



**City of Rockville, Maryland**

**AGENDA**

**Hybrid Meeting  
Rockville Economic Development  
Board of Directors  
Strategic Planning Working Session**

**Saturday, April 26, 2026**

**Shulman Rogers  
12505 Park Potomac Avenue  
6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Potomac, MD 20854**

**8:00 a.m.**

**Notice is hereby given to the public on Saturday, April 25, 2026, at 8:00 a.m., the Mayor and Council of Rockville will be participating in a Strategic Planning Working Session with Rockville Economic Development, Inc.**

**Mayor and Council of Rockville**

**Attest: Sara Taylor-Ferrell, City Clerk/Director of Council Operations**



## Agenda

### Board of Directors Strategic Planning Working Session April 25, 2026, 8:00 a.m.

Shulman Rogers, 12505 Park Potomac Avenue, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, Potomac, MD 20854  
For assistance call 301-355-2201

#### **THEME – Position Rockville’s Identity and Competitive Advantage during this era of disruptive change – How do we deliver on our brand promise**

- How do we continue to leverage, enhance and communicate the identity and competitive advantages of Rockville?
- How do we elevate awareness messaging of REDI’s unique initiatives, impacts and capabilities to better serve the City of Rockville and program participants?

#### **7:30 Breakfast Bites/Networking**

**8:00 Welcome and Goals for Session.....Nancy Regelin**

**8:10 Brief Overview of Last Year’s Goals.....Cindy Rivarde**

#### ***Current Year (2026) REDI strategic goals:***

##### **KEY FOCUS AREAS:**

- Continue focus on key industry areas
  - Bio/Life Sciences
  - Small Scale Manufacturing
  - Climate Tech/Emerging Tech
  - Small Business Support
- Market Rockville’s Competitive Edge
- Understand and Cultivate Private Investment opportunities for businesses
- Reposition The Maryland Women’s Business Center (MWBC) and the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

##### **SUPPORTIVE FOCUS AREAS: Support City efforts to:**

- Establish a Rockville Office of Business Advancement (ROBA) based on the Maryland GOBA
  - Include REDI and City Staff

- Provide concierge services, understand gaps in process, and track performance
  - Look at external and internal facing communications
  - Brand Rockville as business friendly
- Support annexation efforts
- Work to identify and position key sites as site ready
- Support City initiatives for housing development

Are the Key Focus Areas those that should be confirmed for FY27?

**8:20 Presentation.....Clint Nessmith, Resource Development Group a Convergent Company - Fundraising Feasibility Study results**

Purpose: How can REDI sustain and scale its initiatives through alternative and/or supplemental funding strategies?

**8:50 Discussion**

**9:15 Group Photo/Break**

**Breakout Sessions**

*Topics will be discussed in breakout sessions with report back to the full group*

**9:25 Overview of First Breakout.....Nancy Regelin**

**9:30 Break Out Session Number 1 – Marketing and Communications – Rockville’s identity and competitive edge, as well as REDI resources and impacts**

**10:30 Return to Group for Discussion and Report Out and Identify Common Themes**

**10:50 – 11:00 Break**

**11:00 Break Out Session Number 2 - Funding Strategies**

**11:40 – Return to Group for Discussion and Report Out**

**Noon – Adjourn**

## BREAK OUT SESSION 1 HANDOUT

### FACTS to Consider

- Recently there have been several instances where companies that incubated and grew in Rockville were not able to find the real estate to accommodate their next step (usually large space like 30-40,000 sf and high ceilings).
- Montgomery County has similar limitations on appropriate real estate inventory and incentives to match industry needs for attraction and growth.
- In 2025, CNBC ranked America's Top States for business:  
<https://www.cnbc.com/2025/07/10/top-states-for-business-americas-2025-the-full-rankings.html>
  - Maryland ranked 32<sup>nd</sup> overall for Business, with Virginia ranking 4<sup>th</sup>, North Carolina 1<sup>st</sup>, Florida 3<sup>rd</sup>, Georgia 7<sup>th</sup>, and Pennsylvania 17.
  - Maryland ranked 46<sup>th</sup> in Cost of Doing Business
  - Maryland ranked 37<sup>th</sup> for Business Friendliness.
- Rockville has a great quality of life, being rated in March 2026 by AOL as one of the 10 U.S. cities providing the highest quality of life. [The 10 U.S. Cities That Provide the Highest Quality of Life, According to New Data - AOL](#)
- Rockville is strong in supporting entrepreneurship, innovation, and start-ups.
- One of the top reasons for businesses choosing to locate in our region is the availability of skilled and educated talent, in addition to proximity to federal regulatory agencies and facilities, such as FDA, NRC, NIH, NIST.
- Rockville, Montgomery County, and Maryland have struggled to successfully work regionally.
- The changes at the Federal level continue to affect Rockville residents who were or are Federal Government employees or Contractors, resulting in many looking at repositioning their careers.
- AI has shifted marketing and communication focus from manual, static messaging campaigns to hyper-personalized, data-driven, and automated strategies, including real-time content generation, 24/7 customer interaction via chatbots, and predictive analytics.
- AI search focuses on verified authoritative content versus SEO search.
- AI has accelerated the volume of fake messaging leaving audiences to determine whether something is authentic.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

