



## Updates from the Office of Economic Development

### Luna Labs Ribbon Cutting



Yesterday, City officials and OED staff were on hand as Luna Labs celebrated the expansion of its headquarters with a ribbon cutting at the newly renovated facility. This expansion enhances the company's capabilities in advanced materials, biotechnology, and autonomous systems with new lab space and specialized equipment.

In conjunction with its capital investment, Luna Labs received a Virginia Jobs Investment Program (VJIP) grant from the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP), to further support the company's workforce development efforts and new job creation.

Founded in the City almost 25 years ago, Luna Labs has grown from a startup to a nationally recognized leader in R&D. Its work bridges the gap between government-funded research and commercial application, with partnerships spanning federal agencies, universities, and global industry leaders. Please join us in congratulating Luna Labs on its continued growth in the City of Charlottesville.

### Ready To Work Expansion

Ready to Work is a *free* workforce training program designed to equip jobseekers with the tools they need to successfully enter or re-enter the workforce. Participants earn a certificate in soft skills—the foundational qualities that employers value most—while also receiving support to develop a professional resume and cover letter, practice interview techniques, and get connected with participating Ready to Work employers for a guaranteed job interview.

**READY TO WORK**

**Get Trained. Get Certified. Get Hired.**

Since the program's launch in July 2023, jobseekers have completed the training through a flexible, self-paced online format. Starting August 1, 2025, jobseekers will have even more flexibility—with the option to complete the training in person as part of a cohort model.

#### Two Ways to Get Ready:

- **Online, Self-Paced:** Ideal for individuals who want to work independently and on their own schedule. Participants can complete the soft skills course at their own pace and receive a guaranteed interview upon completion.
- **In-Person Cohort:** Perfect for those who thrive in a collaborative, group setting. This option meets once a week for four weeks, with teacher-led instruction and peer support. Classes run for three hours each session, and guaranteed interviews are held on the final day of class.

#### Why Soft Skills Matter:

Soft skills—like communication, teamwork, time management, professionalism, and adaptability—are the *essential ingredients* for success in any workplace. Employers consistently say that

while technical skills are important, it's the soft skills that often determine whether someone gets hired, promoted, or retained. These skills help individuals:

- Build positive relationships with coworkers and customers
- Navigate challenges and resolve conflicts
- Adapt to new environments and tasks
- Show initiative and dependability on the job
- 

Whether you're just starting your career, changing paths, or returning to the workforce, strengthening your soft skills gives you a competitive edge and sets you up for long-term success.

### Ready to take the next step?

Click [here](#) to learn more and enroll in the Ready to Work program today – either option! If you prefer the cohort model, don't delay—class starts August 1, 2025, and seats are limited!

## Business Spotlight: Scrapy Elephant



For five years, *Scrapy Elephant* has been bringing creativity, sustainability, and joy to the Charlottesville community. Founded by Charlottesville native Sarah Sweet, her store offers affordable art supplies, crafting classes, and birthday party experiences, all while keeping over 200,000 pounds of creative materials out of landfills over the years.

Inspired by her love of art and her desire to create a sustainable experience for her child and community, Sarah opened Scrapy Elephant after visiting a similar creative reuse center in Nashville. She knew Charlottesville needed a space that made art accessible, fun, and environmentally conscious. Located in **McIntire Plaza**, Scrapy Elephant has become a hub for sustainable shopping and creative play. The store is filled with unique, donated treasures, affordable art supplies, and offers hands-on classes and events for all ages.

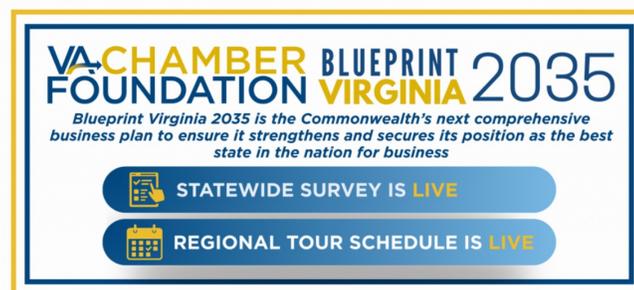
When asked what advice she would give to an inspiring entrepreneur, she shared "You have to trust yourself and take the leap," and simply, "Believe that you know what's right." For aspiring entrepreneurs, she recommends taking the **Community Investment Collaborative** course and getting involved with the **Small Business Development Center**. "You can't go wrong," she says. Sarah points to her incredible team and their loyal customers as the source of her motivation for the business. "Everyone who walks through our doors becomes part of this exciting experience," she says. A key milestone was when she reached the point of being able to pay rent, serve the community, and hire her first employee. "That moment of realizing I could pay someone meant we were growing...It was fun and still is."

Sarah has seen tremendous support from the Charlottesville community, including partnerships with schools, nonprofits, and the University of Virginia. Scrapy Elephant hosts a large Earth Day event each year and was also awarded a **Climate Collaborative** sustainability grant to expand its impact even further.

Stay updated by visiting Scrapy Elephant in person or following them **online** for details on upcoming classes, sales, and events.

## Blueprint Virginia 2035: Charting a Bold Path for Economic Growth

The Virginia Chamber of Commerce has officially kicked off **Blueprint Virginia 2035**, the latest chapter in its comprehensive effort to strengthen Virginia's economy and maintain its position as a top state for business. This strategic plan draws insights from over 7,000 stakeholders across sectors including education, workforce development, healthcare, infrastructure, energy, and innovation.



To ensure that every voice is heard, the Chamber will be conducting a statewide Regional Tour, distributing surveys, and hosting more than 20 Industry Council meetings throughout the year. These collaborative efforts will culminate in the unveiling of the finalized Blueprint, which will be presented to the Governor-elect at the 2025 Virginia Economic Summit and Forum on International Trade.

This is a unique opportunity for business leaders, community members, and local governments to shape the Commonwealth's future. You can explore previous versions of Blueprint Virginia to see how past initiatives have influenced policy—and more importantly, you're encouraged to **complete the statewide survey** to add your perspective to the next edition.

Your voice matters in building a more inclusive, resilient, and competitive Virginia. Discover more and join the conversation at the **Blueprint Virginia homepage**.

## Available Property Spotlight



**188 Zan Road** will be available for lease August 1st, offering 1,680 square feet of space that can be used for retail or office use. Located in Seminole Square, this space places you right in the heart of one of the area's primary commercial corridors. The space is easily accessed from Route 29 or Hilldale Drive with plenty of parking for customers or clients. With new tenants and other changes coming to the Seminole Square development, this is your chance to set up shop and position your business for the next level of growth. For more

information **download the marketing flyer**.

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).

## Access Changes

Please note that beginning Monday, August 4th, the entrance to City Hall directly off Market Street will be changed to an employee only entrance. Visitors to the Office of Economic Development will need to enter City Hall through the main entrance off the Downtown Mall and check-in at the visitor desk where they will provide directions to our office on the 2nd floor.

---

## OED Fun Fact

Rain, rain, go away, come again another day. This July has been a wet one with a total of 8.34 inches of rain so far this month. Turns out the wettest July on record in Charlottesville occurred in 1994, when precipitation totaled 14.83 inches for the month. There is one week remaining in the month, so let's hope we don't beat that record!

---

## Free Business Resources



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!](#)



City of Charlottesville Office of Economic Development | 605 E Market St | Charlottesville, VA  
22902 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!