



New River Valley  
**RES**  
Regional Economic Strategy

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## INTRODUCTION

The New River Valley Regional Economic Strategy (RES), also known as the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), is designed to create broad goals to develop the region's economy in partnership with the region's communities. Implementing these goals will promote regional and local growth. Input from a range of partners representing private and public sectors informed the creation of the RES. The committee set priorities and offered guidance for these strategies to shape economic focus for the next five years.

The RES contains the following sections:

- 1. About the Region:** An overview providing context and information about the current state of the New River Valley (NRV) and its effects on the economy.
- 2. SWOT Analysis:** A collaborative process utilized to determine regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The SWOT tool identifies priorities to promote and expand the region's economic capacity.
- 3. Resilience:** An exploration of the region's ability to prevent, withstand, and recover from disruptions to its economy, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 4. Action Plan:** Informed by the SWOT analysis and Resilience sections, the Action Plan sets regional priorities and strategies for economic development and documents the region's priority projects.
- 5. Evaluation Framework:** A means of identifying and prioritizing RES projects that will positively impact the region's economy and enable the commission to track the progress of economic priorities and development over time.

# ABOUT THE REGION

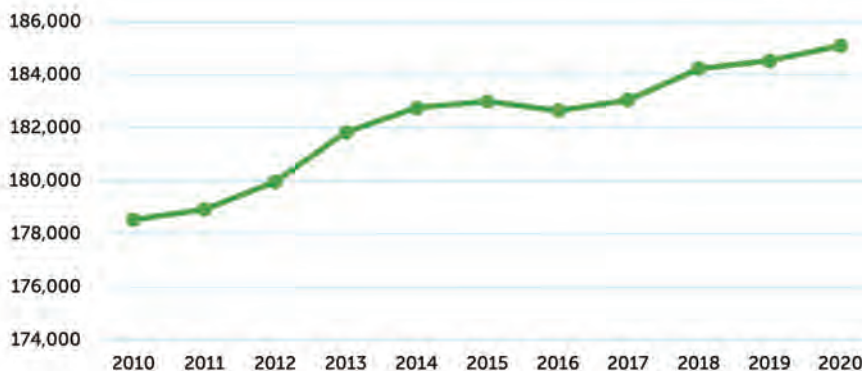
The NRV comprises the counties of Floyd, Giles, Montgomery, and Pulaski, the City of Radford, and 10 incorporated towns. The region also has three higher education institutions: Virginia Tech, Radford University, and New River Community College.

Additional data about the region can be found at <https://nrvc.org/data>.

## Demographics

The NRV has an estimated population of 184,523 as of 2021 and is growing at an estimated 4.3% through 2030. The Commonwealth's projected population growth rate is 7.8% over the same time period.

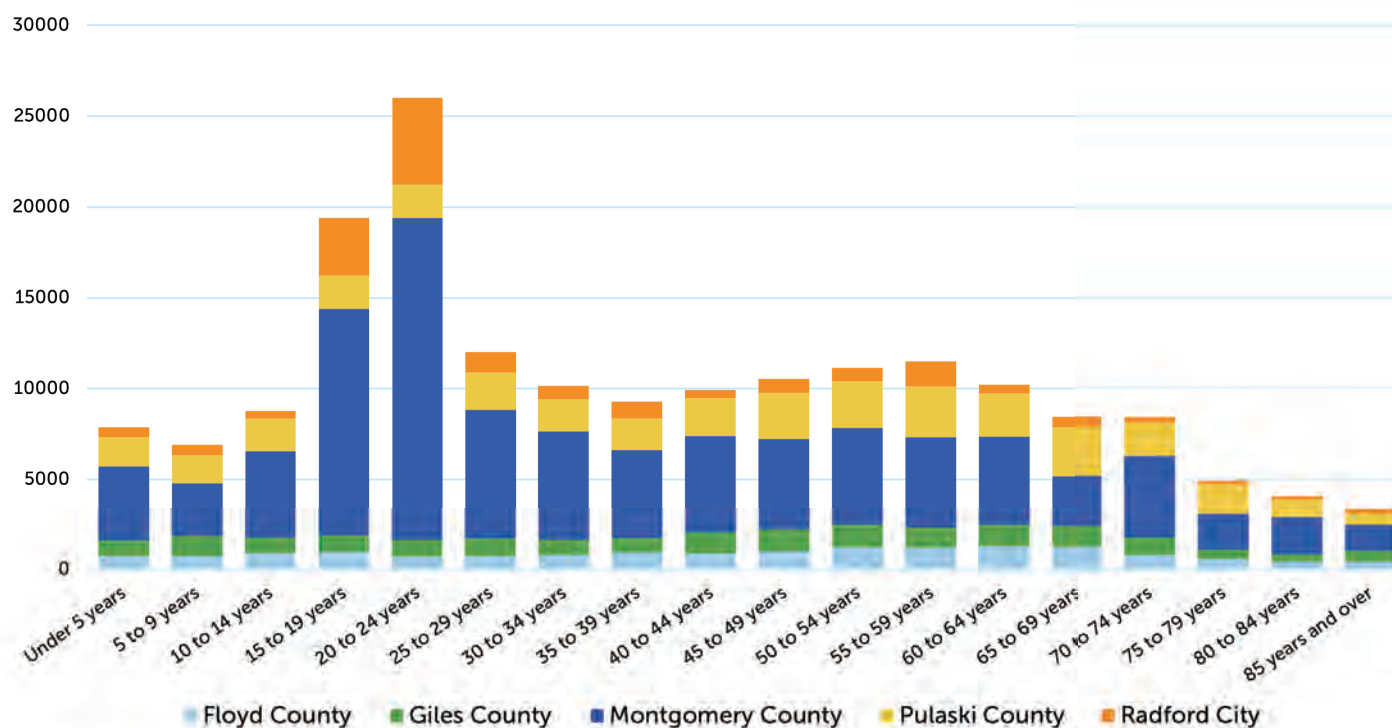
**Total Population of the New River Valley 2010-2020**



Weldon Cooper Center of Public Service, 2020. Intercensal Estimates for Virginia, Counties, and Cities: 2010-2020.

<https://demographic.coopercenter.org/virginia-population-estimates> (accessed May 15, 2021)

**Population Total by Age**

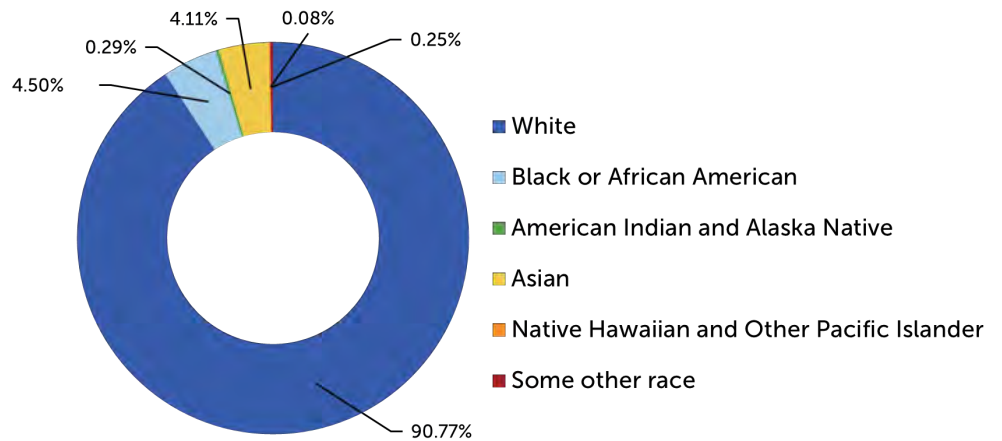


Weldon Cooper Center of Public Service, 2020. Intercensal Estimates for Virginia, Counties, and Cities: 2010-2020. <https://demographics.coopercenter.org/virginia-population-estimates/> (accessed May 15, 2021).

Virginia Tech and Radford University attract over 40,000 students annually. The large student population in the region shifts the median age, particularly in Montgomery County and Radford. The median age for the NRV is 34.3 years and is below the Commonwealth of Virginia's median age of 38.2 years. However, the counties with small numbers of students have median ages well above the state median age, with county median ages between 45 and 47 years in Giles, Floyd, and Pulaski Counties. The higher median age in these counties also suggests that the region's permanent population is aging despite the low median age.

### New River Valley Race and Ethnicity

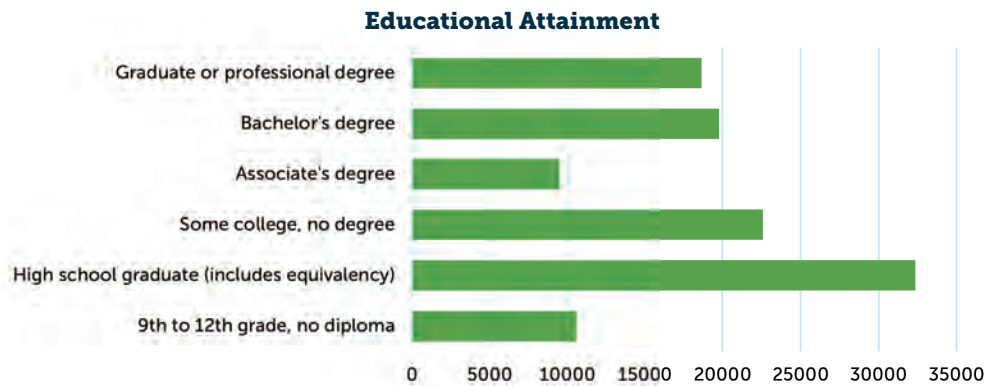
The population primarily identifies as white/Caucasian within the NRV. Of residents in the NRV, 11.8% identify as a minority, and 2.8% of the population identifies as Hispanic. In Virginia, the minority population makes up 39% of the population, and 10% of the population identifies as Hispanic.



U.S. Census Bureau. 2019. ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates, 2019. <https://data.census.gov> (accessed May 15, 2021).

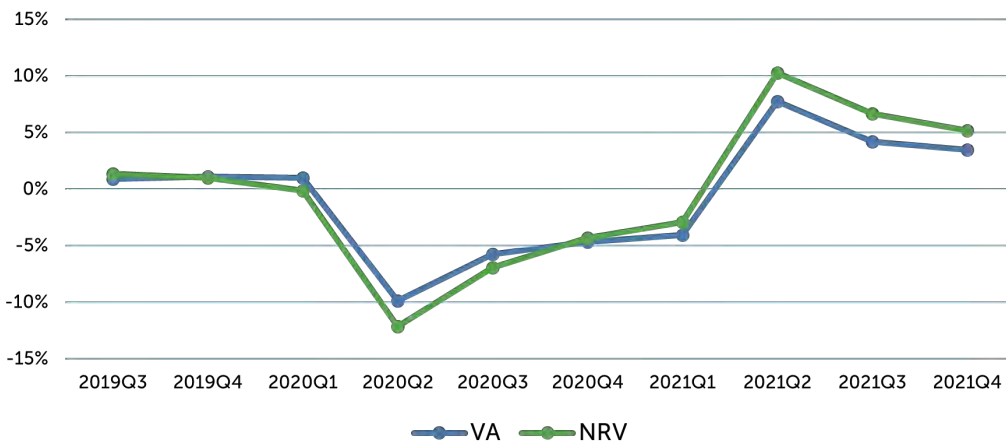
### Educational Attainment

Radford University, Virginia Tech, and New River Community College offer quality higher education and draw students worldwide. The region has a 7% higher high school graduation rate than the state and an 8% greater rate of baccalaureate degree awards.



Educational Attainment of NRV population 25 and older, 2019 5-year ACS, Accessed March 11, 2022

### Employment for New River Valley and Virginia



JobsEQ. Employment as of 2021 Q1. Accessed Sept. 24, 2021.

### Employment

In 2021, the total labor force living in the NRV was 88,346. Employment in the region has increased by 5.2% based on a four-quarter moving average. Virginia had a 3.5% increase when calculated the same way.

As of the fourth quarter of 2021, the NRV employs an estimated 74,889 workers, with the remaining labor force commuting outside the region. The "educational service" sector is the largest employer in the region, followed by manufacturing. More information about other prominent industrial sectors can be seen in the adjacent table.

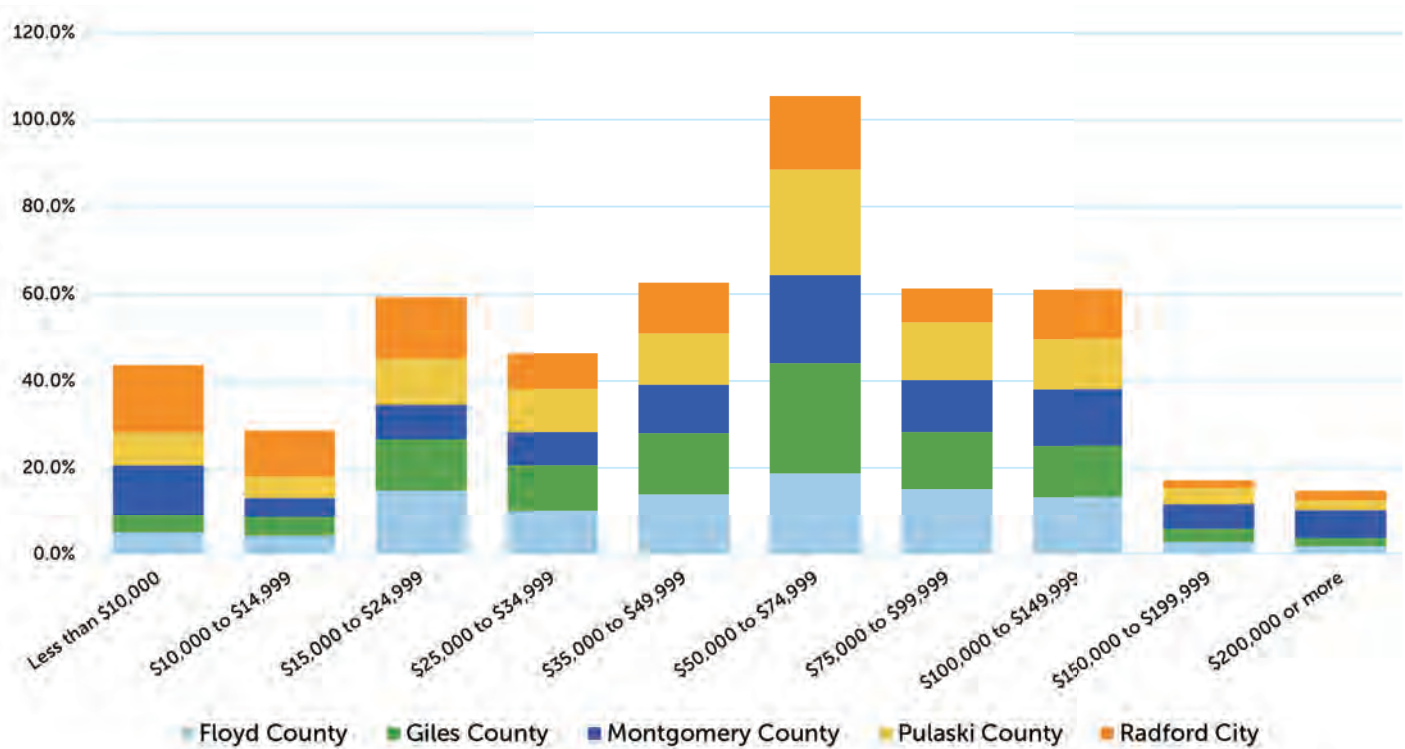


Highest Employing Industry	Employment 2021	Estimated 5yr. % Change of Employment	Employment 2026	Average Annual Wage 2021
Educational Services	15,254	0.3%	15,517	\$51,411
Manufacturing	12,208	0.9%	12,757	\$60,971
Health Care and Social Assistance	8,363	2.0%	9,145	\$44,922
Retail Trade	8,223	-1.0%	7,790	\$29,311
Accommodation and Food Services	5,937	-3.3%	4,840	\$19,142
Construction	4,012	6.0%	5,032	\$55,652
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	3,787	0.9%	3,952	\$83,955
Administrative/Support and Waste Management/Remediation Services	3,162	-1.0%	3,007	\$37,698

**JobsEQ. Industry Snapshot New River Valley PDC, 2021 Q3. (Accessed May 15, 2021).**

In 2021, workers in the NRV earn an average wage of \$46,856 annually. This is lower than the state and national average of \$65,409 and \$65,055, respectively. However, the NRV is relatively affordable compared to other Virginia metro areas, with the third lowest median housing costs.

