



Economic Development

Throughout its history, Gordonsville’s prosperity has relied on its natural beauty, quality of life, and strong transportation linkages. Visitors coming by carriage, train, and highway have always enlivened the town, and tourism is a vital element of the town’s economic development plan. The town also is well-situated to support balanced growth for larger businesses and provide ample opportunities for town residents to work where they live.

This section presents economic data about Gordonsville, explains several strategies for economic development, and then connects these with Council’s adopted goal:

The Town will be a vibrant economic destination for the area where vacant commercial and industrial structures have been filled and new businesses have located to the town to provide both jobs and services to citizens and those living in proximity to town.

Economic Characteristics of the Town

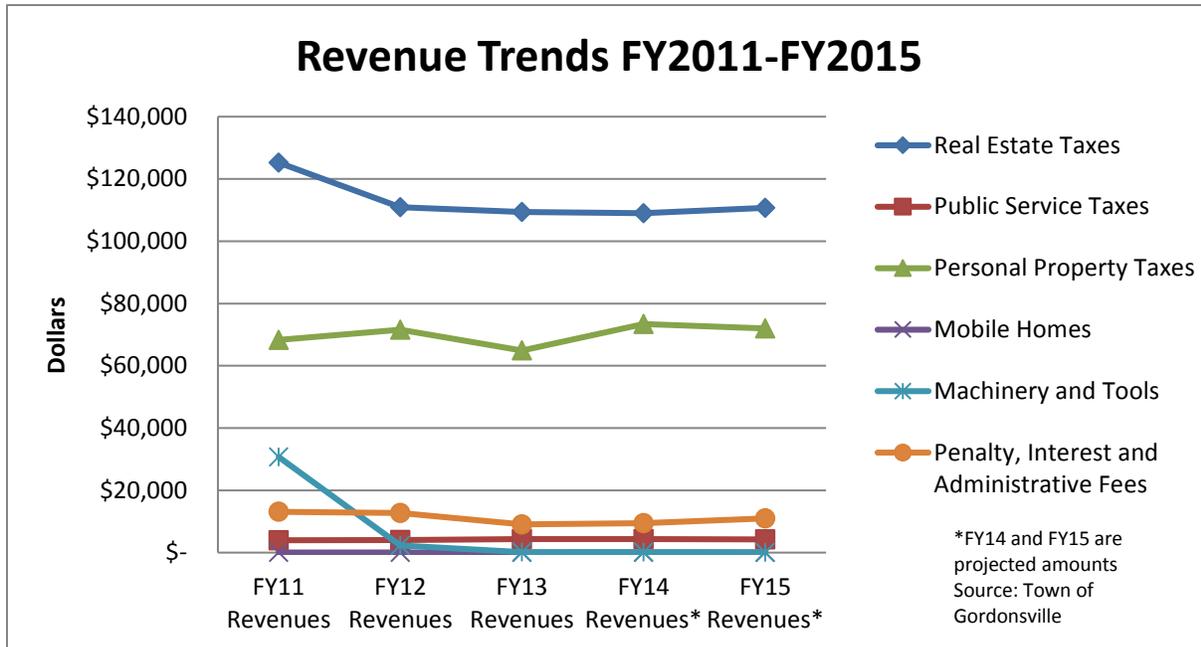
Tax Revenue/Finances

The table below shows the Town’s revenue for the past five years from property taxes and other local taxes. The meals tax is the largest component of the second group. Overall, Town revenues continue to recover from the recession; meals tax revenue has risen faster than property tax revenue. Tourism and local economic activity has grown, and property values have risen more slowly. Tax revenue, particularly meals tax and sales tax, is very important to the Town’s capacity to provide needed services. This Plan assumes that efforts to make Gordonsville more attractive to new businesses and visitors will bring economic growth to the region as a whole and to the Town in particular. Enlarging the tax base through economic development efforts could help to ease the tax burden on the individual property owner.

