

CITY OF RUSTON WASHINGTON

# CHAPTER 6

# ECONOMIC VITALITY



# INTRODUCTION

Economic vitality is essential to the success of a community such as Ruston which strives to provide a range of employment, retail, service, and recreational opportunities for its residents. Provisions for economic growth, vitality, and a high quality of life are important and should be integrated with the Land Use Element, Housing Element, Capital Facilities and Utilities Element, and Transportation Element.

The Growth Management Act requires cities to support economic development in line with comprehensive plans. This involves fostering economic opportunities for all citizens, with a special focus on those who are unemployed or disadvantaged. The act also emphasizes the retention and expansion of existing businesses, as well as the recruitment of new businesses. It acknowledges regional variations that affect economic development and encourages growth in areas facing insufficient economic progress. All these efforts should be within the limits of the state's natural resources, public services, and public facilities.

VISION 2050 ([psrc.org/planning-2050/vision-2050](https://psrc.org/planning-2050/vision-2050)) emphasizes the crucial role of a strong economy in our overall well-being, encompassing environmental, social, and financial aspects. It acknowledges that a vibrant and diverse economy is essential for funding public services, supporting arts and culture, and fostering community development. In VISION 2050, the Multicounty Planning Policies (MPPs) for economic development are structured around the key themes of business, people, and places.

The focus is on enhancing the region's businesses and employment market by prioritizing job retention, growth, and diversification. Significance is given to small, locally owned businesses, recognizing their role in job creation, potential for providing family-wage jobs, and contributions to the sustainability of the regional economy and prosperity.

VISION 2050 also recognizes that the region's economic well-being relies on the safe and reliable movement of people, goods, services, and information. The plan

incorporates provisions to prioritize economic development and allocate transportation funding to economic activity centers.

In essence, Ruston's economic objectives aim to foster a diverse, sustainable, and well-balanced array of economic activities that benefit both residents and visitors. This includes promoting continuous community development with a comprehensive perspective that considers the interconnected aspects of place, people, and the desire for a shared future.

## **FUTURE VISION**

The future vision for the City of Ruston is to become a thriving community with a robust economic core. Ruston aims to attract both tourists and locals seeking opportunities for employment, retail, services, recreation, and leisure. The integration of multimodal transportation is a key aspect, facilitated by the implementation of Complete Streets policies that connect seamlessly with the surrounding community.

Parks and trails in Ruston are strategically linked to pedestrian pathways, residential areas, and commercial establishments, creating a cohesive urban network. The city also provides diverse employment opportunities, including professional office spaces and live-work units that allow employees to work from home or small shops. Importantly, Ruston has managed to accommodate growth while preserving its small-town character.

## **GOALS AND POLICIES**

The city plans to retain and encourage the growth of established businesses and welcome new businesses to Ruston. The city also encourages entrepreneurial opportunities to grow small businesses and contribute to economic activity. The built environment is recognized as a crucial factor in economic sustainability and will continue to emphasize and prioritize elements of good design.

**Challenges** for the City of Ruston include: the retention of businesses that now compete on a global level; the completion of the Point Ruston project; the redevelopment of the Pearl District; and the provision of adequate housing to support anticipated growth.

**Opportunities** and strengths in Ruston encompass the current built environment and infrastructure, including streetscapes, sidewalks, utilities, well-established traditional neighborhoods, as well as parks, community events, and activities that promote tourism.

**ECONOMIC VITALITY GOAL 1:** Ruston has high-quality infrastructure to support economic development.

**EV Policy 1.1** Provide the infrastructure needed for businesses and industries to locate in Ruston, including utilities, transportation connections, all supported by appropriate land use regulations.

**ECONOMIC VITALITY GOAL 2:** Ruston has an array of sustainable employment choices for all income and age levels, particularly jobs that pay a living wage.

**EV Policy 2.1** Encourage the development of employment choices with business stakeholders in the community.

**ECONOMIC VITALITY GOAL 3:** Ruston has a supportive environment for entrepreneurial opportunities and startup businesses.