### Household Income



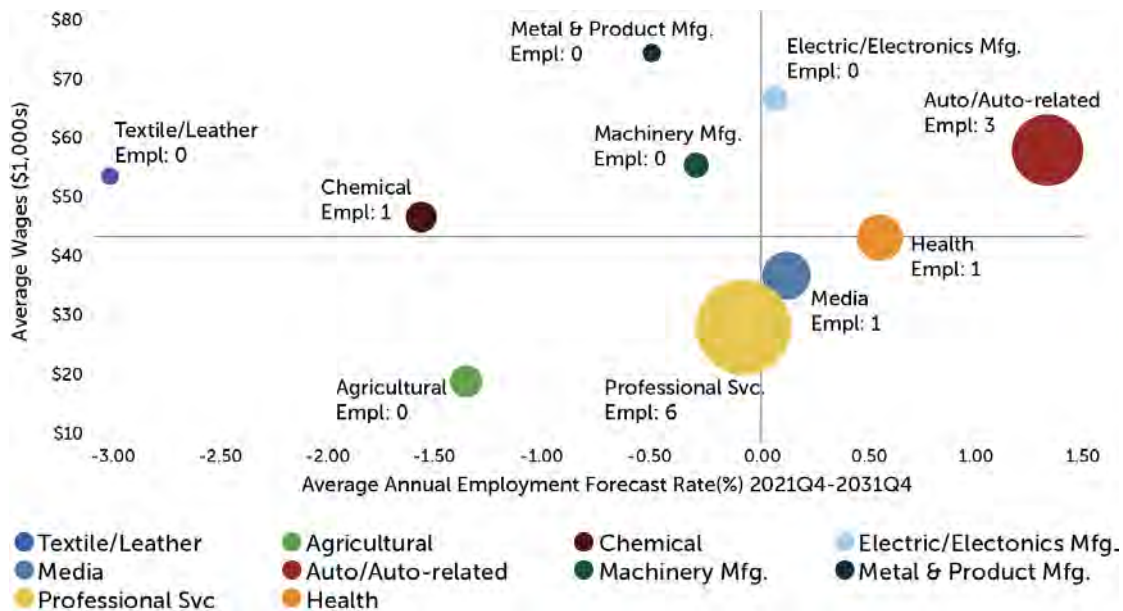
**U.S. Census Bureau. 5 Yr. ACS, 2019. Income in the past 12 months. (Accessed March 7, 2022). <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=S1901&tid=ACST1Y2019.S1901>**

## Target Sectors

Target sectors are any business activity type that is strategically pursued by an economic development organization and its partners for growth and development. Virginia's Initiative for Growth and Opportunity in Each Region (GO Virginia) is a statewide, bipartisan, business-led economic development initiative. By analyzing regional workforce, economic, and geographic similarities, and potentials, GO Virginia regions develop growth and diversification plans which recommend industry areas that offer high paying, growing economic opportunities and encourage development within these sectors within their economies.

The GO Virginia Region 2 Council, which includes the New River Valley as well as the Roanoke and Lynchburg regions, has identified several target industry clusters for the region to develop including transportation/automated vehicles; materials/machinery; life sciences/healthcare; and information and emerging technologies.

**Industry Clusters for New River CDP, VA as of 2021 Q4**



JobsEQ. Cluster Analysis 2021 Q4. Accessed May 24, 2021.

**Advanced Manufacturing** Advanced manufacturing comprises 164 companies and approximately 12,633 employees within the NRV. This sector has grown by around 12% over the last five years.

*Primary sub-sectors:* chemicals, plastics & materials, automotive, and motion control systems.

**Unmanned Systems and Automation** Regional assets to assist sector development includes 2 FAA-Designated UAS test sites, 2.8 Miles of VTTI Smart Road Test Track, and an 85 ft. high netted drone park within the New River Valley.

*Primary sub-sectors:* component manufacturing, software & cybersecurity, research & development, unmanned vehicle systems assembly.

**Emerging Tech and IT** The sector comprises 90 companies within the New River Valley. These companies employ approximately 1562 people and have grown by around 5% in the last five years.

*Primary sub-sectors:* software development, cybersecurity, IT support, and digital creative services.

**Food Processing and Agribusiness** The sector comprises 2,294 farms totaling over 400,000 acres and 73 food and beverage processors within the New River Valley. The Region also has 1.7 billion gallons of average daily river flow, making the NRV ideal for value-added food production.

*Primary sub-sectors:* specialty food & beverage, breweries, wineries, distilleries, value-add agriculture, packaging.

## Natural Resources

### *Land Resources*

The NRV has many natural amenities that promote regional identity and generate tourism. The average elevation within the region is 2,500 feet above sea level. Elevation in the region ranges from 1,470 feet in Glen Lyn to 4,348 feet at Bald Knob.

The region is categorized as predominantly rural and its landscape is comprised of forests, mountains, and farmland. Major land resources include Jefferson National Forest, the Appalachian Trail (a portion of which runs through Giles County), the Blue Ridge Parkway, Gatewood Park, Buffalo Mountain Natural Area Preserve, and others.

### *Water Resources*

The New River, for which the NRV is named, is the oldest river in North America. The New River, and its tributaries, flows through Giles, Pulaski and Montgomery Counties and Radford City and serves as the main stem of the New River basin. The Little River, Peak Creek, Big Walker Creek, and Dodd's Creek are a few of the tributaries of the New River. This abundance of water resources has spurred the area's agribusiness sector and draws visitors for outdoor recreation year-round.

## Cultural Resources

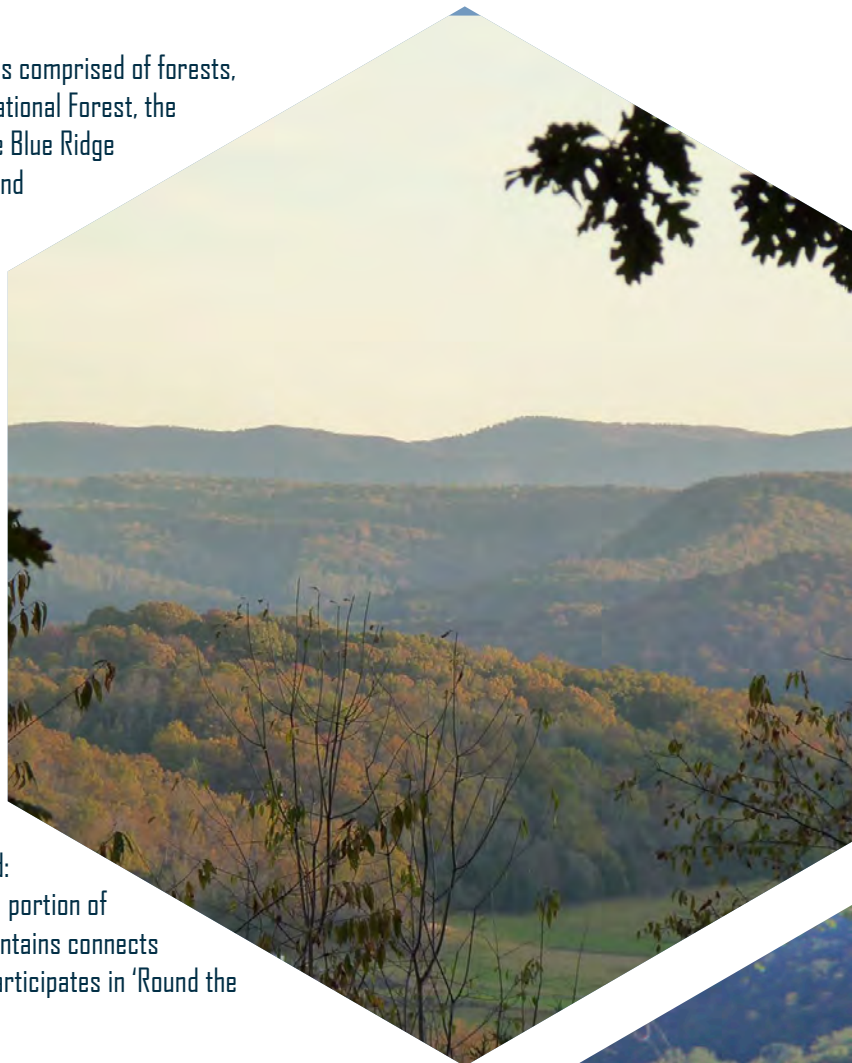
In addition to many natural resources, the NRV boasts rich cultural resources and history. The region is home to many skilled local artisans and local musicians who keep these Appalachian traditions alive. Among the many attractions of the region is The Crooked Road: Southwest Virginia's Heritage Music Trail. A 330-mile driving trail (a portion of which runs through Floyd County) through Southwest Virginia's mountains connects music venues and festivals over Southwest Virginia. The NRV also participates in 'Round the Mountain, Southwest Virginia's artisan network.

The region also has many historic "downtown" commercial centers that serve as cultural hubs in each community. These commercial districts support small business, particularly in the retail, restaurant, and service sectors, and provide residents with quality of life and visitors with a sense of place.

## Historical Resources

The NRV was originally used as hunting grounds by Native American populations for centuries before Europeans arrived. These settlers came along the Great Wilderness Road as development expanded westward. The area became an outpost for routes leading towards the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers in the late 18th and 19th centuries. The NRV also became contested ground in the Revolutionary and Civil Wars.

Today, the region is home to many other historical landmarks and places, including the Glencoe house in Radford, Mabrey Mill in Floyd County, and the Andrew Johnson House in Giles County.





## Transportation

### *Roads*

Interstate 81 and U.S. Route 460 are major routes for freight trucking within the region and throughout the state. Recent upgrades to expand capacity and address maintenance issues on Interstate 81 in the region ensure that these routes are effective avenues to transport goods. Additionally, most of the region's population travels by car. The average commute time is approximately 22 minutes. Less than 1% of the region's population does not own a vehicle.

The communities of Radford, Pulaski, and Blacksburg/Christiansburg offer bus and transit options for residents, while also addressing university and college student transportation needs. Due to limited transit service areas, public transit is often not a feasible means of travel for many of the region's rural residents. Even with this limitation, the NRV has a more robust transportation system compared to many similarly-sized counterparts in other areas of the state.

### *Rail*

Norfolk Southern's Heartland and Crescent Corridors intersect east of Radford. Both corridors are of national significance for freight movement. These rails move freight for Pulaski, Giles, and Montgomery Counties, and Radford City. Rail has lower fuel costs and is more efficient for transporting more goods faster.

While no passenger rail exists in the NRV currently, service will be extended from Roanoke to Christiansburg. The Virginia Passenger Rail Authority will be working with the NRV Passenger Rail Station Authority to oversee this work, slated for completion within the next five years.

### *Airports*

There are two general aviation facilities in the NRV: the Virginia Tech Montgomery Executive Airport in Blacksburg and the New River Valley Airport just north of Dublin in Pulaski County. The New River Valley Airport is a registered foreign trade zone and international port of entry. The nearest commercial passenger airport is Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport, approximately ten miles east of the region.



## Utilities

### *Water and Sewer*

The region has varying degrees of water and sewer system availability. The region's towns and the City of Radford are served by public water and sewer, while the remainder of residents are served by private wells and septic systems. However, aging infrastructure and population changes have made it necessary to upgrade public utility systems to ensure continued, reliable access.

### *Energy*

The NRV's energy prices have reached the national average recently after historically being low. As these prices have increased, alternative means of producing energy at a lower cost to residents have been considered. Programs such as SolarizeNRV have been implemented to encourage residents and business owners to consider investing in solar energy installation. Pulaski County also recently approved special use permits to develop a solar farm that will produce 300MW, enough energy to power an estimated 57,000 homes.

### *Broadband and Cell Service*

Multiple wireless providers exist in the region; however, coverage remains limited. The NRV still has many rural residents whose "last-mile" connection and high internet service costs are often barriers to broadband access. Currently, Montgomery, Giles, and Pulaski counties are pursuing projects to expand fiber-to-the-home and increase access to high-speed internet. Virginia, in partnership with Virginia Tech, has developed a mapping tool that allows communities to view gaps in broadband coverage for planning purposes. This can be viewed at: <https://commonwealth-connection.com/>



# SWOT ANALYSIS

The SWOT Analysis evaluates a region's economic, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

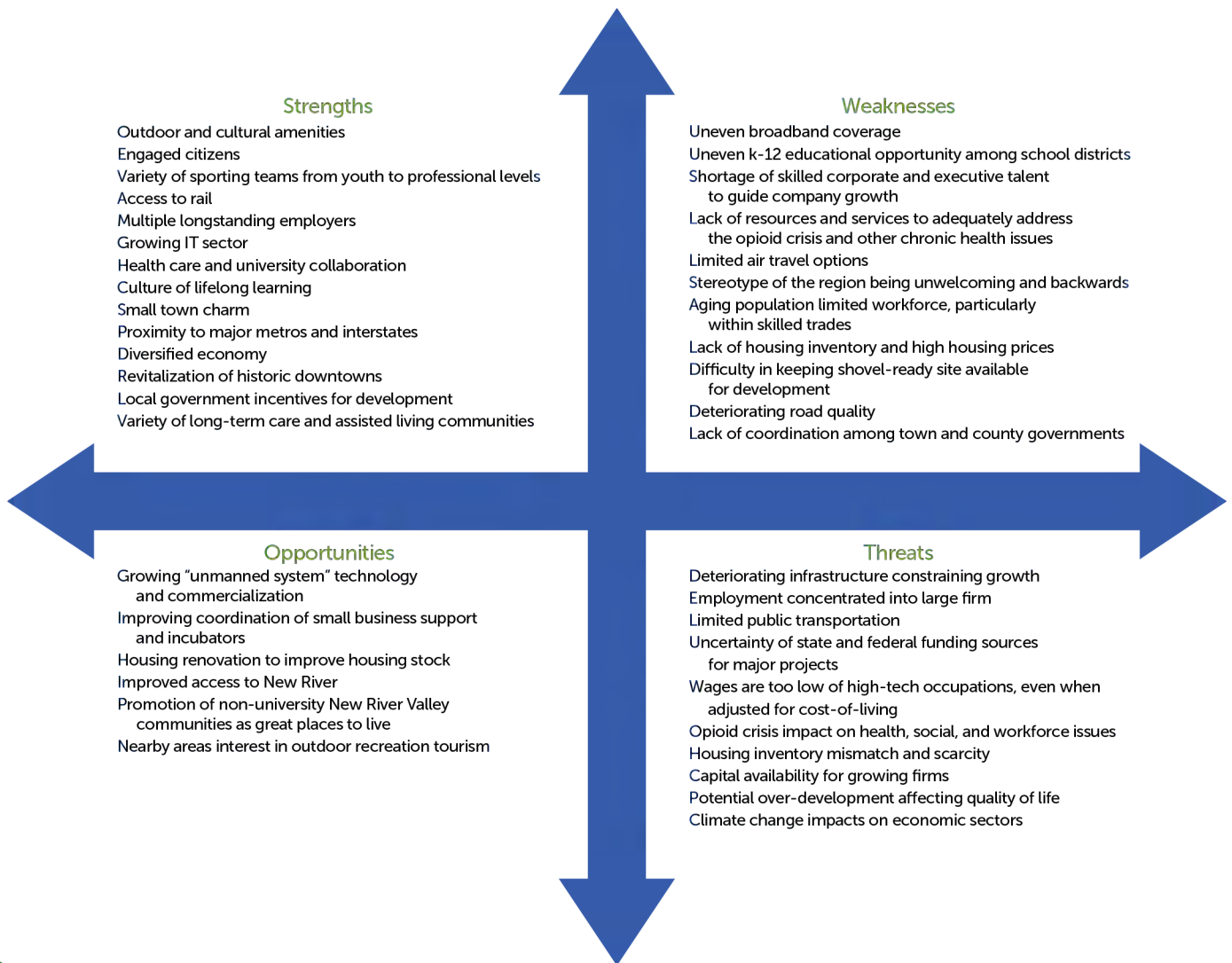
**Strength** - a region's competitive advantages (e.g., industry supply changes, specialized workforce, stakeholder collaboration, etc.); these characteristics are often internal.