Gordonsville Tax Revenue FY11-FY15					
Description	FY11 Revenues	FY12 Revenues	FY13 Revenues	FY14 Revenues*	FY15 Revenues*
Property Taxes					
Real Estate Taxes	\$ 125,236	\$ 110,888	\$ 109,381	\$ 109,000	\$ 110,700
Public Service Taxes	\$ 3,969	\$ 4,046	\$ 4,347	\$ 4,300	\$ 4,200
Personal Property Taxes	\$ 68,308	\$ 71,562	\$ 64,899	\$ 73,400	\$ 72,000
Mobile Homes	\$ 38	\$ 34	\$ 25	\$ 30	\$ 30
Machinery and Tools	\$ 30,698	\$ 2,279	\$ 132	\$ 130	\$ 80
Penalty, Interest and Administrative Fees	\$ 13,095	\$ 12,732	\$ 9,067	\$ 9,500	\$ 11,000
Property Taxes Total	\$ 241,344	\$ 201,541	\$ 187,851	\$ 196,360	\$ 198,010
Other Local Taxes					
Local Sales and Use Tax	\$ 116,140	\$ 102,847	\$ 135,617	\$ 143,000	\$ 150,000
Consumers Utility Tax	\$ 30,443	\$ 24,519	\$ 29,446	\$ 29,000	\$ 29,500
Business License Tax	\$ 95,379	\$ 101,708	\$ 97,048	\$ 92,000	\$ 98,000
Motor Vehicle Tax	\$ 26,987	\$ 28,238	\$ 24,332	\$ 28,300	\$ 26,000
Bank Stock Tax	\$ 35,721	\$ 32,452	\$ 17,483	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000
Cigarette Tax	\$ 21,000	\$ 24,000	\$ 25,500	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000
Meals Tax	\$ 241,786	\$ 237,152	\$ 266,631	\$ 265,000	\$ 300,000
Other Local Taxes Total	\$ 567,456	\$ 550,916	\$ 596,057	\$ 587,300	\$ 633,500
TOTAL	\$ 808,800	\$ 752,457	\$ 783,908	\$ 783,660	\$ 831,510
*projected revenues					
Source: Town of Gordonsville Budget Documents					



The chart below illustrates the trends in tax revenue for the Town from FY2011 through FY2015:



Generally, revenue streams have remained constant over the last five years. The significant decrease in machinery and tools tax that occurred from FY2011 to FY2012 was the result of the closure of American Press, which manufactured printed material.

