

Annual Report on Virginia Business Ready Expedited Permitting Program

Executive Summary

- The Virginia General Assembly passed the Virginia Business Ready Expedited Permitting Program (“EPP”) in the 2024 Session, which had a delayed effective date of January 1, 2025.
- The pilot program allows up to two Virginia Business Ready Sites Program-eligible sites (§ 2.2-2240.2:1) and four economic development projects to participate in the program per year.
- The EPP requires local and state agencies to process and render decisions on relevant permits or requests for approval within 180 days of receiving application materials.
- The EPP has been marketed to economic development prospects since the guidelines were established in January 2025, with companies noting the program as a major factor separating Virginia from its competitors.
- Since the end of the 2025 fiscal year, two companies partnering with Virginia localities have confirmed participation in the program. These projects will have a lasting impact in the Commonwealth, announcing nearly \$10 billion in capital investment and creating 1,250 new jobs, while citing Virginia’s favorable business climate and responsive government support as key decision-making factors.

Legislative History

The Virginia Economic Development Partnership Authority (“VEDP”) administers the Virginia Business Ready Expedited Permitting Program (the “EPP”) in accordance with § 2.2-2240.2:2 of the Code of Virginia to annually designate up to two eligible sites and four projects for participation in the EPP. The sites or projects will align with the goals outlined in the Commonwealth’s economic development plan. The program was established as a pilot during the 2024 General Assembly session with a delayed effective date of January 1, 2025, and is set to expire on June 30, 2028. No projects will be eligible for the EPP after December 31, 2027.

Background

The EPP was established to ensure that the Commonwealth keeps pace with business location and expansion plans, while maintaining rigorous permitting standards. In recent years, economic development projects have become more sophisticated in the site selection process, requiring sites and communities to commit to a streamlined permitting experience in order to compete for private investment. While communities can signal a business-friendly environment by developing sites to a high level of readiness, many items, such as permits, can only be completed once a final user is

confirmed. These post-prospect development items require a high degree of coordination between local and state entities to ensure users can meet critical ramp-up timelines. Therefore, a statewide program codifying the coordination between state agencies and local partners, and committing to accelerated permitting timelines, provides reassurance to prospects that Virginia can meet the private sector's needs. Additionally, as economic development projects continue to target aggressive timelines, providing reliable business support from Virginia's regulatory agencies gives the Commonwealth a compelling advantage over competitor proposals that cannot or will not commit to expedited permitting.

The benefit of the EPP is that it does not place the burden solely on state and local agencies, but it represents a partnership between government and private industry. It requires both parties to move as quickly as possible to meet permitting timelines. The EPP depends on complete state and local cooperation and alignment to ensure that permitting timelines can meet the deadlines as outlined in § 2.2-2240.2:2.

Guidelines

VEDP created EPP guidelines in October 2024 and published them as part of the Virginia Business Ready Sites Program guidelines on its website in January 2025.

VEDP evaluates potential sites for inclusion into the EPP using the following criteria:

1. The property meets the “eligible site” criteria as defined by § 2.2-2240.2:1, under the Virginia Business Ready Sites Program (VBRSP);
2. Expedited permitting reduces the total site development timeline and advances the site's readiness;
3. Expedited permitting improves the site's marketability and competitiveness for traded-sector projects; and
4. The site improves Virginia's industrial site portfolio and increases the state's ability to meet market demand.

VEDP evaluates potential projects for approval into the EPP using the following criteria:

1. The project meets the eligibility requirements of significant economic development projects; and
2. Expedited permitting improves Virginia's ability to win the economic development project.

Once a site or project is designated for participation in EPP, VEDP will complete a review process within 45 business days. This review process allows VEDP to assess permitting needs for the site or project and provide guidance to the applicant and state partners. The EPP commits agencies to complete permit application requests for a designated site or project within 180 days. The applicant may agree to a longer timeframe with a formal memorandum of understanding between the government agency and the applicant.

In accordance with its authorizing law, the EPP does not reduce or eliminate any legal requirements for public comment or input related to a requested permit. However, all required reviews by staff at Commonwealth agencies will be prioritized.

Expedited Permitting Program Results

VEDP offered the EPP in three tailored incentive proposals to companies considering Virginia. Two of the projects made announcements for Virginia and one ultimately disengaged. Applications for these two announced projects will be reflected in the FY26 report. VEDP continues to have interest in the program and expects to fill all four project slots available for FY26.

In FY25, VEDP identified and is in the process of positioning several sites to be ready for the program in FY26. The candidate sites for the EPP are finalizing additional development items that must be addressed prior to program participation. Failing to complete these critical path development items may hinder the ability of permitting agencies to make a complete assessment of the sites and will not improve speed to market.

State Partnerships

Per § 2.2-2240.2:2.(E), all local government entities and state agencies, whether or not independent, shall cooperate with the Authority in carrying out the provisions of this section. State agencies regularly administering relevant permits include the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, Virginia Department of Transportation, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, and State Corporation Commission. VEDP maintains working relationships with partner agencies through its site development task force and throughout the site selection process. These collaborations ensure coordinated guidance and faster approvals, making the Expedited Permitting Program more effective in streamlining the Commonwealth's regulatory processes.

Future Implementation

As previously mentioned, VEDP has two projects committed for FY26 and anticipates two other projects for EPP in the coming months. VEDP continues to identify and evaluate sites for participation in the program by coordinating with local and state economic development partners. VEDP anticipates consistent demand for the program in FY26 and FY27, based on ongoing project activity in Virginia's economic development pipeline.