**Weakness** - a region's competitive disadvantages (e.g., change-resistant culture), also often internal by nature.

**Opportunity** - openings of regional progress (e.g., expansion of regional life science sector); often these are external forces that impact the region.

**Threat** - foreseen possible negative impacts on the region which cause decline ( e.g., global pandemic). These are often external events that impact the region.

The NRV's RES Committee discusses regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats during its meetings. In 2019, an extensive update to the SWOT analysis and revisions were made based on recent events within the region.



# RESILIENCE

Disasters occur when extreme events encounter vulnerable communities. According to the National Risk Index (NRI), the NRV has a very low risk of being impacted by natural disasters. The region is fortunate to encounter fewer extreme events than other communities within the Commonwealth.

## New River Valley Risk Index

County	Rating	Score
Floyd	Very Low	3.58
Giles	Very Low	6.33
Montgomery	Very Low	4.33
Pulaski	Very Low	5.62
Radford	Very Low	3.96

**FEMA. National Risk Index. Accessed on May 15, 2022.**  
<https://hazards.fema.gov/nri/map#>.

The ability of a community or region to improve after a disaster is known as resilience. Historically, when disasters have occurred in the NRV, the region has been more resilient than the surrounding regions and often the State. The relative safety and resilience of the NRV has not lessened the emphasis placed on disaster preparedness and emergency response planning within the region. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the NRV has faced a compounding disaster that has affected many aspects of society. By capitalizing on regional strength, communities have banded together to ensure their resident's health, safety, and well-being.

## New River Valley Social Vulnerability

County	Rating	Score
Floyd	Relatively Low	29.09
Giles	Relatively Moderate	39.57
Montgomery	Very Low	21.4
Pulaski	Relatively Low	38.04
Radford	Relatively Moderate	39.06

**FEMA. Social Vulnerability Index. Accessed on May 15, 2022.**  
<https://hazards.fema.gov/nri/map#>

In a survey conducted by Onward NRV and Virginia Tech Center Economic and Community Engagement in September 2020, regional manufacturing and technology companies were asked about COVID's impact on their business and the prospects for their business in the upcoming year. Sixty-two percent of manufacturers and 63% of technology companies expected to retain their employees. Sixty-two percent of manufacturers had unfilled production worker and engineer positions that needed to be filled, and 38% of tech companies needed software engineers, account executives, and production schedulers. Both sectors' businesses generally had a positive outlook for the following year. The most significant concerns among companies were the health and safety of employees.

In a follow-up survey, NRV manufacturing and technology companies were asked to evaluate their business nearly two years after the initial survey. Follow-up results from the 2022 survey show that regional manufacturing and technology companies have performed strongly since the pandemic. Relative to pre-pandemic levels, the majority of firms —75% of manufacturing firms and 83% of technology firms— report maintaining or increasing the number of employees at their firm. Furthermore, firms in both sectors anticipate employment growth into the future. Most manufacturing firms (82%) report unfilled positions, such as purchasing agents, accountants, engineers, machine operators, technicians, and assemblers. Just over half of technology firms (56%) have unfilled positions, such as developers, engineers, administrators, and various business and operations managers. Manufacturing firms report workforce recruiting and retention to be their main concerns, while technology firms report employee morale and company culture to be their main concerns.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also accelerated existing trends and issues within the region, such as income inequity, housing instability, and changes in small business and retail. It has also presented new challenges such as supply chain shortages, significant unemployment, and social and physical isolation. The Action Plan presented in the next section focuses on addressing and coping with these trends and issues. The RES committee identified strategies, partners, and priority projects to address weaknesses and threats and capitalize on strengths and opportunities.



## Regional Economic Priorities

1. Support Business Development and Entrepreneurship
2. Preparation and Continued Support of Qualified, Available Workforce
3. Utilize Available Land and Expand Quality Infrastructure
4. Preserve and Promote the Natural and Cultural Resources in the Region
5. Encourage Business Friendly Governance and Organizational Representation

### 1.

#### Support Business Development and Entrepreneurship

The NRV has many thriving businesses that provide high-paying jobs and promote a diverse regional economy. The region must continue to demonstrate that it can offer facilities, transportation networks, cultural amenities, workforce resources, and support services to meet business needs and attract companies to locate within the region.

Fifty-one percent of the region's local good and service providers employ less than five (5) employees and 95% employ 50 or fewer employees. Despite their size, small businesses are essential to the regional economy and communities. These businesses offer crucial goods and services as well as jobs, economic growth, and financial stability for employees. Unfortunately, pandemic-related financial hardships have put tremendous stress on these enterprises and emphasized how critical the need is for comprehensive business assistance programs.

The Roanoke Regional Small Business Development Center (RRSBDC) is a resource to business owners in the region and assists them with technical training, best practices, and financial assistance. However, their service area covers both the Roanoke and New River Valleys, stretching their capacity thin. In 2021, the demand for their service was evident by much higher consultation rates than in previous years.

Additionally, local economic development offices and organizations such as Onward NRV have been working with industry partners to actively attract and retain high quality jobs, investment and talent in the region and to promote the economic vitality of the region.





## Priority 1 Strategies

*Strategy 1.1-* Provide a comprehensive array of support services for small business development and growth.

- a. Encourage micro and small business success in downtown and commercial districts, through revitalization and promotion of community individuality.
- b. Develop and support peer networks and events to bring together small businesses in similar industries, such as tourism/outdoor recreation, technology, and health.
- c. Coordinate and improve accessibility of counseling, technical assistance and financing resources offered to local business owners by local, regional, and state partners.

*Strategy 1.2-* Improve the region's ability to foster and retain fast-growing businesses in target sectors.

- a. Improve access to capital for high-growth firms through the development of angel investor groups and promoting partnerships between capital sources and fundable firms.
- b. Support the development of university technology commercialization and industry research partnerships, building on existing efforts in unmanned systems, health/medical technology, and cloud computing/internet/IT.
- c. Support and develop business incubator and technical resources targeted to firms with growth potential.

*Strategy 1.3-* Promote entrepreneurship and provide resources for NRV residents to start their own business.

- a. Support local entrepreneurship promotion initiatives, such as business plan competitions and youth entrepreneurship initiatives.
- b. Coordinate local incentives to encourage business development in targeted sectors that align with local economic development strategies, such as tourism, agribusiness, manufacturing support services, etc.
- c. Develop incubators, co-working, and maker spaces and other resources to allow low-cost options to support entrepreneurs through the start-up phase.

*Strategy 1.4-* Focus local and regional economic development marketing efforts on target industries and firms that build on the region's strengths.

- a. Assess and improve the ability of the region to meet the workforce, infrastructure, and facility requirements of firms in the region's target industry sectors and prioritize projects that address these needs (industrial sites, workforce initiative, green energy requirements, etc.).
- b. Coordinate and promote the technical expertise, research capabilities, and pipeline of skilled graduates that the region's community college and universities can provide to business and industry.
- c. Target recruitment to firms with significant supplier relationships to existing NRV firms and firms that can benefit existing regional assets, including foreign trade zone, interstate access, Commerce Park, university research, etc.
- d. Seek representation on state commissions and committees and the Go Virginia Region 2 Counsel.
- e. Provide input to state agencies from regional economic development organizations and NRVRC to ensure state policies and programs address local issues.
- f. Support police, fire, and medical operations throughout the region.
- g. Coordinate state's regional resources to expand the capacity and resources of local governments to implement desired economic development programs.

The region's higher education programs draw many qualified people to develop skills and gain qualifications. Although there is a promising pipeline for talent and the ability to train for many different careers, there is often a disconnect between employers' desired qualifications and the available skills of workers. The New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board has been developing "career ladders" that work with industry leaders to identify various career paths within an industry and explore qualifications, degrees, and skills that employers seek for these positions.

While the region has a surplus of talent in some job sectors, other sectors struggle to recruit enough talent. For many years the region has experienced a decrease in skilled tradespersons. Across the state and nationwide, skilled tradespersons are aging, and efforts to recruit and retain qualified replacements have had limited success. Reasons for this include:

- Fairweather workers (willing to work in nice weather but will seek other employment during winter months)
- The stigma that trades do not produce a living wage
- New hires do not retain their position because of a lack of soft skills

A significant barrier to the region's workforce returning to work after COVID-19 has been the shortage of affordable childcare facilities and programs. Other services that workers struggle to access include healthcare and tuition assistance. Improving workers' access to critical services advances the ability of communities to attract and retain top-tier talent as well as foster better opportunities for the employees themselves.

### Priority 2 Strategies

*Strategy 2.1*- Align education and training programs with the current and future needs of the region's existing employers and target industry sectors.

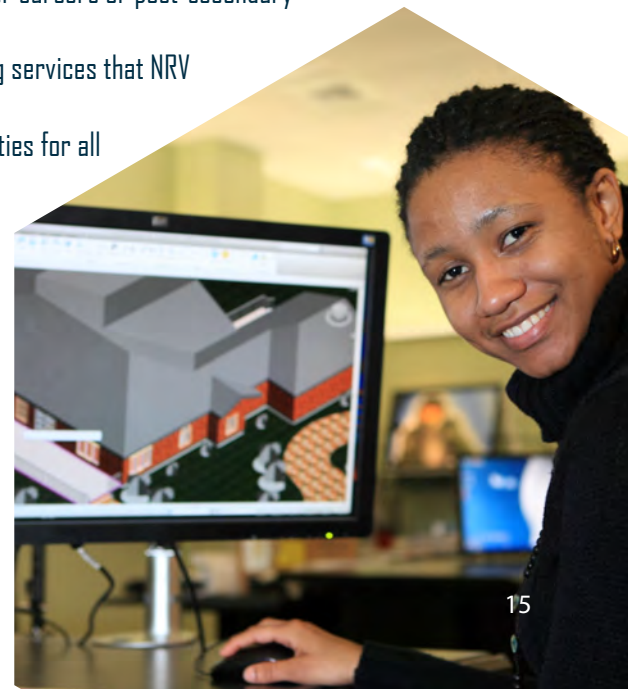
- a. Establish partnerships between industry/business and all levels of education and provide students with more "real world" learning opportunities.
- b. Improve awareness of career options in local industries among K-12, community college, and university students and graduates.
- c. Develop a career pathways approach to ensure regional colleges and universities provide training, credentials, and degrees that allow workers to advance their careers in local industries.

*Strategy 2.2*- Establish a strong foundation for lifelong learning and career success for NRV residents.

- a. Ensure quality, affordable pre-school programs are available throughout the NRV.
- b. Ensure career counseling, technical education, and enrichment activities are available throughout the region to support K-12 students' plans and preparation for careers or post-secondary education.

*Strategy 2.3*- Increase the availability and accessibility of supporting services that NRV residents need to participate fully in the workforce.

- a. Increase the availability of quality, affordable childcare facilities for all areas of the NRV.
- b. Assure access to quality, affordable healthcare and wellness options for physical, mental, and social well-being and safety
- c. Coordinate resources to provide low-cost options or tuition assistance for residents seeking college





*Strategy 2.4-* Ensure the NRV is competitive in its efforts to attract and retain talented workers in the region's target industry sectors.

- a. Coordinate industry recruitment and economic development marketing efforts to address shortages of specific technical workers or skilled professionals that hamper growth in target industries.
- b. Implement projects that improve the quality of life and availability of housing and services to meet the needs of the region's current and future workforce.
- c. Encourage and promote work from home and telework opportunities to keep and attract remote talent within the region.

### 3.

## Utilize Available Land and Expand Quality Infrastructure

Land and infrastructure are essential commodities for thriving businesses. Transportation, broadband internet, available commercial and residential property, and alternative energy sources are some of the areas the region has prioritized.

### *Transportation*

Transportation is an essential factor influencing workforce and product availability and encourages the transfer of resources, goods, services, and consumers between the region and other locations worldwide. Interstate 81, US 460 and other secondary roads are critical corridors for truck freight and commuter mobility throughout the region. Rideshare programs like RIDEsolutions support the reduction of single-occupancy vehicle commuting.

Passenger rail is expected to extend to the region within the next five years. Amtrak's Northeast Regional Service will extend operation to Christiansburg, VA. The addition of passenger rail in the NRV will connect the region to metropolitan areas such as New York, Philadelphia, and Washington D.C. which offers opportunities to expand visitorship and increase workforce connectivity.

### *Broadband*

The pandemic underscored the need for quality internet to conduct business, engage in education, and access goods and services. The region has also been working to bring quality high-speed internet regionwide. In 2021, the NRV received funding for a multi-regional broadband project to address the gaps in affordable broadband access within the region. Other localized projects are also underway. It is estimated that by 2026 the entire NRV will have access to high-speed internet.

### *Available Property*

A continued barrier to business attraction and growth is the limited availability of industrial, commercial, and residential building stock. Intense demand is outstripping supply, and because of these shortages, the region is often passed over for other communities who can offer adequate employee housing and commercial space.

### *Alternative Energy*

Increasing utility costs and growing concerns around fossil fuel consumption and climate change have led many localities and business leaders to pursue alternative energy options. While fossil fuels still comprise most of the energy usage, alternative energy solutions such as solar, wind, and geothermal energy generation offer a way for households and communities to reduce emissions and overall energy costs.



## Priority 3 Strategies

*Strategy 3.1* - Expand transportation options to meet the needs of businesses and residents.

- a. Develop and expand regional transit systems, rideshare programs, and other initiatives that connect population centers to employment centers to improve access for rural residents.
- b. Promote land-use policies that maximize the opportunities of regional access to transportation networks, including interstates and major highways, freight rail, and airports.
- c. Promote and support the development of a passenger rail station in the NRV.
- d. Expand the regional walking and biking trails, bike lanes, and pedestrian safety improvements.

*Strategy 3.2* - Identify opportunities to expand and improve the region's high-speed internet available to residents and offer services to meet the needs of households and businesses within the NRV.

