

Vision

The Town of Vienna envisions a future where economic vitality thrives as a core part of the small-town charm, with a resilient, diverse, and innovative business environment. Vienna will leverage its strategic location by attracting and retaining community-serving businesses that support a sustainable economy. Vienna will remain a premier destination for businesses, residents, and visitors alike.

Goals

1. Enhance the Town's commercial districts to create vibrant, pedestrian-friendly, and economically sustainable areas.
2. Support small and locally owned businesses that provide services to the community as key contributors to the local economy.
3. Promote regional tourism to drive economic activity.
4. Foster a business-friendly environment to support a strong and diverse revenue base, which includes the meals tax revenues that fund the Town's capital improvements.
5. Maintain and enhance a strong corporate presence in the Corporate Park sector.

Introduction

Economic development in Vienna is centered on maintaining and enhancing a vibrant economy that supports businesses, residents, and a diverse tax base for Town revenues. This chapter outlines the Town's approach to fostering a thriving commercial environment that complements Vienna's small-town charm. Vienna is implementing strategies that modernize regulations, enhance infrastructure, attract employers in the Corporate Park, and promote a diverse mix of businesses.

The Town's economic development strategy prioritizes targeted investments, business-friendly policies, and thoughtful revitalization of key commercial areas. Vienna is leveraging its strategic location within Northern Virginia to attract businesses while ensuring that the Town's economy aligns with community values. Each of Vienna's commercial districts — including Maple Avenue, Church Street, the light-industrial area of Mill Street and Dominion Road, Cedar Lane, and the Corporate Park District — offers unique economic opportunities, and the Town is implementing targeted strategies to support their vitality.

Infrastructure improvements, small business support programs, commercial land preservation efforts, and initiatives to increase tourism will enhance Vienna's long-term economic sustainability. Vienna is also committed to fostering a supportive environment for small and locally owned businesses.

Vienna is improving its regulatory processes to support economic growth. Streamlining permitting, updating zoning codes, and providing business incentives will make it easier for businesses to start and expand in the Town. This plan also recognizes regional market pressures and the need for flexibility, especially in long-vacant office areas such as 901 Follin Lane SE. This plan sets a clear direction for ensuring economic resilience, fostering a dynamic business climate, and enhancing the Town's unique character.

Economic Development in Vienna

Nestled within a dynamic economic region, Vienna benefits from its proximity to Washington, D.C.; major employment hubs within Northern Virginia, including Tysons, Reston, and Merrifield; the Capital Beltway, I-66, VA-123, other major roadways, and the W&OD Trail; and Dulles International Airport. However, its future economic success requires careful planning that integrates business growth with community values. Vienna's approach to economic development focuses on fostering a supportive business climate, improving infrastructure, attracting new community-serving businesses, retaining existing business, and maintaining an attractive environment.

Nearby Areas

Vienna operates within a dynamic and rapidly evolving economic landscape. Tysons, just northeast of Vienna and immediately west of the Capital Beltway, has undergone significant transformation, shifting from an employment center dominated by suburban offices and indoor mall shopping into a dense, transit-oriented urban center. By 2050, Tysons is projected to include 45 million square feet of constructed space, providing housing for approximately 100,000 residents and employment for 200,000 people. The area's continued evolution includes high-rise mixed-use developments, improved pedestrian infrastructure, and enhanced access to regional transit, positioning it as a major economic engine for Fairfax County and the greater Washington, D.C. region.

Further east, Merrifield has similarly emerged as a vibrant, mixed-use destination. The Mosaic District, its centerpiece, is a model for walkable urban development, featuring 576,000 square feet of curated retail, a range of residential offerings, hotel accommodations, and modern office spaces. The district has successfully attracted national retailers, boutique shops, and an array of dining and entertainment options, serving as a hub for regional visitors. The adjacent Fairfax Plaza and other commercial centers provide essential services and amenities to Vienna residents. Merrifield is also part of the broader Lee Highway and Route 50 corridors, where there is significant economic activity.

To the south, Fairfax City adds to the region's economic diversity with a revitalized downtown, active cultural scene, and ongoing redevelopment along key corridors. The presence of George Mason University further supports local innovation, commerce, and growth.