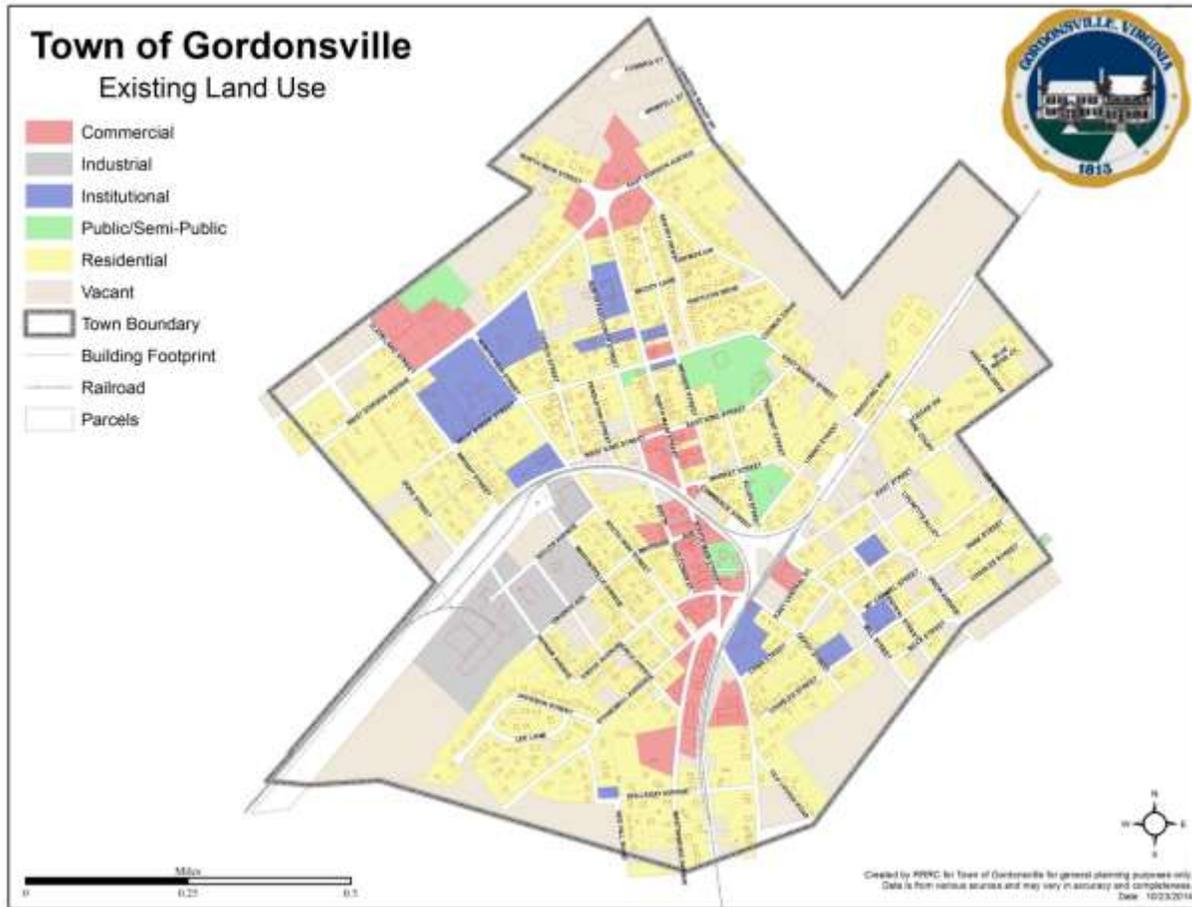
The [regional economic summary](#) completed in 2012 by the Thomas Jefferson Partnership for Economic Development (now the Central Virginia Partnership for Economic Development) does not focus on Gordonsville in particular, but it highlights several industries and sectors where the region can grow competitively, such as:

- Arts, Entertainment, Recreation & Visitor Industries
- Agribusiness, Food Processing & Technology
- Business and Financial Services

Current Economic Conditions in Gordonsville

Gordonsville’s local economy is healthy and growing. The town benefits from a favorable location and economic trends which create new opportunities for growth. The “fundamentals” of the town are strong.

The existing land use map for the Town, as shown below, provides a good illustration as to where business uses are concentrated within the Town. Commercial activity is clustered along the major transportation routes through Town at the traffic circle, along Main Street, along Martinsburg Avenue and along West Gordon Avenue. The businesses located in the downtown corridor are generally tourism-oriented, while industrial businesses are clustered along the railroad in the southwestern quadrant of the Town.



Gordonsville’s economy is not self-contained. Many town residents commute to Charlottesville and other areas to work, and many rural residents commute into Gordonsville to work. Town businesses cater both to local residents and to visitors from near and far. One goal of this Plan is to increase opportunities for people to live, work, and play within the Town.

The March 2014 announcement of Green Applications’ decision to locate in Gordonsville was a strong positive change for the Town’s economic vitality. The manufacturing facility will distribute nationally and employ an estimated 323 people, making it the town’s largest employer. The table below shows the other major employers in the town. The Town relies on a small number of key employers, creating the risk of disruption should one of those businesses leave. As a case in point, Perrigo Nutritionals, supplier of store brand infant formulas and nutritional products worldwide, was headquartered in the Town. In late 2014, the company moved its facilities to the Charlottesville area, leaving a vacancy in the Town’s downtown business district. While this had an initial negative impact on the Town’s economy, it also provided the opportunity for creating a more diverse and expanded downtown business district. Reliance on a small number of businesses helps the Town to focus on a specialized set of economic development goals that



feature the core of the Town’s economic activity: tourism, manufacturing and routine services to residents.

