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# Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

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*Annual Update*  
*Adopted \_\_\_\_\_*

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Prepared By:  
Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional  
Commission

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Prepared for:  
US Department of Commerce -  
Economic Development Administration

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## Section 1: Introduction

A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is a document and ongoing planning process designed to bring together the public and private sectors in the creation of a regional economic roadmap. This roadmap is designed to diversify and strengthen regional economies. This CEDS document assesses regional economies, establishes regional goals and objectives, and outlines an action plan of priority projects.

This document, the *2024 Roanoke Valley - Alleghany Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Annual Update*, outlines annual progress made in implementing the strategy and on any revisions made to the Goals and Objectives and/or to the Prioritization Criteria along with the 2024 Project Package.

On January 25, 2007, the Roanoke Valley - Alleghany Regional Commission (RVARC) adopted the 2007 Update to its Strategic Plan, which called for the development of a regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the Roanoke Valley - Alleghany region and for the pursuit of the region's designation as an Economic Development District by the United States Economic Development Administration (EDA). Throughout much of 2008, a committee composed of both public and private sector interests representing the member governments of the RVARC worked diligently to define the region's goals and priorities.

A regular ongoing economic planning function was initiated for the Roanoke Valley - Alleghany Region in 2008. In keeping with the regular update cycle prescribed by the EDA, annual reports have been published since the 2009-10 Fiscal Year.

In January 2017, the EDA designated the Roanoke Valley - Alleghany region an Economic Development District (EDD). This designation enhances our ability to obtain grants from EDA. A key function of EDDs is to develop, maintain and assist in implementing a regional CEDS and support local governments in short-term planning activities.

The EDD designation supports the RVARC work on the CEDS. This strengthens the capacity of localities, institutions of higher education, and other eligible recipients to undertake and promote economic development programs. The designation creates more opportunities to work with EDA and its Federal partners such as HUD, EPA, ARC and FHWA on initiatives that require large amounts of funding from more than one source. Project grant applications listed in the CEDS may also receive higher scores since they are listed as a priority in a regional economic development plan (for example the VDOT Smart Scale funding).

## Organization and Management

The Roanoke Valley - Alleghany Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy planning process is managed by the Roanoke Valley - Alleghany Regional Commission, as the CEDS District Organization. The Roanoke Valley - Alleghany Regional Commission (RVARC) was created in 1969 as one of Virginia's 21 Planning District Commissions (PDCs). The purpose of PDCs as set out in the Code of Virginia (§ 15.2-4207) is

*“... to encourage and facilitate local government cooperation and state-local cooperation in addressing, on a regional basis, problems of greater than local significance. The cooperation resulting from this chapter is intended to facilitate the recognition and analysis of regional opportunities and take account of regional influences in planning and implementing public policies and services.”*

*“... also promote the orderly and efficient development of the physical, social and economic elements of the district by planning, and encouraging and assisting localities to plan, for the future.”*

The RVARC member governments include the Counties of Alleghany, Botetourt, Craig, Franklin, and Roanoke; the Cities of Covington, Roanoke, and Salem; and the Towns of Clifton Forge and Vinton. Franklin County and the Town of Rocky Mount are joint members in RVARC and West Piedmont Planning District Commission and are represented in the West Piedmont's CEDS.

The RVARC board is comprised of elected and appointed representatives from each City and County in the region and includes liaison representation from the region's Chambers of Commerce, Convention and Visitor's Bureau, Workforce Development Board, Community Colleges, and regional economic development organizations.

The RVARC board, as the planning organization, is responsible for maintaining and coordinating the CEDS planning process. The RVARC created a Strategy Committee to develop the CEDS document, monitor implementation, and to formulate regional goals and objectives.

A majority of the Strategy Committee members work in the private sector and represent large and small employers. The Strategy Committee is comprised of 36 voting members representing the local governments, several major employers, small businesses, workforce development, regional economic development, higher education, and minority groups.

Recent examples of RVARC projects include the following:

#### Economic Development

- Coordinated establishment of the Roanoke Valley Broadband Authority
- Regional Arts and Cultural Economic Impact Assessment
- Alleghany Highlands Regional Broadband planning grant
- Hotel Roanoke Economic Impact Study
- IMPLAN analysis of various projects
- Alleghany Highlands Revenue Sharing mapping
- Masonic Theater Economic Impact Study
- Virginia Telecommunications Initiative (VATI) grant applications

#### Community Development

- HUD funded Partnership for a Livable Roanoke Valley
- Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Comprehensive plan updates
- Virginia Housing Regional Development Grant

#### Transportation

- Roanoke Valley Pedestrian Vision Plan
- Craig County Public Transit Study
- Roanoke Valley Greenway Plan
- Update of Traffic Analysis Zones
- Roanoke Valley Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan
- Regional Pedestrian Vision Plan Phase I
- Regional Transit Vision Plan Phase II
- Regional Transit Demand Management Plan

#### Technical Assistance

- Created and maintained websites for the Midland Trail, Roanoke Valley Greenways Commission, Roanoke River Blueway, Upper James River Watershed, Western Virginia Regional Industrial Facility Authority, and SERDI
- Mapping for numerous economic development, recreation, and transportation projects
- Distribution of The Regional Register to over 350 subscribers

#### Program Coordination:

- Chesapeake Bay PDC Locality Implementation Program
- Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee
- Regional Local Foods Committee
- Ride Solutions
- Roanoke River Blueway Committee
- Roanoke Valley Collective Response
- Roanoke Regional Stormwater Advisory Committee
- Blue Ridge Interagency Council on Homelessness
- Regular meetings of the Mayors and Chairs, as well as Chief Administrative Officials in the region

## **Community Participation**

Participation by the community and collaboration between the public and private sector are cornerstones of a successful CEDS planning initiative and of regional economic development. Community involvement is a primary focus of the CEDS planning process and project development. Importantly, the Strategy Committee's composition was designed to include representatives from both large and small employers, governments, and community and economic interests.

It is important to note that participation from public entities and local utility companies was encouraged as well. RVARC staff sought to promote the initiative and to increase awareness throughout the larger community.

All project news and draft elements of the CEDS are routinely posted to the project web site. In addition, relevant project information was also shared periodically on the RVARC's Facebook page and newsletter.

The CEDS 30-day comment period was opened and advertised on May \_\_, 2024. A public hearing on the CEDS was held on June \_\_, 2024, at the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission's office in Roanoke, Virginia. The 2022 CEDS Annual Update was adopted by the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission on June \_\_, 2024.

## **Private Sector Participation**

Private sector participation has been a vital component of the development of the CEDS strategy. Encouraging the participation of the regional business community will continue to be a focus as the Strategy Committee pursues specific projects and initiatives. Funding from private corporations and foundations will likely play a role in the planning and development of many of the proposed CEDS projects.

Numerous examples exist regarding how the regional business community will be vital to the implementation of CEDS initiatives. Most of the capital projects will eventually leverage some level of private investment and job creation if not in the project itself then as a direct result. This region has a standing tradition of including the private sector in economic planning and seeking private sector leadership and investment in regional economic development activities. The RVAR CEDS will only strengthen this tradition as it identifies and elevates regional investment priorities to focus on projects that will have the greatest impact on the regional economy.



## Section 2: Data Analysis

### Overview

The Roanoke Valley - Alleghany Region is in the western portion of Virginia and consists of the Counties of Alleghany, Botetourt, Craig, and Roanoke, the Cities of Covington, Roanoke, and Salem, and the Towns of Clifton Forge and Vinton. The Roanoke Valley - Alleghany Region has a land area of approximately 1,633 square miles. It is bounded to the west by Greenbrier County, West Virginia, Monroe County, West Virginia, Giles County, Virginia and Montgomery County, Virginia, to the south by Floyd and Franklin Counties, to the east by Bedford and Rockbridge Counties, and to the north by Bath and Rockbridge Counties.

The Roanoke Valley - Alleghany Region contains the entire Roanoke Urbanized Area except for small sections located in Bedford County and Montgomery County. The region also contains a significant portion of the Roanoke, Virginia Metropolitan Statistical Area, which includes the Counties of Botetourt, Craig, Roanoke and Franklin and the Cities of Roanoke and Salem. The Roanoke Valley - Alleghany Region also includes the rural Alleghany Highlands area which has exhibited significant economic distress in recent years.

Much of the Roanoke Urbanized Area lies within a large valley between the Southern Blue Ridge and the Allegheny Mountains centered on the Roanoke River. The surrounding rural areas are very mountainous with small valleys. Many recreational opportunities are available in the region due largely to the mountain ranges in the area and the significant acreage owned by the National Forest Service, National Park Service, and other federal agencies. The Appalachian Trail runs through the northern section of Roanoke County and through portions of Craig and Botetourt Counties. The Blue Ridge Parkway runs through the counties of Botetourt and Roanoke and just to the south of the City of Roanoke. Carvins Cove Natural Reserve, the second-largest municipal park in America, lies in northeast Roanoke County and southwest Botetourt County.

The region has a significant rail history and heritage. Roanoke was an early transportation center serving as a crossroads for the Shenandoah Valley Railroad, which later became the Norfolk and Western Railway, and then Norfolk Southern. Both Norfolk Southern and CSX rail lines serve the region. Amtrak provides passenger service to the Town of Clifton and the City of Roanoke.

The region is served by several major interstate highways and major US highways. Interstate 81 crosses Botetourt County, Roanoke County and the City of Salem running north and south. Interstate 581 is a spur from Interstate 81 and serves Roanoke County and the City of Roanoke. Interstate 64 crosses the Alleghany Highlands area from East to West and connects with Interstate 81 farther east of the Roanoke Valley - Alleghany Region. US Highway 220 is an essential connection between the Alleghany Highlands, the Roanoke metropolitan area, and points south of the region. US Highway 220 also serves as a north-south connection between Interstate 81 and Interstate 64. US Highway 460 is an important east-west connection that crosses Roanoke County, the City of Salem, the City of Roanoke, and the Town of Vinton.

Table 1: Major Cities and Distance from the RVARC Region

City	Distance in Miles
Atlanta, GA	430
Baltimore, MD	281
Charlotte, NC	194
Chicago, IL	722
Detroit, MI	588
Greensboro, NC	105
Indianapolis, IN	531
Knoxville, TN	255
New York, NY	476
Norfolk, VA	245
Philadelphia, PA	403
Raleigh, NC	156
St. Louis, MO	686
Washington, DC	251

Source: Roanoke Regional Partnership, 2021.

The region is served by the Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport in Roanoke and the Greenbrier Valley Airport in Lewisburg, West Virginia. Commercial air passenger service is offered at the Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport in Roanoke, Virginia. The Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport is served by four commercial carriers - Allegiant Air, American, Delta, and United Airlines - which offer direct service to eight domestic hubs. Commuter air services are also offered at the Roanoke Regional Airport. Air freight providers include Air Cargo Carriers, American Airlines, Delta, Federal Express, Quest Diagnostics, United Express, and UPS. The Greenbrier Airport provides private charter flights and flights to Dulles International and Chicago O'Hara International airports.

There are numerous postsecondary education opportunities in the region itself and within a reasonable driving distance. The offerings from institutes of higher education include traditional 4-year universities, community colleges, private technical colleges, and medical schools. The Western Virginia Workforce Development Board coordinates the resources in the workforce development system to provide training and education opportunities to the region's constituents.

Nine target industries have been identified by the Roanoke Regional Partnership for the region: Transportation Manufacturing, Advanced Manufacturing, Life Sciences, Finance & Insurance, Printing & Packaging, Technology & Innovation, Food & Beverage, Outdoor Industry, and Foreign Investment. The Alleghany Highlands Economic Development Corporation has identified six Key Industries: Advanced Manufacturing, Data Centers & Back Office Operations, Health Sciences, Hospitality & Retail, Information Technology, and Outdoor Recreation.

The region's largest employment sectors are healthcare, manufacturing and education, which have all experienced multimillion-dollar investments over the past few years. The economy is also expanding through new efforts in high tech entrepreneurship, tourism, and outdoor activities.

