

**ST. MARY’S COUNTY
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
2025 ANNUAL REPORT**

INTRODUCTION: PURPOSE OF THE GROUP

The purpose of the Economic Development Commission (EDC) is to provide the Commissioners of St. Mary’s County with advice and assistance concerning the development and implementation of a comprehensive economic development strategy to guide the diversification of the County’s future economy.

Each member of the Board shall be appointed for a term of office of three years. Members of the St. Mary's County Economic Development Commission during 2025 were as follows:

<u>Member</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Expiration Date</u>
Mahree E. Annan	Member	12/31/2026
Dr. Christine Bergmark	Member	Ex-officio
Dr. Silvio Borrero-Caldas	Member	06/30/2027
Curtis Brown	Member, Chair	06/30/2027
Matthew Burgan	Member	12/31/2027
Leona Charles	Member, Vice Chair	12/31/2027
Lisa Colavito	Member, Secretary	12/31/2026
Dr. Asif U Dowla	Member	07/30/2027
Elldwinia English	Member	12/31/2027 (resigned)
Nathan Evans	Member	12/31/2025
Nicholas Hooper	Member	12/31/2027
Dr. Dale Moore	Member	06/30/2028
Kenneth Russell	Member	06/30/2028
Richard Tarr	Member	Ex-officio
Dr. Rupan Talukder	Member	12/31/2027

The following shall be ex-officio members:

- one (1) member from the Naval Air Station Patuxent River
- one (1) member from the St. Mary’s County Chamber of Commerce

ACTIVITIES IN 2025 CALENDAR YEAR

The EDC met three (3) times in 2025 to discuss the progress of implementing the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs), and to learn about other initiatives of the Department.

TOPICS DISCUSSED BY THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

January 15, 2025

- Announcements (Technology Resource Book update, Chesapeake Bay Ways Destination Assessment, FY2026 Budget submissions including three new funding requests, AeroPark Innovation District Plan update, resignation of the Agriculture & Seafood Manager, Department Newsletter, and upcoming Young Professionals Event)

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- St. Mary’s County Comprehensive Plan Presentation (“St. Mary’s 2050: Charting our Tomorrow”)
- CEDS Related Updates (review of Key Recommendations and detailed discussion on creating a St. Mary’s County Agriculture and Seafood Brand with consultant Arnett-Muldrow)
- DED Reorganization (updated staff structure) ○ Economic Development Commission 2025 Meeting Calendar ○ Election of Officers (Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary)

April 16, 2025

- Canceled – Lack of Quorum

July 23, 2025

- Announcements (St. Mary’s County Citizen Academy, reprint of the St. Mary’s County Tech Handbook, and Director Chris Kaselemis retirement effective July 31, 2025)
- CEDS Related Updates – Workforce Development Initiatives (education/training partnerships, internships/apprenticeships/mentorships, talent pipeline)
- Visit St. Mary’s MD Update ○ Introduction of new Agriculture & Seafood Division Manager (Sydney Garner) ○ Present Agriculture & Seafood Product Brand – AgriCoast

October 15, 2025

- Proposed 2026 Meeting Calendar
- Resolution/By-law Updates Discussion (mechanism for ex-officio and sector-specific members)
- DED Program Updates:
 - AeroPark Innovation District (terminal renovations, wayfinding signage, future hangars, market study, and upcoming master plan update) ▪ Manufacturing Day participation ▪ Visit St. Mary’s MD new promotional videos ▪ Monthly DED metrics and economic indicators report ▪ Economic Development Week activities ▪ Ongoing Director search and recruitment for Economic Development Specialist (marketing/communications) ▪ MEDA Fall Conference panel on Lexington Park ▪ County Comprehensive Plan Update public comment period ▪ New Small Business Development Center plan for start-ups and entrepreneurs ▪ Barns at New Market Holiday Market ▪ Select USA participation
- Sector Updates (College of Southern Maryland workforce programs, Department of Transportation interim rule, Southern Maryland Navy Alliance and Maryland Aerospace and Technology Commission activities, federal government shutdown impacts, Historic St. Mary’s City housing discussion, new St. Mary’s College of Maryland President, small business growth, and housing/labor/material cost concerns)

PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

By-law and membership limitations

- There is no mechanism in the current by-laws to add Ex-officio members (designated stakeholders) or to appoint members from the specific sectors and targeted industries identified in the CEDS.

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- Concern that one industry could become heavily represented while smaller industries are excluded.
- Concern about the appropriate number of Ex-officio members that could be appointed.

Federal regulatory change impacting small businesses

- Interim Department of Transportation rule that disproportionately affects women and small businesses.
- The rule eliminates the presumption of disadvantages based on race or gender.
- Comment period is still open; Leona Charles noted this could “affect our small business greatly.”

Housing challenges

- Housing shortages for academic staff at the Historic St. Mary’s City Hotel & Conference Center.
- Broader workforce/affordable housing issues: home builders facing increased labor and material costs, resulting in “thin margins” for affordable and workforce housing (raised by Kenneth Russell).

Federal government shutdown

- Rick Tarr raised the federal government shutdown as a current concern (no further details provided in the minutes).

PLANS FOR THE CURRENT YEAR

The Commission will continue to meet on a quarterly basis the third Wednesday of the month. 2026 Meeting Calendar is as follows:

January 21, 2026; April 15, 2026; July 15, 2026; October 21, 2026

**Commissioner and citizen attendance are always welcome.

- The EDC will continue to provide feedback concerning the implementation of a comprehensive economic development strategy and share industry specific updates to guide the diversification and increase resiliency of the County’s economy.

ONGOING ACTIVITIES

- The EDC will continue to promote and discuss initiatives, projects, and programs as they relate to the St. Mary’s County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.