Three Largest Employers in Gordonsville

Employer	Product/Service	Employees
Green Applications	Textile printing manufacturing	323*
Food Lion	Grocery	60
The Village at Gordon House	Nursing Care Facilities	60
*estimated employment at full operation. Source: Orange County Economic Development Office, 2012.		

Education and workforce development is important for the town. There is a strong resource for higher education very near Gordonsville. Piedmont Virginia Community College’s campus in Charlottesville is a half-hour drive, as is the University of Virginia. These campuses are available for town residents to commute to and for businesses to take advantage of training programs.

Population and Labor Force

The table below shows the town’s population by age group, according to the 2010 Census. These figures show 60% of the population aged 18-64, which indicates a large potential workforce.

Age Group	Number	Percentage
Under age 18	365	24.4%
Aged 18 to 64	897	60.0%
Aged 65 and over	234	15.6%

The town population is 54% female and 46% male. The population lives in 632 households, for an average household size of 2.4 people per household.



Our Business Community

Main Street

The view below shows Main Street, looking west. The downtown business district situated between Grove Avenue and the railroad bridge is located just left of center in the photograph. One can see that the density of buildings in this area creates a compact, walkable business core. Vacant storefronts here offer opportunities for downtown expansion, and the proximity of Falconer Street, which parallels Main Street one block to the west, enhances rear business access and parking availability for downtown patrons.



Gordonsville Plaza

Gordonsville Plaza is a 49,000 square foot center anchored by Food Lion and Family Dollar. Construction was completed in December, 1996. The view below looks east and shows the plaza in the lower left. The traffic circle is visible in the upper left, and the Green Applications facility is prominent on the right. The plaza has potential for increased density and new commercial development using existing parking and access.





Martinsburg Avenue



The view above looks east at Martinsburg Avenue where it splits from South Main Street. The southern town boundary is shown at right. The area between Martinsburg Avenue, Noble Avenue and the railroad has potential for revitalized commercial development at the southern entrance corridor of the Town.

Traffic Circle



One of the signature features in Town is the Gordonsville traffic circle where U.S. Route 15, U.S. Route 33 and Virginia Route 231 converge. This modern-day crossroads is what most travelers know as “Gordonsville” and offers services geared toward motorists passing through the area. Fast food restaurants, convenience stores and gas stations are the hallmark of development here. A local veterinary hospital and a local pharmacy and butchery are also located at the circle and provide services to those living in the region. The Gordonsville traffic circle is the town’s gateway for those travelling through the region from the north, west and east. Opportunities for commercial expansion in this area are limited due to the proximity of long-established residential neighborhoods.



A Destination for Tourism

Visitor Center

Gordonsville's Visitor Center is located downtown, next to the town hall and convenient to parking and walkable tourism destinations. The view below (looking west) shows the Visitor Center at the right. The Exchange Hotel is at the lower left.



Visitor center operations will be important to developing tourism in the town. The volunteers staffing the center do wonderful work to welcome and orient visitors. In the short- to medium-term (1-3 years), several actions will be needed to increase the value of the visitor center:

- Recruit additional volunteers and increase hours of operation. Currently the center is only staffed by volunteers Friday through Sunday from 10am to 5pm. Ideally, the center would be open daily, with evening hours on Fridays and Saturdays.
- Increase online presence and services. Currently, visitor center services are mainly paper-based and delivered in person or over the phone to visitors who call. Website information is available; information available via other social media outlets is limited and should be developed, including mobile device formatting.
- Obtain certification as a Tourist Information Center from the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC). This program encourages local and regional visitor centers to meet requirements and operate under guidelines as set by VTC. This program promotes standards that enhance and also simplify the travel experience for Virginia visitors. The Virginia Tourism Corporation will support Town staff and volunteers in meeting [certification standards](#).