**Map 1 region location map**

## Population

Several localities within the Roanoke region experienced an increase in population since 2012. The population for the RVAR CEDS area increased 2.24% compared to a 7.6% increase in the Commonwealth over the same period.

Table 2: Population

Locality	2012	2022	Change
Alleghany County*	12,397	11,618	-6.28
Botetourt County	33,074	33,734	5.32
Craig County	5,186	4,898	-5.55
Roanoke County**	84,345	88,608	5.05
City of Covington	5,903	5,722	-3.07
City of Roanoke	96,742	99,213	2.55
City of Salem	24,972	25,372	1.6
Town of Clifton Forge	3,900	3,541	-9.21
Town of Vinton	8,087	8,045	-0.52
RVAR CEDS Region	274,606	280,751	2.24
Virginia	8,014,995	8,624,511	7.60

Source: American Community Survey 2012 and 2022.

\* Excludes Town of Clifton Forge population.

\*\* Excludes Town of Vinton population.

The population of most of the localities within the CEDS region is older than that of the Commonwealth. Table 3 displays the median age of each of the jurisdictions and disaggregates the population by age.

Based on recent demographic trends in the region it appears that the older population in the region will continue to expand. Data suggests that potential labor force issues related to a large percentage of retirees and declining number of people in the workforce are likely if the current population trends continue.

Table 3: Population by Age Group

Locality	Median Age	Under 5	5 to 19	20 to 34	35 to 54	55 to 64	65 and over
Alleghany County	48.0	629	2,549	2,413	3,342	2,421	3,805
Botetourt County	47.5	1,397	5,756	5,001	8,274	5,479	7,827
Craig County	46.1	375	944	688	1,050	900	941
Roanoke County	43.6	4,403	17,213	16,361	24,333	13,376	20,967
Covington city	41.9	349	1,141	950	1,293	897	1,092
Roanoke city	38.1	6,377	17,518	20,867	24,440	12,592	17,419
Salem city	40.8	1,012	4,994	4,901	6,128	3,435	4,902
Clifton Forge Town	42.8	259	622	644	575	601	840
Vinton Town	41.1	371	1,439	1,649	1,828	1,207	1,551
Virginia	38.7	494,148	1,631,202	1,750,132	2,248,095	1,119,928	1,381,006

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2022, U.S. Census Bureau.

Table 4 shows the most recent population projections from the Weldon Cooper Center through 2050. The rural areas are projected to lose population, while the urban areas experience small gains, and the region is projected to gain 12,869 people from 2030 to 2050.

Table 4: Population Projections

Locality	2030	2040	2050
Alleghany County	13,993	12,805	11,809
Botetourt County	33,556	34,588	36,138
Craig County	4,528	4,363	4,264
Roanoke County	100,027	104,046	109,621
City of Covington	5,434	5,075	4,792
City of Roanoke	101,514	102,529	105,079
City of Salem	25,519	25,438	25,737
RVAR CEDS Region	284,571	288,844	297,440
Virginia	9,129,002	9,759,371	10,535,810

Source: Virginia Population Projections, University of Virginia Weldon Cooper Center, Demographics Research Group. 2022.

*[The 2022 data has not been updated.]*

## Gross Domestic Product

The Bureau of Economic Analysis produces quarterly and annual estimates of Gross Domestic Product. The gross domestic product estimates the value of the goods and services produced in a county, metropolitan area, state, or nation. It can be used to compare the size and growth of county economies across the state and nation. The growth rate of GDP is the most popular indicator of the nation's overall economic health.

Table 5: Gross Domestic Product (in thousands of dollars)

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2022 Rank
Alleghany + Covington	816,458	753,084	754,235	865,140	61
Botetourt County	1,163,104	1,132,616	1,194,173	1,375,303	48
Craig County	91,545	90,164	89,750	111,043	104
Roanoke City	6,382,646	6,339,701	6,712,970	7,617,071	15
Roanoke County + Salem City	5,538,960	5,382,102	5,615,519	6,189,165	23
Virginia (millions)	489,199,063	478,909,346	505,350,968	576,964,272	-

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2023.

## Income

Data available on income trends in the region indicate that the median income is increasing for almost all localities in the region.

It is important to note that median household income is the amount which divides the income distribution into two equal groups, half having income above that amount, and half having income below that amount. It is considered by many to be a better indicator as it is not affected as much by unusually high and low-income values.

Table 6: Median Household Income

Locality	2012	2022	Change
Alleghany County	46,133	52,546	13.9
Botetourt County	66,053	77,680	17.6
Craig County	47,691	66,286	3.90
Roanoke County	61,686	80,872	31.1
City of Covington	36,067	45,737	26.8
City of Roanoke	38,265	51,523	34.6
City of Salem	47,776	68,402	43.2
Town of Clifton Forge	41,343	32,007	-22.6
Town of Vinton	43,374	65,481	51.0
Virginia	63,636	87,249	37.1
United States			

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2012 and 2022.

The regions per capita income can be seen in Table 7. Per capita income is total income divided by total population. It is generally considered to not be as good of an economic indicator as median household income because small concentrations of wealthy or low-income populations can increase (or decrease) per capita income far above that of most residents.

Table 7: Per Capita Income

Locality	2012	2022	Change
Alleghany County	23,680	30,143	27.3
Botetourt County	30,137	40,289	33.7
Craig County	21,826	32,020	46.7
Roanoke County	31,666	43,125	36.2
City of Covington	20,055	24,657	22.9
City of Roanoke	23,381	33,206	42.0
City of Salem	26,699	37,991	42.3
Town of Clifton Forge	22,058	21,654	-1.8
Town of Vinton	24,579	39,914	62.4
Virginia	33,326	47,210	41.7
United States			

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2012 and 2022.

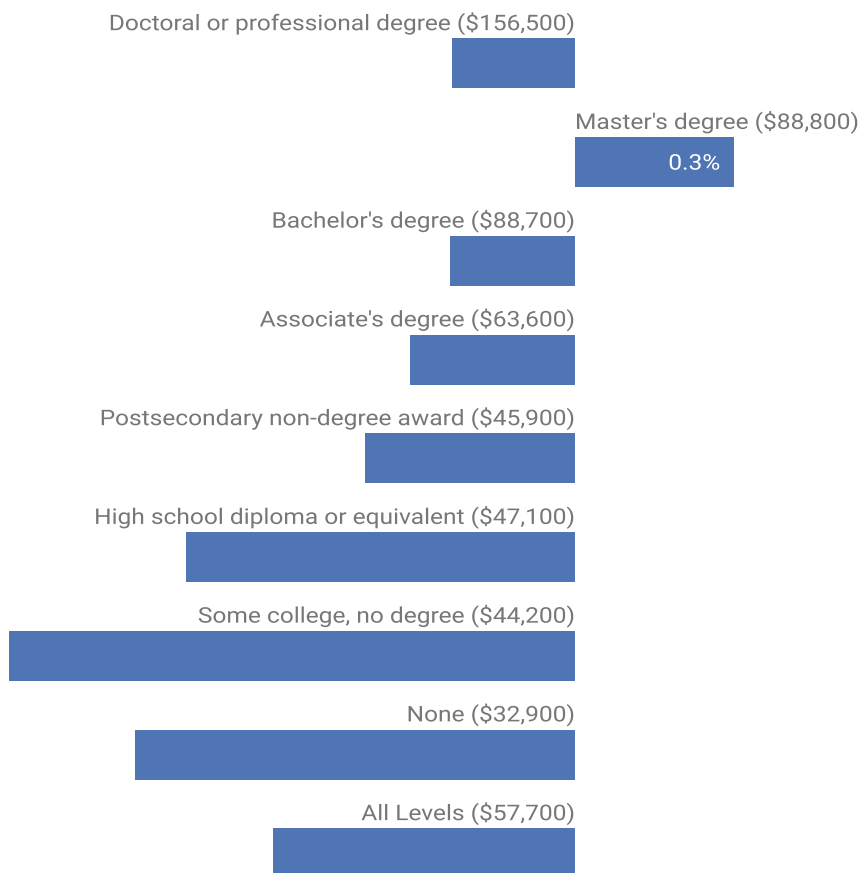
## Education

Expected growth rates for occupations vary by the education and training required. While all employment in the RVARC CEDS is projected to contract 0.6% over the next ten years, occupations typically requiring a postgraduate degree are expected to contract 0.3% per year, those requiring a bachelor's degree are forecast to contract 0.3% per year, and occupations typically needing a 2-year degree or certificate are expected to contract 0.3% per year.

Employment by occupation data are estimates as of Third Quarter 2023. Education levels of occupations are based on BLS assignments. Forecast employment growth uses national projections from the Bureau of Labor Statistics adapted for regional growth patterns.

Figure 1 Projected job Growth by Training Required

### Annual Average Projected Job Growth by Education Levels



Source: JobsEQ®  
Data as of 2023Q3

Source: JobsEQ®, <http://www.chmuraecon.com/jobseq>  
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Table 8: Graduates and Completers by Diploma Type  
2022-2023

Division Name	Standard Diploma	Advanced Studies Diploma	Other Diploma	Certificate of Program Completion	GED Certificate	ISAEP	Total
Alleghany County	129	76	16	1	0	9	231
Botetourt County	163	190	12	1	0	3	369
Covington City	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Craig County	31	6	5	0	1	0	43
Roanoke City	503	268	89	0	0	0	860
Roanoke County	508	575	15	0	0	7	1,105
Salem City	136	165	8	0	0	3	312
Virginia	39,024	51,029	2,548	193	167	831	93,972

Source: Annual Report of Graduates and Completers 2022-2023, Virginia Department of Education.

Note: Effective July 1, 2022, Covington City no longer operates as a school division; data is reported as Alleghany Highlands.

Postsecondary enrollment reports show the number and percent of Virginia high school graduates who enrolled in an Institution of Higher Education within sixteen months of graduating high school.

Table 9: Graduates by Continuing Education Plans  
2022-2023

Division Name	Attending Two-year Colleges	Attending Four-year Colleges	Other Continuing Education Plans	Employment	Military	No Plans	Total
Alleghany County	110	42	16	57	4	2	231
Botetourt County	108	135	11	95	7	13	369
Covington City							
Craig County	11	6	7	19	0	0	43
Roanoke City	181	235	30	325	15	74	860
Roanoke County	314	486	13	253	30	9	1105
Salem City	84	142	7	74	3	2	312
Virginia	20,974	46,193	5,457	14,773	2,383	4,012	93,792

Source: Annual Report of Graduates and Completers 2022-2023, Virginia Department of Education.

Note: Effective July 1, 2022, Covington City no longer operates as a school division; data is reported as Alleghany Highlands.

## Postsecondary Educational Opportunities

There are numerous postsecondary education opportunities in the region itself and within a reasonable driving distance (~60 miles). The offerings from institutes of higher education include traditional 4-year universities, community colleges, private technical colleges, and medical schools.

Table 10: Postsecondary Educational Opportunities

Type of Institution	Name
Public four-year	Radford University Virginia Military Institute Virginia Tech
Private four-year	Ferrum College Hollins University Liberty University University of Lynchburg Randolph College Roanoke College Southern Virginia University Sweet Briar College Washington & Lee University
Medical Schools	Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine Radford University Carilion Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine
Virginia Community College System	Mountain Gateway Community College Central Virginia Community College New River Community College Virginia Western Community College
Private Technical Colleges	American National University ECPI University
Multi-Institutional	Roanoke Higher Education Center

## Industry and Education Credential Programs

To encourage more students to work toward a selected industry credential or state license while pursuing a high school diploma, the Path to Industry Certification: High School Industry Credentialing program was developed by the Commonwealth in 2012. The CTE Credential Requirement for the Standard Diploma becomes effective with the graduation class of 2017

A credential is defined as:

- State-Issued Professional License, required for entry into a specific occupation as determined by a Virginia state licensing agency (Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN), Cosmetology);
- Full Industry Certification, from a recognized industry, trade, or professional association validating essential skills of a particular occupation (A+ CompTIA, Microsoft Certified Professional (MCP));
- Pathway Industry Certification, which may consist of entry-level exams as a component of a suite of exams in an industry certification program leading toward full certification (Automotive Service Excellence, (ASE), Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS)); or
- Occupational competency assessment, a national standardized assessment of skills/knowledge in a specific career and/or technical area, (NOCTI).