What are 2-3 unique characteristics that make Rockville competitive from the lens of business and economic development? Do Innovation, Creativity and Livability resonate – are there other characteristics that should be highlighted?

How do we apply the identified characteristics to the messaging of our key industry areas – Bio/Life Science, Small-Scale Manufacturing, Emerging Technology and Small Business?

For each target audience in the key industry areas, what communication channels and messaging approaches are most effective? Consider approaches like impact driven storytelling, multi-channel digital engagement, thought leadership platforms, business/expert roundtables, stakeholder briefings, dashboards, and publications.

What must the City deliver to back up the brand promise we are putting out? In the coming years, how can we move the needle to strengthen the City's assets for businesses and economic development? (Dream Big)

**Bring Back to the Full Group:** The 2 -3 top asset characteristics currently for Rockville; how those apply in messaging to our key industry areas and what channels would be most effective. Aspirationally, what should the City of Rockville and REDI do to strengthen Rockville's brand promise to these industry sectors?

## **BREAKOUT SESSION TWO HANDOUT**

### **FACTS to Consider**

- Congress recently explicitly recognized Women Business Centers (formed in 1988) in the bill text that provided FY2026 funding for WBC's in the amount of \$27 million, which solidifies that Congress is continuing to support and fund this program (and that the Executive Branch cannot eliminate the program).
- While Congress has solidified its support of the WBC program, the Executive Branch still controls issuance of grant opportunities, and grant requirements.
- The two Federal SBA grants REDI receives (each \$150,000) require staff to be constrained geographically to deliver services, which is not the best use of a small staff. Also the SBA metrics reward volume of clients rather than depth of support for each client, which can conflict with local goals.
- The State of Maryland and other local jurisdictions are starting to feel the impact of the federal changes to their tax bases, and it is anticipated the next few years will be fiscally challenging.
- MWBC has minimally pursued foundation support and private philanthropy.
- The challenging fiscal times and change in federal funding has impacted a wide variety of non-profit organizations, all of whom are struggling with how to maintain operations and support.
- Entrepreneurs and businesses in a number of sectors need support with resources, technical assistance, networking, and incentives.
- REDI and the City of Rockville have invested in the Biotech Corridor brand, successfully launching it and starting to develop awareness. Brand implementation is a multi-year initiative, and the Biotech Corridor support of the bio/life science industry sector is a long-term initiative.
- REDI with Montgomery County funding has successfully done placemaking to create Rock East, train 3 cohorts of entrepreneurs in start-up and growth-stage small-scale manufacturing and provide ongoing technical assistance to help small-scale manufacturers in Rockville, many of whom are in the food and beverage area.
- MWBC successfully piloted Founders Rising, assisting former Federal workers and contractors in pivoting to entrepreneurship.
- Rockville has a strong emerging technology industry sector – in green tech, AI, quantum, aerospace, satellites, etc.

### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

What are the key takeaways about REDI's ability to secure short-term and long-term alternative funding, including challenges and opportunities?

What level of transparency and accountability around funding diversification will stakeholders and the public expect, and how should REDI communicate progress?

How should REDI structure its fundraising strategy to remain agile and responsive to rapid shifts in the federal, state and local funding landscape?

Are our incentive programs aligned with attraction/retention goals and the business needs of our key industry areas?

**Bring Back to the Full Group:** Reflections on the RDG report and at least three recommendations about fundraising strategies.