- a. Encourage the development of broadband networks in unserved rural areas and improve the capacity of broadband connections in underserved communities.
- b. Support local service providers' efforts to bring fiber to the home.
- c. Encourage the development of network redundancy around critical services (emergency services, health care facilities, schools, government buildings, etc.) to be prepared for emergency and disaster situations.
- d. Retrofit historic buildings to provide improved broadband options.

*Strategy 3.3* - Develop and maintain adequate and affordable housing stock within the region.

- a. Develop and encourage youth programs that offer on-the-job training in construction and other related skilled trades (electricians, HVAC technicians, plumbers, masons, etc.) related to the housing industry.
- b. Reinvestment in housing stock to provide renovation and retrofitting to older homes.
- c. Investigate programs that establish regional purchasing power for building materials to reduce building material costs.
- d. Business support for construction firms to improve business practices and cash flow.

*Strategy 3.4* - Develop and maintain available sites and buildings to meet the needs of industrial and commercial users.

- a. Incentivize rehabilitation of deteriorating structures in historic downtown districts and encourage mixed-use development in growth areas and downtown districts.
- b. Inventory and assess vacant industrial and commercial properties, identify appropriate uses for the buildings and related retrofitting needs.
- c. Promote and support shovel-ready mid and large-sized industrial site projects.
- d. Promote and support building energy efficiency through efforts to increase demand for these features through public education and valuation for energy efficiency improvements.

*Strategy 3.5* - Explore and implement alternative energy options within the region.

- a. Promote and support the ability of government, business, residents to invest in alternative renewable energy sources and infrastructure.
- b. Education programs to inform citizens about options and benefits of alternative energy for residents.
- c. Promote the NRV's alternative energy efforts as an asset for regional attraction.

## 4.

### Preserve & Promote the Natural and Cultural Resources in the Region

The NRV has rich natural and cultural resources that shape the identity of each locality and offer many opportunities for the region's economy. These options include raw material production, outdoor recreation and other tourism opportunities, and rich cultural history to provide a unique place to live and work. During the COVID-19 pandemic, outdoor recreation amenities gave communities both continued economic development opportunities and a means for safer social interaction.

#### Priority 4 Strategies

*Strategy 4.1* - Preserve the NRV's natural and historic assets to protect the character and quality of the regional environment.

- a. Support and encourage the continuation of family farms through efforts to increase the market for local agricultural products, including farmers markets, regional aggregation facilities, and "farm to school" programs.
- b. Utilize tourism initiatives to preserve open spaces, historic sites, and vital natural attractions with local non-profits, historical societies, conservation groups, etc.
- c. Coordinate conservation, outdoor recreation, and tourism initiatives related to the New River within the region and neighboring regions.
- d. Improve land use planning and practices to preserve the region's rural character and encourage development in existing population and employment centers.

*Strategy 4.2* - Coordinate marketing and promotion campaigns to create a consistent brand and message for the NRV.

- a. Explore options to provide regional support and coordination for tourism promotion campaigns of the county, city, and town destination marketing organizations.
- b. Leverage state and regional tourism and economic development marketing programs aligned with NRV marketing initiatives.
- c. Identify, develop, and package the region's historical and cultural assets, arts natural features, outdoor recreation amenities, and events to support external marketing.



## 5.

### Encourage Business Friendly Governance & Organizational Representation

Partnerships between the public and private sectors are key to the success of many of the region's initiatives. Stakeholders can capitalize on regional strengths and opportunities and lessen regional weaknesses and threats by working together.

Regional collaboration proved an effective tool for navigating the pandemic. Multi-disciplinary groups of local government representatives, businesses, first responders, and other volunteers worked together to limit disease transmission, hold vaccination clinics, and organize business support and assistance. Utilizing these relationships, regional and local stakeholders can continue to tackle issues that face the region.

#### Priority 5 Strategies

*Strategy 5.1-* Promote a business-friendly environment through governments cooperating with businesses at the local level and advocating for them at the state and federal levels.

- a. Seek representation on state commissions and committees and the Go Virginia Region 2 Counsel.
- b. Provide input to state agencies from regional economic development organizations and NRVRC to ensure state policies and programs address local issues.
- c. Support police, fire, and medical operations throughout the region.
- d. Coordinate state's regional resources to expand the capacity and resources of local governments to implement desired economic development programs.

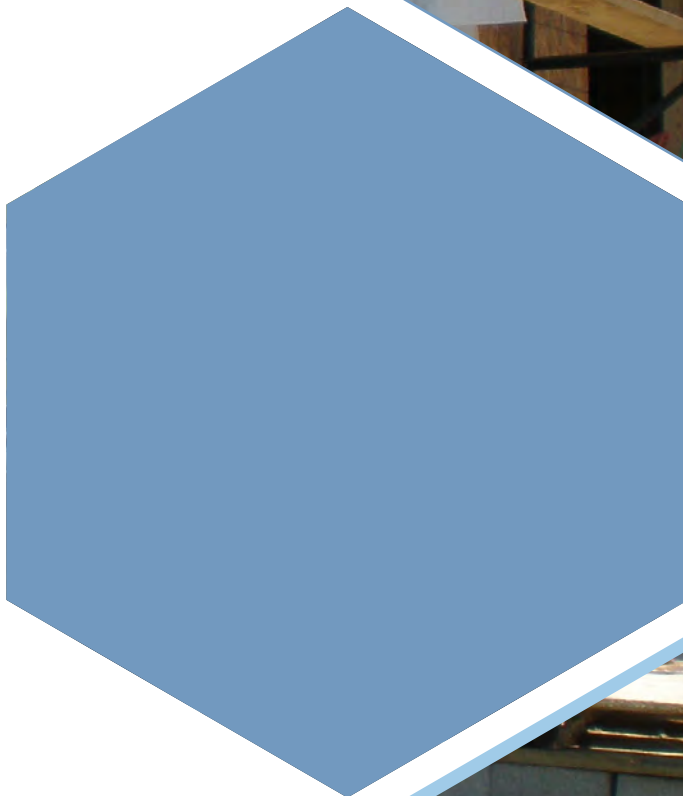
*Strategy 5.2-* Develop and maintain partnerships among organizations, educational institutions, and government entities.

- a. Build relationships between groups to collaborate to facilitate the exchange of information to benefit the region.
- b. Collaborate with multi-disciplinary partners to develop strategies and tackle priority regional projects.
- c. Coordinate events that foster cross-organizational relationships.



# EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The RES committee and the NRVRC Board members reviewed and updated the project evaluation criteria. These criteria reflect RES priorities and strategies and are used to measure the relevancy of a project with the regional strategy. Projects are evaluated on project readiness and priority alignment, economic competitiveness, and regional alignment.





2022



# TOP PROJECTS

1

**Development of Broadband Infrastructure and Internet Availability.** Implement recommendations of studies in local jurisdictions (Montgomery, Pulaski, Giles). NRV will continue to pursue additional funds for underserved areas.

**Estimated Funding:** \$68,000,000 **Target Date:** 2022-2024

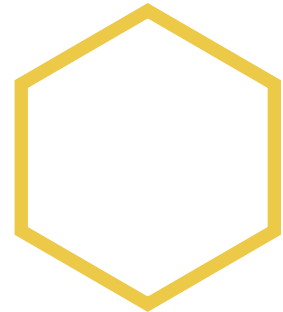
**Responsible Agency:** Private Internet Service Providers and NRV localities

2

**The Future of Transportation and Logistics.** Virginia Tech leads regional coalitions that aims to support the local transportation and logistics cluster and accelerate the adoption of electric and automated (uncrewed) vehicles. The coalition plans to build upon its existing strengths in vehicle manufacturing, digital technology R&D, and vehicle test and evaluation. The coalition proposes to support this cluster through three distinct projects providing more accessible technology testbeds and networks for tech transfer, business development support, and talent development services.

**Estimated Funding:** \$24,000,000 **Target Date:** 2022-2024

**Responsible Agency:** Virginia Tech and NRV localities



3

**Provide Technical Assistance Services to Supply Chain Firms of Regional Manufacturers.** Engage university experts and industrial consultants to provide product testing/prototyping, market analysis, process improvement, and other technical assistance services to support the competitiveness of suppliers to large regional manufacturers.

**Estimated Funding:** \$6,000,000 **Target Date:** 2022-2024

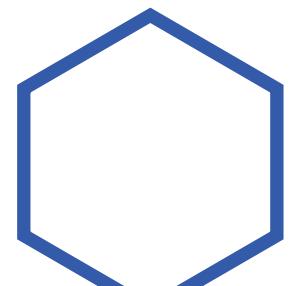
**Responsible Agency:** Onward NRV, Virginia Tech, local economic development, private business

4

**Implement "Sector Strategies" Focus for Workforce Development Programs to Meet Needs in Target Industry Sectors.** Develop relationships between regional businesses and education, economic development, and related stakeholder organizations to provide services that ensure success of these industries in the region. Enhance integrated "career pathways" workforce curriculum to develop workforce skills that address needs of targeted industry sectors, especially manufacturing, IT, and healthcare.

**Estimated Funding:** \$25,000,000 **Target Date:** 2022-2026

**Responsible Agency:** NRMW WDB, Education providers, local industries





**5 Manage, Promote and Expand Local and Regional Revolving Loan Fund Programs.** Deploy RLFs to small businesses and entrepreneurs across the region. Secure funds to recapitalize the loan fund to target scale up opportunities and emergent business sectors.

**Estimated Funding:** \$100,000  
**Target Date:** 2022-2024  
**Responsible Agency:** NRVRC, local economic development

**6 Commercial District Revitalization Efforts.** Encourage micro and small business success in downtown and commercial districts, through revitalization and promotions of community individuality, redevelopment of blighted properties, and small business support services.

**Estimated Funding:** \$10,000,000  
**Target Date:** 2022-2026  
**Responsible Agency:** NRVRC, NRV localities, RRSBDC

**7 Support of Local Agriculture, Growers, and Producers.** Through business development services, networking and mentoring, local farmers and agriculture producers can expand business opportunities in the food/beverage and small-scale manufacturing industries to increase production, profitability, and access to healthy foods.

**Estimated Funding:** \$100,000  
**Target Date:** 2023-2024  
**Responsible Agency:** Cooperative Extension office, local economic developers, Thrive network, farmers markets, RRSBDC

**8 Promote and Coordinate the Development of a New River Valley Passenger Rail Station.** In conjunction with the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority and the New River Valley Passenger Rail Station Authority, coordinate state and private stakeholders to pursue development of this passenger service from Roanoke to Christiansburg.

**Estimated Funding:** \$4,500,000  
**Target Date:** 2025  
**Responsible Agency:** NRV localities, Higher Ed, State Agencies, Public/Private Railroad Companies, NRVRC

**9 New River Water Trail Expansion Project.** Support regional and local efforts to develop outdoor recreation tourism amenities related to the New River and other natural resources, such as boat ramps and access, signage, marketing, education, safety, stewardship and other recreation supportive projects.

**Estimated Funding:** \$2,500,00  
**Target Date:** 2022-2026  
**Responsible Agency:** NRVRC, NRV localities, New River Watershed Roundtable, National Park Service, VA Dept of Wildlife Resources, Friends of New River, local DMOs



# 10

## **Industrial Site Development and Upgrades.**

Site grading, pad site development, shell building construction and other infrastructure upgrades to the region's industrial parks and sites.

**Estimated Funding:** \$15,000,000 **Target Date:** 2022-2026

**Responsible Agency:** Virginia's First RIFA, local economic development

# 11

**Housing Production.** Development of a wider range of homeowners opportunities and rental; development of greenfield sites for housing.

**Estimated Funding:** \$100,000,000 **Target Date:** 2022-2026

**Responsible Agency:** Private and non-profit developers, NRV localities, NRV Home Consortium

# 12

**Blockchain Ecosystem Catalyst.** Virginia Tech will develop and implement academic programming, professional talent development, developing industry relationships, and launching an online resource portal for blockchain startups and professionals. The program is designed to encourage entrepreneurship and commercialization of blockchain-related technologies and bolster existing IT pipelines around blockchain systems.

**Estimated Funding:** \$500,000 **Target Date:** 2022-2023

**Responsible Agency:** Virginia Tech; private industry

# 13

**Bio-medical/Life Sciences Expansion.** The Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center in partnership with the city of Roanoke, Montgomery County, and Johnson & Johnson JLABS, will support a three-prong approach to grow the region's health and life science cluster. The project will pilot a shared lab facility in Blacksburg at the VTCRC to meet the demand from small, early-stage companies, many of which are spinoffs from Virginia Tech and/or alumni of the Regional Accelerator & Mentoring Program (RAMP).

**Estimated Funding:** \$600,000 **Target Date:** 2022-2023

**Responsible Agency:** Virginia Tech, private industry, Montgomery County, RRSBDC

# 14

**Valley to Valley Trail Study.** Perform analysis combined with consensus building to result in a recommended alignment that will connect the Roanoke River Greenway to the New River Trail while connecting to other recreational facilities in the region such as the Huckleberry Trail in Christiansburg.

**Estimated Funding:** \$100,000 **Target Date:** 2022-2024

**Responsible Agency:** VDOT, NRVRC, NRVMPD







# Local Project List



Description	RES Goal	Area	Estimated Cost	Responsible Agency	Estimated Construction Date
Preparation of newly graded building sites at NRV Commerce Park. Site readiness to move Lot J (120 acres) from Tier 4 to Tier 5.	Goal 3	NRV	\$728,000.00	Virginia's First Regional Industrial Facilities Authority	2023
Development of Broadband Infrastructure and Internet Availability Implement recommendations of studies in local jurisdictions (Montgomery, Pulaski). NRV will continue to pursue additional funds for underserved areas.	Goal 3	NRV	\$68,000,000.00	Private Internet Service Providers, APCO, and NRV Localities	2022-2024
Implement 'sector strategies focus for workforce development programs to meet needs in target industry sectors. Develop relationships between regional businesses and education, economic develop, and related stakeholder organizations to provide services that ensure success of these industries in the region. Enhance integrated 'career pathways' workforce curriculum to develop workforce skills that address needs of targeted industry sectors, especially manufacturing, IT and healthcare.	Goal 2	NRV	\$25,000,000.00	NRMR-WDB, Educational Providers, Local Industry	2022-2024
Manage, promote, and expand the NRV Revolving Loan Fund deploy funds to small businesses and entrepreneurs across the region. Secure funds to recapitalize the loan fund to target scale up opportunities and emergent business sectors.	Goal 1	NRV	\$100,000.00	NRVRC, NRVRLF Committee	2023
Promote and coordinate the development of a New River Valley passenger rail station. In conjunction with the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority and the New River Valley Passenger Rail Station Authority, coordinate state and private stakeholders to pursue development of this service by 2025.	Goal 3	NRV	\$4,500,000.00	NRV Localities, Higher ED, State Agencies, Public/Private Railroad Companies, NRVRC	2025
Coordinate Regional Destination Marketing Organizations (DMO). Explore options to increase coordination of regional DMOs and tourism promotion initiatives, and support local tourism marketing campaigns to promote New River Valley communities as a tourist destination, and increase visitor spending. Upgrade regional tourism website.	Goal 4	NRV	\$100,000.00	NRV Localities, Tourism Offices, NRVRC	2024
New River Watershed Roundtable. Convene regional partners and act as a forum for information and knowledge of the New River. Coordinate environmental stewardship related to the New River as an identity, source of outdoor recreation and economic opportunity, as well as a public health amenity. Continue regional coordination of river clean-up events to preserve the water quality and condition of the New River.	Goal 4	NRV	\$25,000.00	NRVRC, local governments, VA Dept. of Environmental Quality ( DEQ)	
New River Water Trail Expansion Project. Support regional and local efforts to develop outdoor recreation tourism amenities related to the New River and other natural resources, such as boat ramps and access, signage, marketing, education, safety, stewardship and other recreation supportive projects.	Goal 4	NRV	\$2,500,000.00	NRVRC, local governments, Norfolk Southern	2022