The Virginia Department of Education evaluates on an on-going basis industry credentials against prescribed criteria for graduation requirements for the Standard Diploma and student –selected verified credit. Credentials that meet the criteria are presented to the Virginia Board of Education annually for approval.

In addition to providing student-selected verified credit(s) and adding value to a student's résumé for obtaining entry-level positions in today's technical job market, credentials provide the following benefits to students:

- added value to a transcript for higher education purposes or obtaining an entry-level position in the technical job market,
- evidence that the student has completed advanced educational preparation by verifying competency in career and technical education skill areas in demand by business and industry,
- increased job opportunities for advancement in a chosen career path; and
- enhanced self-esteem for students through achieving national occupational competency standards recognized by business and industry.

Table 12 shows the industry certification completions for each locality in the region.

Data presented is based on the performance of CTE program completers. A CTE completer is a student who has met the requirements for a CTE concentration (course sequence) and all requirements for high school graduation, or an approved alternative. Secondary schools report the number of credentials earned by students for passing Board-approved credentialing exams.

Table 11: Career and Technical education Completers

	Armed Services VABE	CTE Completers	Industry Certification	NOCTI	State Licensures	Students Earning One or More Credentials	Total Credentials Earned	Workplace Readiness
Alleghany County		87						
Botetourt County		224				89	89	89
Craig County		21	45		1	57	64	18
Roanoke County		661	1223		23	1305	1493	247
Covington City								
Roanoke City	22	343	1011	77	1	1196	1659	570
Salem City		106				5	5	5
Virginia	761	44,149	95,688	2,590	1,236	115,682	143,862	44,348

Source: School Quality Profiles 2021-2022, Virginia Department of Education.

## Workforce Development

### Western Virginia Workforce Development Board

The Western Virginia Workforce Development Board is one of 15 organizations in the Commonwealth of Virginia created by U.S. Department of Labor legislation. Serving the entirety of Planning District 5, the Western Virginia Workforce Development Board is responsible for the oversight and administration of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding provided to the region for job training and workforce development activities. The Western Virginia Workforce Development Board is also designated as the regional convener for workforce development in the region by the Virginia Board of Workforce Development, the state workforce development board, and the Code of Virginia. The funding provided through Title I of the WIOA legislation focuses on meeting the needs of businesses for skilled workers and individuals' needs for training, education, and employment.

Board members of the Western Virginia Workforce Development Board represent community leaders from business, education, local government and service providers, with a private sector majority. The Board's mission is to prepare job seekers for in-demand occupations to help the region's businesses succeed. The Board also works with the Chief Local Elected Officials in the region to inform the localities of workforce development activities and needs and strengthen services for their constituents.

The Board meets its mission through sector strategies and career pathway activities, job training, and business services, all in collaboration with the partners within the workforce development system. These services are provided out of physical locations, known as Virginia Career Works Centers, which provide individuals and businesses with access to appropriate training, education, support services, and other applicable workforce development services. The Board connects service providers to individuals in need of assistance, links individuals to training resources and educates them about the demands of employers.

Responsibilities of the Board include, but are not limited to:

- Overseeing the region's one-stop system of Virginia Career Works, which provides a variety of services to businesses and individuals including job matching, career counseling and educational training resources.
- Developing and implementing a comprehensive regional workforce development strategy to meet the needs of new and existing employees.
- Determine the needs for, and assist in the development of, appropriate employment training.
- Working with economic development professionals in recruiting new business and retaining existing employers.
- Advising local officials on trends and events affecting the workforce system.

The Western Virginia Workforce Development Board has chartered three Virginia Career Works Centers in Virginia Local Workforce Development Area III in Covington, Roanoke and Rocky Mount. Each of these Centers provides a full range of individual and business services.

In early 2019, the Board completed the review and modification of the Local Workforce Plan for the region. This process included a review of local and regional labor market information to reaffirm and/or modify the target industries and in-demand occupations in the area and a review of any pertinent changes to structure, performance, and programming of the Board. The proposed modifications were submitted to the Virginia Community College System, as the WIOA Title I Fiscal and Administrative Agent for the Commonwealth of Virginia and are expected to be approved through 2020. These modifications included the addition of the Education sector to the target industries for the region and the consolidation of Health and Life Sciences, as well as Manufacturing and Food and Beverage Manufacturing. The Local Plan modifications also included a greater alignment with the regional economic development priorities set forth by the Roanoke Regional Partnership. The below table details revised workforce demand analysis for the region.

Table 12: Workforce Demand Analysis

Industry Cluster	Total Jobs (2018)	Projected Jobs Change (2018-2021)	Projected Job Growth (2018-2024)	Location Quotient (2018)	Competitive Effect (2018-2024)
<b>Existing Target Industries</b>					
Healthcare	22,266	2,319	10%	1.33	-241
Manufacturing	17,537	319	2%	1.28	104
Construction	11,790	-155	-1%	1.10	-999
Transportation & Warehousing	8,821	323	4%	1.11	-752
Financial Services	2,423	184	8%	0.65	-57
<b>Emerging Target Industries</b>					
Food and Beverage Manufacturing	1,122	164	15%	1.79	130
Life Sciences	2,929	95	3%	1.26	-148
Information Technology	4,640	155	3%	1.28	-265

Source: Virginia Career Works, Blue Ridge Region, 2019.

The table above also shows industry location quotient and competitive effect statistics. These are indicators that provide insight into each target industry’s strength and competitiveness compared to the nation. Location quotients above 1.00 indicate the region is doing better than the national average in terms of concentrated employment. Positive competitive effect numbers illustrate that projected new jobs will occur specifically due to regional drivers, not just because of national trends. Those with negative competitive effect numbers may still grow, but at a slower pace than the national average.

The Board has also added several new programs beyond the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act to diversify the workforce programs offered in the region and address gaps in services that have been identified by stakeholders. Some of these projects include a Regional Career and Technical Education study to evaluate the current Career and Technical Education

programs in the region while identifying ways to reduce duplication, increase capacity, and provide more programs that meet business demand. The Board has also worked with private sector partners, such as Norfolk Southern, to ensure that programs available to those who have been dislocated from employment due to large reductions in force (i.e. General Electric, Norfolk Southern, FreightCar America, etc.) have the ability to address their workforce needs in a more flexible manner.

In late 2020, the Board will undertake a strategic planning process to re-evaluate proposed goals and measurables and set the path for future activities and strategies. A new Local Plan will also be created to be implemented from 2020 through 2024 to align operations with the strategic plan that is developed by the Board.

**Labor Force**

Human capital is one of the single most important assets a community can offer prospective businesses. The lack of human capital is also one of the hardest economic development deficiencies a community could ever seek to overcome. Data have already been presented suggesting that key working age cohorts are decreasing.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics data provided in Table 13, all localities except Alleghany County and the City of Covington have experienced an increase in the size of their respective labor forces over the past 5 years.

Table 13: Annual Labor Force

Locality	2019	2023*	Change
Alleghany County	6,994	6,857	-2.0%
Botetourt County	17,634	18,330	3.9%
Craig County	2,350	2,401	2.2%
Roanoke County	49,858	51,745	3.8%
City of Covington	2,415	2,346	-2.9%
City of Roanoke	49,212	50,907	3.4%
City of Salem	12,917	13,399	3.7%
Virginia	4,414,972	4,588,256	3.9%

Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024.  
 \*Average calculated based on monthly data.

### Unemployment

All localities within the RVAR CEDS region saw their average annual unemployment rates remain relatively stable when comparing 2019 to 2023. The annual unemployment rate increased in 2020 and 2021 during COVID but returned to pre-pandemic rates by 2023.

Table 14: Annual Unemployment Rate

Locality	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Alleghany County	3.5	6.4	4.1	3.2	3.3
Botetourt County	2.5	4.4	3.1	2.5	2.0
Craig County	3.1	5.0	3.4	2.9	3.1
Roanoke County	2.5	4.9	3.2	2.5	2.4
City of Covington	4.1	9.2	5.8	4.1	4.0
City of Roanoke	3.0	7.3	5.0	3.3	3.0
City of Salem	2.7	5.5	3.6	2.8	3.0
Virginia	2.8	6.0	4.0	2.9	2.9

Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024.

### Business Trends

It is important to look at trends in terms of business growth and decline. Table 15 outlines the most current business establishment data available and illustrates growth in the total number of business establishments from 2018 to 2022 and the decline during the COVID pandemic in 2020 and rebound by 2022.

Table 15: Number of Business Establishments

Locality	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Alleghany County	362	360	361	377	497
Botetourt County	886	887	871	908	1,027
Craig County	126	124	122	126	165
Roanoke County	2,551	2,521	2,496	2,596	2,776
City of Covington	277	275	269	275	286
City of Roanoke	3,395	3,431	3,405	3,441	3,669
City of Salem	1,069	1,051	1,030	1,048	1,119
Virginia	278,349	280,066	282,884	297,191	327,821

Data was only available up to the Second Quarter of 2023 at the time of the CEDS draft.

Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024.



## Economic Structure

It is necessary to understand the nature, structure, and trends of the region's economy to determine its strengths and weaknesses. There are several data sources that are used in analyzing the local economic structure of the region. The following section will seek to describe regional trends in the industry clusters for the entire RVAR CEDS region.

An outline of the region's largest employers is provided below. It will assist with understanding the local economy and demonstrates that most of the region's largest employers are in the industries of government, healthcare, education, banking and insurance, and retail.

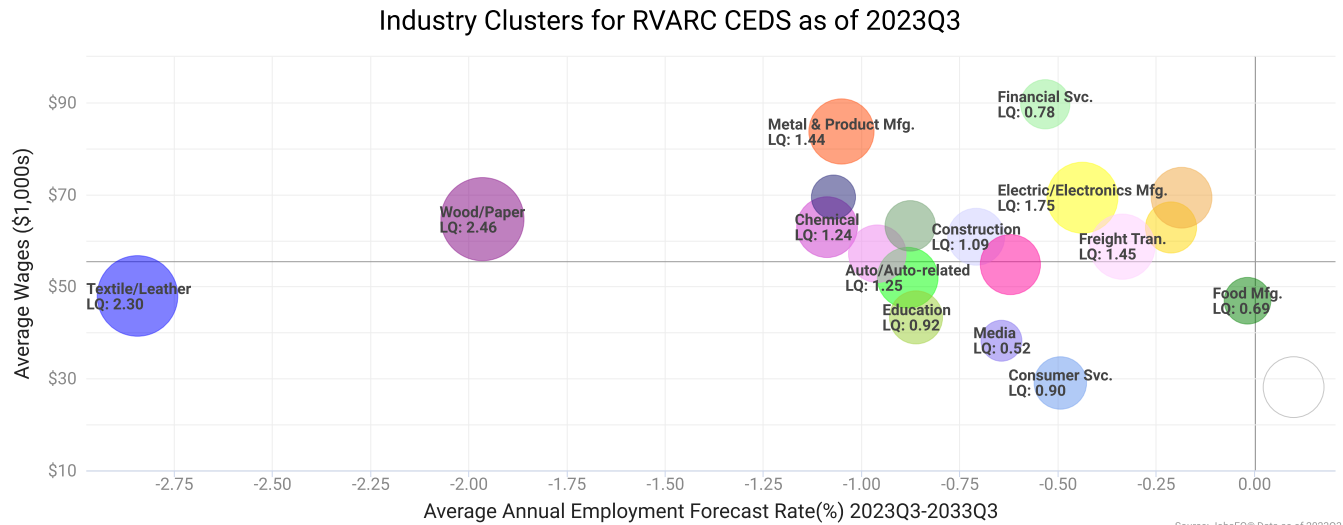
Table 16: Largest 50 Employers

1. Roanoke Memorial Community Hospital	26. Elbit Systems of America
2. HCA Virginia Health System	27. Yokohama Tire Corp.
3. Roanoke County School Board	28. Carter Machinery Company
4. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs	29. Integrity Windows Inc
5. Wal Mart	30. Roanoke College
6. Roanoke City School Board	31. Lake Region Medical
7. Carilion Services	32. YMCA
8. City of Roanoke	33. County of Franklin
9. Wells Fargo Bank NA	34. VDOT
10. Kroger	35. Alleghany Highlands Public Schools
11. County of Roanoke	36. Carilion Healthcare
12. Cornerstone Building Brands Service	37. Paychecks Plus
13. U.P.S.	38. Steel Dynamics Roanoke Bar Division
14. Franklin County School Board	39. Anthem
15. Alliance Group Rock Tenn	40. Davis H. Elliot Company, Inc.
16. Altec Industries Inc	41. Coca Cola Bottling Company
17. Advance Auto Parts	42. Piedmont Airlines
18. US Postal Service	43. Dynax America Corporation
19. Botetourt County School Board	44. Adams Construction Company
20. Food Lion	45. Richfield Nursing Center
21. Lowes' Home Centers, Inc.	46. US Foodservice
22. Friendship Manor	47. Metalsa Roanoke Inc
23. City of Salem	48. Hollins University
24. Virginia Transformer Corporation	49. County of Botetourt
25. City of Salem School Board	50. Franklin Memorial Hospital

Data includes all localities within Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission region.  
 Source: Virginia Employment Commission, Economic Information & Analytics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), 3rd Quarter (July, August, September) 2023.

