

City of Arlington
Strategic Goals and Plan
July 1, 2026- June 30, 2031

This is a five-year plan, to be reviewed, revised, and approved by City Council prior to expiration, that reflects current and future needs.

Goal #1: Promote a positive supervisory environment that attracts both businesses and workers.

Our Strategy

1. Invest in the promotion and development of current and aspiring leaders.
2. Maintain policies and procedures that utilize consistent, two-way communication regarding positive expectations and results.
3. Always look for ways to get to “Yes”.

Goal #2: Promote growth and prosperity throughout the City of Arlington

Our Strategy

1. Position Arlington to successfully apply for infrastructure grants by working with local, state, and federal agencies to develop a shovel-ready plan to expand businesses and provide a stable, self-sustaining tax base. *See attached Small Business Recruitment Plan*
2. Invest in educated, proactive solutions to our housing needs.
3. Develop and support a child care environment for every Arlington child, aged 0-10, who needs it.
4. Ensure Arlington is investment-ready through improved planning and zoning codes, UGB expansions, and City annexations.
5. Build upon successful initiatives with the local Chamber of Commerce to retain and expand existing small businesses and encourage entrepreneurship.
6. Serve in a supportive, resourceful role to our schools, taxing districts, and local organizations to help improve livability and reduce challenges to growth in our community.

Goal #3: Manage the budget to ensure consistent, reliable, and sustainable programs and services.

Our Strategy

1. Evaluate City programs and opportunities that optimize the efficiency and effectiveness of services and operations.
2. Maintain healthy cash reserves to capitalize on opportunities and protect essential programs and services.
3. Work with Elected Officials to seek new funding and create diversified revenue sources.

Goal #4: Encourage collaboration, cooperation, and communication between all of the taxing districts that are part of the Arlington area.

Our Strategy

1. Host annual roundtable discussions between schools, other taxing districts, and local organizations to share ideas, identify common goals, and promote communication.
2. Leverage funds to encourage public entities and organizations to work together.
3. Improve accessibility to Arlington City Council members, personnel, and services for all citizens.

Goal #5: Be a strong and truthful voice for Arlington

Our Strategy

1. Take an active role in organizations such as League of Oregon Cities (LOC) to improve our influence with State and Federal decision-makers.
2. Partner with neighboring Cities to address common needs and advocate for regional concerns.
3. Host annual City outreach meetings with County and State lawmakers.

Goal # 6: Development of new City Structures to provide necessary and required services to our growing businesses and population

Our Strategy

1. Our City Municipal Building (City Hall) is currently operating at capacity due to space constraints. A new Municipal building and location will be required to accommodate increased personnel that would include Clerical, Business Recruitment Coordinator, and Grant Writing.
2. Our Public Works Building is also operating beyond its capacity due to space constraints and repair necessity. A new building and location will be required to accommodate increased public work personnel, a mechanic shop, and equipment parking.
3. Planning and budgeting for these necessary upgrades should begin within the next year (26-27) and be ready for implementation by 2030.
4. The successful execution of the Goals and Strategies will enable our City to grow and develop in an organized and cost efficient path forward.

August 27, 2025

SMALL BUSINESS RECRUITING PLAN

Years ago I went to Peter Mitchell with a plan to recruit small businesses to Gilliam County. I was working 7 long days a week at that time. He asked me to write my plan out so he could present it to the Port Board and County Court. I told him I was too busy at that time. So what I'd like to do is lay it out in general terms without a lot of details so you can get a basic understanding of the format.