Coordinate marketing and business support efforts for arts and cultural amenities in the New River Valley. Promote and support the development of arts and cultural-related events and institutions through targeted incentives and support for arts-related development. Coordinate with Friends of Southwest Virginia, Crooked Road, 'Round the Mountain and local arts-based non-profits.	Goal 4	NRV	\$300,000.00	Localities, civic groups, business groups	
Commercial District Revitalization efforts. Encourage micro and small business success in downtown and commercial districts, through revitalization and promotions of community individuality, redevelopment of blighted properties, and small business support services	Goal 1	NRV	\$100,000.00	NRVRC, Participating Towns	
Provide technical assistance services to supply chain firms of regional manufacturers. Engage university experts and industrial consultants to provide product testing/prototyping, market analysis, process improvement, and other technical assistance services to support the competitiveness of suppliers to large regional manufacturers	Goal 1	NRV	\$6,000,000.00	US EDA, VT, Onward NRV, Local Economic Developers, Private Business	2023
Target Industry Business Development Program. Develop educational program through the community college and university that support the development and/or recruitment of small businesses/industries in regional target sectors, including advanced manufacturing, IT/cybersecurity, life sciences, and food and beverage processing.	Goal 1	NRV		Virginia Tech, Radford University, NRCC, School Divisions, Onward NRV	
Maintain updated Regional Housing Study. Assess regional housing market annually and update local and regional strategies to address housing market needs	Goal 3	NRV		NRVRC	Ongoing
Develop regional 'small scale manufacturing' capability. Creation of a regional maker space and coordination of regional fabricators to support prototyping and small-run manufacturing for entrepreneurs	Goal 1	NRV	\$1,000,000.00		
Create utility standards for service providers to follow while coordinating digging between localities and service providers to install conduits or other utilities	Goal 3	NRV		APCO, PSAs, Internet Service Providers, Local Governments	
Explore the creation of a Regional Recreation Authority to oversee and manage multi-jurisdiction trails, including water trails	Goal 4	NRV		Localities, Civic Groups, NRVRC, Educational Institutes	2025
Valley to Valley Trail Study Perform analysis combined with consensus building to result in a recommended alignment that will connect the Roanoke River Greenway to the New River Trail while connecting to other recreational facilities in the region such as the Huckleberry Trail in Christiansburg.	Goal 2	NRV		VDOT, NRVRC, NRVMPD	2022
Interstate-81 interchange improvements Exits 89,94,98,105,114.	Goal 3	NRV		VDOT	2020
Route 100 widening between Pulaski County and Giles County.	Goal 3	NRV		VDOT	2022
Create Regional Revolving Loan Fund for Energy Audits and Retrofits Fund for NRV businesses and residents.	Goal 3	NRV		NRVRC	
Support Carpooling Efforts/Initiatives throughout the New River Valley Support the expansion and marketing of Ride Solutions while exploring potential for carpooling app	Goal 3	NRV			
Create Network of Growers and Producers in the region linking NRV farmers to markets to increase profitability.	Goal 1	NRV		Thrive Network, Farmers Markets, Eat Work Grow	
Support for local craft brewery, winery, and distillery business growth marketing and business development support for these businesses' growth.	Goal 1	NRV		NRV Economic Developers, Local DMOs	2024
Centralize marketing of energy efficiency options create a "one-stop-shop" where people can evaluate typical "payback" on upgrades, find a qualified energy auditor/retrofitter, navigate various financing options.	Goal 3	NRV		NRVRC, Localities	
Multi-Jurisdictional Trails: used as both a tourism asset and an alternative/green method of transportation.	Goal 3	NRV	\$10,000,000.00	NRVRC, Localities, Education Institutions, civic groups	2018
Develop and implement a program to support small family farms using a trade collective and professional development model similar to "Cultivating Success".	Goal 1	NRV		Local Economic Developers, Cooperative Extension, Sustain Floyd, Work Eat Grow	2026
Scenic Byway Designation study- Look at Route 8 (Floyd) and Route 460 (Elliston) (Pre-concept Phase)	Goal 4	NRV			
Developing a Destination for Talent. Virginia Tech will be creating regional hubs to help connect local employers, students, Virginia Tech faculty, and economic development professionals. This program will create a pipeline of talent from Virginia Tech to employers in the region's identified priority clusters through an internship program, and facilitate opportunities for Virginia Tech faculty to collaborate with employers and interns on specific tech transfer projects.	Goal 1	NRV	\$773,000.00	Virginia Tech, Onward NRV	
Classrooms to Careers Classrooms to Careers will connect teachers and students to local Information Technology (IT) businesses, raising students' awareness of IT career opportunities in the New River Valley (NRV) and preparing them for the further education and training needed to pursue those opportunities successfully.	Goal 2	NRV	\$411,000.00	NR-MR WOB, Regional Public School Systems, NRCC, Radford University, Virginia Tech	

Blockchain Ecosystem Catalyst Virginia Tech will develop and implement the Blockchain Ecosystem Catalyst (BEC) program through four areas: 1) academic programming, 2) professional development, 3) developing industry relationships, and 4) launching an online resource portal for blockchain startups and professionals. The BEC program will support talent development by creating and supporting new curricula for regional higher education and midcareer professionals that bolster and widen existing IT pipelines around blockchain/distributed ledger systems. The program is also designed to encourage entrepreneurship and commercialization of blockchain-related technologies.	Goal 2	NRV	\$500,000.00	Virginia Tech	
Automated Vehicles. Virginia Tech leads a coalition in the Southern and Southwest Virginia region that aims to support the local transportation and logistics cluster and accelerate the adoption of electric and automated vehicles. The coalition plans to build upon its existing strengths in vehicle manufacturing, digital technology R&D, and vehicle test and evaluation. The coalition proposes to support this cluster through three distinct projects providing more accessible technology testbeds and networks for tech transfer, business development support, and talent development services. If provided an implementation grant, the coalition aims to catalyze regional economic growth by aligning regional assets, accelerating the adoption of critical vehicle technologies, and achieving global prominence in automated electric delivery.	Goal 1	NRV	\$24,000,000.00	Virginia Tech	2022
Huckleberry Trail Extension. Assist in the construction of the Huckleberry Trail extension from Prices Fork to Glade Road. Grading, site amenities, and surfacing are needed.	Goal 4	Blacksburg	\$100,000.00	Town of Blacksburg, Friend of the Huckleberry Trail	2018
Housing Development - affordable multi-tenant development	Goal 3	Blacksburg		Private industry, NRV HOME Consortium	ongoing
Signature Park Development Phase I includes four full-sized rectangular fields, two picnic pavilions, a splash pad, a small and large dog park, an inclusive playground, an adult fitness zone, a challenge course, nearly two miles of trails, and green space for passive recreation.	Goal 2	Christiansburg	\$18,000,000.00	Town of Christiansburg	2022
Farmers' Market Structures - New permanent structure, ARC funded	Goal 1	Christiansburg	\$275,000.00	Town of Christiansburg	2024
Phase III of the Downtown Enhancement Project N. Franklin Street-new sidewalks, planting, paving, Main to Depot intersection improvements.	Goal 1	Christiansburg		Town of Christiansburg	2025
Christiansburg Institute - Cultural Experience, Cultural Learning Curriculum, Oral History, and Site Preservation.	Goal 4	Christiansburg		Christiansburg Institute	2027
N. Franklin St. - Peppers Ferry Road Connector Route Phase I Not in draft SYIP - Smart Scale project	Goal 3	Christiansburg	\$12,004,000.00	VDOT, Town of Christiansburg	2027
N. Franklin St. - Peppers Ferry Road Connector Route Phase II Not in draft SYIP - Smart Scale project	Goal 3	Christiansburg	\$12,000,000.00	VDOT, Town of Christiansburg	2029
Public Works Complex. Moving current complex out of the floodplain	Goal 3	Christiansburg	\$10,000,000.00	Town Christiansburg	2027
Upgrade of Wastewater Plant to accommodate 2 million gallons more per day.	Goal 3	Christiansburg		Town of Christiansburg	
Future Emergency Services Station (location TBD)	Goal 2	Christiansburg	\$6,000,000.00	Town of Christiansburg	2026
Drain improvement-College St. area	Goal 3	Christiansburg		Christiansburg Public Works	
Marketplace redevelopment-housing	Goal 3	Christiansburg		Private industry, Town of Christiansburg	
Clifton Town Center - mix of commercial and residential along Peppers Ferry Road	Goal 3	Christiansburg		Private industry, Town of Christiansburg	
Phase IIb Development of Floyd Regional Commerce Center. Develop building pads on Lots 1 and 2 (51 acres); have funds to do road access and utility extension.	Goal 3	Floyd	\$4,000,000.00	Floyd County, Floyd County EDA	2023
Developing Lots 4 and Lot 8 at the Floyd Regional Commerce Center. Site pad/grading work to get these sites ready for business location	Goal 3	Floyd	\$1,500,000.00	Floyd County, Floyd County EDA	2022
Constructing Shell building on Lot 8. Construction of a building in the Floyd Regional Commerce Center. The building will be designed to be able to serve more than one tenant.	Goal 3	Floyd	\$6,050,000.00	Floyd County, Floyd County EDA	2021
Marketing Floyd Growth Center Phase 2 of Regional Commerce Center. Additional funding to continue into 2022	Goal 1	Floyd	\$100,000.00	Floyd County	2022
Route 8 Improvements. Road Improvements on Route 8 between I-81 and Floyd Town	Goal 3	Floyd	\$10,000,000.00	VDOT	2026
Floyd County EDA Revolving Loan Fund. Expand revolving loan pool as all funds currently loaned out due to high demand.	Goal 1	Floyd	\$80,000.00	Floyd County EDA	Ongoing
Trails for Floyd (pedestrian, biking, and hiking). Extension of trail corridors from the town to the county as outlined in the comprehensive plan.	Goal 4	Floyd	\$5,000,000.00	Floyd County, Floyd County EDA, Floyd County Tourism	
Stream Gauge and Rain Gauges for Hazard Mitigation. Floyd County's Little River Watershed experienced a significant flash flood in 2015 with more than 25 houses destroyed or significantly damaged. There are no stream gauges in this area and no real-time rain gauges. These are needed to protect lives during flash flooding.	Goal 3	Floyd	\$10,000.00	Floyd County	2023

Floyd County Community Resource Hub - One-stop-shop in Floyd that would enable citizens to access needed services (concept phase)	Goal 5	Floyd		Floyd County	2025
Engineering Studies on Extending Water and Sewer to areas of Floyd Co. Determine priority areas for extension of public water and sewer, and begin extending system. Need to protect recharge and well-head areas.	Goal 3	Floyd	\$1,500,000.00	Floyd County	2021
Improving Access to the Floyd Regional Commerce Center from Route 8. Remove sharp turns to improve truck access.	Goal 3	Floyd	\$800,000.00	Floyd County, Floyd County EDA, VDOT	2023
Expansion of the Floyd Innovation Center – pursuing planning funding to develop masterplan for more expansion and development	Goal 1	Floyd	\$200,000.00	Floyd County EDA	2023
Loan funding for farming, food and beverage (concept)	Goal 1	Floyd			
Building renovation and mixed development utilizing brownfields funding, historic tax credits to encourage private investment	Goal 3	Floyd		Floyd Town, and Floyd County	Ongoing
Floyd County-Solid waste & recycling (convenience)	Goal 3	Floyd			
Housing Projects- development of a wider range of homeowners opportunities and rental, development of greenfield site for housing.	Goal 3	Floyd		Private Industry	Ongoing
Habitat for Humanity Homeownership-Construction of 7 townhouses build in Habitat model	Goal 3	Floyd		Floyd County, Habitat for Humanity	2022
Scattered Site Housing Rehabilitation- improvements to 12 homes in the county	Goal 3	Floyd	\$1,000,000.00	Floyd County	2023
Phlegar House Restoration Facility in great disrepair. If restored, it could be the trail head in the Floyd Regional Commerce Center Greenway. (concept phase).	Goal 4	Floyd	\$500,000.00	Floyd County Historical Preservation Trust, Floyd County EDA	2023
Floyd Public Transit Study - viability of public transit in county/town	Goal 3	Floyd (town)	\$25,000.00	Floyd town	2021
Ongoing public improvements streetscape, trails, building improvements, parking improvements, wayfinding study	Goal 3	Floyd (town)		Floyd town	ongoing
Eggleston Water Extension Phase 2-Extend water service to 160 residencies	Goal 3	Giles	\$1,400,000.00	Giles County	2026
Route 635 Water-Extension provide public water to approximately 150 residents in the Big Stoney Community of Giles County	Goal 3	Giles	\$3,000,000.00	Giles County	2026
Clendennin Water Extension-provide public water to approximately 50 residents in the Clendennin community of Giles County.	Goal 3	Giles	\$2,000,000.00	Giles County	2024
Creation of industrial shell building- 30,000 Sqft.	Goal 1	Giles	\$11,000,000.00	Giles County IDA	2024
Giles County Trails Center - at Mountain Lake Lodge and connection to the Appalachian Trail	Goal 4	Giles		Giles County, Mountain Lake Hotel	
Housing Production- development of 240 houses and house lots	Goal 3	Giles		Giles County, Private Developer	2022
Public Transportation Connections to Blacksburg, Virginia Tech, and other major employment centers. Specific projects in local transit plans and 2016 Regional Transit Study.	Goal 2	Giles	\$2,000,000.00	Giles County, NRV MPO (data hub)	2018
Route 8 Widening Project -widening Route 8 from the Montgomery and Floyd County line to the Town of Christiansburg.	Goal 3	Montgomery		VDOT	
Expansion of Falling Branch Industrial Park Phase II, Lot 2 -Land is ready for water, sewer, and road improvements	Goal 1	Montgomery		Montgomery County EDA	2022
Trail Around Falling Branch Corporate Park Phase I - Status Conceptual To develop a walking trail around Falling Branch Corporate Park.	Goal 2	Montgomery		Town of Christiansburg	2023
Housing Development significant housing construction (up to 1000 plots) along Prices Fork Road - private development. Will need update on road and traffic study from MPO.	Goal 3	Montgomery		Montgomery County, Blacksburg, VDOT	
Project Eagle. The Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center (VTCRC), a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Virginia Tech Foundation (VTF), in partnership with the city of Roanoke, Montgomery County, and Johnson & Johnson JLABS, will support a three-prong approach to grow the region's health and life science cluster. Project Eagle+ will pilot a shared lab facility in Blacksburg at the VTCRC to meet the demand from small, early-stage companies, many of which are spinoffs from Virginia Tech and/or alumni of the Regional Accelerator & Mentoring Program (RAMP).	Goal 1	Montgomery	\$600,000.00	Virginia Tech	
Upgrades and improvements at Mill Creek Nature Park - improve access, upgrades to parking area, restroom facility (water/sewer). Additional support from Virginia Outdoor Foundation	Goal 4	Narrows	\$15,000.00	Town of Narrows	2022
Architectural study for upgrade/replacement of Narrows Volunteer Fire Department equipment building (continuing)	Goal 5	Narrows	\$15,000.00	Town of Narrows, Fire Department	2022-2024
Downtown improvements. Façade and infrastructure improvements to encourage visitors and business development.	Goal 1	Narrows	\$1,000,000.00	Town of Narrows, Giles County, NRVRC	2018-2023
Replace existing collection system piping and upgrade wastewater plan and RBC system	Goal 3	Narrows	\$1,500,000.00	Narrows, Giles County, NRVRC	2018-2023
Sewer repair and replacement	Goal 3	Narrows	\$700,000.00	Town of Narrows	2022-2023