## Industry Clusters

A cluster is a geographic concentration of interrelated industries or occupations. The industry cluster in the RVARC CEDS with the highest relative concentration is Wood/Paper with a location quotient of 2.46. This cluster employs 2,828 workers in the region with an average wage of \$64,622. Employment in the Wood/Paper cluster is projected to contract in the region about 2.0% per year over the next ten years.



Source: JobsEQ®, <http://www.chmuraecon.com/jobseq>  
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Location quotient and average wage data are derived from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, imputed where necessary, and updated through 2023Q2 with preliminary estimates updated to 2023Q3. Forecast employment growth uses national projections from the Bureau of Labor Statistics adapted for regional growth patterns.

## Industry Snapshot

The largest sector in the RVARC CEDS is Health Care and Social Assistance, employing 27,399 workers. The next-largest sectors in the region are Retail Trade (15,415 workers) and Manufacturing (14,788). High location quotients (LQs) indicate sectors in which a region has high concentrations of employment compared to the national average. The sectors with the largest LQs in the region are Management of Companies and Enterprises (LQ = 1.87), Health Care and Social Assistance (1.25), and Manufacturing (1.22).

Sectors in the RVARC CEDS with the highest average wages per worker are Finance and Insurance (\$89,543), Management of Companies and Enterprises (\$86,182), and Wholesale Trade (\$83,872). Regional sectors with the best job growth (or most moderate job losses) over the last 5 years are Manufacturing (+739 jobs), Construction (+658), and Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation (+578).

Over the next 1 year, employment in the RVARC CEDS is projected to contract by 925 jobs. The fastest growing sector in the region is expected to be Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services with a +0.2% year-over-year rate of growth. The strongest forecast by number of jobs over this period is expected for Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (+14 jobs), Management of Companies and Enterprises (+2), and Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation (-1).

Employment data in Table 17 Regional Industry Snapshot are derived from the JobsEQ software and based on the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and imputed where necessary. Estimates are updated through Third Quarter 2023.

Table 17: Regional Industry Snapshot Third Quarter 2023

Industry	Current			5-Yer History	
	Employment	Average Annual Wages	Location Quotient	Employment Change	Annual Change
Health Care and Social Assistance	27,399	\$66,790	1.25	476	0.4%
Retail Trade	15,415	\$34,999	1.03	-1,062	-1.3%
Manufacturing	14,788	\$69,196	1.22	739	1.0%
Accommodation and Food Services	11,982	\$23,971	0.92	-872	-1.4%
Educational Services	10,213	\$47,319	0.85	247	0.5%
Construction	9,594	\$61,828	1.07	658	1.4%
Transportation and Warehousing	8,453	\$55,632	1.14	-67	-0.2%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	7,949	\$71,699	0.72	42	0.1%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	7,680	\$39,675	0.81	-1,103	-2.6%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	7,201	\$34,920	1.12	-1,421	-3.5%
Wholesale Trade	6,745	\$83,872	1.19	80	0.2%
Public Administration	5,676	\$63,109	0.82	103	0.4%
Finance and Insurance	4,644	\$89,543	0.77	-903	-3.5%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	4,364	\$86,182	1.87	-144	-0.6%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	2,898	\$20,444	0.99	578	4.5%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	2,202	\$54,284	0.82	110	1.0%
Information	1,296	\$61,860	0.43	-279	-3.8%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	612	\$19,919	0.32	-144	-4.1%
Utilities	605	\$69,394	0.79	-108	-3.2%
Unclassified	381	\$42,905	1.18	106	6.8%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	128	\$61,939	0.24	9	1.5%
<b>Total - All Industries</b>	<b>150,226</b>	<b>\$55,510</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>-2,952</b>	<b>-0.4%</b>

Source: JobsEQ®

Note: Figures may not total due to rounding.

1. All data based upon a four-quarter moving average.

## Occupation Snapshot

The largest major occupation group in the RVARC CEDS is Office and Administrative Support Occupations, employing 16,988 workers. The next-largest occupation groups in the region are Transportation and Material Moving Occupations (14,016 workers) and Sales and Related Occupations (13,583). High location quotients (LQs) indicate occupation groups in which a region has high concentrations of employment compared to the national average. The major groups with the largest LQs in the region are Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations (LQ = 1.40), Community and Social Service Occupations (1.22), and Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations (1.18).

Occupation groups in the RVARC CEDS with the highest average wages per worker are Management Occupations (\$119,600), Legal Occupations (\$115,200), and Computer and Mathematical Occupations (\$93,600). The unemployment rate in the region varied among the major groups from 1.1% among Legal Occupations to 4.7% among Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations.

Over the next 1 year, the fastest growing occupation group in the RVARC CEDS is expected to be Computer and Mathematical Occupations with a +0.6% year-over-year rate of growth. The strongest forecast by number of jobs over this period is expected for Computer and Mathematical Occupations (+31 jobs) and Healthcare Support Occupations (+15). Over the same period, the highest separation demand (occupation demand due to retirements and workers moving from one occupation to another) is expected in Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations (2,167 jobs) and Office and Administrative Support Occupations (1,822).

Occupation employment data are estimated via industry employment data and the estimated industry/occupation mix by JobsEQ. Industry employment data are derived from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and currently updated through 2023Q2, imputed where necessary with preliminary estimates updated to 2023Q3. Wages by occupation are as of 2023 provided by the BLS and imputed where necessary. Forecast employment growth uses national projections from the Bureau of Labor Statistics adapted for regional growth patterns.

Table 18: Regional Occupation Snapshot Third Quarter 2023

Occupation	Current			5-Year History	
	Employment	Mean Annual Wages <sup>2</sup>	Location Quotient	Employment Change	Annual Change
Office and Administrative Support	16,988	\$43,200	0.94	-1,470	-1.6%
Transportation and Material Moving	14,016	\$44,600	1.06	-56	-0.1%
Sales and Related	13,583	\$49,400	1.02	-927	-1.3%
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	12,309	\$89,500	1.40	712	1.2%
Food Preparation and Serving Related	11,788	\$31,300	0.97	-956	-1.5%
Production	9,577	\$45,500	1.14	-282	-0.6%
Business and Financial Operations	9,310	\$76,900	0.97	291	0.6%
Management	8,917	\$119,600	0.79	665	1.6%
Educational Instruction and Library	7,262	\$63,200	0.91	45	0.1%
Healthcare Support	7,050	\$33,500	1.05	356	1.0%
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	6,894	\$54,600	1.18	-72	-0.2%
Construction and Extraction	6,712	\$49,200	0.98	166	0.5%
Computer and Mathematical	4,884	\$93,600	1.01	-84	-0.3%
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	4,451	\$33,000	0.91	-415	-1.8%
Personal Care and Service	3,560	\$33,900	0.96	-244	-1.3%
Protective Service	3,335	\$45,400	1.04	-125	-0.7%
Community and Social Service	3,304	\$52,500	1.22	-158	-0.9%
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	2,151	\$57,400	0.78	-72	-0.7%
Architecture and Engineering	2,027	\$85,400	0.84	75	0.8%
Legal	1,106	\$115,200	0.90	-82	-1.4%
Life, Physical, and Social Science	793	\$78,500	0.60	22	0.6%
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	209	\$43,300	0.23	-52	-4.4%
<b>Total - All Occupations</b>	<b>150,226</b>	<b>\$57,700</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>-2,664</b>	<b>-0.4%</b>

Source: JobsEQ®

Note: Figures may not total due to rounding.

1. Data based on a four-quarter moving average unless noted otherwise.

2. Wage data represent the average for all Covered Employment

**Enplanements**

Enplanements are the number of passengers boarding commercial air carriers. The data provides insight into short run changes in economic activity. However, such data should be used with caution since airline scheduling and ticket prices obviously affect air travel. Air travel is highly elastic, meaning slight changes in price lead to sharp changes in demand. Table 19 shows annual enplanements at the Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport including the dramatic decline and subsequent rebound in passenger traffic due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 19: Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport Enplanements

Year	Enplanements	Percent Change
2010	316,478	6.35
2011	320,961	1.42
2012	315,877	-1.58
2013	310,295	-1.76
2014	305,496	-1.55
2015	300,181	-1.74
2016	305,212	1.68
2017	309,341	1.35
2018	330,063	6.70
2019	361,131	9.41
2020	145,061	-59.8
2021	242,814	67.39
2022	299,858	23.49

Source: Federal Aviation Administration, CY 2021 Commercial Service Enplanements Data.

## Regional Housing Supply and Demand

Housing is a fundamental need for residents and the economic development community has a role to play in creating and maintaining a housing market that meets the needs of the region's population. Housing affordability and availability also impacts the ability of businesses to attract and retain employees. The localities in the region need affordable, quality housing to attract and retain employees and maintain quality of life for all residents. Three major housing studies are summarized below. These studies identify key data and issues along with recommendations that can help guide local policymakers in addressing housing supply and demand in the region.

### *Comprehensive Housing Analysis Alleghany Highlands Region* (S. Patz and Associates, 2019)

The 2019 county-wide housing study for the Alleghany Highlands Region analyzed the potential market for new homes within Alleghany County, the City of Covington, and the Town of Clifton Forge. The study is intended to be a realistic strategy for public officials to reverse the current trends that have not provided new housing and address four main conclusions. The lack of new housing unit development is not a “demand” issue, but a “supply” issue impacted by past recessions of the 2000s and a generally stagnant economy. Second, viable sites and buildings exist to support new housing, both single-family and multifamily and for families and older adults. Third, local officials have publicly stated their desire to support plans for new housing unit development. plans are identified in the study and can be implemented if some public monies can be made available to make viable sites “shovel ready” for new development. Fourth, the need for large area employer(s) to assist in the housing development strategy by making sure that employees, new and existing, are aware of future new housing and identifying housing needs of their employees to developers.

The study identified nine vacant buildings in the Alleghany Highlands for potential residential development. Several are being eyed for mixed-income or workforce housing. The market for new homes is not large enough to support the reuse of all of these buildings. Some other uses may need to be identified for some of the smaller and less adaptable buildings.

Eleven properties were identified as having the most potential for residential development. The properties have a wide range of sizes, from just over four acres to over 100 acres. The properties that were identified are generally located along the I-64 corridor and thus enjoy quick access to the employment centers in the Alleghany Highlands and outside region, possibly increasing their marketability to potential owners who might work outside of the study area.

The market study conclusions are fully described in the report, along with an estimate of potential new housing demand and recommendations for actions to be undertaken to prepare and market sites to investors. The study recommends that in the near-term future, Alleghany Highlands officials should concentrate on only one or two sites for immediate development, so development can occur and be supportable. Other sites should be studied in the future.



