



2025-2027

STRATEGIC PLAN

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OVERVIEW



MISSION

The mission of the Washington County Economic Development Council is to enhance job growth and increase the tax base of Washington County, Johnson City, and Jonesborough by engaging the community and business leaders through nurturing existing businesses and actively recruiting new industries and commerce.

KEY DUTIES OF THE WASHINGTON COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

The core duties of the Washington County Economic Development Council (WCEDC) will continue to guide our ongoing efforts in supporting and growing the regional economy. These duties include workforce development, business recruitment, business retention and expansion, marketing, site and infrastructure development, and addressing barriers such as childcare that impact workforce participation.



KEY DUTIES

- Site and Infrastructure Development
- Business Recruitment
- Workforce Development
- Marketing
- Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E)
- Addressing Barriers to Employment (e.g., Childcare)
- Maintaining Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development (TNECD) Three Star Certification

WASHINGTON COUNTY ASSETS

Washington County is uniquely positioned as a vibrant community with strategic assets that support economic growth and quality of life. Its prime location with access to major highways and transportation networks facilitates efficient commerce and industry connections. The county benefits from strong educational institutions that cultivate a skilled workforce tailored to evolving industry needs. Robust infrastructure, including expanding broadband capabilities, supports both businesses and residents. Additionally, the area's rich cultural heritage, natural beauty, and recreational opportunities contribute to a high quality of life, making Washington County an attractive place for families, workers, and employers alike. These combined strengths form a solid foundation for ongoing economic development and community prosperity.

ASSETS

EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- East Tennessee State University (ETSU)
- Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) – Elizabethton
- TCAT Expansion – Washington County
- Northeast State Community College
- Science Hill High School CTE Department
- Washington County Schools CTE
- RCAM – Regional Center for Advanced Manufacturing
- CareerQuest
- Northeast TN Workforce Development Board
- First Tennessee Development District – Workforce Initiatives
- Caring Workplaces

AGRIBUSINESS & AGRICULTURE

- Jonesborough Farmers Market
- Johnson City Farmers Market
- Appalachian Farmers Market
- Washington Farmers CO-OP
- Washington County Cattlemen’s Association
- Appalachian Producers Coop

SMALL BUSINESS, RETAIL DEVELOPMENT & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

- Sync Space Entrepreneur Center
- Avante
- Program (offered 3x/year – Chamber & FoundersForge)
- Spark Plaza – Co-working Space
- FoundersForge
- Pitches and Pints Event
- Business Building Workshops
- Innovation Lab
- Small Business Development Center (SBDC)
- Main St Jonesborough
- Main St Johnson City
- Startup Mountain Summit

HEALTHCARE

- Ballad Health
- ETSU – Quillen College of Medicine
- ETSU – Gatton College of Pharmacy
- ETSU – College of Public Health
- Holston Medical Group
- State of Franklin Health Care Associates
- Frontier Health

AVAILABLE INDUSTRIAL SITES & BUILDINGS

- Washington County Industrial Park – 25 Acre Site
- Washington County Industrial Park – 19.4 Acre Site
- Washington County Industrial Park – 5 Acre Site
- Washington County Industrial Park – 7 Acre Site
- Former JTEK/Koyo Building
- Former Nakatetsu Building

INFRASTRUCTURE, UTILITIES & TRANSPORTATION

- BrightRidge 10-Gig Broadband
- Broadband Expansion to Unserved & Underserved Areas
- Public Transportation (Johnson City Transit)
- Interstate Access (I-26 and I-81)
- Freight Rail Access – CSX and Norfolk Southern
- Tri-Cities Regional Airport (TRI)

TOURISM, ATTRACTIONS & RECREATION: OUTDOOR RECREATION

- Buffalo Mountain City Park & USFS
- Persimmon Ridge Park
- Jonesborough Linear Trail
- Willow Springs Park & Dog Park
- Winged Deer Park
- Jacob’s Nature Park
- Tweetsie Trail
- Founders Park
- Katy Branch & Clark’s Creek Recreation Area (USFS)
- Boone Lake
- Tannery Knobs Mountain Bike Park
- Rotary Park
- King Commons
- Buffalo Mountain ATV Trail
- Lost State Scenic Walkway
- ETSU Woods
- Wetlands Water Park
- Langstone Center
- Martin Center
- Reece Museum
- Tipton Haynes Center
- Planned First Frontier Trail