Water Meter Replacement	Goal 3	Narrows	\$500,000.00	Town of Narrows	2022-2023
Water Line PER for upgrades.	Goal 3	Narrows		Town of Narrows	2023-2025
Upgrades to HVAC at Community Center and library	Goal 2	Narrows		Town of Narrows	2022
EMS/Ambulance Service offered by Narrows Fire Department	Goal 2	Narrows		Narrows Fire Department	2023-2025
Pearisburg Wastewater Treatment Plant UVA Project – Replace chlorine gas disinfection with UVA disinfection to eliminate safety concern with current treatment method.	Goal 3	Pearisburg	\$150,000.00	Town of Pearisburg	2018
Old Town Shop Property Redevelopment-Adaptive reuse of former public works building and property.	Goal 1	Pearisburg		Town of Pearisburg	2018
Community Center Renovation of Old School for Community Center - Including new electrical, mechanical and plumbing	Goal 2	Pearisburg	\$2,000,000.00	Town of Pearisburg	2020
Claremont School Redevelopment-housing 52 units (affordable units Landmark Development)	Goal 3	Pulaski		Private Developer, Pulaski County	2023
Pulaski Middle-150 apartments market rate (Eschelon Development)	Goal 3	Pulaski		Pulaski County, Private Developer	2024
Green Government approach- Sol Smart gold standard. development of 3rd largest solar farm on the East Coast- 3000 acres: hydro dam; wind farm; methane conversion at landfill.	Goal 3	Pulaski		Pulaski County, Sol Smart, Private Developer	2024
Launch small business solutions department at the County – Pulaski County Innovation Center – transition to an incubator – properties manager which is to support small business and entrepreneurship	Goal 1	Pulaski		Virginia's First Regional Industrial Facilities Authority, Pulaski County	2021
Expansion of County Tourism Department- assistance to tourism related/hospitality business	Goal 1	Pulaski		Pulaski County Tourism	2021
State Trail Welcome Center-Draper Cottage	Goal 4	Pulaski		VTC/State Park Collaboration	
Transition County Welcome Center into Sale Center	Goal 1	Pulaski		Pulaski County	
Housing Development 498 units Countryside Landing – behind the middle school (near Dublin) already building homes; High Bridge (152 units – near innovation center – start soon)	Goal 3	Pulaski		Pulaski County, Private Developer	ongoing
New River Trail Extension	Goal 4	Pulaski	\$5,000,000.00	VDOT,Pulaski County	
Rt. 99 Water/Sewer Extension Extend water and sewer lines to Exit 94, to encourage commercial development.	Goal 3	Pulaski	\$1,500,000.00	Pulaski County, Town of Pulaski	
Housing Rehabilitation and Blight Remediation - address housing concerns for low to moderate income residents as well as remove slum & blight issues in residential neighborhoods	Goal 3	Pulaski (town)	\$1,250,000.00	Town of Pulaski	2020
Continue Blight Elimination Program - The Town reenacted vacant building registry and enforcing building maintenance codes.	Goal 3	Pulaski (town)	\$200,000.00	Town of Pulaski	ongoing
Bicycle Lane and Trail Improvements Improving bike accessibility for critical pathways throughout the Town.	Goal 2	Pulaski (town)	\$1,000,000.00	Town of Pulaski	2023
Recreational Amenities (Skate Park)	Goal 2	Pulaski (town)	\$221,000.00	Town of Pulaski	2023
Recreation amenities - Mountain Bike Park (8 acres of variety of skills – right off I-81 & New River Trail)	Goal 2	Pulaski (town)		Town of Pulaski	2022
Recreation amenities – Municipal splash pad	Goal 2	Pulaski (town)		Town of Pulaski	2023
Derelict Building Redevelopment – Downtown Brewery in old Foundry Building	Goal 1	Pulaski (town)	\$2,000,000.00	Pulaski Town Redevelopment & Housing Authority	2023
Planning and Imagining the redevelopment of Pulaski Furniture (pre-concept phase)	Goal 1	Pulaski (town)			Ongoing
Convert Main Street into Two-Way Street	Goal 3	Pulaski (town)		Pulaski Town, VDOT	
Hotel Study-Looking at a building Downtown as possibility	Goal 1	Pulaski (town)			
Radford Village Water Line Replacement - 3,225 linear feet of 6" main water line would be replaced with an 8" service throughout the Radford Village residential area improving service reliability and water flow to forty homes.	Goal 3	Radford	\$17,500.00	City of Radford	2023
Wildwood Park Entrance Improvement- Improve Park entrance with parking facilities, a kiosk, pergola, new gate, and interpretive exhibits.	Goal 4	Radford	\$150,000.00	City of Radford	2023
University Drive Bridge - Improvements and repairs needed to the 25 year old University Drive Bridge which includes deck repairs, waterproofing, painting, fencing, and sidewalk repairs and corrosion maintenance.	Goal 3	Radford	\$531,000.00	City of Radford	2022
Amphitheater Planning, design & construction, 200 seats & stage	Goal 2	Radford		City of Radford, Radford University	2023
High Meadows Development-Improve the water system to include line work and a water tank	Goal 3	Radford	\$806,000.00	City of Radford	2025
East Main Street – improvements sidewalks, lights, 3rd avenue parking lot Implement recommendations from the planning study	Goal 1	Radford	\$3,000,000.00	City of Radford, Radford University, NRVRC	2023

# Project Evaluation Criteria 2022



The following project evaluation criteria used to rank projects that localities submitted for inclusion in the RES. Projects are ranked to evaluate readiness and competitiveness as they align with the US Economic Development Administration and other funding source's priorities, should a project seek funding. This Ranking method is used to determine the region's Top 10+4 Projects.

## Tier 1: Project Readiness and RES Goal Alignment

The following criteria ranked all RES projects. These criteria reflect RES goals and objectives and were used to rank all submitted RES projects. Tier 1 evaluation ranks projects based on ability to address RES priorities and readiness for implementation.

### 1. Does the project address one or more RES Goals? (2 pts each)

Support small business development and entrepreneurship  
Preparation and continued support of qualified, available workforce  
Available land and quality infrastructure

Preservation of natural and cultural resources  
Business-friendly governance and representation

### 2. What is the regional impact of the proposed project?

Region-wide or Multi-regional impact (8 pts)  
Two or Three Jurisdictions participating or impacted (2 pts)

Four or five jurisdictions participating or impacted (4 pts)  
One jurisdiction participating or impacted (1 pt)

### 3. Does the proposed project have jurisdictional commitment?

Yes (8 pts)  
No (0 pts)

Unknown (1 pt)

### 4. Is there a project plan available for the project?

Final plans available (4 pts)  
Preliminary plans available (2 pts)

No plans exist (0 pts)  
Unknown (1 pt)

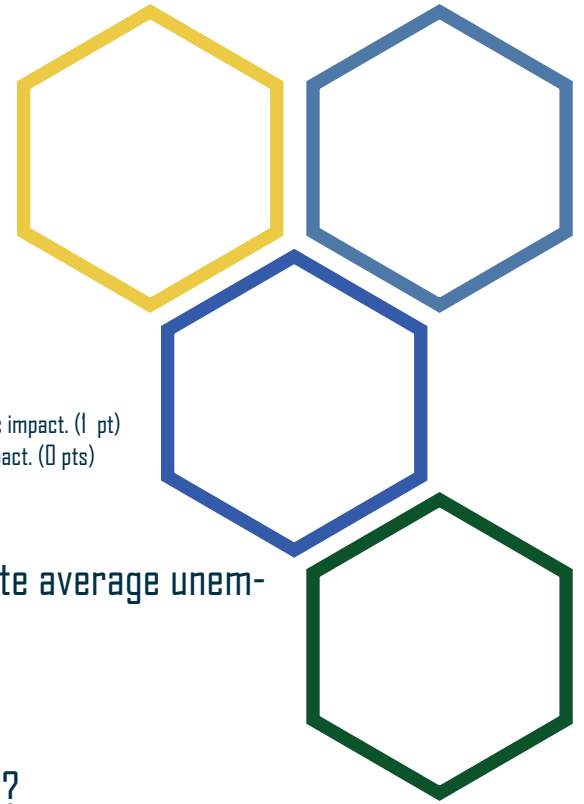
### 5. Has funding been identified and secured for this project?

Fully funded (8 pts)  
No funding identified (0 pts)

Partially funded or further funding needed (4 pts)  
Funding identified (2 pts)  
Unknown (1 pt)

## Tier 2: Economic Competativeness

The following criteria evaluated the expected positive economic impact a project will have or its ability to elevate socioeconomic indicators, and its ability to address regional vulnerability and resilience.<sup>1</sup>



### 1. What is the expected economic impact for this project?

Project is expected to have a substantial economic impact. (5 pts)  
Project is expected to have some economic impact. (3 pts)

Project is expected to have limited economic impact. (1 pt)  
Project is expected to have no economic impact. (0 pts)

### 2. Does the project target occupations with higher than state average unemployment rates?

Yes (2 pts)  
Same as (1 pt)

No (0 pts)

### 3. Does the project support skill-building or career training?

Yes (2 pts)

No (0 pts)

### 4. Is the project expected to create high wage positions?

Yes (2 pts)  
Unknown (1 pt)

No (0 pts)

### 5. Will this project contribute to geographic concentration of clusters?

High geographic concentration (5 pts)  
No geographic concentration (0 pts)

Low geographic (3 pts)

### 6. Will this project contribute to supply chain concentration of clusters?

High supply chain concentration (5 pts)  
No supply chain concentration (0 pts)

Low supply chain concentration (3 pts)

### 7. Does this project relate to target industry sectors identified by Onward NRV?

Yes (2 pts)  
Unknown (1 pt)

No (0 pt)

### 8. What percentage of the population is estimated to have lower than average per capita income (average of all jurisdictions involved in project)?

< 60% of local per capita income (3 pts)  
61-74 % of local per capita income (2 pts)

> 75% of local per capita income (1 pt)



## 9. What is the relationship to previous investments?

New facility or service (3 pts)

Expansion of existing services or facilities (2 pts)

Replacement of existing services or facilities (1 pt)

No new services or facilities are being created or expanded (0 pts)

## 10. Using the CDC's Social Vulnerability Index Map<sup>2</sup> for overall vulnerability by county, what is the project's vulnerability ranking? (Use average for multi-jurisdiction projects.)

High between .7501-1 (5 pts)

Limited between .2501-.5 (2 pts)

Moderate between .5001-.75 (4 pts)

Low between 0-.25 (2 pts)

## 11. Using the composite fiscal stress prepared by the Commission of Local Government, what is the relative strengths of the project jurisdictions (for multi-jurisdiction projects use the highest index ranking among participants)?

High (4 pts)

Below average or low (1 pt)

Above Average (3 pts)

## Tier 3: Regional Alignment

Criteria rate a project's alignment with other national, state, and regional initiatives and goals.

### 1. Does the project align with EDA investment priorities?<sup>3</sup>

Yes

No

### 2. Does this project address one or more of GoVirginia Region 2 priorities?<sup>4</sup>

Yes

No

### 3. Does the project support "in-demand occupations" as defined by the New River Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board?

Yes

No

### 4. Does this project promote regional livability goals?<sup>5</sup>

Yes

No

## Endnotes

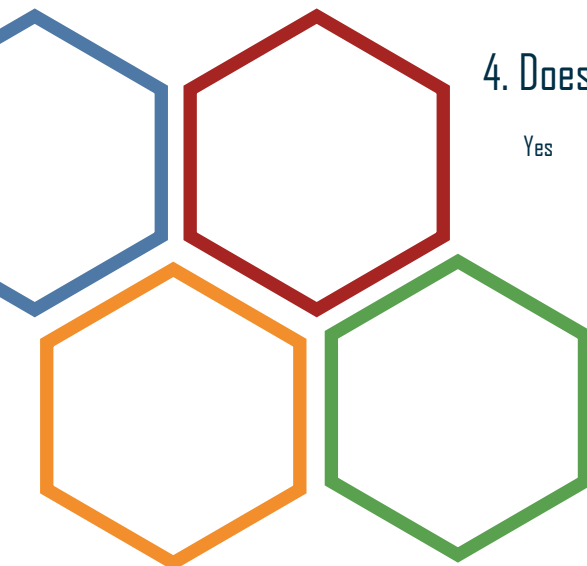
<sup>1</sup> Regional vulnerability criteria were established using the CDC's Social Vulnerability Index Documentation 2018, available at [atsdr.cdc.gov/placeandhealth/svi/documentation/SVI\\_documentation\\_2018.html](https://atsdr.cdc.gov/placeandhealth/svi/documentation/SVI_documentation_2018.html).

<sup>2</sup> CDC SVI created by the Agency of Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, <https://svi.cdc.gov/map.html>.

<sup>3</sup> For guidance regarding EDA priorities, see <https://eda.gov/about/investment-priorities/>

<sup>4</sup> See Region 2 GoVirginia 2021 Growth and Diversification Plan, available <https://cece.vt.edu/GOVAR2/GOVADocumentation.html>

<sup>5</sup> See Livability Goals found in the New River Valley Livability Plan strategies available at [https://nrvc.org/images/pdf/NRV\\_Home\\_Report.pdf](https://nrvc.org/images/pdf/NRV_Home_Report.pdf)





## New River Valley Regional Economic Strategy Committee Meeting

June 6, 2022  
1:00 p.m.  
New River Room

### Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Presentation of RES in ArcGIS StoryMaps
3. Presentation of RES Consumer Version
  - a. Regional sharing/alignment
4. Discussion
  - a. Advancing Top Priority projects
  - b. Regional Collaboration opportunities
5. Next Steps

Next meeting: October 7, 2022 @ 10:00 a.m.



# New River Valley Regional Economic Strategy Committee Meeting

May 6, 2022

## Meeting Notes

**Attendees:** Bob Beckman, Katie Boswell, Erin Burcham, Ann Cassell, Amanda Forrester, Cora Gnegy, Diane Grey, Holly Lesko, Andrew Warren, Joy Rumley, Summer Bork

### Agenda

Welcome

Presentation of RES in ArcGIS StoryMap

Presentation of RES Consumer Version

Regional Alignment/Sharing

Advancing Top Priority Projects

Regional Collaboration Opportunities

Next Steps

### Presentation of the RES in ArcGIS StoryMap

Summer Bork, NRVRC staff, presented the online RES document using the ArcGIS StoryMap feature. The committee wholly agreed that having an interactive, online version through StoryMap would help to make the full document more accessible to the region's partners.

The committee agreed that the document should link to regional partner's websites when they are mentioned in the RES to better access information and resources within the region.

### Presentation of the RES Consumer Version

The committee was generally enthusiastic about the consumer version of the RES, and the ability to quickly access this information regarding regional goals and projects, and share this with their partners and clients. They appreciated the digestibility of the document, and its utility for promoting RES goals within the region.