Cultural Events

Special cultural events have two important purposes. They enhance quality of life for town residents and make Gordonsville a more enjoyable place to live. And they also attract visitors who enliven the events and contribute economically. Gordonsville currently has several annual events which can grow into more important economic assets.



Fried Chicken Festival: Gordonsville is known for fried chicken that was served to passengers of trains stopping in town during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. To celebrate this special heritage, the Town of Gordonsville holds a Fried Chicken Festival in mid-May. In future years, the festival can grow to include more vendors from the surrounding area, more music and artistic performances. Marketing of the festival can expand around the region using the visitor center and other resources.

Street Festival: The Gordonsville Street Festival is held on the first Saturday in October. It is sponsored by the Gordonsville Volunteer Fire Company Auxiliary and is one of their biggest fundraisers to support the Town's Volunteer Fire Company. The festival is a regional tourist draw for the Town.



Figure 1. Visitors enjoy the Gordonsville Street Festival (photo courtesy of Jeff Poole).



Figure 2. Veterans Parade, 2011 (photo courtesy of Jeff Poole).

Veterans Parade: On the second Saturday of November, Gordonsville honors veterans from throughout Central Virginia with a Veterans Parade that features patriotic music, veterans groups and floats themed in support of veterans. There is not another Veterans Day parade in a nearby town, so this event attracts marchers and spectators from Charlottesville and other surrounding areas. Like the other two festivals, there are opportunities to grow this event.



Tree Lighting: The lighting of the Memorial Christmas tree on the lawn of Town Hall officially begins the Christmas holiday season in the Town of Gordonsville and typically takes place on the first Sunday of December. The lights on the tree honor the memory of loved ones during the holiday season. The tree lighting is mainly a local activity and not a priority for tourism growth. However, the town's lights and decorations attract tourists and shoppers throughout the holidays.



Figure 3. The Memorial Christmas Tree Lighting event in Gordonsville is a treat for all (photo courtesy of Jeff Poole).

Exchange Hotel

The [Exchange Hotel](#) was built in 1860 to serve railroad travelers. During the Civil War it was used as receiving hospital. After the war, it was used as a Freedman's Bureau and again as a hotel before being acquired by Historic Gordonsville in 1971. It is now open as a Civil War museum, emphasizing its historic architecture and value as Virginia's only remaining Civil War receiving hospital. The Civil War sesquicentennial will likely benefit the museum through 2015, and the hotel may then refocus on its role in Reconstruction and rail transportation. Known as one of the most haunted structures in America, the Exchange Hotel brings in scores of visitors year-round for ghost walks and tours. Opportunities exist for improving the marketing of the museum in partnership with local businesses and the visitor center.



Figure 4. Gordonsville Civil War Museum at the Exchange Hotel (photo courtesy of Jeff Poole).

Journey Through Hallowed Ground

The [Journey Through Hallowed Ground Partnership](#) is a non-profit, four-state partnership dedicated to raising awareness of the unparalleled American heritage in the region running from Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, through Maryland and Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, to Thomas Jefferson's Monticello in Charlottesville, Virginia. With more history than any other region in the nation, the Journey Through Hallowed Ground corridor has been designated by Congress as a National Heritage Area. The Journey passes through Gordonsville along Route 15. The Exchange Hotel is noted in Journey marketing as a [key site](#) within the corridor.



Figure 5. Journey Through Hallowed Ground (www.jthg.org).

As Civil War sesquicentennial programming ends in 2015, the Journey may offer an ongoing structure for heritage tourism efforts that serve to attract more visitors to the Town.



Marketing the Town

Gordonsville will market its economic development by building on its existing strengths. Some key words to emphasize are:

Crossroads, Experiences, History, Charm, Character, Walkable

This marketing strategy does not alienate or discourage the growth of appropriate industry or major retail as anchor employers. As an historic crossroads, Gordonsville is strategically placed within the region for business expansion in all sectors.

