



COMMENTARY: Upbeat Look at Business in 2009

Economic Development Authority has worked with companies to add 4,000 jobs to local economy.

By Gerald L. Gordon
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As 2009 draws to a close, it will be remembered as an especially significant year for Fairfax County's economy and for those who live and work here. And, the successes achieved this year will position the county and its residents well during the economic recovery and beyond.

The national unemployment rate topped 10 percent this year, and in many communities it is much higher. Job creation in many locations is non-existent. Meanwhile, in Fairfax County, we will end the year with about a 4.5 percent unemployment rate. My office has worked with dozens of companies that have added or will add more than 4,000 jobs to the economy. Decisions by Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC), Hilton Worldwide and The Ignite Institute to locate their corporate headquarters in Fairfax County are especially noteworthy.

Individually, each of these new headquarters operations would be leaders in any business community. Adding another Fortune 500 headquarters — SAIC is the county's seventh — is a tremendous achievement. Hilton, perhaps the world's best-known hotel brand, and Ignite, a non-profit that is pioneering the field of personalized medicine, bring important new diversity to our economic base and business community. The same can be said of the 2007 addition of the headquarters operation of Volkswagen Group of America to Fairfax County.

Neither should we overlook the growth of the small and mid-sized firms that are the backbone of this and every economy. Of the more than 100 companies that the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority worked with this year, a vast majority of them are small businesses with fewer than 100 employees.

The successes of 2009 have important implications for Fairfax County taxpayers in 2010 and beyond. First, there will be more job opportunities, particularly compared to many other parts of the nation. Second, a larger commercial tax base means residents bear less of the cost of

providing the range of high-quality services funded by the county Board of Supervisors.

Third, new workers in our community buy homes, dine in restaurants and shop in local stores. Fourth, the broader the base of companies that are here, the greater the likelihood that our economy and commercial tax base will be stable and grow. And, finally, the quality of life for which Fairfax County is known will be improved by economic stability and growth.

The mission of the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority is to build the commercial tax base by promoting the county as one of the world's best business locations — attracting companies here and working with them to stay and create jobs here and fill office space.

The FCEDA is proud of its success in 2009 to broaden the economic diversity of Fairfax County. It will help ensure that Fairfax County remains one of the best of the best places to work and live for decades to come.

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