Countywide Market Analysis For-Sale and Rental Housing (S. Patz and Associates, 2016)

The purpose of the study was to identify new housing opportunities for new employees who are expected to work in Botetourt County over the next 5 years. The consultant focused their research on site development opportunities rather than housing demand, which has been fully documented. The study found that few sites in the county are readily available for apartment unit development, but several properties, with rezoning, could serve the county's housing needs. The study provides data on numerous sites for residential development, both new construction and adaptive reuse.

At the time of the study, Botetourt County had few viable readily available options for new residential development and could be expected to meet the housing unit demand to be generated by projected near-term employment growth. The county needed available housing options to continue to attract new employment. A second issue identified was a lack of housing in nearby locations, and thus a potential shortage of housing to accommodate commuters to new businesses in the county. The study also looked at the market for adaptive reuse of existing historic buildings in Botetourt County. There are several buildings in the county that could be upgraded for new, attractive housing.

The eight primary conclusions of the study are:

1. That the demand for new housing in Botetourt County is likely to be greater than the supply due to the current lack of available land for development.
2. That there are a few sites that are readily available for development for new housing; most sites identified for development require rezoning and/or other issues that need public approvals.
3. The current housing market is stronger for rental housing rather than for for-sale housing due to the type and wage levels of new employment.
4. The County has no affordable housing and a sizable percentage of new jobs will be at moderate incomes.
5. Adaptive reuse properties provide a good opportunity for new housing, as these sites have public water and sewer, require no or minimal off-site development costs, and have land prices that should allow for successful adaptive reuse.
6. There is a need for County officials and staff to restudy development density to attract more home builders and to reduce development costs. Restudy of the "comp" plan is also recommended as some sites recommended for apartment unit development have commercial zoning or need higher density zoning.
7. For the for-sale housing market, zoning that allows for townhomes needs to be increased, as this housing type will provide more affordable housing.
8. While not included in the housing study, our market research shows a likely continue demand for more industrial land, as employer interest and new job growth are likely in 2017 and after and new proposals should greatly increase the current 1,200± job totals currently announced.

The study identified seven primary developable sites in the County that could, with rezoning, provide up to 1,000 new apartment rental units. Additionally, the Daleville Town Center property

could add 100 for-sale units. Several properties that are being studied for for-sale housing. These include: (1) Sanderson Ridge, approved for 72 homes with a mix of single and duplex; (2) Bolen property for possible apartment unit development; and (3) expansion of Santillane subdivision, among other sites.

*Regional Housing Market Analysis Study* (RKG Associates and JM Goldson, 2020)

This regional study was undertaken in 2020 to identify housing needs and provide both a region-wide and locality specific housing market analysis. The study provides demographic, economic, household, and housing analyses outlining the shifting market dynamics and a land suitability analysis to identify sites for potential new housing.

The study points to several challenges the region is facing including slow population growth, continued growth large households of 4 or more people, lack of affordable housing for those earning below 50% of the median income, older housing units with almost 82% constructed before 1980, an average rent increase of 14% over the last five years, almost 41% of renters are cost burdened, and more residents qualified for affordable rentals than is currently available, and declining financial resources.

Across the region there are mismatches between the number of households at a certain income level and the price of available housing units. There are gaps at the higher end of the market resulting in households “buying down” and putting pressure on the middle of the market. The mismatch for renters is at the lowest and highest ends of the market. This is often seen in markets where subsidized units are not meeting demand for low income households and where the market is not producing enough units at the highest end.

The Land Suitability Assessment element of the study identified potential locations for housing in each of the participating localities. The assessment identified sites with potential for housing and the types of units that could be constructed, determined barriers to development, estimated when sites could be developed, and ranked the top three locations to focus on. There were multiple sites identified for each participating locality including: 13 sites in Franklin County, 14 sites in Roanoke County, 11 sites in the City of Roanoke and 7 sites in the City of Salem.

The study identified regulatory, financing, coordination, and market barriers to meeting the demand for housing. The lack of housing choice in the region is hindering the attraction and retention of residents and workers. This in turn is limiting the growth of the population and the labor force. While the region’s employment is projected to grow there is a need for housing options to match workers’ income ranges. If housing is not available workers will have to commute from outside the region.

Decreasing housing funding at the Federal level will continue to put pressure on local governments trying to create affordable housing. A combination of local funding, regional partnerships, and creative and flexible local regulations can help address the reduced funding. Older existing homes in need of rehabilitation can be an affordable option for purchasers with less

buying power. The study stated that regional coordination is needed to draw more funding to the Roanoke Region, leverage housing resources more effectively, broaden partnerships, encourage private investment, and create educational campaigns on the importance of housing.

Several strategies were recommended in the study to address housing needs in the region. Use of local zoning ordinances to incentivize housing diversity and choice through broadening allowable residential uses across districts. The use of creative residential uses like upper story units in downtowns, accessory dwelling units, vertical mixed uses, and cluster zoning would create more opportunities for development of housing. Affordable housing unit production could be boosted by using inclusionary zoning and developer agreements. Creation of a local or regional affordable housing trust fund, similar to what the Commonwealth has done to collect, leverage, and distribute funding to affordable housing projects could help with development of more affordable units. Implementation of owner and renter housing rehabilitation programs can increase utilization of older properties and attract new residents to the region.

The study recommended that localities prioritize the best locations for housing development in the near-term, especially those already in public ownership. Efforts should focus on making sure those sites are available and ready for development. The region should coordinate investment in infrastructure to open up new sites and strengthen the market position of existing developed areas that could accommodate more housing.

### Annual Homes Sales

An examination of the RVAR CEDS regional economy would be incomplete without analyzing information on home sales/value and foreclosures. Examining the percentage of those who own their own home versus those who rent is also a useful economic indicator. Housing can serve as an important indicator of economic vitality in a region. Housing is also a key indicator of population growth. The supply of affordable housing is also increasingly important from a policy perspective in many areas since it can affect labor force availability.

The data set on homes sales is incomplete for the region. A significant number of home sales in the Alleghany Highlands are not tracked in any Multiple Listing Service and are not reflected in the Roanoke Valley or Virginia Association of Realtors database. Currently, comprehensive data is only available from the Roanoke Valley Association of Realtors, which includes the Counties of Botetourt, Bedford, Craig, Franklin, and Roanoke, along with the City of Roanoke and Salem. Nonetheless, these data can be used as an indicator for what is occurring throughout the region. Average home prices have risen steadily in the region and home sales have increased in spite of the COVID pandemic.

Table 20: Roanoke Valley Home Sales Annual Overview

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Residential Units Sold	6,398	6,587	5,639	4,651
Average Home Price	\$265,544	\$295,632	\$314,285	\$332,329
Volume Sold	\$1,723,190,083	\$1,949,836,991	\$1,786,342,217	\$1,552,764,475

Source: Roanoke Valley Association of Realtors, 2024.

As previously mentioned, looking at the percentage of those who own their own home compared to those who rent is a useful economic indicator. Botetourt County has the highest percentage of owner-occupied housing units at 86.7 percent. Localities with the highest percentage of rental housing include the City of Roanoke at 47.9% and Town of Vinton at 43.5 percent. The Virginia statewide owner-occupied percentage is 66.9% and the renter occupied percentage is 33.1 percent.

Table 21: Housing Occupancy

Locality	Total Units	Occupied Units	Owner Occupied	Renter Occupied	Vacant Units
Alleghany County	7,938	6,309	5,250	1,059	1,629
Botetourt County	14,932	12,916	11,198	1,718	2,016
Craig County	2,466	1,810	1,465	345	656
Roanoke County	42,135	39,156	29,642	9,514	2,979
City of Covington	3,049	2,503	1,883	620	546
City of Roanoke	48,726	42,806	22,308	20,498	5,920
City of Salem	11,096	10,045	6,426	3,619	1,051
Town of Clifton Forge	1,778	1,427	938	489	351
Town of Vinton	4,023	3,686	2,081	1,605	337

Source: 2022 ACS Five-Year Estimates, American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau, 2023.

## Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

The Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis is a strategic planning tool used by organizations to ensure that there is a clear objective informed by a comprehensive understanding of the region's capabilities and capacity. The analysis identifies the region's competitive advantages - those assets that make the region special or competitive in the national and global economies - and contrasts them against internal or external factors that impact the regional economy. Analyzing what the region already possesses that could be leveraged better to build the capacity for growth, including competitive cultural, economic, technological, intellectual, and physical assets, is critical to developing the regional economy.

The CEDS Strategy Committee participated in a SWOT analysis during its April 1, 2020, meeting. Committee members were asked to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the region.

### Strengths

Strengths describe the positive attributes, tangible and intangible, internal to the region. These items are within the control of local government and businesses. Strengths describe what the region does well and the advantages it has over its competition.

1. Environment – natural beauty and recreational opportunities
2. Low cost of doing business, low cost of living, low utility rates
3. Geographic strengths – Mid-Atlantic location, good road and rail access
4. Education – good school systems (overall); two community colleges and more than 15 colleges and universities offer classes in the region.
5. Strong, growing arts and culture, outdoor activities and amenities, sports, and special events
6. Diversity in culture and national origin cultural programs (refugee resettlement and Sister Cities programs)
7. Good transportation system overall (airports, roadways, and railroad).
8. Diverse economy not dependent on one industry or sector
9. Medical and research institutions have a positive impact on the economy, employment opportunities, business spinoffs, attraction of other medical and research employers
10. Right-to-work state, good labor relations, low unionization
11. Vibrant downtowns and village centers
12. Wealthy retirees from other areas retiring here; volunteering and starting small businesses bring knowledge and experience.
13. Expanding entrepreneurial climate (co working, incubators, accelerator, The Gauntlet)
14. Low unemployment rate
15. Good place to retire.
16. Amtrak service is available in the Town of Clifton Forge and in the City of Roanoke
17. The partnership between the Western Virginia Workforce Board and the RVARC

18. Available site for industrial development; Tier V site available
19. Western Virginia Regional Industrial Facilities Authority
20. Nationally recognized outdoor events such as the Blue Ridge Marathon and Ironman
21. Great building stock for redevelopment opportunities including former industrial buildings
22. A Class 1 rail carrier to serve industries
23. Ongoing broadband efforts by local governments and the Roanoke Valley Broadband Authority
24. Strong regional cooperation among local governments as documented in the Regional Commission's Regional Report Card
25. Explore Park growth and new programs such as camping, Illuminights event, and Brugh Tavern and its role as an evolving regional destination attraction
26. Strong medical presence with VTC School of Medicine, Carillion Clinic, and Radford University

### Weaknesses

Weaknesses are factors that are within local government and business's control that detract from the region's ability to obtain or maintain a competitive edge. Weaknesses might include limited resources, lack of access to skills or technology, or inferior service offerings.

1. Pockets of improvement needed in school systems and education
2. Some areas in the region with a less diverse economy
3. Children grow up and leave (looking for employment, lifestyle)
4. Competition from other localities, they "sell the product" better with incentives
5. Changes in airline industry (number of flights, fares, destinations, cancelled flights, lack of reliability) out of Roanoke
6. Aging population and declining school enrollment negatively impact on workforce (while this is definitely a weakness, it doesn't appear to fit the definition of "within local government or business control" as stated above)
7. Number of children on free and reduced lunch is high
8. Lack of awareness about entertainment and social scene, area is still under the radar; need to continue to "sell the product" through tourism marketing
9. Flat revenue growth for local governments; impact of lost state and federal dollars
10. Flat and low state funding for schools, teachers' salaries etc.
11. A lack of large developable prepared sites land for industrial development
12. Lack of communication among localities and with state/federal agencies
13. High Concentration of tax-exempt uses
14. Heavy reliance on machinery and tool tax
15. Region's continuing loss of political influence in Richmond
16. Lack of outside funding at the state and federal level for projects and matching support
17. Aging housing stock and a need for middle income housing

18. More school counselors to share career options earlier to both students and families other than 4-year degrees, like 2-year programs, certificates, and high school vocational programs (CTE program awareness and employer and family utilization)
19. More associate degree completers to address the current deficit which would help improve the regions low community peer rating for innovations
20. Regional differences in localities; how to address rural and urban issues?
21. Lack of access to venture capital funding that in turn impacts the entrepreneurial startup ecosystem
22. Limited services and funding available for public transportation.
23. Need for greater equity and opportunities for all of the region's residents

### Opportunities

Opportunities are the external and internal factors that will allow the region to prosper. These opportunities exist in the market, or in the environment, and can benefit the region if acted on.