1. Print up enough color brochures that describe Gilliam County and all it has to offer. The Columbia River access, good schools, no gangs, affordable housing, hunting, golf, a good place to raise a family. One of the additional benefits small business would have in Gilliam County is a lower tax burden. In addition, their employees would save around \$500 per month in property taxes here versus Portland. In addition to that, they would also be able to take advantage of our Homestead Rebate for an additional savings. This point should be included in the marketing of Gilliam County as friendly environment for small businesses to grow and prosper.
2. Mail the brochures to approximately 100 small businesses in NW Portland. These would be businesses that have under 10 employees and manufacturer a product that is nationally used so it wouldn't make any difference where they are located.
3. Explain to them the huge bonus their employees would get just from the sale of their house in Portland and relocating to a drug-free, safe environment in Gilliam County.
4. Set up a room in the Marriott by the Blue Bridge that goes to Vancouver and meet with those who responded and showed interest. Crunch the numbers. Detail the Industrial Property available, the Grain Lab building, and Commercial Property. If we get 5-10 interested and 2 that actually decide to relocate to Gilliam County we would score a big win.

Denny Newell stated that in the past (could still be available), Metro had a healthy business recruitment budget and very savvy business development staff. He's long thought that Columbia Ridge Landfill contracts should include provisions stipulating that Metro's business recruitment "bones" (generally businesses wishing to relocate/expand to Oregon but too small to attract Portland's attention) be referred to Gilliam County. Then Gilliam County could pick and choose and apply financial incentives accordingly.

Now that I have a better understanding of what our County's financial capabilities are, I think we could throw in some incentives in the form of help in building, such as infrastructure, or some outright Economic Development grant monies. In my opinion, once you get the first two or three here they, of course, all have friends and associates. They would tell them about the great experience they had working with the people of our County and then it's "Katy bar the door". There are several small but important details left out of this rough outline but what I've laid out will give enough insight to make a judgment call on whether it's something our County is interested in.

When Peter Mitchell was hired by the Port, his primary job was Gilliam County Economic Development Director. That duty was taken from him by Liz's Court and has since been in our County Courts hands. Right or wrong in their taking of the Port Directors duties, it was done. Now we need to reconfigure a path forward to get the Economic Development back on course with a well thought out directive. What our County is in dire need of is a Small Business recruitment/marketing arm that works closely with our Court to not only recruit and market but thoroughly vet the applicants. With this approach, we don't waste time on anyone that is not a viable candidate.

This kind of planning would put a diverse economic underpinning to our economic future and at the same time produce a solid, sustainable tax base along with great jobs and an improved cash flow for our current businesses.

The primary resistance will come from the small but loud group using 501(C)3's to move personal agenda's that have no capability to support long term County success. And, the resistance will not be limited just to this plan, but to any plan that steers our County in the direction of an incentive based Economic Strategic Plan to broaden our tax base and create a long-term stable and sustainable economy.

This plan, if accepted as a positive path forward by our County leaders, would mean a shift in strategic goals toward a more long term and sustainable economy. The current direction we are headed includes too many grandiose ideas that require annual County operational support with no end in sight.

Small business is the backbone of all great economies. We need to support and recruit small business in Gilliam County to enable us to enjoy those benefits. There are two types of businesses that we, in Gilliam County, need to recruit:

Type 1. Businesses that typically spring up around Data Centers.

Type 2. Small businesses that would be attracted by what Gilliam County has to offer.

We need to get on paper the number and primary types of business that follow Data Centers. In addition, identify how Data Centers impact local economies through satellite businesses that tend to accompany their presence. This will help us with understanding who our focus should be on and what percentage these satellites make up. This in turn gives us direction on what percentage of our yet to be determined incentive budget should be allocated to; Type 1 or Type 2 businesses.

There are 43k small businesses in the greater Portland area. Small businesses in the Portland area are identified as having up to 50 employees. Of these 43k small businesses, a large percentage will be deemed unsuitable for the following reasons:

1. They are too large to be in our targeted group of under 10 to 15 employees. The reason we can't absorb larger businesses at this time is simply housing availability.
2. They make a product that is used locally (Portland area). So proximity is an issue.
3. They have a local supply chain that would affect the cost of doing business.