The Role of Town Government in Economic Development

Residents understand that the town government does not make jobs: the Town has fewer than 30 full-time employees. Rather, the town government works to improve the conditions for growth. The goals in this plan make it easier for businesses to start and grow, improve the business environment, and make living and doing business in Gordonsville more appealing. Economic development is related to every other aspect of this plan, because good business is just one part of small-town quality of life.

The Role of the Gordonsville Airport

There is considerable scholarly literature on economic development related to general aviation and the circumstances under which it benefits local economies. Gordonsville has an airport that may be utilized as a catalyst for economic growth for the Town and the region. Gordonsville Municipal Airport is located outside of the current town boundary, two miles north of downtown. The airport occupies land between US 15 and the railroad. Extension of the runway could improve the viability of the airport as an economic development tool for the Town.

External Resources

[Orange County Economic Development](#). The office has a staff of two and is responsible for marketing the Towns of Gordonsville and Orange and Orange County at the state and national level. Staff is available to support the Town in attracting businesses, particularly in the areas of mapping, marketing, and business liaison. The office is affiliated with the state level [Virginia Economic Development Partnership](#).

[The Orange County Department of Tourism and Visitors Bureau](#) has been and continues to be an active partner in marketing Gordonsville as a destination for visitors to the region. Additionally, the Town is a member of the [Orange County Chamber of Commerce](#) and works hand-in-hand with them to support local business development and marketing.



Community Meeting and Survey Responses

What Residents Want in Economic Development

Town staff and elected officials discuss the local economy with town residents and businesses regularly. The community survey and community meetings held as part of the comprehensive plan update revealed that Town residents and government share a general consensus about some key points for economic development as follows:

- Appropriate, healthy growth of the population and of the business community is desired.
- It is important that some residents have local jobs and enjoy the quality of life that comes from living and working in a small town. Walkable development is desired.
- The town must be an appealing home for residents who commute to employment centers elsewhere, and it must attract tourists from other places.

Community Meeting Results

Attendees at the community meetings expressed a variety of thoughts and issues related to economic development within the Town. There is strong support for the reuse of existing vacant buildings for new businesses. Residents noted specific new business needs, such as fast food and other restaurants, a farmer's market, middle retail and the location of a bed and breakfast. Additionally, residents indicated that industrial growth must be low impact or light in character in order to fit with other uses within the town. The ability to live where you work is also important to Town residents, as is the availability of basic goods and services. Citizens also believe that encouraging business growth will reduce their tax burden.

The specific comments made by attendees at the community meetings are as follows:

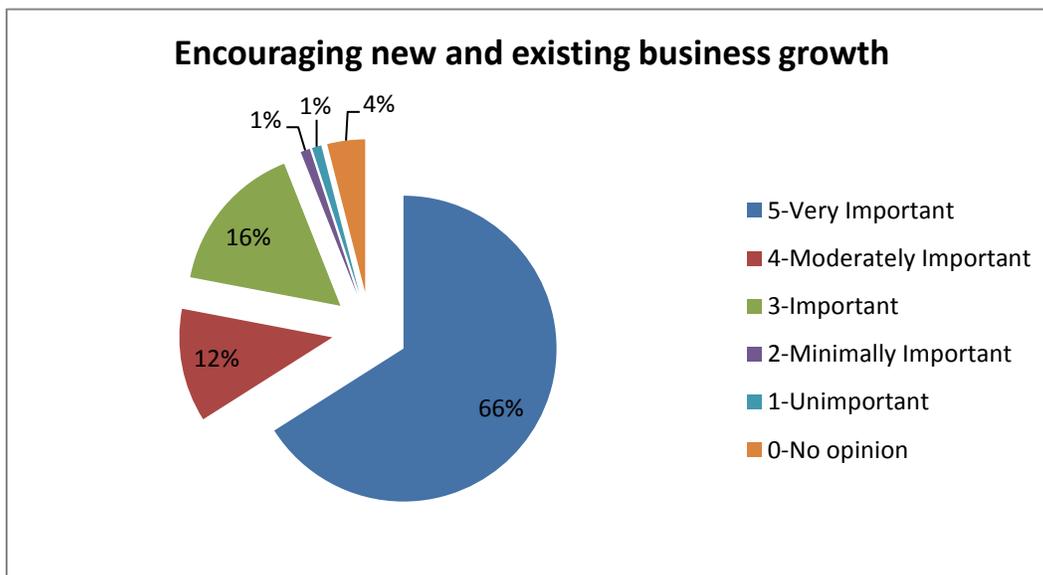
- Bring in more fast-food restaurants (McDonalds, Taco Bell, mobile hot dog vendors) and an ice cream store
- Fill the vacant commercial/industrial buildings with businesses that will in turn create other supportive business opportunities
- Provide for laundry/dry cleaning services
- Bring middle-retail back to downtown within walking distance or convenient to residents
- Provide for more restaurant opportunities
- Provide for festivals or movie events within Town (another street festival; bring carnival back to town)
- Bring in electronic industries (e-commerce)
- Create more cohesiveness between Town businesses and Town Council
- Create a farmer's market in Town and work to promote development of other cultural events and festivals - create a venue for same
- Develop a telecommuting center or business center
- Work with providers to expand bandwidth for internet in Town