1. Leverage and complement Carilion Clinic and other research and medical initiatives. (greater region including NC) including Virginia Tech Medical School and Research Institute
2. Bring medical conferences to the area to build on medical and research infrastructure and showcase region
3. Manufacturing is changing; the strategy must be more than just attraction; there is a need for retention, expansion and skill building too.
4. Economic and community development; need more than just industrial sites; need infrastructure, housing, quality of life, etc.
5. Re-development of underutilized property, repurposing, reuse
6. Existing business expansion and retention (grow your own)
7. Continue to expand Broadband service, service to rural area and fiber to the home and increase broadband coverage using federal and state grants (VATI)
8. Localities could combine regional legislative agendas to create "one voice" for the region
9. I-73 construction and related development
10. Cultivating student population – Talent attraction and retention of students and young professionals – "career path" to raise awareness of employment opportunities in the region
11. Partnering businesses with education sector to create training programs and jobs
12. Continue building tourism infrastructure, brand, and assets – i.e. Explore Park – to expand the tourism sector
13. Passenger rail creates an opportunity to develop AMTRAK related services and businesses
14. Intermodal facility should be constructed in the region
15. Available commercial property for use by new or expanding businesses

16. Technology that could bring businesses to region
17. Continue to market to Millennials, need for marketing of the region in general along the lines of Get2KnowNoke and Experience Roanoke
18. Volunteers in schools, education etc. to serve as mentors and/or instructors, utilize Junior Achievement in more school systems
19. Expansion of Agri-tourism – wineries, hops, wedding venues, and seasonal events
20. Promote, expand and develop new resources for innovation and entrepreneurship.
21. Opportunity Zones available for investment
22. GO Virginia organization and funding for new projects
23. Develop new lodging opportunities focused on outdoor tourism
24. Implementation of the recommendations from the regional career and technical education study that is underway in 2020 including new partnerships and regional career technical center
25. Seek federal and state investment and grants for improved career technical education
26. A culture of innovation that supports entrepreneurs and new businesses

### Threats

Threats include factors beyond your control that could place the region’s economic development strategies, or the region itself, at risk. These are external and internal and local businesses and governments have little to no control over them, however the region may benefit by having contingency plans to address them if they should occur.

1. General Assembly may eliminate machinery and tools tax and BPOL tax
2. Loss of corporate headquarters; corporate restructuring
3. Image and Reputation loss based on closure of certain businesses
4. Mergers and Acquisitions (Consolidations) impacting employment and workforce
5. Increased regulatory burden (stormwater, air etc.)
6. Technology that displaces business from region
7. Workforce availability; low unemployment, not enough workers to fill new jobs
8. Aging infrastructure
9. Competition with other localities, “race to the bottom”
10. Other localities and states have big incentive funds that the region cannot match
11. Declining birth rate, school enrollments, and aging population impact on workforce and government services
12. Natural disasters and public health crises significantly impact the local economy and operating budgets.



## Opportunities to Diversify the Economy

From a historical perspective, the region's economy has been based on the railroad, traditional manufacturing, and resource extraction. Changes in the economy since the 1990s have resulted in a new perspective on the need to diversify the regional economy.

- Although manufacturing employment in the region has declined since the 1980's, it is still an important sector in our regional economy. Economic development organizations are now trying to attract firms that are considered "advanced manufacturing", which provide higher wages for employees.
- Healthcare-related services now represent the largest employment sector in the region. Approximately 15% of employment is related to hospitals and healthcare oriented organizations. To support enhancements in the healthcare field, in 2007 Carilion Clinic and Virginia Tech created the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine and Research Institute. The Research Institute will be expanding over the next couple of years since the Governor recently announced that construction funds will be made available to build a new Life Science research facility that will be tied to the Medical Research Institute.
- The region is trying to develop an "entrepreneurial eco-system" that will help attract new start-ups, particularly in the area of technology. Local governments, the Roanoke Regional Partnership, the Chamber of Commerce and the RVARC are working with the Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council to identify and address key issues that inhibit great entrepreneurial development. The Gauntlet is a comprehensive business development program in Alleghany Highlands, Botetourt County, Roanoke City, Roanoke County, and/or the City of Salem. Entrepreneurs participate in weekly business training sessions, meet and network with successful entrepreneurs, fellow Gauntlet participants, mentors, and develop business strategies that provide a roadmap to success. The participants include a mix of Main Street and High Growth businesses.
- Tourism is becoming a major element in the regional economy. In 2015, Virginia's Western Highlands (including the counties of Alleghany, Bath, Craig, Highland, and City of Covington), Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge (including the counties of Botetourt, Franklin and Roanoke along with the cities of Roanoke and Salem) and Bedford County announced the formation of the new Virginia Mountains region. The region is working cooperatively to promote outdoor amenities for tourists, which include events such as the Blue Ridge Marathon, the Gran Fondo bicycle races, and the Go Outside Festival. In 2018 over \$1.36 billion in revenue was generated by tourism related activities in the Virginia Mountains region.

## Inter-Municipal Cooperation

Over the last decade, the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission has been researching and publishing a report on regional collaboration. The Regional Commission gathers information from its member jurisdictions to assess the level of regional cooperation. The Report Card documents the high level of regional cooperation currently taking place among our local jurisdictions. The Report Card cites 99 multi-jurisdictional cooperative programs and/or projects. Collaborative activities outlined in the report range from two governments working together to 10 or more working on a specific program or project. The report also highlights the work that the local governments do with numerous Federal and state agencies in the region. The activities cover a variety of services and are divided into ten categories: economic development; education; environment; general government; libraries; parks and recreation; public safety; public works and facilities; social and human services; and transportation. The most recent version of the Report Card was published in 2017.

The RVARC hosts all the Mayors of the region's cities/towns and Chairs of the county Boards of Supervisors quarterly for the purpose of discussing issues of importance to the region. The RVARC also hosts the city/town managers and county administrators bi-monthly to allow them to share best practices and to review key interests in their communities.

An example of a recent cooperative project was the establishment of the *Roanoke Valley Broadband Authority (RVBA)* which was housed at the RVARC office until 2017. In 2011, private and public-sector leaders felt there was a need to better understand broadband infrastructure and related opportunities in the Roanoke Valley. Seven public entities, and 11 businesses and individuals financed a Broadband Study in 2012. The RVBA was created in 2013 and met formally for the first time in January 2014. The primary goal of the Authority is to improve affordable high-speed broadband services in the Roanoke Valley by encouraging collaboration, competition, and long-term investments. The RVBA has completed the buildout of a 45-mile network in the Valley at a cost of more than \$6 million. The network serves business parks, large institutions, government facilities and businesses. Phase II of the project in Roanoke County was completed in 2017. RVBA continues to work with local governments and business to explore possibilities for expanding service.

The *Roanoke Valley Housing Study* began in 2020 at the request of Roanoke County Economic Development Department, along with support from neighboring localities, developed a successful application for Virginia Housing Development Authority planning funds to document the need for "market rate" or "worker" housing in the Roanoke Valley. The goals of the study are to: 1) Develop a document that identifies housing needs and provides both a regionwide and locality-specific market analysis, 2) Analyze commuter and residential patterns, 3) Incorporate results and findings from recently performed housing studies in Botetourt County, Village of Ferrum (Franklin County), Route 419 Town Center Plan Residential Analysis (Roanoke County), and the Alleghany Highlands portion of the region, 4) Create economic development opportunities by providing strategies to address housing concerns, 5) Develop regional and locality-specific recommendations that address local housing needs and encourage private investment, and 6)

Engage stakeholders to determine local housing needs and identify potential opportunities and partners to address and identify needs. The study area includes the Counties of Franklin and Roanoke (incorporating the Towns of Boones Mill, Rocky Mount, and Vinton respectively) and the Cities of Roanoke and Salem.

The *Revenue Sharing Agreement* between Alleghany County and City of Covington is another example of intergovernmental cooperation. The process is part of an agreement signed between the county and Covington two years ago. The agreement calls for the city and county to jointly invest in economic development properties and share revenues. In 2019, the localities identified eight sites for potential joint marketing and development.

The *Western Virginia Regional Industrial Facility Authority* was formed in 2014 by Botetourt County, Franklin County, Roanoke County, the City of Roanoke, the City of Salem and the Town of Vinton. The purpose of the Authority is to provide a mechanism for localities to cooperate regionally on economic development projects. The Authority works closely with member governments and economic developers throughout the Roanoke Valley Region of Virginia. The Western Virginia Regional Industrial Facility Authority (WVRIFA) comprised of local government leaders from Roanoke County, Roanoke City and the City of Salem, has acquired 109.7 acres on Wood Haven Road for economic development purposes.

The *Regional Career and Technical Education Study* was a cooperative project undertaken in 2020 by the Western Virginia Workforce Development Board, Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission and the Counties of Roanoke, Botetourt and Franklin and City of Salem with the public schools in Roanoke County, Salem, Alleghany, Covington, Botetourt, and Franklin. Career and technical education is critical for growing the pipeline of skilled workers in the region. Before developing new strategies, it was important to understand what exists, what is working, and what can be improved. The Regional CTE Study evaluated previously completed studies of CTE programs, existing conditions for CTE centers and recommended next steps to improve CTE programs in the region.

## GO Virginia

GO Virginia is a bipartisan, business-led economic development initiative that is changing the way Virginia's regions collaborate on economic and workforce development activities.

GO Virginia supports programs to create more high-paying jobs through incentivized collaboration between business, education, and government to diversify and strengthen the economy in every region of the Commonwealth.

The initiative is based on three main points:

1. Virginia urgently needs strong private-sector growth. Federal cutbacks have exposed our over-dependence on public-sector jobs. Virginia needs strong private-sector growth and job creation.
2. Growth in Virginia's diverse regions requires collaboration. To grow and diversify our economy, business, education, and government must collaborate effectively in each region.
3. State government must be a catalyst and partner. State government must provide incentives for strategic, job-focused collaboration in each region of the Commonwealth.

The Growth & Opportunity Board, responsible for awarding allotted funds to relevant projects, oversees Regional Councils, who submit project ideas to the Board for approval. The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development supports the administrative aspects of both these entities, and the GO Virginia Foundation supports these efforts through education about best practices and advocacy.

The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) is the state agency responsible for administering the GO Virginia program. DHCD is responsible for establishing GO Board meeting dates, times, and agendas. Additionally, DHCD administers the GO Virginia Fund. At the regional level, DHCD works with the nine regions to ensure alignment with other state initiatives and to foster collaboration across regions.

The Virginia Research Investment Committee ("VRIC") and the Virginia Research Investment Fund were established by the General Assembly in 2016 as a part of the GO Virginia Initiative. To position the Commonwealth as a national leader in science-based and technology-based research, VRIC makes investments in innovative and collaborative research, development, and commercialization projects and programs from Virginia's public colleges and universities that have a high potential for economic development and job creation opportunities.

