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Fairfax County, a magnet for private-sector jobs

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Columnist Robert McCartney is right that that a regional economy should not be based on any one industry [[“Federal dollars alone can no longer fuel region’s job growth,”](#) Metro, Aug. 22]. Seattle nearly went bankrupt in the 1970s when Boeing almost went out of business, and Houston’s economy declined in the 1980s when oil prices fell below \$20 a barrel.

The Washington area is in good shape because employment centers such as Fairfax County have worked hard to attract a wide range of companies.

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates’s [recommendations](#) to scale back defense contracting and the “in-sourcing” happening with federal agencies would have had an even more serious impact a generation ago before this area became a headquarters for software, telecommunications and Internet-related companies.

Fortunately, many qualities that sustain federal contractors in this area — especially a highly educated and creative workforce, access to high-quality educational offerings from kindergarten through graduate school, and a diverse, vibrant community — also are important to companies that don’t rely on federal contracts. [Hilton Hotels](#) and [Volkswagen Group of America](#) relocated to Fairfax County in recent years and are excellent examples of companies that can take advantage of the business culture that the community has worked hard to build.

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