TOURISM, ATTRACTIONS, & RECREATION: CULTURAL & TOURISM ATTRACTIONS

- International Storytelling Center
- Northeast Tennessee Tourism Association
- Brights Zoo
- Johnson City Railroad Experience
- Gray Fossil Site
- Pinnacle Fire Tower
- Jonesborough Repertory Theatre
- Main Street Theatre
- George L. Carter Railroad Museum
- McKinney Center
- Johnson City Community Theatre

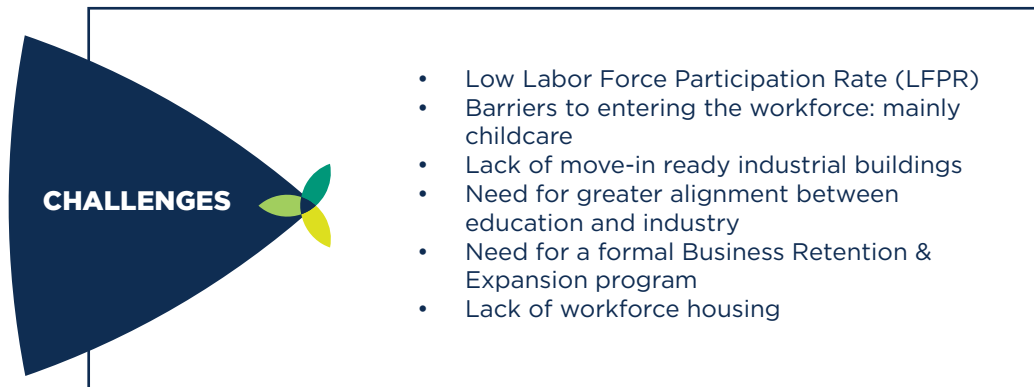
ADDITIONAL TOURISM INFORMATION:

- northeasttennessee.org
- jonesboroughtn.org/residents/visitors-center
- visitjohnsoncitytn.com



STRATEGIC ISSUES

Despite its many strengths, Washington County faces several strategic challenges that require focused attention to sustain and enhance economic growth. The county's labor force participation rate remains below desired levels, limiting the available talent pool for local employers. Barriers such as limited access to affordable and quality childcare contribute to workforce non-participation, especially among parents who struggle to balance employment and family needs. Additionally, the scarcity of suitable commercial and industrial buildings presents a constraint for business expansion and recruitment efforts. Addressing these issues through targeted strategies is essential to unlocking the county's full economic potential and ensuring a thriving, resilient community for years to come.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Washington County Economic Development Council (WCEDC) proudly serves the communities of Washington County, Johnson City, and Jonesborough. The mission of the Washington County Economic Development Council is to enhance job growth and increase the tax base of Washington County, Johnson City, and Jonesborough by engaging the community and business leaders through nurturing existing businesses and actively recruiting new industries and commerce.

On May 23, 2025, Rebecca Davis Consulting facilitated a comprehensive strategic planning process for the Washington County Economic Development Council (WCEDC). This effort marked a significant milestone in the Council's ongoing commitment to fostering economic vitality across Washington County, Johnson City, and Jonesborough. Grounded in deep community engagement and cross-sector collaboration, the process was designed to reflect the voices, challenges, and aspirations of the region.

Our engagement began with a foundational belief: that effective strategy must be co-created with the people and institutions it aims to serve. We convened a diverse group of stakeholders—spanning local government, business, education, workforce development, nonprofit organizations, and civic leadership. Through a series of facilitated discussions and work sessions, participants shared candid insights into the region's most pressing economic development challenges and opportunities. Three strategic focus areas clearly emerged:



These areas were not abstract priorities—they were rooted in specific local conditions. Stakeholders voiced concerns about workforce gaps, particularly the need for stronger alignment between education pipelines and local employer needs. Childcare surfaced as a critical barrier to workforce participation, particularly among low-income families. And while the region values new business recruitment, participants recognized the urgent need to strengthen support systems for existing employers.

Rebecca Davis Consulting guided the formation of dedicated task forces for each focus area. These groups—comprising respected local leaders with subject matter expertise—were not only instrumental in shaping the strategic goals, but they are also positioned to lead implementation in the years ahead. Each task force worked closely with our facilitation team to develop clear, measurable goals, timelines, and accountability structures.

