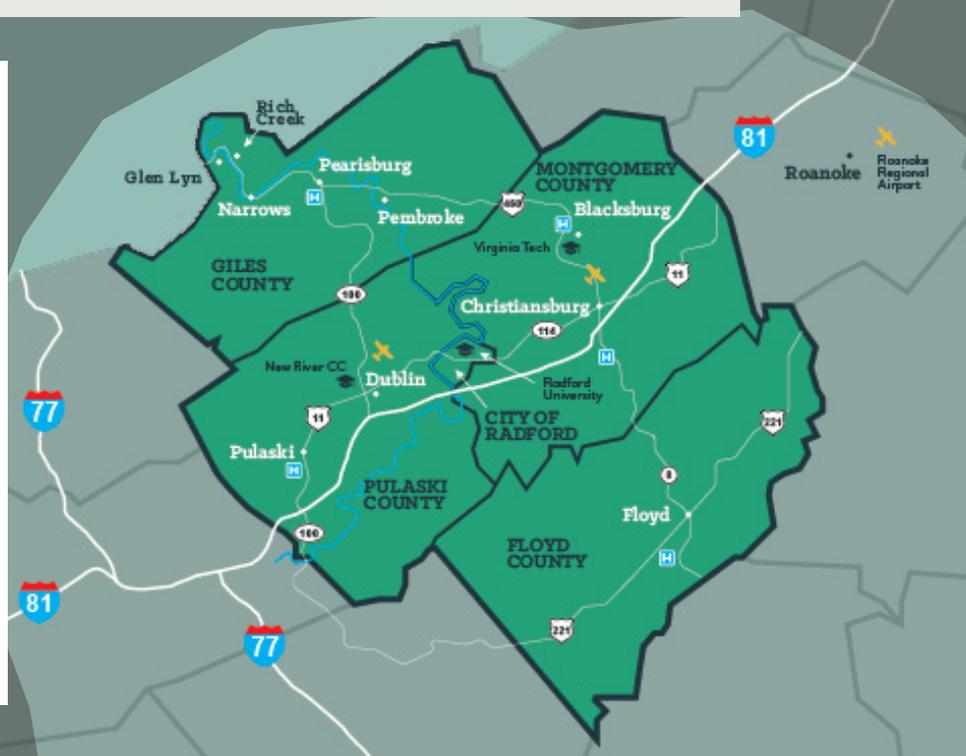




# VIRGINIA'S NEW RIVER VALLEY

For those searching for an inspiring place to live and do business, Virginia's New River Valley provides a collection of small towns with an innovative, collaborative business community with a loyal, highly skilled, and educated workforce. Offering the best of all worlds - magnificent mountains, cutting-edge research, arts, entertainment, and education - it's  
**A NATURAL FIT.**



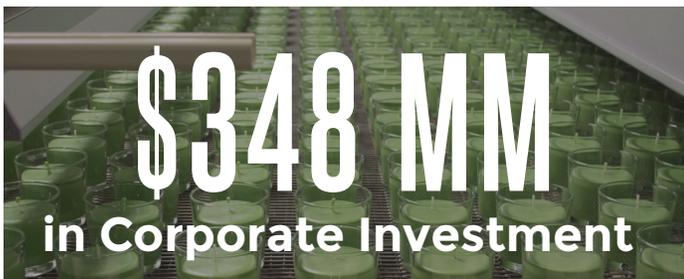


## OUR MISSION & VISION

Onward NRV, formerly known as the New River Valley Economic Development Alliance, is a public/private, regional economic development organization whose mission is to attract and retain world class jobs, investment and talent in Virginia's New River Valley. It's a movement where leaders from business, government, and higher education work together to promote the economic vitality of the region.

Onward NRV is always striving to move the region forward; It's an organization that get things done. This is embodied in the new action-oriented name and branding of our organization. The movement of the red arrow is symbolic of Onward NRV, which pulls people and ideas together to move the region forward. Leaders in business, government, and higher education have a role to play in economic development. We're here to help them **Join the Movement**.

## ONWARD'S SUCCESS



Since 2001, Onward has assisted in bringing millions of investment to the NRV. Companies include Backcountry.com; DISH Network Corporation; InMotion US; Inorganic Ventures; Interstate Cargo; James Hardie Building Products Inc.; Koinonia Ltd.; Korona Candles.; Phoenix Packaging; Red Sun Farms; and RICK Stamping Corporation.