Multiple committee members commented on the design work that had been put into the document, and a couple editorial changes were recommended. The committee other substantive suggestions, such as:

- Adding "Digital Health" to the title of project 13 (expansion of bio-medical and life science cluster)
- Consider adding "food access" to title of project 7 (Support local agriculture, growers, and producers)
- Include "NRV HOME Consortium" as a partner to project 11 (develop a wider range of homeowner and rental opportunities).

## Regional Sharing/Alignment

Katie Boswell raised the question of how we intended to spread the news of the RES update being published and available to our partners.

Joy Rumley shared that the Commission staff intended to:

- Run an announcement in the Commission's newsletter
- Considering a post on the Commission's social media accounts
- Encourage Commissioners to share the information with their organizations and jurisdictions.

Committee suggestions:

- Press release about RES
- Copies available for distribution
- Include notifications to Chief Elected and Administrative Officials, Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development and Tourism Departments.

## Advancing Top Priority Projects

Bob Beckman shared his concerns that project 1 (Develop broadband infrastructure and internet availability) and requested an update of the status. NRVRC staff explained that broadband in Montgomery, Pulaski, and Bland is coming, and currently, negotiations for finalized plans are ongoing with multiple parties. Then an environmental review would be performed before construction could begin, but the project was happening, and funding was secured.

One of the significant drawbacks to expanding in the region is not enough housing and a competitive housing market. Erin Burcham mentioned that several NRV companies are exploring their options for expansion. Tracking regional housing developments and unit availability, might be a way of encouraging these companies to expand in the region.

## Next Steps

The full RES document will be approved by the NRVRC board at the June meeting. Once approved, the StoryMap and final documents will be published on the website. NRVRC staff will share the final documents, online link and begin sharing the document out.

**The next meeting will be held on October 7, 2022, at 10 A.M. at the Pulaski Innovation Center, New River Room.**



6580 Valley Center Drive | Suite 124 | Radford, VA 24141 | 540-639-9313

[NRVRC.ORG](http://NRVRC.ORG)

## New River Valley Regional Economic Strategy Committee Meeting

May 6, 2022  
10:00 a.m.  
New River Room

### Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Review draft RES narrative
  - a. Discussion
3. Review draft Project evaluation – Top 10 + 4
  - a. Discussion
4. Continued engagement opportunities
  - a. Discussion
  - b. Brainstorm Emergent trends/future opportunities
5. Next Steps

Next meeting: June 6, 2022 @ 1:00 p.m.

Sample:



### Counties

Floyd | Giles  
Montgomery | Pulaski

### City

Radford

### Towns

Blacksburg | Christiansburg  
Floyd | Narrows | Pearisburg  
Pembroke | Pulaski | Rich Creek

### Higher Education

Virginia Tech | Radford University  
New River Community College

# New River Valley Regional Economic Strategy Committee Meeting

May 6, 2022

## Meeting Notes

**ATTENDEES:** Bob Beckman, Katie Boswell, Cora Gnegy, Susan Kidd, Chris Lawrence, Kim Repass, Elli Travis, Andrew Warren, Peggy White, Joy Rumley, Summer Bork

### Agenda

Welcome

Review of Draft RES document

Review of Draft Project Evaluation - Top 10 + 4

Continued Engagement Opportunities

Brainstorm Emergent Trends/Future Opportunities

Next Steps

### Review of Draft RES Document

The attendees were largely in consensus that this document accurately captures the region's economy and action plan/strategies for the future.

A few edits were recommended which included:

- Pg. 3, Cultural Resources: Specifically mentioning Floyd County as the primary location/route for the Crooked Road.
- Pg. 3, Cultural or Historic Resources: Add something about historic downtowns.
- Pg. 5, Add mention of VT's CGIT Broadband Mapping Efforts
- Pg. 6, Regional Economic Priorities: Use numbers instead of bullets in final draft.

There was some discussion regarding small business assistance and how it might be addressed regionally or even locally. The RES document does reference these needs and opportunities within 1.1 and 1.2.

It was concluded after some discussion that perhaps the RES committee can continue to look at the region's needs in this area and determine small business needs, gaps and opportunities, in conjunction with offerings at the local, regional and state level. An additional strategy might also be unifying local downtown organizations and small business support organizations into a more robust regional support system. While the RRSBDC is an excellent partner, it does not have the staffing capacity to address all the small business needs and demands in the region.

### Draft Project Evaluation – Top 10 + 4

The committee was generally in consensus that the project list represents the needs and economic priorities of the region.

Comments for edits include:

- Support of Local Agriculture, Growers, and Producers Project to change “Ag extension” to “Cooperative Extension.”
- Consider adding NRV DMOs to the New River Water Trail Project (Editorial Note: all necessary partners not fully determined yet and will be evaluated through a technical assistance project funded by the National Park Service.)
- Update Industrial Site Development and Upgrades Project to include “industrial marketing and advocacy” – include Onward NRV as part of the marketing & advocacy portion.
- Add RRBD to revolving loan fund, commercial district revitalization, agriculture and biomedical as they are playing a role in those areas as well.

GOVA Region 2 met the previous day and they discussed blockchain and life sciences as new industry projects, so the RES committee was pleased to see those projects on the RES top list, as evidence of regional alignment with priorities and projects.

### Continued Engagement, Emergent Trends/Opportunities

Staff showed the committee the new RES logo and briefly discussed the branding and layout design underway for the full document and “consumer version”.

It was suggested that the Regional Commission and region be more intentional about publicizing the regional economic development successes (possibly a quarterly update) to help promote the efficacy of the RES and its impact on the region. Including time for folks to share project updates during RES meetings might also help.

In addition to small business ecosystems and regional support of small business, an emergent opportunity is regional transportation networks and their effect on the region’s economy, looking toward the future and how to address commuting patterns in and out of the NRV. Because of teleworking and work from home, this has changed over the past couple of years.

### Next Steps

The June Meeting will focus on review of the final documents, discussing the RES process moving forward, and brainstorming implementation options for some of the priority projects.

**The next meeting will be held on June 6, 2022, at 1 P.M. at the Pulaski Innovation Center, New River Room.**



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## New River Valley Regional Economic Strategy Committee Meeting

April 1, 2022  
10:00 a.m.

New River Room

### Agenda

1. Welcome & Introductions
2. Brief review of final draft of Goal/Strategies
3. Overview project evaluation rubric
  - a. Do Tiers seem appropriate?
  - b. Are weights appropriate?
4. Regional Project list
  - a. What needs added?
  - b. What needs removed?
5. Engagement Tool
6. Next Steps

Next meeting: May 6, 2022 @ 10:00 a.m.

#### **Counties**

Floyd | Giles  
Montgomery | Pulaski

#### **City**

Radford

#### **Towns**

Blacksburg | Christiansburg  
Floyd | Narrows | Pearisburg  
Pembroke | Pulaski | Rich Creek

#### **Higher Education**

Virginia Tech | Radford University  
New River Community College



# New River Valley Regional Economic Strategy—Committee Meeting

April 1, 2022

## Minutes

**ATTENDEES:** Bob Beckman, Ernie Maddy, Diane Gray, Erin Burcham, Amanda Forrester, Ann Cassell, Katie Boswell, Cora Gnegy, Susan Kidd, Marty Holiday, Michael Solomon, Angela Joyner, Andrew Warren, Elli Travis, Lydena Martin, Kevin Byrd, Joy Rumley, Summer Bork

## Agenda

Welcome & Introductions  
Brief review of final draft of Goals/Strategies  
Overview of Project evaluations rubric

- Do Tiers seem appropriate?
- Are weights appropriate?

Regional Project List

- What needs to be added?
- What needs to be removed?

Engagement Tool  
Next Steps

## Review of Final Draft of Goals and Strategies

“Priority<sup>1</sup>: Support Small Business Development and Entrepreneurship” Committee decided to delete the word “Small” to better support all businesses in the region.

“Strategy 2.3.b: Increase the availability of quality, affordable, treatment options for substance abuse and mental health.” Committee proposed that it be reworded to include a broader health, safety, and well-being scope which mental illness and addictions are factors.

Perhaps add a strategy around work from home/telework to keep/attract talent in the region.

If you have more suggestions, please contact Joy Rumley.

## Overview of Project Evaluation

Kevin Byrd gave context to the historic process of project ranking/evaluation. While not explicitly required by the US EDA, project ranking is a means of measuring project relevancy, not only as it relates to the RES document but also to the priority of the project to the region.

Staff presented suggested amendments to the evaluation criteria. These amendments included tiering the evaluation criteria to evaluate and sort regional projects efficiently. As presented, the criteria will assess a project’s readiness, alignment with RES priorities, economic competitiveness and its ability to

address regional vulnerability and resilience. Consideration is also given to how the project aligns with other regional strategies and plans to promote regional collaboration and connection.

Comments on the criteria related to how weights and tiers would be evaluated. Particularly relating to how breaks would be decided and whether these criteria would equitably promote all jurisdictional levels (towns, counties, and the region).

Another comment raised the point of the difficulty of accurately demonstrating the jurisdictional need for specific projects via statistical data. National and state data is skewed because of certain communities having large out commuting populations and lower per capita income due to a high number of university students in certain localities. Additional, state median wage is skewed because three of the wealthiest counties in the nation are in Northern Virginia and raise wage data that the NRV cannot compete with.

It was discussed how to best reframe these criteria so that they would more accurately reflect the needs and reality of our communities but would also remain broad enough that the data gathered during evaluation would align with state and national metrics and (often) standardized grant application quantitative data requirements.

Edits that were suggested during this discussion include:

- Adding possibly changing unemployment related questions to local wage information
- Using regional median wage rather than state
- Adding an out-commuting criteria question to contextualize the average per capita income questions.

## Engagement Tool

Staff presented to the committee an engagement tool ([engagenrv.org](http://engagenrv.org)) that could be used to keep track of regional economic stories and successes and a way to submit projects to the list.

A link to the site will be share with the RES Committee.

## Next Steps

1. NRVRC Staff presents the final draft of the online RES.
2. The RES project list will be finalized.
3. Suggested revisions to the Evaluation Criteria will be made.
4. Projects will be evaluated via the Evaluation Criteria for Committee review.

**The next meeting will be held on May 6, 2022, at 10:00 A.M. at the Pulaski Innovation Center, New River Room.**



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## NEW RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY COMMITTEE MEETING.

*Oct. 1, 2021*

Attendees: Bob Beckman, Summer Bork, Kevin Byrd, Joy Rumley

### Covid's Impact on Tourism within Montgomery County

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*Presented by Irene Kilmer*

Montgomery County is highly dependent on event and university related tourism. These activities were largely curtailed through 2020 and a large portion of 2021. Additionally, student populations act as a major driver to local economies within the region.

Students make a large portion of employees in retail and other service sector jobs in Montgomery County and created a more sustained labor shortage in the Montgomery County than other Counties in the Region. Businesses also depend on student and university related visitors' revenues to sustain profitable business.

Because the university largely held virtual learning during academic year 2020-2021, many students did not return to campus. The university also suspended attendance of athletic events, and canceled many of its alumni events, parent's weekends, and other university sponsored events. Additionally, Christiansburg is a destination for sporting events particularly swim meets. However, these activities were also cancelled.

A second issue was the lack of coordination between Virginia Tech and the county and towns messaging pertaining to public health and safety led to mismatched messaging. The university's efforts to minimize virus transmission on campus led to the misconception that Montgomery County, particularly Blacksburg was a Covid hotspot when it was not, and prevented visitors from traveling to the area. This particularly affected the lodging and restaurant business sectors.

#### Counties

Floyd | Giles

Montgomery | Pulaski

#### City

Radford

#### Towns

Blacksburg | Christiansburg

Floyd | Narrows | Pearisburg

Pembroke | Pulaski | Rich Creek

#### Higher Education

Virginia Tech | Radford University

New River Community College

# Discussion of Short-Term Response-recovery Projects for Regional Pandemic Related Economic Issues

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- Small Businesses (lack of employees, and decreased sales last year because of few students, visitors, Etc.)
- Tourism (particularly event and university-driven tourism)
- Broadband Access for rural areas (next steps)
- Arts and Entertainment sector (e.g., local artisans, non-profits, etc.)
- Supply Chain breakdowns (e.g., Volvo and Agriculture sectors)

Due to lack of meeting attendance the discussion really didn't go anywhere or produce productive solutions. We agreed these were problems for the region. Bob was eager to tackle the broadband access issues. (At that point New River Valley Regional Commission had secured a multi-regional broadband grant that would address broadband insufficiency in Pulaski and Montgomery Counties but was still waiting on the official funding announcement to discuss it with the public.)

## Discussion of New Infrastructure Strategies (Strategy 3)

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Generally, the consensus was positive regarding the new infrastructure strategy, and the comment was made that adding housing was important for the region as availability-affordable housing stock was an ever-growing issue.

### Proposed New Goals

#### Goal 3: Available Land and Quality Infrastructure

##### 3.1 Expand transportation options to meet the needs of businesses and residents

1. Develop and expand regional transit systems, rideshare programs, and other initiatives that connect population centers to employment centers and improve access for rural residents.
2. Promote land-use policies that maximize the opportunities of regional access to transportation networks, including interstates and major highways, freight rail, and airports.
3. Promote and support the development of a passenger rail station in the New River Valley.

4. Expand the regional system of walking and biking trails, bike lanes, and pedestrian safety improvements.

### **3.2 Identify opportunities to expand and improve the region's high-speed internet available to residents and offer services to meet the needs of households and businesses within the New River Valley.**

- 1.
2. Encourage the development of broadband networks in unserved areas to improve the capacity of broadband connections in underserved communities.
3. Support local service providers' efforts to bring fiber to the home.
4. Encourage the development of network redundancy around critical services (emergency services, health care facilities, schools, government buildings, etc.) to be prepared for emergency and disaster situations.
5. Retrofit historic buildings to provide improved broadband options.

### **3.3 Develop and maintain adequate and affordable housing stock within the region.**

1. Develop and encourage Youth programs that offer on-the-job training in construction and other related skilled trades (electricians, HVAC technicians, plumbers, masons, etc.) related to the housing industry.
2. Reinvestment in housing stock to provide renovation and retrofitting to older homes.
3. Programs that establish regional purchasing power for building materials
4. Business support for construction firms to improve business practices and cash flow.

### **3.4 Develop and maintain available sites and buildings to meet the needs of industrial and commercial users.**

1. Incentivize rehabilitation of deteriorating structures in historic downtown districts, and encourage mixed-use development in growth areas and downtown districts
2. Inventory and assess vacant industrial and commercial properties, identify appropriate uses for the buildings and related retrofitting needs.
3. Promote and Support shovel-ready mid and large-sized industrial sites.
4. Promote and support energy efficiency of building through efforts to increase demand for these features (public education, valuation for energy efficiency improvements).

### **3.5 Explore and Implement Alternative Energy options within the region.**

1. Promote and support the ability of government, business, residents to invest in alternative renewable energy sources and infrastructure.
2. Education programs to inform citizens about options and benefits of alternative energy for residents.
3. Promote the New River Valley's alternative energy efforts as an asset for regional attraction.

New River Valley Regional Commission

# New River Valley Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee Meeting

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04 June 2021 / 10:00 AM / New River Room-Virtual Hybrid Meeting

## AGENDA

- Welcome and Introductions
- Discuss findings of NRV Regional and Local Housing Study Final Report (available at: <https://nrvrc.org/regional-housing-study/> ) presented by Mel Jones
- Update- Valleys Innovation Council Strategic Plan offered by [Meredith Hundley](#)
- Review 'infrastructure and natural resources' strategy areas
- upcoming CEDS meeting housekeeping (review of dates and location, more info to follow, Aug. 6, 2021 meeting agenda, and invite).