The Collaborative Economic Development Act was created by Virginia's General Assembly in 2016 as a part of the GO Virginia legislative package. The Act calls for the creation of the Virginia Collaborative Economic Development Performance Grant Fund ("CED Fund") that will provide grants to at least two or more Virginia localities that collaborate in joint economic development initiatives that result in the location or expansion of a certified company within their respective

jurisdictions. Unlike typical grant programs, CED grants may not flow back to the companies. Rather, to spur additional investment in Virginia's communities, CED grants must be used for economic development activities that are aligned with a participating localities' collaborative economic development plan such as a regional CEDS. The grants awarded to the participating localities may be invested in activities such as:

- Public or private utility extension on and off site
- Public or private installation, extension, or capacity development for broadband internet
- Road, rail, public transportation access costs
- Site acquisition, grading, drainage, paving
- Workforce training initiatives that assist with targeted industries as identified by each region's GO Virginia – Economic Growth and Diversification Plan
- Cluster scale up activities
- Small business assistance (including incubator and accelerator projects)
- And others (non-exhaustive list)

This tool, in addition to the existing grant programs offered by VEDP and GO Virginia, serves to grow and diversify Virginia's economy and that of its regions.

### GO Virginia Region 2

In 2016, the Virginia Growth and Opportunity Board certified nine distinct regions across the Commonwealth. These regions consist of multiple local jurisdictions that are geographically similar and share similar economic development and workforce needs. The Regional Councils were developed by drawing from business leaders, economic development professionals, educators, and local government officials in each region.

The RVAR CEDS planning region falls entirely within GO Virginia Region 2 which includes the cities of Covington, Lynchburg, Radford, Roanoke, and Salem; and the counties of Alleghany, Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford, Botetourt, Campbell, Craig, Floyd, Franklin, Giles, Montgomery, Pulaski, and Roanoke. Virginia Tech's Office of Economic Development serves as Region 2's administrative support organization.

The Region 2 Council has identified four specific strategies in its *Growth and Diversification Plan* to serve as a guide for projects seeking funding:

1. Promote innovation and technology for priority and high-potential industry clusters.
2. Grow, attract, and retain skilled talent at all levels.
3. Enhance access to capital and business mentorship and training.
4. Collaborate in development of sites and buildings.

Region 2's Priority Industry Clusters as identified in the 2019 Growth and Diversification plan are: Food and Beverage Processing, Emerging Technology and IT, Life Sciences and Healthcare, and Manufacturing.

Table 22: Projects funded By GO Virginia in Region 2

Project	Recipient
Stopping the Brain Drain Strategy Development	Roanoke Regional Partnership
Region 2 Talent Collaborative	Virginia Career Works – Central Virginia
Enhancing the Region through New Technology for Unmanned Systems	Dabney S. Lancaster Community College
Regional Career and Technical Education Study	Virginia Career Works – Blue Ridge
Ignite	United Way of Southwest Virginia
Developing a Destination for Talent	Virginia Tech Office of the Vice Provost for Learning Systems Innovation and Effectiveness
Blockchain Ecosystem Catalyst	Virginia Tech Department of Computer Science
Capital Ecosystem Development	Valleys Innovation Council
Regional Acceleration and Mentorship Program Expansion	Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council
Roanoke Regional Small Business Development Center	Roanoke Regional SBDC
Increasing the Birth Rates of New High Growth Companies for Region Part 2	The Advancement Foundation
Regional Entrepreneurship Initiative	Valleys Innovation Council
Wood Haven Road Water and Sewer Infrastructure Enhancement	Western Virginia Regional Industrial Facility Authority
Center for Energy Research and Education Industry Labs	Liberty University and Framatome
Additive Manufacturing Partnership Labs	Liberty University
Lynchburg Site Readiness	Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance
Central Virginia Training Center	Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance
Workforce Training and Regional Capacity for Rapid High Throughput COVID-19 Testing	Fralin Life Sciences Institute and Fralin Biomedical Research Institute
NRV Business Continuity Team	NRV PDC and New River Health District
PIVOT and RAMP Up	Regional Acceleration and Mentorship Program
Public Health Readiness Evaluation (PHRE) Tool	Virginia Tech and ICTAS
Roanoke Regional Recovery Project	Roanoke Regional Partnership
Experiential Learning in Tech Employment (ELITE) Internship Program	Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council
Amherst LYH Region Site Readiness	Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance

Source: GO Virginia Funded Projects, Virginia Tech Office of Economic Development, 2021.

Projects By The Numbers Through FY18-FY21

- ✓ 30 total projects funded by GO Virginia Region 2 Council (9 projects completed)
- ✓ Total funds allocated: \$5,541,260
- ✓ Jobs Created to Date: 250
- ✓ External Investment Generated: \$7,274,844

## Transportation Planning for Economic Development

In FY2018, the Roanoke Valley Transportation Planning Organization (RVTPO) studied the connection between transportation and economic development. The purpose of the *Regional Study on Transportation Project Prioritization for Economic Development and Growth* and resulting document was to identify key transportation priorities that will enhance the region's economic development opportunities. Recognizing the importance of transportation to economic development, the RVTPO entered into this study with the goal of building regional consensus around a small number of transportation projects in the TPO area that merit a concerted push from the region based on their ability to advance regional economic development objectives. The study was updated in 2021 to include new transportation projects.

The Roanoke Region's transportation and economic development goals are in alignment centering around four key areas: connectivity, competitiveness, maintenance, and sustainability.

**Connectivity.** The connectivity theme addresses the need to maintain connections within the region and with the broader global economy.

**Competitiveness.** Competitiveness represents a focus in the region on how well the transportation system supports business, addressing specific sectors like tourism, and focusing on a diverse business base.

**Maintenance.** Maintenance refers to the mandate to think as a region about long term care of the system as well as how to get the most value from the assets the region already has.

**Sustainability.** The alignment area of sustainability recognizes the ample natural and cultural resources in the region and seeks to align transportation and economic development strategies to keep the region and its growth sustainable in the long run.

The process for identifying regional transportation priorities for the Roanoke Valley TPO area was grounded in the RVTPO's adopted *Framework for Prioritization*. Transportation needs, defined as improvements necessary for the region to maintain its current economy and spur sustainable new economic growth, underlie all subsequent identification of priorities, solutions, and projects. Also, in developing and refining priorities, key input was provided by the project steering committee, regional economic development stakeholders, the Roanoke Regional Chamber, and the RVTPO's Policy Board. The four priority transportation needs and associated solutions to address those needs are described below.

Improve Connectivity between the Roanoke Valley and the New River Valley by:

- Widening/Improving I-81 between the Roanoke and New River Valleys (Exit 150 to Exit 118)
- Improving U.S. 460 traffic flow west of Salem to Christiansburg

- Improving U.S. 460/Alt. 460 traffic flow around Downtown Salem
- Improving and expanding transit options between the Roanoke Valley and New River Valley

Improve Connectivity between the Roanoke Valley and the Lynchburg Area by:

- Reducing congestion on U.S. 460 and improving capacity between 11th Street and the TPO boundary
- Pursuing opportunities for alternative intersections along U.S. 460 East
- Improving capacity on US 220 Alt between I-81 and US 460 East
- Improving and expanding transit options between the Roanoke Valley and Lynchburg Area

Improve Connectivity from Botetourt and Franklin Counties to the central Roanoke Valley localities by:

- Reducing congestion on U.S. 220 North of I-81 and South of Route 419 which may include widening and/or Super Street designs
- Pursuing opportunities for alternative intersections along U.S. 220/I-581
- Improving and expanding transit options between Botetourt and Franklin Counties and the central Roanoke Valley localities
- Construct I-73 between West Virginia and North Carolina

Improve Mobility within Urban Development Areas and Designated Growth Areas by:

- Expanding multimodal accommodations across the region to connect Central Business Districts, commercial and employment centers, institutions of higher learning, and transportation hubs.
- Continue implementation of the *2018 Roanoke Valley Greenway Plan*, *Bikeway Plan for the Roanoke Valley Area MPO (2012)*, *Regional Pedestrian Vision Plan for the Roanoke Valley (2015)*, and *Roanoke Valley Transit Vision Plan (2016)*.

The RVTPO and its planning partners are committed to advancing the identified regional priorities as part of ongoing regional prioritization. This is intended to be a “living document” with needs, solutions, and individual projects refined as part of the RVTPO’s planning process.

The process is expected to include:

- Continued work to secure funding for identified priority projects and studies, whether through SMART SCALE or other appropriate funding mechanisms.
- Strategic bundling of projects and project components to ensure that desired improvements can be implemented as incremental opportunities arise.
- Incorporation of available performance data and tools to further identify project opportunities under the solution areas. For example, VDOT’s alternative intersections tool may be used to identify and screen innovative intersection and interchange configurations to be evaluated for further study, analysis and design.
- An ongoing commitment to ensuring projects representing the most effective use of limited funds to achieve specific performance outcomes.



- Subsequent strengthening of the prioritization process through further incorporation of existing data and identification of any specific data gaps.

Recognizing the importance of transportation to economic development, the CEDS Strategy Committee supports the RVTPO the goal of building regional consensus around a small number of transportation projects that merit a concerted push from the region based on their ability to advance regional economic development objectives. Projects identified in the *Roanoke Region Transportation Priorities for Economic Development and Growth*, as well as key projects from VTrans, the Vision 2040: Roanoke Valley Transportation constrained long-range multimodal transportation plan, the Rural Long-Range Transportation Plan, and projects submitted in the 2018/19 round of SMARTSCALE, have been included in the CEDS in support of this effort.

## Resilience

Resilience can be defined as an area's ability to withstand, prevent, or quickly recover from major disruptions to its underlying economic base. These disruptions can include events such as natural disaster, closure of large employers, decline in an industry sector, and changes in the workforce.

Natural disasters can leave local businesses damaged and closed. Damage to buildings, transportation and utilities interrupt operations and can potentially lead to business closings. The Insurance Information Institute estimates that 15 to 40 percent of the businesses affected by natural and manmade disasters never reopen. This can lead to the loss of income, jobs and services. While many communities have focused on natural disasters, increasing attention has been given lately to diversification of the economy in anticipation of continued instability of the national economy. Planning for disasters should lead to development/redevelopment patterns that do not increase risks from natural hazards.

There is an established relationship between disaster mitigation and response and economic development through the National Disaster Recovery Framework established by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The Department of Commerce and EDA lead the national Economic Recovery Support Function that helps rebuild businesses and associated infrastructure following a disaster. EDA's role in infrastructure repair and its work with the Small Business Administration to assist businesses following a disaster is essential to a region's economic recovery.

Integrating resiliency into the CEDS can take multiple forms including identifying vulnerabilities and assets; mitigation and response projects; diversification of the economy; and creating partnerships among economic development, public works and emergency services personnel.

The National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) cites the benefits of plan coordination as:

- Supports business and economic development that is safe and resilient to known hazards.
- Builds capacity and relationships that can lead to a quicker, stronger recovery in the event of a disaster.
- Makes each plan more effective and likely to achieve its objectives.
- Promotes creative thinking about new funding sources for programs and projects.
- Allows leaders to market the region to businesses as safe and prepared for future disasters.

In addition to coordinating the ongoing CEDS efforts, the RVARC also coordinates and develops the FEMA required regional pre-disaster mitigation plan entitled [Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan](#). Communities must have a FEMA approved plan in order to be eligible for post disaster recovery funding.

In 2002, the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) requested that planning district commissions take the lead in developing regional pre-disaster mitigation plans. The most

recent plan was completed and approved in 2013. While the plan does not establish any legal requirements for the localities, it does provide a framework for planning for natural hazards. The plan identifies hazards; establishes individual locality goals and objectives and select mitigation activities that are appropriate for the localities in the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Region. The Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan was updated in 2019 and is being updated in 2024.

The plan outlines general actions designed to address and reduce the impact of a full range of natural hazards facing the region, including such natural hazards as floods, hurricanes, winter storms and wildfires.

A multi-jurisdictional planning approach was utilized to develop the plan. By having multiple jurisdictions work together on common hazards and risks, the planning process eliminated the need for each local jurisdiction to devise its own approach and prepare its own separate document. Further, this type of planning effort resulted in a common plan format and loss estimation technique that will help VDEM and FEMA understand the area's vulnerabilities when evaluating future policies and projects.

The plan includes sections addressing hazard identification, risk assessment and loss estimates, mitigation strategies, and plan maintenance. While a single, regional plan was developed, each local jurisdiction has its own separate section outlining goals, objectives and projects as part of the plan.