So through the process of elimination we could end up with a target group of 10% or 4300. Of this group, our realistic target number will be further reduced to probably three hundred to a thousand. If we have 50-100 interested parties and were able to land 5 it would still be more than we could accommodate into our County all at once. My estimate is that it will take one to two years, after a decision to move is made, to complete that relocation. This is still a short time frame for Gilliam County to put a plan in place and have infrastructure and housing ready. The impact on our schools must also be considered. These are all problems that can be solved by having an Economic plan in place before marketing starts. This plan will identify what our costs will be and give our Court time to budget the necessary monies. I'm thinking next year's budget and probably into the following year before we see a tapering off of incentive and infrastructure spending. With a well-executed preliminary Marketing Plan we could move from creating demand to accommodating demand and at that point the costs of incentives should be almost nonexistent. This time frame could, optimistically, be as short as two years or as long as 3 years.

Would it be beneficial to identify a ratio based incentive for new business? As an example the ratio could be a number that equals 5 years of their projected tax burden. Incentives must have direct correlation to hard costs all businesses have. This could include infrastructure assistance or a reduced water, sewer, garbage rate over a specific time period...etc.

All incentives must be directed toward moving the business' decision making process to a positive outcome for that business. When we are in the process of identifying a good number to incentivize, we must consider the roll-over/multiplier effect of their paychecks being spent locally.

We need an aerial map of Gilliam County with all available locations for small businesses to relocate to. These locations need to be assigned a number that would correspond with an attached cut sheet that identifies all pertinent information on that piece of property. Such as size, zoning, etc. Each property should be assessed as to development needs and costs to become buildable. Include the following:

Easy access, good road and infrastructure.

Fire hydrants are necessary but sometimes overlooked. This exercise will give us a priority list of which properties are the most financially feasible to start our build-out for marketing.

These are thoughts about what actions and decisions need to be accomplished to begin to draft a comprehensive Economic Development plan. They are just “power points” to address items that should be in a finished Economic Development plan. They are not in any particular order. Just points to be discussed that are worth considering. Diversity equals security when it comes to the underpinnings of an economic base.

Yes, small businesses can be attracted to build near data centers due to the potential for reduced latency, access to specialized services, and the creation of a tech-focused ecosystem. Data centers can act as a catalyst for Economic Development, drawing in other businesses that support their operations or rely on their services. Here's why small businesses might be attracted:

Reduced Latency:

- Locating near a data center minimizes data transmission delays, which is crucial for latency-sensitive applications and services.

Specialized Services:

- Data centers often offer specialized services like colocation, cloud computing, and cybersecurity, which can be attractive to businesses seeking these capabilities.

Tech Cluster Formation:

- The presence of a data center can attract other businesses involved in IT, cybersecurity, construction, and related fields, creating a thriving tech cluster.

Job Creation:

- Data centers create various job opportunities, from technical roles to support staff, and the broader tech ecosystem can further expand employment options.

Real Estate Opportunities:

- Increased demand for data center space can drive up property values and create opportunities for related businesses like real estate development and property management. However, there are also potential challenges: Competition: Data centers can attract established companies, which may create competition for resources and talent.

Infrastructure Demands:

- Data centers can put a strain on local infrastructure, including power and water, which may require upgrades and investments.

Environmental Impact:

- Data centers can have environmental impacts related to energy and water consumption, which may need to be addressed through sustainable practices.

In conclusion, data centers can be a significant driver of economic growth and attract various businesses, but careful planning and consideration of potential challenges are necessary to ensure sustainable and mutually beneficial development.

Company Listings/Websites

- Fast Company

<https://www.fastcompany.com>

How data centers are transforming local communities

Mar 20, 2025 — Data centers can help build strong local economies with more opportunities for people and businesses...and, perhaps, even get their own Trader Joe's.

- McKinsey & Company

<https://www.mckinsey.com>

Investing in the rising data center economy

Jan 17, 2023 — As demand for data centers increases, investments in companies that operate them and in co-location companies remain an option.

- WPR

<https://www.wpr.org>

Local leaders see data centers as revenue boon, but critics say subsidy ...

May 16, 2025 — Critics argue Wisconsin's sales tax exemption for data centers will give powerful tech companies millions with no end in sight.