Vienna must strategically position itself within this competitive commercial landscape. The Town benefits from its small-town appeal and local business focus, which

differentiates it from the large-scale developments in Tysons and Merrifield and does not feature many available large sites on major thoroughfares. By leveraging its unique strengths, improving infrastructure, and fostering business-friendly policies, Vienna can remain an attractive destination for both residents and businesses while maintaining its distinct community character.

Economic Factors and Characteristics

Vienna's economic landscape is defined by a strong residential base and a stable commercial sector, as evidenced by its high median household income of over \$215,000 (2022); steady population; and a well-educated, highly skilled workforce that supports a growing number of home-based professional businesses. At the same time, the commercial sector continues to show stability through low vacancy rates in retail and office spaces, positive net absorption, rising sales and meals tax revenues, and consistent new business activity—particularly in food, retail, and personal services—reflecting sustained demand and confidence in the local economy. According to the 2023 National Community Survey, 76% of respondents rated the Town's economic health as excellent or good, demonstrating strong public confidence.

Vienna remains predominantly residential, with approximately 70.5% of its 4.4 square miles zoned for single-family detached homes. The Town prioritizes retaining its residential character while supporting a business community that complements and supports its neighborhoods.

Residential real estate in Fairfax County is assessed at 100% of its market value as of January 1 each year. In 2024, the Town of Vienna levied a real estate property tax rate of 22.5 cents per \$100 of assessed value, which is in addition to Fairfax County's rate of \$1.095 per \$100. Vienna's additional levy remains lower than the Town of Herndon, which imposes a rate of 26.5 cents per \$100 of assessed value. The Town's median household income has steadily increased over the past decade and reached \$215,556 in 2022, significantly higher than both regional and state averages. Vienna's population has remained steady, with minimal fluctuations and is estimated at 17,279 residents as of 2023 by Fairfax County's Department of Management and Budget. Employment remains strong, with a low unemployment rate of 3.6% according to the 2022 American Community Survey and a highly skilled workforce, reflecting Vienna's appeal as a desirable place to live and work.

Commercial mixed-uses, light industrial uses and corporate offices comprise approximately 10.2% of the Town's land area, supporting a diverse mix of professional services, medical offices, government, professional offices, retail, and food and beverage establishments. The Town has seen growth in business activity, with 1,718 registered businesses, reflecting a notable increase in professional and home-based businesses, and a 14.9% rise in sales tax revenue in the first half of 2024. Retail and office vacancies have remained low, with retail space seeing a decrease in vacancies from 4.3% to 2.4% from June 2023 to June 2024, indicating strong demand. Additionally,

Vienna's commercial real estate market continues to thrive, with increasing gross rents and a net absorption of 8,215 square feet of office space over 2024.

Vienna is also part of the national capital region, which is the primary reason for the in-town location of Vienna's two largest employers - Navy Federal Credit Union and the FBI's Terrorist Screening Center. Changing Presidential administrations can affect the demand for office space for federal employees, federal contractors, and businesses/institutions closely associated with the federal government, but the proximity to Washington, D.C. and the national security infrastructure in Northern Virginia remains a long-term part of the regional economy that can and does benefit Vienna.

Vienna's commitment to maintaining a balanced economic environment is reinforced by its investment in public spaces, infrastructure, and small business support initiatives. The Town offers a high quality of life that attracts both residents and businesses. Vienna's strategic location near major economic centers, coupled with its small-town appeal, ensures a stable and prosperous future for the community.

Economic Development Climate

The long-term economic vitality and sustainability of the Town of Vienna is dependent on retaining sufficient land for commercial use that includes retail, office, and mixed-use residential. Retail businesses are attracted to the high-income area surrounding the Town as well as the high traffic volume along Maple Avenue and Cedar Lane and the walkability of Church Street and the Mill and Dominion light industrial corridor. Office tenants are generally driven to a destination that provides community amenities like lunch destinations, walkability, or parks that provide vibrant places. The demand for housing in Vienna is expected to remain strong in the foreseeable future so that residential development could, if it were allowed to do so, squeeze out other types of uses. For this reason, it is important to retain the balance of residential and commercial uses while also allowing development to evolve to meet market demand.