# A MODERN APPROACH

## PROMOTING ECONOMIC VITALITY THROUGH FOUR KEY CLUSTERS

Through comprehensive research, Onward NRV identified four key clusters to support and grow in the region. A targeted approach ensures that resources are focused on clusters with the greatest local competitive advantage and return on investment for the region. These clusters, and their corresponding niches, funnel new money into the region, offer higher wages and equitable career pathways, and have strong growth forecasts.



### Information Technology

1. Software Development
2. Cybersecurity
3. IT Support Services
4. Digital Creative



### Advanced Manufacturing

1. Automotive
2. Electronics & Components
3. Chemicals
4. Materials



### Food Processing & Agribusiness

1. Specialty Food & Beverages
2. Breweries, Wineries, & Distilleries
3. Value-Add Agriculture
4. Packaging



### Unmanned Systems

1. Component Manufacturing
2. Software & Cybersecurity
3. Research & Development
4. Unmanned Vehicle Systems Assembly

## OUR REGIONAL BRAND

When a community fits, you feel it. The scenery inspires, the people connect, the work feels easy. In the visual identity of our brand, which is overlapping river stones, we wanted to highlight the natural beauty of the region and work to focus on the people, places, and businesses that make our region great.

Our branding aims to focus on these key messages:

1. Eclectic Mix of Small Towns and World-Class Universities
2. Diverse & Innovative Business Community with a Loyal, Highly-Skilled & Educated Talent-Base
3. Access to the Outdoors and a Deep Connection to Nature



STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS 1-3

## A HOLISTIC APPROACH

To create economic success for Virginia's New River Valley, we've developed a 5-Year Economic Development Strategy that uses a holistic approach to focus on (1) businesses, (2) talent, and (3) place

1. Enhance Cluster Competitiveness to Stimulate Job Growth and Investment
2. Attract & Retain Talent to Strengthen Clusters and Grow Communities
3. Cultivate Assets and Regional Brand to Foster Economic Vitality

# 5 YR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### 1 Enhance Cluster Competitiveness to Stimulate Job Growth & Investment

To spur job growth and investment, Onward NRV will focus its efforts on **advanced manufacturing, food processing and agribusiness, information technology, and unmanned systems**. A targeted approach ensures that resources are focused on clusters with the greatest local competitive advantage and return on investment. These clusters, and their corresponding niches, funnel new money into the region, offer higher wages and equitable career pathways, and have strong growth forecasts.

#### 1. Enhance the competitiveness of companies in the NRV

- i. Host annual cluster summits to encourage collaboration around common challenges and opportunities and to provide input on Onward's cluster strategies
- ii. Document and build connections into centers of innovation and talent resources at Virginia Tech, Radford University, and New River Community College
- iii. Conduct annual survey of area businesses to assess cluster competitiveness and identify regional challenges that need addressing

#### 2. Recruit new companies to the region

- i. Execute outbound marketing trips focused on the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, site consultants, and businesses/suppliers in the targeted clusters
- ii. Execute inbound marketing trips focused on the Virginia Economic Development Partnership and site consultants
- iii. Develop lead generation strategies to target companies with alumni from Virginia Tech and/or Radford University who are in C-level positions

#### 3. Position the NRV as a hub for each cluster

- i. Cultivate relevant marketing materials and maintain regional website (NewRiverValleyVA.org) featuring robust portals for each cluster
- ii. Execute content marketing strategy that tells the story of each cluster through 1) company testimonials, 2) interesting facts, and 3) accolades and announcements
- iii. Maintain up-to-date online resources for businesses and produce videos showcasing the prominent business parks in the region

ANNUAL BUDGET: \$218,808 5-YEAR: \$1,094,038

### 2 Attract & Retain Talent to Strengthen Clusters and Grow Communities

Focus groups revealed that companies, especially in advanced manufacturing and IT, expressed concerns about there not being a pool of skilled workers to draw from as they need to grow. The benchmark analysis also revealed that the NRV had slower population growth and lower educational attainment demographics than its peer regions. Thus, the NRV must ensure it has the people and talent necessary for communities to be vibrant and companies to grow.