Together, we crafted a dynamic strategic plan that includes both long-term (2-year) and short-term (6-12 month) goals for each priority area. Whether it's increasing experiential learning opportunities for students, repurposing underutilized spaces for childcare facilities, or formalizing a structured BR&E program, the strategies are actionable and metrics-driven. Importantly, this plan does not end with publication. The WCEDC has committed to a quarterly task force convening schedule through 2027. These sessions will serve as real-time accountability checkpoints, allowing leaders to track progress, remove barriers, and adjust tactics as needed. This ongoing structure ensures that the plan remains a living document—responsive to emerging needs and opportunities.

Facilitating this process reinforced what we already believed: Washington County is a region with deep-rooted assets, strong leadership, and an authentic spirit of collaboration. This strategic plan positions the WCEDC and its partners to move from dialogue to action—to elevate workforce participation, expand childcare access, and solidify the foundation of a thriving, inclusive local economy.

We at Rebecca Davis Consulting are honored to have supported this transformative work and look forward to seeing Washington County continue its journey toward sustainable economic prosperity.



FOCUS AREA 1: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

THE NEED

Washington County employers report increasing difficulty in finding and retaining talent. While educational partners are working to prepare students for future careers, greater alignment is needed between those efforts and the skills needed locally. Workforce development efforts must bridge gaps through experiential learning, soft skill development, early career awareness, and inclusive engagement of underutilized populations such as justice-involved individuals, caregivers, and adults changing careers.

GOALS



TASK FORCE

The WCEDC Workforce Development Task Force is composed of regional education partners, nonprofit leaders, government representatives, and other professionals working collaboratively to strengthen and grow the local talent pipeline.

TASK FORCE PRIORITIES

- Expand experiential learning opportunities via ETSU and TCAT.
- Promote and scale Work-Based Learning awareness.
- Support and publicize the Work Ethic Distinction program.
- Encourage early career exploration for students K-12.
- Strategically engage underutilized talent pools.

METRICS TO CONSIDER

INDICATOR	UNIT OF MEASUREMENT	TARGET
Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR)	% of working-age population in the workforce	Increase by 1% annually
Number of Employers Engaged in WBL	Count	+3 per year
Number of Experiential Learning Programs	Count	+3 by year-end
Soft Skills Credential (Work Ethic Distinction) Completions	Count	Track YOY growth
Early Career Awareness Events	Count	+3 per school year



FOCUS AREA 2: CHILDCARE ACCESS

THE NEED

Childcare access directly impacts a parent’s ability to work, especially among lower-income and single-parent households. Many providers in Washington County are full or operating below capacity due to licensing, staffing, or facility challenges. Addressing these barriers by repurposing underutilized spaces, improving regulatory pathways, and advocating for state-level policy changes will improve both economic outcomes and educational readiness.

GOALS



TASK FORCE

The Childcare Task Force is comprised of representatives from nonprofit organizations, governmental agencies, childcare experts, and additional stakeholders dedicated to expanding access to high-quality, affordable childcare options throughout the community.

TASK FORCE PRIORITIES

- Identify and assess local barriers to expanding access.
- Recruit providers, developers, and advocates to the working group.
- Work with building owners to repurpose underutilized space.
- Coordinate with TQEE on potential legislative advocacy.
- Create an inventory of provider capacity and expansion needs.

METRICS TO CONSIDER

INDICATOR	UNIT OF MEASUREMENT	TARGET
Childcare Slot-to-Child Ratio	Number of licensed slots per child under age 6	Improve year-over-year
Number of New Childcare Slots Created	Count	+50 by 2027
Number of Childcare Providers Engaged	Count	+2 per year
Number of Barriers Identified & Addressed	Count	At least 3 barriers analyzed
Facility Repurposing Projects in Development	Count	At least 1 by 2026
Policy/Legislative Actions Supported	Count	Track and support ≥1 initiative annually



FOCUS AREA 3: BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION (BR&E)

THE NEED

Washington County’s economic future depends on the success of its existing employers. It is time for the WCEDC’s BR&E program to be formalized to better proactively identify needs, threats, and opportunities. By creating structured touchpoints and a shared system for follow-up, WCEDC and its partners can respond more effectively preventing the loss of key employers or talent, and encouraging the expansion of existing industries.