Vienna's commercial corridors serve as both economic and social hubs and contribute to the Town's community connectivity. Retail and shopping opportunities were rated positively by 64% of 2023 Community Survey respondents, indicating room for improvement. By fostering a more diverse mix of retail and business offerings, Vienna can further enhance its commercial appeal and attract more visitors and residents to local establishments. Improved urban design can assist in this goal by improving the environment for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers, thereby making a better business environment. Maple Avenue, Church Street, and the Mill/Dominion area each present unique opportunities for revitalization. The Town is actively working to transform these corridors with streetscape improvements, better connectivity, and infrastructure investments.

Maple Avenue E and W

Maple Avenue serves as the primary commercial corridor in Vienna, stretching over a mile through the Town's center. It is characterized by retail, restaurants, professional

offices and institutions. The past decade has also seen an increase in residences, as part of mixed-use development projects. Historically characterized by auto-oriented development with numerous unconnected surface parking lots and narrow sidewalks, the avenue has been a focal point for revitalization efforts aimed at enhancing its appeal and functionality.

In 2014, the Town of Vienna undertook a significant initiative to transform Maple Avenue into a more pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use environment. This effort led to the adoption of the Maple Avenue Commercial (MAC) zoning regulations, which encouraged compact, pedestrian-oriented development, the creation of publicly accessible community gathering spaces, and allowed for four stories to be built with a requirement of commercial use on the first floor. The goal was to promote a variety of housing options and enhance the Town's economic vitality while maintaining the commercial tax revenue balance. However, the MAC faced challenges, including community concerns about building heights and parking adequacy, leading to its repeal in 2020. In October 2023, a revised zoning code was adopted, allowing for slightly taller buildings in the Maple Avenue Center to make three-story mixed-use development more viable. As of this writing, this change has not yet resulted in formal development proposals, though there have been a few conversations that have not advanced to application.

Businesses along the Maple Avenue corridor primarily cater to Town and nearby residents, offering consumer-focused services and retail. Approximately 40% of the existing retail establishments fall under Neighborhood Goods & Services or convenience-based retail, with major anchors such as Giant, Fresh Market, and Whole Foods. Office spaces in the area are predominantly occupied by healthcare providers, including doctors' offices, acupuncturists, and other professionals serving the community's needs.

Church Street NE and NW

The Church Street commercial corridor is a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly district that seamlessly blends historic-themed charm with modern amenities. The core of the corridor spans approximately 1,400 linear feet between Mill Road and Lawyers Road, and is characterized by smaller properties, with storefronts averaging around 1,900 square feet and street frontages measuring between 60 to 70 feet. This intimate scale fosters a diverse and engaging experience for pedestrians. Northeast of the core, between Beulah Road NE and East Street NE, commercial buildings are set back from the street and supported by ample parking. This area accommodates low-intensity commercial uses such as small offices, professional services and specialty shops. Southwest of the core district, just past the post office, is the three-story Windover Professional Building, which houses a mix of medical, professional, and cultural organizations.

Historically, Church Street served as Vienna's main commercial artery until the 1950s, when businesses began relocating to Maple Avenue due to the development of shopping centers. In 1999, to revitalize and preserve the unique character of Church Street, the Vienna Town Council adopted the Church Street Vision zoning ordinance.

This place continues to ensure that vision, though supports appropriate updates that will help to further the goal of a thriving Church Street.

The plan and the zoning overlay district encourage property owners in the Church Street Vision Overlay Zone (then called C1-B Pedestrian Commercial zone) to renovate and develop properties reflecting late 19th-century small-town American streetscapes. In return, developers may receive benefits such as additional building square footage and reduced parking requirements. To date, several projects have been approved under this vision, enhancing the street's historic ambiance. Overall, Church Street remains a cornerstone of Vienna's community, offering a blend of historic preservation and modern commerce, making it a cherished destination for shopping, dining, and cultural experiences.

The last Church Street Vision project that was constructed was approved in 2014. There was a project approved in 2022, but the owner determined that it was not economically viable and did not move forward. The Town could consider reviewing the overlay district, after more than 25 years of its existence, to determine if the incentives match the current development market.

Mill Street NE and Dominion Road NE

The Mill Street NE and Dominion Road commercial area is a distinctive district known for its blend of lifestyle, wellness, and light industrial businesses. This area has become a hub for health-focused establishments, including gyms, dance and yoga studios, catering to the wellness needs of the local community, but it still retains its light industrial roots. Establishments such as home furnishing stores, landscape suppliers, automobile services, and garden centers continue to operate, providing essential services to Vienna households. These consumer-facing businesses ensure that the district meets a wide range of local needs.