- TRG Datacenters

<https://www.trgdatacenters.com>

Texas Data Center Markets Are Booming

Why are there so many data centers in Texas? Texas data centers have an enviable reputation for attracting high-tech energy and technology businesses.

- Golden Shovel Agency

<https://www.goldenshovelagency.com>

How to Prepare Data Center Sites for an Attraction Strategy

A data center attraction strategy must include available sites, ideally around 500 acres, along with the infrastructure to support them

This proposal could unite our countywide efforts to recruit and retain new business opportunities in both Condon and Arlington – particularly targeting the growing tech industry and related support services – while building on our unique strengths and lifestyle advantages.

The Opportunity

Gilliam County is in a prime position to welcome businesses that value rural living paired with strong infrastructure. We have:

- The Port of Arlington with rail and river access
- The Arlington Mesa and Airport Industrial Complex
- I 84 access
- Shuttler Flat Industrial lands
- The Columbia River Gorge at our doorstep
- Thriving main street business districts ready for growth/partnership with Oregon Main Street
- Nearby golf courses, community events, beautiful scenery
- A close-knit community with clean air, abundant sunshine, and a safe environment for families

We can also market to a very specific demographic: people who place a high value on rural living and close-knit communities in which to raise families. Advantages include:

1. No gangs
2. A fairly drug-free environment
3. Strong, supportive schools
4. The mighty Columbia River for water sports, fishing, and hunting
5. Clean air and sunshine
6. Significantly lower housing costs and minimal property taxes
7. Tourism/Waves/Water & Wheat; “what’s not to love”

These are qualities that many in today’s workforce – including employees of Waste Management – are seeking. Part of this effort could be a campaign to encourage relocation to our communities, showcasing the benefits of working here and living here. (Don’t commute when you don’t have to...)

A Tailored Approach for Arlington and Condon

Arlington: With freeway access, a marina, RV parks, and commercial and industrial ready land, Arlington is positioned to be a hub for small industrial and manufacturing businesses – the kind that drive population growth and later support more small commercial ventures. Its riverfront and amenities make it appealing to both visitors and new residents.

Condon: A quaint, historic town with a well-preserved past and strong small-business potential. Its vitality depends on remaining a point of destination, with boutique shops, restaurants, and attractions that draw tourists while supporting local residents.

The Proposal

I recommend creating a Business Recruitment and Retention Coordinator position. This role would:

- Network, promote, and actively recruit businesses seeking rural expansion locations.
- Partner informally with Pioneer Community Development to market our incentive programs and small business grants.

- Collaborate with MCEDD to leverage state and federal funding. Work with the Small Business Development Centers, Business Oregon, Community Colleges and Universities
- Focus marketing efforts on our ideal demographic rather than a broad, unfocused audience.
- Have a clear understanding and vision of economic development plans and strategies for the City and the County.

Structure & Support

- Competitive salary with performance incentives after two years, annual review, and flexibility to refine the role as needed.
- Sufficient budget for travel, event participation, and marketing.
- County-wide collaboration to ensure both Arlington and the County's unique strengths are promoted.

Why Now

The tech industry and related service sectors are expanding at a rapid pace. Many companies and their employees are seeking communities that offer lower overhead, strong infrastructure, and a quality of life they can't find in crowded urban centers. Gilliam County is perfectly positioned to meet that demand. We have an abundance of assets and unique partnerships that make this a prime moment to showcase our region as an ideal place to start or relocate a business – and to thrive both professionally and personally.

Our communities are frontier, rural, and deeply connected – places where neighbors look out for one another, opportunities are embraced, and the quality of life is unmatched.

I think a hard look to re-brand the Port of Arlington would be a great way to also bring the County together. Another partner that could help lead this effort is Pioneer Community Development (possibly adding a position there) someone who can also promote the housing incentive programs.

This is our moment to share just how inviting, supportive, and full of potential our region truly is. We have a remarkable story to tell, and it's time to share it with the right audience.

Respectfully,
Lenn Ball, Et al.