#### 1. Work to retain graduates from local colleges & universities

- i. Help students connect with the NRV
  - a. Work with employers to form a summer internship consortium of businesses to connect students to job opportunities. Host a kickoff event to help them network and build connections in the region
  - b. Attend on-campus career fairs at VT, RU, & NRCC to promote living/working in the NRV
- ii. Market the live/work message to university alumni outside the area to help them reconnect with opportunities in the NRV

#### 2. Showcase job opportunities & career pathways in targeted clusters

- i. Develop videos for each targeted cluster showcasing major employers in the region and in-demand jobs
- ii. Map out local training and degree programs in each cluster and actively market these programs to residents in the NRV
- iii. Participate in workforce development and training meetings to be an advocate for cluster needs

#### 3. Position the NRV as desirable place to live, work, & play

- i. Execute content marketing strategy that tells the story of living in the NRV through 1) company testimonials, 2) interesting facts, and 3) accolades
- ii. Connect people outside the region to livability assets and job opportunities in the NRV through a robust regional website
- iii. Develop NRV Relocation Guide and share with area realtors and employers to assist in attracting people to the area

ANNUAL BUDGET: \$165,440 5-YEAR: \$827,199

# 3 Cultivate Assets & Regional Brand to Foster Economic Vitality in the NRV

*In an ever-tightening national labor market, quality of place (the outdoors, cultural amenities, downtown revitalization, etc.) and the attachment it creates will increasingly drive where talented people choose to live, thereby influencing corporate location decisions. It is also imperative for the NRV to have the traditional infrastructure, such as ready-to-go sites and buildings, to capitalize on economic development opportunities.*

## 1. Continue developing the NRV brand to encourage community engagement and foster regional identity.

- i. Develop and promote video that reinforces the NRV brand and encourages the cultivation of a regional identity
- ii. Execute a content marketing strategy that engages residents and showcases quality of place assets, with an emphasis on the outdoors, cultural amenities, and downtown revitalization
- iii. Develop and distribute NRV branded swag

## 2. Be an advocate for investment in quality of place assets

- i. Generate new information by replicating the “Soul of the Community” survey to gauge place attachment, mapping outdoor assets and needs, and conducting a quality of place needs assessment
- ii. Share best-practices in the region and institute an annual awards program to recognize and encourage individuals/ organizations who contribute to the success of the region

## 3. Ensure NRV has business ready sites & buildings

- i. Encourage assessment of available sites and buildings to gauge site readiness. Market most ready properties and advocate for further investment for those less ready
- ii. Encourage site/park connections to greenways and trails
- iii. Track prospect trends related to site and building requirements and annually report to localities and developers

ANNUAL BUDGET: \$106,736

5-YEAR: \$533,678

# 4 Be a High-Performing Regional Econ. Development Org. that Unifies the NRV

*Onward must continue to focus internally on organizational development, staffing, and funding. The solid foundation built over the past 20 years must be matched with equal fervency to create an organization structurally sound enough to continue influencing a unified movement of leaders in business, government, and higher education to move the region forward.*

## 1. Execute meaningful investor relations program.

- i. Leverage quarterly investor events to provide the premier networking opportunity in the region
- ii. Actively communicate to ensure investors are up-to-date on the inner-workings of Onward NRV
- iii. Maintain tiered investor model to ensure equity among our members
- iv. Raise visibility of our investors in the region through Onward NRV websites and events

## 2. Cultivate an engaged Board of Directors

- i. Facilitate an annual board planning retreat to review and update the strategic plan
- ii. Conduct Board Self-Assessment survey every other year to assess engagement and develop a follow-up plan

## 3. Staff alignment and development

- i. Add Administrative Assistant position to free up existing staff to devote time to cluster competitiveness and talent
- ii. Ensure the organization retains quality staff

## 4. Community outreach and public relations

- i. Develop media relations plan to spotlight outcomes of the five-year strategy
- ii. Create an annual report and distribute to investors and stakeholders
- iii. Continue to host regular meetings with Local Economic Development Officials to promote regional collaboration among localities
- iv. Host “Economic Vitality Group” to encourage collaboration among organizations engaged in economic development in the NRV

ANNUAL BUDGET: \$42,694

5-YEAR: \$213,469