One of the key advantages of this district is its affordability and accessibility. A variety of business types are drawn to Mill Street and Dominion Road due to lower rental rates and the availability of spacious properties that offer high visibility from the Washington & Old Dominion (W&OD) Trail, a well-trafficked recreational path. This visibility not only benefits businesses but also integrates the commercial area seamlessly with outdoor activities, encouraging foot traffic and patronage from trail users.

Corporate Park

The area around Follin Lane SE, designated as the Corporate Park (CP) District in the Town's zoning code, is tailored to accommodate office and light industrial uses. This zoning classification aims to promote economic development by providing spaces suitable for corporate offices, research and development facilities, and light manufacturing operations.

Follin Lane SE represents a significant concentration of Vienna's professional office space, with approximately 1.24 million square feet occupied by office tenants. Navy Federal Credit Union, Vienna's largest private employer, anchors much of this space

and plays a central role in shaping the area's employment landscape. The FBI's Terrorist Screening Center is also a major user within this district.

High occupancy rates among key employers highlight the area's stability. However, the traditional suburban office layout and a lack of industrial or mixed-use development present challenges in adapting to future market demands. Notably, the office building at 901 Follin Lane SE has remained largely vacant for over a decade, despite repeated marketing efforts and attempts to attract long-term tenants. This prolonged vacancy highlights the need for a more proactive approach to land use planning within the district.

The Town continues to view this area as an important employment and business center, essential for both job creation and revenue diversification. While the Corporate Park remains suited for institutional and office uses, this plan acknowledges that prolonged vacancy is not in the Town's interest. Creative approaches to land use may be necessary to enhance the district's vitality while maintaining its role as a professional hub.

Cedar Lane SE

The Cedar Lane SE commercial area is a neighborhood-focused district offering a variety of fast-casual dining options and personal services. The central feature of this area is the Cedar Park Shopping Center, a 75,844-square-foot retail hub situated at the intersection of Cedar Lane SE and Park Street SE. The shopping center hosts a diverse array of convenience-oriented retailers and restaurants, catering to the daily needs of residents. Other tenants include personal service providers, fast-casual eateries, and specialty shops, reflecting the community's preferences for accessible and practical services.

Goals, Policies, and Strategies

Goal 1. Enhance the Town's commercial districts to create vibrant, pedestrian-friendly, and economically sustainable areas.

The Town recognizes the importance of its commercial corridors and will continue to support their economic success and revitalization through infrastructure improvements, public realm enhancements, and supportive land use policies and regulations.

Policy 1.1: Invest in infrastructure improvements to support business activity and accessibility.

Strategy 1.1.1: Evaluate, update, and implement recommendations from the Maple Avenue Corridor Multimodal Study to improve walkability and transit access.

Strategy 1.1.2: Upgrade streetscape elements, including sidewalks, lighting, and landscaping, to create inviting commercial environments.

Strategy 1.1.3: Ensure adequate and well-managed parking solutions that balance the needs of businesses, residents, and visitors.

Policy 1.2: Encourage mixed-use development to create dynamic and livable commercial areas.

Strategy 1.2.1: Update zoning regulations to allow for a greater mix of retail, office, and residential uses in key commercial corridors.

Strategy 1.2.2: Provide incentives for the redevelopment of underutilized properties to align with the Town's economic and land use goals.

Strategy 1.2.3: Encourage adaptive reuse of existing buildings to support small businesses and retain Vienna's unique character.

Goal 2: Support small and locally owned businesses that provide services to the community as key contributors to the local economy.

Vienna's local businesses provide essential goods, services, and character to the Town, making it a priority to ensure their long-term sustainability.

Policy 2.1: Provide resources and support programs for small businesses and entrepreneurs.

Strategy 2.1.1: Establish a business incubation program to support new startups and growing enterprises.

Strategy 2.1.2: Offer financial assistance programs, such as small business grants or low-interest loans, to support storefront improvements and operational needs.

Strategy 2.1.3: Facilitate networking and mentorship programs to connect new business owners with experienced professionals.

Policy 2.2: Preserve Vienna's small businesses and neighborhood-serving enterprises.

Strategy 2.2.1: Work with property owners to encourage long-term leases that help stabilize small businesses.

