



## Updates from the Office of Economic Development

### Piedmont Pitch Returns



Piedmont Pitch is back for 2025! A collaboration among the City of Charlottesville, Albemarle County, and the Central Virginia Small Business Development Center (CVSBDC), Piedmont Pitch is more than just an entrepreneurial competition – It also provides one-on-one business advising services, assistance perfecting your business pitch, and access to the virtual library of Business Essentials Training courses. If you have a new or existing small business idea that you would like to submit for consideration in this year's Piedmont Pitch, all you need to do is visit the **Piedmont Pitch application page** and complete the required information,

including a copy of your draft business plan. If you don't have a business plan, an example and template can be found on the main **Piedmont Pitch page**. Applications and draft business plans must be received no later than **Friday, March 14th, at 11:59 pm**.

For more information about the Piedmont Pitch process and program requirements, please visit the **Piedmont Pitch page** or contact CVSBDC at [events@cvsbdc.org](mailto:events@cvsbdc.org) or (434) 295-8198. Don't miss this opportunity to make your pitch, win cash prizes, and join previous winners such as Black Roses Landscaping, Refemme, Rita's Bright Beginnings, and Quilt Your Masterpiece!

### Commonwealth BioAccelerator Holds Ribbon Cutting Event

Recently, OED representatives were in attendance to help celebrate the ribbon cutting for the Commonwealth BioAccelerator, a 6,000 SF lab space designed to help attract, build, and prepare promising life sciences companies for the commercialization of innovations in therapeutics, medical devices, tools, and digital health aids.



The project is part of a larger \$14.3 million funding package allocated by GO Virginia to three biotech organizations across Virginia as part of the multiregional initiative "Project VITAL: Virginia Innovations and Technology Advancements in Life Sciences." CvilleBioHub, a Charlottesville based, industry-led organization, received \$4.3 million of this award and will collaborate with UVA to establish the region's first laboratory accelerator at North Fork, a UVA Discovery Park. The OED and the Charlottesville Economic Development Authority (CEDA) were early supporters of CvilleBioHub their effort to growth life science opportunities in the region. The Accelerator will open in March and six companies have applied for access to the space and supportive programing available.

### GO Hire Spotlight: Pearl Island Catering

**Pearl Island Catering** recently received a GO Hire Workforce Training Grant, which owner Sober Pierre utilized to invest in the development of his staff. Pearl Island Foods is committed to ongoing training for their entire team to stay competitive and up-to-date with industry standards and trends. When Sober learned about Culinary Concepts AB, LLC's new Career Catalyst Essentials

workshop, he recognized it as an opportunity to enhance his team's skills and effectiveness. Culinary Concepts AB, LLC's Team designed a customized three-hour workshop for his team, focusing on Communication, Adaptability, Common Ground, Teamwork, and Managing vs. Leading. Thanks to GO Hire funding, Sober was able to provide training for all six team members.

Sober stated, "The Career Catalyst Essentials workshop was an opportunity for us to come together in a different space and reconnect as a team. It was important for us to discuss the various aspects of leadership and how we can lead from our respective roles."

Team member Zakiah shared, "The instructor Ami made the class upbeat and relateable. I love that she made us think seriously about how we operate as a team and how our individual actions influence the team. We are all leaders."

"The Career Catalyst Essentials workshop had a significant impact on the Pearl Island Catering team by enhancing their communication and collaboration skills. It better equipped team members with the tools to work together more efficiently, especially in a high-pressure catering environment where quick decisions and clear communication are key. By focusing on leadership, teamwork, and interpersonal communication, the team was able to foster stronger relationships and work more seamlessly, creating a more supportive and productive work culture," said Instructor Ami Shimanek.

**Career Catalyst Essentials** offers workshops customized to focus on specific soft skills a business selects to deepen their teams knowledge and understanding and maximize their performance. Each workshop is interactive, provides expert facilitation, customized sessions, proven results, with comprehensive skill development all in a supportive learning environment.

**GO Hire** offers two workforce-based grants designed to assist City businesses that are growing and enhancing their workforce: New Employee Wage Subsidy and Existing Worker Retraining. Read more about the **GO Hire Guidelines** or contact Jenny Biche at [jbichej@charlottesville.gov](mailto:jbichej@charlottesville.gov) or (434) 970-3117 to schedule a consultation.

Pearl Island is committed to giving their customers a taste of the Caribbean. Be sure to stop by **Pearl Island Cafe** or place your next **catering order** and experience the flavor and care this amazing team provides!



Photo credit: Ami Shimanek

## Virginia Works' HIRED Apprenticeship Fund

Virginia Works has just announced a new funding opportunity for Registered Apprenticeship programs, and applications are due by March 17, 2025.

The HIRED Apprenticeship Fund incentivizes employers to start or expand Registered Apprenticeship in the following high-demand industry sectors: teacher education, early childhood education, clean energy, care economy, healthcare, and repair and maintenance. \$4,000 for Registered Apprenticeship Training and \$2,000 for Supportive Services are available per apprentice with a 2 apprentice maximum per applicant. Funds can be used for training and education costs as well as to supplement supportive services (transportation, childcare, uniforms, etc.) for up to two net new apprentices. More details on allowable costs can be found [here](#).

Registered Apprenticeship is a proven model — creating strong talent pipelines, retaining talent,

fostering loyalty and innovation. It is the ultimate “earn while you learn” model, combining two key components — on-the-job training and classroom learning. Registered Apprenticeship provides a structured program tailored to meet the specific needs of your industry, while providing each apprentice with a nationally recognized credential upon completion of the program.