GOALS



TASK FORCE

The Business Retention and Expansion Task Force includes members of the business community, chamber of commerce executives, government representatives, and other key stakeholders committed to supporting existing industry and fostering long-term economic stability.

TASK FORCE PRIORITIES

- Host a BR&E program kickoff and onboarding session.
- Deploy an employer survey to identify needs and risk factors.
- Compile common challenges and create an action-oriented response strategy.
- Offer educational sessions for industry leaders on key issues (e.g., tax incentives, workforce tools).
- Create a feedback loop and resource guide based on survey data.

METRICS TO CONSIDER

INDICATOR	UNIT OF MEASUREMENT	TARGET
Number of Business Visits Conducted	Count	+15 annually
Critical Needs Identified	Count of recurring needs	Identify top 3 per year
Number of Educational Events Held	Count	1 per 6 months
Number of Businesses Connected to New Resources	Count	+10 annually
Follow-Up Actions Completed	% of identified issues addressed	≥80% within 6 months

ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability is central to the success of this strategic plan and to the mission of the Washington County Economic Development Council. From the outset, this plan was built with broad community input and is rooted in a collective sense of ownership and responsibility. To ensure that it remains grounded in local needs and responsive to real-time challenges, WCEDC has established a structure that emphasizes transparency, ongoing dialogue, and collaborative action.

Each strategic priority—Workforce Development, Childcare, and Business Retention & Expansion—is supported by a task force made up of community leaders, educators, industry representatives, and local officials who are deeply invested in Washington County’s growth. These task forces are not only advisory bodies but active partners in implementation. Their purpose is to keep momentum strong, ensure follow-through, and make recommendations based on firsthand experience.

Quarterly meetings between the WCEDC and each task force will provide a space to reflect on progress, identify barriers, share new ideas, and coordinate next steps. This structure allows for continuous learning, builds trust among partners, and strengthens the connection between strategy and on-the-ground action.

By keeping these conversations ongoing and inclusive, WCEDC will remain accountable to the people and communities it serves. This is not a plan that will sit on a shelf—it is a living document, shaped by those doing the work and refined by those most affected by its outcomes.

TASK FORCE MEETING SCHEDULE (STARTING Q3, 2025 - ENDING Q2, 2027)

QUARTER	MONTH	TASK FORCE
Q3 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> July August September 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Childcare Workforce Development Business Retention & Expansion
Q4 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> October November December 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Childcare Workforce Development Business Retention & Expansion
Q1 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> January February March 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Childcare Workforce Development Business Retention & Expansion
Q2 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> April May June 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Childcare Workforce Development Business Retention & Expansion
Q3 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> July August September 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Childcare Workforce Development Business Retention & Expansion
Q4 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> October November December 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Childcare Workforce Development Business Retention & Expansion
Q1 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> January February March 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Childcare Workforce Development Business Retention & Expansion
Q2 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> April May June 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Childcare Workforce Development Business Retention & Expansion



CONCLUSION

This strategic plan was built by Washington County, for Washington County. It reflects a deep commitment to collaborative planning, with broad engagement from city, county, and regional stakeholders across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. The input, leadership, and accountability of these local partners have not only shaped our strategic priorities—Workforce Development, Childcare, and Business Retention & Expansion—but also defined the structures through which we will carry them out.

Each priority area is now supported by a dedicated task force composed of cross-sector leaders who bring both insight and action to the table. These task forces will meet quarterly with the WCEDC, serving as accountability hubs to ensure that resources, partnerships, and policies remain aligned with evolving needs. Their work will inform programming, influence advocacy efforts, and ensure a feedback loop from employers, educators, and families directly into county-wide economic strategies.

The WCEDC remains committed to leading this work with transparency, urgency, and a relentless focus on results. Metrics such as labor force participation rate, the childcare slots-to-children ratio, and employer engagement benchmarks will help illuminate our progress, celebrate wins, and inform needed course corrections. This is not a static document—it's a living roadmap. As new challenges and opportunities arise, we will adapt while holding fast to our shared vision: to build a stronger, more prosperous, and more resilient economy for all who live and work in Washington County, Johnson City, and Jonesborough.

With the structures in place, the partnerships secured, and the priorities clearly defined, Washington County is positioned not just for progress—but for transformation.

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