Strategy 2.2.2: Support public awareness campaigns that highlight and celebrate Vienna's long-term businesses.

Goal 3: Promote regional tourism to drive economic activity.

Cultural events, historic sites, and recreational assets contribute to Vienna's appeal and help attract visitors, supporting local businesses and strengthening the economy.

Policy 3.1: Expand community events and marketing efforts to attract visitors.

Strategy 3.1.1: Develop a comprehensive tourism marketing campaign that highlights Vienna's unique attractions and events.

Strategy 3.1.2: Support and expand signature events, such as festivals, markets, and seasonal celebrations, to drive visitor engagement.

Strategy 3.1.3: Collaborate with regional tourism organizations to position Vienna as a premier destination for visitors.

Policy 3.2: Leverage Vienna's cultural and recreational assets to enhance economic development.

Strategy 3.2.1: Invest in wayfinding signage and visitor information hubs to enhance the experience for tourists.

Strategy 3.2.2: Partner with local businesses and community groups to create themed experiences and promotional initiatives.

Strategy 3.2.3: Encourage expansion of performance spaces, galleries, and creative venues to diversify Vienna's tourism offerings.

Strategy 3.2.4: Leverage the W&OD Trail, in coordination with NOVA Parks, to attract the many local and regional tourists that pass-through Vienna to shop and eat in Vienna establishments.

Goal 4: Foster a business-friendly environment to support a strong and diverse revenue base, which includes the meals tax revenues that fund the Town's capital improvements.

Vienna is committed to maintaining a strong and diverse economy by streamlining business processes, creating a welcoming regulatory framework, and ensuring businesses of all sizes have the support they need to thrive.

Policy 4.1: Improve the efficiency of the Town's regulatory and permitting processes.

Strategy 4.1.1: Continue to build on and improve the digital permitting system to streamline approvals and reduce processing times.

Strategy 4.1.2: Regularly review and update zoning and regulatory policies to reflect modern business needs and economic trends.

Strategy 4.1.3: Expand communication and engagement efforts to ensure business owners have clear guidance on permitting and zoning requirements.

Strategy 4.1.4: Support equitable access to business resources by engaging underrepresented entrepreneurs and providing language-accessible materials and events.

Policy 4.2: Attract and retain a diverse range of businesses to enhance economic resilience.

Strategy 4.2.1: Develop incentive programs for new businesses, including tax abatements and grants to encourage local investment.

Strategy 4.2.2: Partner with regional economic development organizations to promote Vienna as a destination for small businesses and entrepreneurs.

Strategy 4.2.3: Conduct regular business climate assessments to understand market trends and proactively support business retention efforts.

Policy 4.3: Retain and strengthen Vienna's strong retail/restaurant base and preserve office space, and light industrial uses, wherever market feasible.

Strategy 4.3.1: Continue to prohibit residential development on the ground floor facing Maple Avenue and the portion of Church Street within the overlay district.

Strategy 4.3.2: Develop a Small Area Plan for the Mill and Dominion area to establish the highest and best commercial and light industrial uses for the area.

Strategy 4.3.3: Develop land use policies for properties that face the W&OD trail, with a focus on trail-oriented uses such as cafes, recreation services, or trail-focused retail.

Strategy 4.3.4: Study the viability of office spaces currently located in Transition zone areas to establish the highest and best commercial uses for those areas.

Strategy 4.3.5: Review the Church Street Vision Overlay District incentives to determine if they need to be updated to match current market demand and conditions.

Goal 5: Maintain and enhance a strong corporate presence in the Corporate Park sector.

The Corporate Park District is home to major employers, including Navy Federal Credit Union and the FBI's Terrorist Screening Center. To support its continued role as a professional and business hub, the Town will proactively address challenges such as long-term vacancies, shifting market demands, and infrastructure needs.

Policy 5.1: Support reinvestment and adaptability in the Corporate Park.

Strategy 5.1.1: Develop a Small Area Plan for the Corporate Park District to explore flexible land uses, infrastructure needs, and targeted redevelopment strategies.

Strategy 5.1.2: Evaluate zoning regulations in the CP District to allow for light industrial, institutional, R&D, and potential innovation hub uses.

Strategy 5.1.3: Partner with major employers and property owners to understand evolving space needs and promote reinvestment in underutilized properties.