Apply [here](#) before March 17, 2025.

Contact Jennifer Hynson, VA Works Registered Apprenticeship Consultant for our region at [Jennifer.Hynson@viriniaworks.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Hynson@viriniaworks.gov) or (804) 305-0514 to learn more.

## Available Property Spotlight

### THE FLATS AT WEST VILLAGE

852 W MAIN STREET, CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA 22903

#### PROPERTY OVERVIEW



#### OFFERING SUMMARY

Lease Rate: Negotiable  
Year Built: 2014

#### PROPERTY OVERVIEW

Rare retail space available in The Flats at West Village, an 8-story student housing project next to the University of Virginia in Downtown Charlottesville. Located in a prime location, site is walking distance to the University of Virginia and UVA Medical

Does 1st floor retail space in a multi-family residential building that caters primarily to students sound appealing to you? What if the space was right on one of the City's main travel corridors with easy access to CAT and UVA bus routes, as well as an Amtrak station? If this sounds like a prime location for your business you need to take a look at **retail space located in The Flats at West Village**. Located at 852 W. Main Street, the property has one retail space totaling 3,585 sf currently available. If you are interested in learning more about this opportunity you can **contact the listing agent with Divaris Real Estate**.

Find information on other available properties in the City of Charlottesville by visiting the Office of Economic Development's "**Sites & Buildings**" webpage. If you have commercial, retail, or industrial space available for lease or sale, let us know by emailing property information and any marketing flyer to [ecodev@charlottesville.gov](mailto:ecodev@charlottesville.gov).

## Welcome New Ready To Work Employer: The Catering Outfit

The City of Charlottesville's Office of Economic Development extends a warm welcome to the newest Ready To Work participating City employer, The Catering Outfit. The Catering Outfit is a locally owned, boutique culinary design firm specializing in unique experiences for celebrations in the lives of their clients. They create immersive, interactive, food-driven experiences and pair that with their exceptional service. As a Ready To Work partner employer, The Catering Outfit offers competitive wages, low barriers for entry level positions, career pathways for advancement and a guaranteed interview to any Ready To Work graduate. They have several positions available and are looking for professional, fun and energetic staff.

the  
catering|outfit

The Ready To Work program certifies jobseekers in soft skills, provides resume, cover letter and interview prep assistance, and culminates with a guaranteed interview with any of the Ready To Work participating employers. It's free and open to all. Click [here](#) to learn more or to enroll.

Stop by the Coffee & Conversations event on Friday, February 28 from 9:30-10:30am to meet **The Catering Outfit** and other local employers. Email [bichej@charlottesville.gov](mailto:bichej@charlottesville.gov) for more information.

## Join the Energy Resource Hub Launch Event

Charlottesville and Albemarle County businesses now have access to a valuable resource for reducing energy costs and improving efficiency. The Energy Resource Hub is a free service that connects companies with rebates, incentives, and expert support to make upgrades like heat pumps, insulation, and electric appliances more



affordable. **The Energy Resource Hub Launch Party** will take place on Tuesday, March 11th, from 4 to 7 PM at Carver Recreation Center. This event highlights opportunities for businesses to lower expenses and enhance sustainability through energy efficiency improvements. Businesses can expect access to various incentives that provide financial support for energy-saving upgrades, efficiency surveys offering insights on reducing energy waste and lowering utility bills, expert guidance through connections to professionals who offer tailored solutions, and an understanding of how energy efficiency contributes to long-term business success. The Energy Resource Hub, hosted by Community Investment Collaborative and

supported by the City of Charlottesville, helps businesses take advantage of energy-saving programs designed to reduce costs and improve operations, making the launch event an ideal opportunity to explore these benefits.

**If you haven't already, don't forget to complete the 2025 City of Charlottesville Business Survey!**

## OED Fun Fact

On February 27, 1827, a group of masked and costumed students danced through the streets of New Orleans, Louisiana, marking the beginning of the city's famous Mardi Gras celebrations. This event has now evolved into an annual cultural phenomenon, attracting millions of visitors who participate in the parades, parties and festivities. The translation for the French phrase "Mardi Gras" is Fat Tuesday and encompasses the tradition of eating rich foods and also marks the last day of the Carnival season.

## Free Business Resources

The logo for 'BUY LOCAL Albemarle County & Charlottesville' features the word 'BUY' in blue, 'LOCAL' in large, colorful letters (each letter containing an icon: a building, a fork and knife, a bunch of grapes, a leaf, and a shopping bag), and 'Albemarle County & Charlottesville' in smaller text above 'LOCAL'.

The Albemarle County & City of Charlottesville Buy Local campaign highlights small businesses within the Charlottesville-Albemarle area through a multi-channel, multimedia promotional and educational campaign. To learn more about the campaign, click [here](#)!

The logo for 'AMERICA'S SBDC VIRGINIA CENTRAL' features 'AMERICA'S' in red, 'SBDC' in large blue letters, 'VIRGINIA' in white on a red background, and 'CENTRAL' in blue below.

The Central Virginia Small Business Development Center is a team of business and technical experts available to advise and assist entrepreneurs, confidentially and free of charge. They offer 1:1 assistance, curated research, access to technical experts and professionals, and timely events/training. To see upcoming SBDC events, click [here](#)!

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