## NOTES

- The committee received updates on recent work around the region, the NRV housing study, and Valley Innovation Counsel's strategic plan update. The presentation slides will be attached to the notes.

### NRV Regional and Local Housing Study

Housing plays a vital role in economic development. However, the region's housing market demand has low and moderate income households struggling to find habitable and affordable housing. The findings of the NRV housing study suggest that our region is has a hyper-competitive demand for housing which has driven up prices. The housing market competition also makes first-time home buying extremely difficult, and large numbers of students drive the rental market in the region. This issue makes it difficult for new residents to find high-quality, affordable rental housing. Employers have expressed their concerns that this is hurting their ability to attract and retain quality employees to their firms.

### Strategy Recommendations:

1. Emphasize the importance of housing through cross-sector partnerships between public and elected officials
2. Creating a regional housing trust fund to help with housing retrofitting and offset building costs to maintain affordable housing stock.
3. Partner with anchor health and non-health institutions to promote healthy, safe, and well-maintained communities.
4. Address common manufactured housing challenges
5. Grow buildings, construction, and construction-related skilled trades.
6. Provide support for aging populations.
7. Address rental shortage, particularly for low-income renters.
8. Renewable Energy upgrades for existing housing.

### Possible projects:

- House Financing assistance program for first-time homeowners
- Tax disincentives for keeping homes blighted.
- Encourage HOA's and neighborhoods to reinvest in dated and under-cared-for homes and properties with possible assistance for underserved communities.

For more information, see attached PowerPoint.

### Valley Innovation Council Strategic Plan:

Valley Innovation Council (VIC) works to connect entrepreneurs with resources and encourage the growth of the economy of Southwest Virginia through innovation-driven entrepreneurship. They ensure that target sector industry start-ups have adequate access to capital and investment to grow business concepts. They assist in connecting business owners with skilled mentors and accelerator programs that offer services and education on business planning and scaling, bookkeeping, and other support to help make people's ideas a reality. VIC supports Research and development activities that help shepherd new ideas into products, services, and process improvements and support R&D commercialization within the region. They also focus on other aspects of business development such as human capital, infrastructure, markets, and others that help grow the regional economy and impact the success or failure of these fledgling businesses.

VIC has identified nine projects that they believe would be beneficial to the cultivation of new business ventures within our region and address challenges that entrepreneurs face.

1. Pitch Plus (Technical Assistance)
2. Startup Pathways
3. Hub-and Spoke Startup Studios with Co-working Space
4. Pre-Seed Funding/Early-stage funding sources
5. Technical talent for hire
6. Industry-specific accelerator Cohorts
7. Industry-Specific Shared Workspaces
8. Exit RAMP (Hand holding after business as graduated from initial accelerator program)
9. C-Suite for hire (Technical Expert that can be hired to ensure a company can run)

For more information, see attached PowerPoint.

### Existing CEDS Strategy for Infrastructure

#### 3. Available land and quality infrastructure

##### 3.1 Expand transportation options to meet the needs of businesses and residents

- Develop and expand regional transit systems, ride-sharing, or other initiatives that connect population centers to employment centers and improve access for rural residents
- Promote and support the development of a passenger rail station in the New River Valley to provide rail service to the Northeast Corridor.

- Expand the regional system of walking and biking trails, bike lanes, and pedestrian safety improvements.

3.2 Identify opportunities to expand on the region's existing network of fiber trunk lines to ensure sufficient, affordable bandwidth is available to meet the needs of modern households and businesses throughout the New River Valley.

- Encourage the development of broadband networks in unserved rural areas and improve broadband connections in underserved communities.
- Assess availability and quality of broadband options in towns and population centers in unincorporated areas
- Retrofit historic downtown buildings to provide improved broadband options and ensure public facilities are telecommuting enabled (proposed addition).

3.3 Develop and maintain available sites and buildings to meet industrial and commercial areas and housing in residential.

- Incentivize rehabilitation of deteriorating structures in historic downtown districts, and encourage mixed-use development in growth areas and downtown districts
- Inventory and assess vacant industrial and commercial properties, identify appropriate uses for the buildings and related retrofitting needs.
- Develop shovel-ready mid-size and large industrial sites
- Promote and support energy efficiency of buildings through efforts to increase demand for these features (public education, valuations for energy efficiency improvements).

As part of this discussion, we explored items that are now considered potential priorities for the region not represented in the CEDS.

- Renewable Energy potential and existing projects and priority:
- Not having non-fossil fuels energy options has been shown to impede regional attraction
- Ensure the affordability of alternative energy
- Ensure that Electrical Grids are ready to switch to small-scale renewables. (Resiliency: Businesses and households are not dependent on major power grids. Many of our population is dependent on electric pump wells for water. When the power goes out, they are without water too.) Large numbers of businesses and households won't be out of power for long periods when the power goes out.

Steady state of community's infrastructure.

Radford- businesses support their own energy production

Giles- Eco-Park will be LEEDs certified soon.

Floyd- Water issues stemming from elevation and the water table position.

#### **For Further Discussion**

The committee decided to discuss the preservation of natural and cultural resources goals in a future meeting.

We may also re-open the topic of infrastructure strategies, goals, and projects during the next meeting.





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[NRVRC.ORG](http://NRVRC.ORG)

## NEW RIVER VALLEY COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY COMMITTEE MEETING

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**07 May 2021 / 10:00 AM / Virtual**

### AGENDA

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- 1) Welcome and Introductions
- 2) Review examples of online CEDS format/features
  - a) Discuss features to include in NRV CEDS online migration
  - b) Received feedback from the Committee regarding migration and possible resources
    - i) ONWARD NRV regional, data and profiles
- 3) Strategies/projects list topic area-workforce
  - a) Proposed Comments of workforce content dashboards, Projects, etc.
  - b) Discuss strategy update/revision
  - c) Discuss 'top 5' workforce project list and existing programs to highlight/expand
- 4) CEDS process updates
  - a) Discuss location/schedule

### NOTES

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#### Housekeeping

It was decided to move next month's meeting to a hybrid format on June 4 at 10 AM. More details will be included in June's CEDS agenda.

We also decided to continue meeting every other month after the June meeting, until the end of 2021. Then, the Committee would reevaluate an appropriate meeting schedule.

#### CEDS New Home Online Update

If you missed the May meeting and would like to learn more about our preliminary plans for online migration of the CEDS, please reach out by email, [sbork@nrvrc.org](mailto:sbork@nrvrc.org).

Summer will be glad to discuss it with you. As part of the discussion, Onward NRVI reminded us of the work they are doing to highlight target sectors within the region and

**Counties**  
Floyd | Giles  
Montgomery | Pulaski

**City**  
Radford

**Towns**  
Blacksburg | Christiansburg  
Floyd | Narrows | Pearisburg  
Pembroke | Pulaski | Rich Creek

**Higher Education**  
Virginia Tech | Radford University  
New River Community College

that this data might be helpful to NRVRC and the Committee as resources to link to or reference during CEDS development.

### Existing Workforce CEDS Goals

#### 2. Preparation and continued support of qualified, available Workforce

2.1 Align education and training programs with the region's current and future employers' needs and targeted industry sectors.

- Establish partnerships between industry/business and all levels of
- education and provide students with more "real world" learning opportunities
- Improve awareness of career options in local industries among K-12,
- community college, and university students and graduates
- Develop a career pathways approach to ensure regional colleges and
- universities provide training, credentials, and degrees that allow workers
- to advance their careers in local industries.

2.2 Establish a strong foundation for lifelong learning and career success for NRV residents.

- Ensure quality; affordable preschool programs are available throughout
- the New River Valley.
- Ensure career counseling, technical education, and enrichment activities
- are available throughout the region to support K-12 students' plans and
- preparation for careers or post-secondary education.

2.3 Increase the availability and accessibility of supporting services that NRV residents may need to participate fully in the Workforce

- Increase the availability of quality, affordable childcare facilities for all areas of the NRV.
- Increase the availability of quality, affordable treatment options for substance abuse and mental health.
- Coordinate resources to provide low-cost options or tuition assistance for residents seeking college degrees or workforce training.

## Existing CEDS Projects from previous years

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*Expand pilot education and job training programs for local K-12 students and youth, targeting careers in growing NRV industries.*

- Develop work-study and internship placement, on-the-job training, and similar arrangements between businesses and education to help local students develop on-the-job skills for careers in local industries.
- Expand college scholarship programs for K-12 students to attend community colleges.

*Implement 'sector strategies' focus on workforce development programs to meet needs in target industry sectors.*

- Develop relationships between regional businesses and education, economic development, and related stakeholder organizations to provide services that ensure the success of these industries in the region.
- Enhance integrated "career pathways" workforce curriculum to develop workforce skills that address the needs of targeted industry sectors, especially manufacturing, IT, etc.

#### *Target Industry Business Development Program*

- Develop educational programs through the community college and university that support developing and recruiting small businesses/industries in the region's target sectors, including advanced manufacturing, IT/cybersecurity, life sciences, and Agrobusiness.

## Current Efforts and Models that might be worth expanding

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The workforce has been curating information from local industry and career pathways in our target sectors. The suggestion was made that this information may be more easily managed and updated by businesses and accessed by prospective workers if it was turned into an app. These informational diagrams demonstrate what skills, certifications, and education local businesses look for when hiring and the variety of careers each target sector offers.

The Giles County ACCE program is a program that funds students in the county's community college education, providing a student meets specific requirements such as volunteering some hours.

Summer Youth work programs: a program that matches high school students with summer employment. This is a partnership between Giles, Goodwill, and local businesses. This program was suggested as a current effort that helps introduce students to career opportunities and leads to future talent retention with relationships built through the program, particularly in target sectors and trades. This initiative appears to be something that could be replicated in other areas of the region.

Onward NRV is building relationships between our universities and industries to ensure students are aware of career opportunities within the region. As well as support for student projects, internships, job fairs, and other efforts to connect skilled students and graduates to careers in local firms. Additionally, Onward is also working to promote the region and attract firms, so the region can continue to have available positions for students and workers.

The Build Smart Institute is a workforce and Giles Co. Technical Center partnership working toward addressing the lack of skilled labor within the construction industry. Vacancy in much-needed professional trade careers and the negative perception of these jobs as viable options for success have led to a shortage of new workers. However, it is unclear how to market these careers to dispel these issues. Additionally, this lack of skilled tradespeople has added complexity to the region's housing shortage. Another suggestion was made by our more tourism-dependent communities that not only expanding skilled labor but perhaps adopting a similar skills development program for the

tourist service industry and business management might be valuable subjects to consider creating similar programs modeled on Build Smart.

## Issues Affecting the Strength of our Workforce

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The lack of transportation for underserved rural populations without our regions was a potential issue for getting access to high-paying jobs. As well as lack of affordable quality childcare is another known barrier. It was suggested that identifying locations where the industry was clustered to provide transportation and childcare facilities may be helpful to work parents and other community members.

Hiring and certification priorities are misaligned, causing graduates difficulty finding employment after graduation.

Also, a comment was made that companies are looking for solid and soft skills and will train and promote from within, creating job opportunities at non-entry level positions harder to find.

### New Project Ideas

- Build an App that captures the career/industry ladder data that Workforce has been collecting.
- Build an App that matches people with rideshare options (suggested via email after the meeting)
- Contractor Business development assistance-contractor reconnaissance
- Expand building trade programs to include business development/contractor business assistance (focus group with businesses on hiring/training trends).
- Expand resources available for non-traditional course formats
- Expand the Early Head Start program
- Target childcare centers business assistance outreach program
- Marketing careers in construction, manufacturing, automotive, logistics, and other occupations.
- Re-entry job training programs
- Employer or co-op childcare and transportation models with slots for workers
- Expand Jumpstart and other small business incubator models of entrepreneurship/start-up training within the region
- Expand the Summer Youth Work program-connect it to target industries.
- Possible Culinary program in the NRV (Roanoke model as a partner).

## FY 2021-22 New River Valley Regional Commission Members

*Chair – Mr. Michael Maslaney  
Vice-Chair – Mr. Hil Johnson  
Treasurer – Mr. Leon Law*

*Past-Chair – Mr. Michael Harvey  
At-Large – Mr. Steve Fijalkowski  
Ms. Catherine Potter  
Ms. Angie Covey*

<u>Floyd County:</u>	Mr. Levi Cox* Floyd, VA 24091	Mr. Michael Maslaney PO Box 908 Floyd, VA 24091	Ms. Linda DeVito Kuchenbuch* 539 Dobbins Hollow Road Riner, VA 24149
<u>Giles County:</u>	Mr. Richard McCoy* 505 Tyler Avenue Pearisburg, VA 24134	Mr. Leon Law 1809 Cascades Drive Pembroke, VA 24136	<u>Town of Narrows:</u> Mr. Tom Spangler* Narrows, VA 24124
	<u>Town of Pearisburg:</u> Ms. Cathy Clark* Pearisburg, VA 24134	<u>Town of Rich Creek:</u> Mr. Roger Jones* Rich Creek, VA 24147	<u>Town of Pembroke:</u> Robert Lawson 519 Circle Drive Pembroke, VA 24136
<u>Montgomery County:</u>	Mr. Steve Fijalkowski* 2557 Mt. Pleasant Road Shawsville, VA 24162	Mr. Michael Harvey 803 Willard Drive Blacksburg, VA 24060	<u>Town of Floyd:</u> Mr. Will Griffin* Floyd, VA 24091
<u>Pulaski County:</u>	Dr. Doug Warren 4540 Shelburne Road Radford, VA 24141	Mr. Charles Bopp* PO Box 1402 Pulaski, VA 24301	
<u>City of Radford:</u>	Mr. David Horton* 106 5th Street Radford, VA 24141	Mr. Jeff Martin 107 Bird St. Radford, VA 24141	
<u>Town of Blacksburg:</u>	Ms. Susan Anderson* 700 Preston Avenue Blacksburg VA 24060	Mr. Daniel Breslau 601 Turner Street Blacksburg, VA 24060	
<u>Town of Christiansburg:</u>	Mr. Hil Johnson 140 Brilliant Drive, N. W. Christiansburg, VA 24073	Mr. Tim Wilson* Christiansburg, VA 24073	
<u>Town of Pulaski</u>	Mr. Michael Reis* Pulaski, VA 24301	Mr. Larry Clevinger 1128 Well Street Pulaski, VA 24301	
<u>Radford University:</u>	Vacant		
<u>Virginia Tech:</u>	Ms. Liza Morris VA Tech Blacksburg, VA 24061	Ms. Catherine Potter Blacksburg, VA 24061	
<u>New River Community College:</u>	Ms. Angie Covey 5251 College Drive Dublin, VA 24084		

**\* = Elected Official**



# 2 0 2 2 Committee Members

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Bob Beckman	<a href="mailto:beckman.bbg@gmail.com">beckman.bbg@gmail.com</a>	Local citizen	local business/innovation
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## 2 0 2 2 Glossary of Acronyms

DMO	Direct Marketing Organization
NRMR WDB	New River Mount Rogers Workforce Development Board
NRV	New River Valley
NRV HOME	New River Valley Housing Opportunities Made Equal
NRVMPO	New River Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization
NRVRC	New River Valley Regional Commission
RIFA	Regional Industrial Facilities Authority
RRSBDC	Roanoke Regional Small Business Development Center
VDOT	Virginia Department of Transportation