**EV Policy 3.1** Support home-based businesses and occupations by reviewing and implementing rules that are current and adaptive to new technologies.

**EV Policy 3.2** Work with private commercial owners to provide low-cost incubation space for startup businesses.

**EV Policy 3.3** Offer a high quality of life for entrepreneurs, their families, and employees.

**ECONOMIC VITALITY GOAL 4:** Development standards and regulations are aligned with the needs of new and technology-based businesses.

**EV Policy 4.1** Regularly review development regulations, and evaluate the impact of regulations, and the needs of local businesses.

**EV Policy 4.2** Create zoning standards for live-work units that encourage the development of new small business spaces.

**EV Policy 4.3** Update zoning standards to create a new zoning district named the “Pearl District” from portions of the existing Commercial (COM) and Commercial-Pearl (COM-P) zones, and update zoning standards to create zoning districts named the “Baltimore District”, “Marina District”, and “Promenade District” from portions of the existing Point Ruston Master Development Plan. Ensure that consistent design standards apply to all existing and newly created districts.

**EV Policy 4.4** Recognize that big-box development with surface parking is neither feasible nor compatible with Ruston’s small-town character.

**ECONOMIC VITALITY GOAL 5:** Ruston is full of thriving businesses and is recognized and celebrated as a prime location in the State to live, work, and play.

**EV Policy 5.1** Retain and recruit businesses in Ruston’s commercial districts.

- EV Policy 5.2** Encourage continued revitalization through appropriate development, redevelopment, and rehabilitation.
- EV Policy 5.3** Incentivize redevelopment of vacated and/or underutilized commercial properties in the Pearl District.
- EV Policy 5.4** Continue the support and encouragement of tourism-based commerce.

**ECONOMIC VITALITY GOAL 6:** Ruston has a robust retail economy, providing numerous shopping options that attract tourists and are the preferred choices for local residents who opt to shop in the city.

- EV Policy 6.1** Work with property owners to develop Ruston’s Pearl, Baltimore, Marina, and Promenade Districts as a well-connected mixed-use urban village that supports both commercial and residential development.
- EV Policy 6.2** Support community festivals, celebrations, and events such as a 5K walk/run, parade and farmer’s markets.
- EV Policy 6.3** Support temporary closures of Winnifred Street for community festivals, celebrations, and events.
- EV Policy 6.4** Allow temporary food trucks during community festivals, celebrations, and events.
- EV Policy 6.5** Prohibit permanent food trucks as unfair competition to “brick-and-mortar” businesses.
- EV Policy 6.6** Collaborate with the local chamber of commerce and non-profit agencies to assist distressed areas and disadvantaged populations in Ruston for the purpose of encouraging redevelopment of underutilized commercial areas.

## **ECONOMIC VITALITY GOAL 7:** Tourism continues to be an important part of Ruston’s economy.

- EV Policy 7.1** Work with local and regional partners to encourage tourism and an increase of commerce within the City of Ruston.
- EV Policy 7.2** Maintain and improve the built environment of sidewalks, parks, paths, coordinated wayfinding signage, and other public amenities and events that visitors will enjoy and utilize.
- EV Policy 7.3** Develop an economic strategic plan that identifies actions needed to encourage economic vitality in Ruston. Specific actions should include both programs and capital projects intended to be added to Ruston’s Capital Facilities Plan.
- EV Policy 7.4** Develop a Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Tourism plan that identifies actions needed to encourage community recreation, tourism, and economic vitality in Ruston. Specific actions should include both community programs and capital projects intended to be added to Ruston’s Capital Facilities Plan.

## **POLICY CONNECTIONS**

The **Land Use Element** and **Housing Element** each include policies to accommodate projected growth and ensure sufficient land capacity is available for new jobs and residents.

The **Transportation Element** and **Capital Facilities and Utilities Element** each include policies demonstrating how public services and infrastructure will serve existing and future land uses.

The **Community Character Element** includes policies that encourage neighborhood character that is supportive to economic vitality.