- Increase visitor opportunities (promote the Town)
- Tourism, tourism, tourism
- Encourage development of a Bed & Breakfast within Town
- Develop a country club or golf course in Town
- Get Amtrak to stop in Town on weekends
- New economic development should be compatible with existing businesses - not in competition
- Develop a plan of incentives for business attraction
- Promote the history of the Town as an economic development tool
- Develop a good relationship with the Orange County Tourism department to promote the Town through advertisements, etc.
- Work with the Journey Through Hallowed Ground initiative to promote the Town as a gateway to the Journey
- Promote the Town tagline "a Town at the Crossroads of History" on internet search engines and work to get the Town's website better linked through various search engines

Community Survey Results

Improving employment opportunities in town was a topic of importance for Gordonsville residents as evidenced in their responses to the community survey conducted in the fall of 2011. The chart below illustrates responses to the question related to encouraging new and existing business growth for the Town.



Two-thirds of respondents indicated that it is very important to encourage new and existing growth for the Town. Overall, more than three-quarters of survey respondents indicated this issue is important for the Town.



Economic Development Goal

The Town will be a vibrant economic destination for the area where vacant commercial and industrial structures have been filled and new businesses have located to the town to provide both jobs and services to citizens and those living in proximity to town.

Objective A. Develop the town's local economy by growing the key export industries of tourism and light manufacturing.	
A1.	<i>Encourage the development of a cluster of related design and technical services to create a business campus around the Green Applications site.</i>
A2.	<i>Encourage tourism development through marketing and special events, growth of small businesses, and coordination with historic resources and regional agri-tourism events.</i>
A3.	<i>Develop Verling Park as a venue for cultural events.</i>
Objective B. Develop the town's local economy by expanding the business services desired by residents.	
B1.	<i>Work with Orange County Economic Development and the Central Virginia Partnership for Economic Development to expand business opportunities within and around the Town.</i>
B2.	<i>Facilitate the development of new and existing businesses within existing commercial areas of Town to serve the basic needs of current and future residents with activities such as grocery shopping and dining, banking and personal services, specialty shopping and recreational activities, as appropriate to land use and neighborhood character.</i>
B3.	<i>Work with Orange County Economic Development to develop an Enterprise Zone for the Town.</i>
Objective C. Develop the Gordonsville Airport as an economic development tool for the region.	
C1.	<i>Review and revise the Airport Layout Plan as needed and implement the plan to upgrade and develop the facility in a manner consistent with Virginia Department of Aviation requirements.</i>
Objective D. Create a workforce that is job-ready to promote business development in the community.	
D1.	<i>Work with Orange County Economic Development to create workforce development programs in the area.</i>
D2.	<i>Work with the Orange County School System to develop a career mentoring program for youth to demonstrate future job opportunities.</i>