A wide range of strategies and projects in the *Regional Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan* impact local businesses and mitigate a natural disaster's impact on the economy including:

- Remove and/or protect development in floodplains Installation of generators at critical infrastructure sites
- Inventory of flood-prone properties and roadways
- Stormwater system improvements
- Seeking funding for hydrologic studies
- Interoperability of emergency communication equipment
- Public education and outreach about natural disasters
- Building and development codes review
- Community wildfire assessments
- Real-time flood monitoring
- Reverse 91, and
- Automated weather warning systems

## Section 3: Vision Goals, and Strategies

### Vision Statement

The Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Region will be recognized for its outstanding outdoor amenities, quality of life, and higher wage employment opportunities. The region will grow and prosper while preserving its natural beauty and resources. Businesses and individuals of all ages will be attracted to the region because of its accessibility, affordability, commitment to lifelong learning, vibrant arts and culture, diversity, and hospitality.

### Goals and Strategies

The Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission (serving as the Economic Development District) coordinates the development of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. The Regional Commission works with its member localities and economic development organizations in pursuing community, economic development, environmental and transportation projects in the region. The region's CEDS goals and strategies reflect recent economic trends and needs. The CEDS Strategy Committee has identified nine priority issues. The priority issues include: 1) diversifying the economy, 2) maintaining a skilled workforce, 3) improvements to infrastructure, 4) projecting a positive identity, 5) marketing the regions assets, 6) redevelopment of unused properties, 7) affordable housing opportunities, 8) resilience, and 9) multimodal transportation.

Each issue has multiple strategies that are supported by the CEDS Project Package and associated partners.

1. Encourage regional economic vitality through an increasingly diverse base of businesses including entrepreneurial startups and large employers.
  - 1.1 Recruit businesses and industries in high-wage industry clusters. [localities, AHEDC, RRP, chambers]
  - 1.2 Promote small and entrepreneurial businesses. [localities, The Advancement Foundation, chambers, SBA, RBTC]
  - 1.3 Retain and expand existing businesses in the region. [localities, AHEDC, RRP, chambers]
  
2. Develop and maintain a skilled workforce ready to meet the challenges presented by the creative economy.
  - 2.1 Improve literacy and graduation rates. [local schools]
  - 2.2 Promote cooperation between local higher education institutions and local public-school districts to improve K-12 educational quality. [local schools, local colleges, and universities]

- 2.3 Promote career and technical education to address the growing needs of business. [local schools, community colleges, Virginia Career Works]
  - 2.4 Promote affordable lifelong education.
  - 2.5 Pursue the development of additional specialized training and educational programs as appropriate to further develop higher wage industry clusters. [business sector, local schools, community colleges, Virginia Career Works]
  - 2.6 Actively attract and retain young professionals to work in the region. [localities, RRP]
3. Ensure the region has adequate infrastructure in place to facilitate the growth of higher-wage industry clusters and to ensure connectivity with regions nationally and globally.
- 3.1 Pursue development of appropriate commercial, industrial, and research-oriented parks and centers to facilitate growth of appropriate industry clusters. [localities, AHEDC, RRP]
  - 3.2 Expand information technology infrastructure and telecommunications systems through deployment of local and regional broadband infrastructure to business and residential sectors and use of Federal and state funding sources such as VATI. [localities, RVBA]
  - 3.3 Pursue the maintenance and expansion of traditional infrastructure including water, sewer, natural gas lines, and transportation infrastructure in areas where such investments will improve economic development potential. [localities, public and private utility companies, AHEDC, RRP, RVARC, RVTPO, WVWA]
  - 3.4 Pursue development and/or improvement of 'quality of life infrastructure' including arts and cultural amenities, outdoor amenities, and other related improvements. [localities, chambers, Roanoke Outside, Greenway Commission]
  - 3.5 Creation of a regional pot of funding to be used for economic development projects and matching funds for grants.
  - 3.6 Creation of revolving loan programs at both the local level and regional level to assist with business development and expansion. Programs should be responsive to the needs of targeted sectors as well as small businesses.
4. Project a positive identity for the Roanoke Valley - Alleghany Region.
- 4.1 Pursue regional marketing initiatives to promote the region to select markets including site selection professionals and individuals. [localities, chambers, VVBR, AHEDC, RRP]
  - 4.2 Engage the public and media to inform and educate residents on the economic development initiatives being pursued in the region. [localities, AHEDC, RRP]

- 4.3 Seek to improve intergovernmental cooperation and collaboration as well as cooperation and collaboration between government and the private sector and other important stakeholders to enhance regional economic development. [localities, AHEDC, RRP, RVARC]
5. Seek to maintain and promote the region's natural beauty as well as its cultural amenities and seek sustainable growth opportunities.
  - 5.1 Invest in appropriate natural and outdoor amenities to simultaneously preserve open space and outdoor quality while further promoting the region as a destination for outdoor activities. [localities, VA DCR, Roanoke Outside, AHCOCT, BRLC]
  - 5.2 Promote existing outdoor amenities including greenway networks, hiking trails, rivers, blueways, lakes, State and National Park lands, and the National Forest to residents and external markets. [localities, VVBR, VA DCR, Roanoke Outside, AHCOCT]
  - 5.3 Promote the region's arts and cultural amenities. [localities, VVBR, RAC, museums, private sector]
  - 5.4 Take necessary steps to ensure ongoing improvement and/or maintenance of healthy air and water quantity and quality. [localities, VA DEQ, WVWA]
  - 5.5 Promote Explore Park as a destination in the region.
6. Seek to reuse existing underutilized commercial, institutional, and industrial properties and target them for redevelopment.
  - 6.1 Direct investment in unused or underused properties to help reduce the need for greenfield development. [localities, AHEDC, RRP]
  - 6.2 Invest in infrastructure to increase the intensity of use in already developed areas. [localities, AHEDC, RRP, WVWA]
  - 6.3 Pursue revitalization of blighted areas. [localities, Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority]
  - 6.4 Pursue redevelopment of brownfields and grayfields where appropriate and feasible. [localities, private sector, AHEDC, RRP, RRHA, VA DEQ]
  - 6.5 Redevelop unused commercial and/or institutional properties for multi-use projects that combine commercial and residential use where appropriate. [localities, private sector, DHCD, VHDA]
7. Seek to ensure that the region offers a strong and diverse mix of housing opportunities.
  - 7.1 Pursue the rehabilitation and preservation of existing housing stock. [localities, RRHA, TAP, DHCD, VHDA]
  - 7.2 Expand housing opportunities for all income levels. [localities, RRHA, TAP, DHCD, VHDA]

- 7.3 Encourage the development of quality, affordable housing for workers entering the job market. [localities, RRHA, TAP, DHCD, VHDA]
  - 7.4 Encourage the development of housing for the elderly. [localities, RRHA, TAP, DHCD, VHDA]
  - 7.5 Encourage the development of market-rate housing. [localities, RRHA, TAP, DHCD, VHDA]
  - 7.6 Encourage the development of a second-home housing market. [localities]
  - 7.7 Redevelop unused commercial and/or institutional properties for multi-family housing. [localities, RRHA, TAP, DHCD, VHDA]
  - 7.8 Implementation of recommendations in the Comprehensive Housing Analysis Alleghany Highlands Region, Countywide Market Analysis for-Sale and Rental Housing Botetourt County, and Roanoke Valley Regional Housing Study.
8. Address resiliency through coordination of the Regional Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan, COVID-19 response activities, and CEDS.
- 8.1 Continue to coordinate CEDS and HMPs through each plan's 5-year update process and identify areas for alignment in future plans. [localities, RVARC]
  - 8.2 Engage hazard mitigation planning team members, emergency managers, land use planners, floodplain administrators, public works staff, and others with expertise on natural hazards in the CEDS planning process. [RVARC]
  - 8.3 Include a hazard mitigation stakeholder as a Technical Advisor on the CEDS strategy committee. [RVARC, VDEM]
  - 8.4 Conduct targeted outreach to hazard mitigation stakeholders to gather feedback on CEDS goals and strategies. [RVARC]
  - 8.5 Encourage businesses to develop business continuity plans with measures such as providing business continuity and risk management workshops to small and mid-sized firms. [VDEM, FEMA]
  - 8.6 Build an economic response/recovery team from a core team of engaged business leaders and anticipate and strategize what needs might arise from a disaster event. Plan for establishment of a Business Recovery Center, a central location for business recovery information and support. [SBDC, VDEM, FEMA]
  - 8.7 Work with local emergency managers, VDEM, Chambers of Commerce, and Small Business Development Centers to offer hazard vulnerability audits to small businesses. [SBDC, VDEM, FEMA]
  - 8.8 Review and consider strategies and projects from other disaster related planning documents such as local emergency operations plans, evacuation plans, and hazardous materials response plans. [RVARC]
  - 8.9 Development and implementation of a COVID-19 response plan to address needs of small businesses and local governments [RVARC].

9. Improve the Multimodal Transportation Network of the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Region
  - 9.1 Promote innovative transit programs and expansion of existing transit services in the region where such investments will improve economic development potential. [localities, DRPT, RADAR, RVTPO, Valley Metro]
  - 9.2 Provide new site access to facilitate development and expansion of commercial centers, residential properties, and business parks [ARC, EDA, VDOT]
  - 9.3 Address the need for a regional intermodal freight facility. [localities, DRPT, VDOT]
  - 9.4 Maintain and improve multimodal transportation services for freight and passengers. [localities, RBRA, DRPT, NS, CSX, Amtrak]
  - 9.5 Construct additional lanes on I-81 from Exit 140 to 150. [VDOT]
  - 9.6 Widen Route 220 from Eagle Rock to the Alleghany County line. [VDOT]
  - 9.7 Improvements to I-81 including additional lanes and realignments to address safety. [VDOT]
  - 9.8 Completion of the Roanoke Valley Greenway network. [Greenway Commission, RVTPO, DCR, VDOT]
  - 9.9 Streetscape, pedestrian and traffic flow improvements in Business Districts and Urban Development Areas. [localities, VDOT, RVTPO]
  - 9.10 Construct I-73 from I-81 to the North Carolina Stateline. [VDOT]
  - 9.11 Develop commuter transit service along the Route 220 Corridor between Clifton Forge and Roanoke. [localities, VDRPT]
  - 9.12 Explore lower cost projects to improve Route 220 from I-81 to the North Carolina state line. [localities, VDOT, RVTPO]
  - 9.13 Explore Route 460 east and west of Roanoke City into Roanoke County and its intersection with Route 220 [localities, VDOT, RVTPO]
  - 9.14 Develop Amtrak Connector (bus/shuttle) from Roanoke to Clifton Forge Amtrak station [localities, VDRPT]



## Section 4: Action Plan, Accomplishments, Performance Measures

### Action Plan

The 2020 annual project package included in this CEDS Strategy document includes a large set of strategies and projects selected by the Roanoke Valley - Alleghany Regional CEDS Committee and recommended by the Committee's regional partners and by its local governments.

### Accomplishments

The localities represented in the CEDS process remain committed to the process and to making smart investments that will stimulate economic growth throughout the region. The committee, local governments, and local partners have been successfully implementing projects from the previous CEDS project listings.

A sampling of projects that are either complete or substantially complete include the following:

- Alleghany County - Jackson River Trail Phase I – V
- Alleghany County - Alleghany Outdoors opened
- Alleghany Highlands Chamber - Alleghany Highlands Visitor Center
- Botetourt County - Upper James River Water Trail – Phase I & II
- Botetourt County - Gateway Center/Exit 150 Market Feasibility Study and Redesign
- Botetourt County - Shell Building in Botetourt Center at Greenfield
- Botetourt County - Glen Wilton Public River Access
- Botetourt Greenfield - Vista Park Water Systems and Tinker Creek Interceptor
- Clifton Forge - Masonic Theater Renovations
- Clifton Forge - Business Incubator
- Clifton Forge - Business Park access road
- Clifton Forge - School of the Arts
- Covington and Clifton Forge - Downtown Revitalization Strategy
- City of Roanoke - Amtrak passenger rail platform
- City of Roanoke - Roanoke Acceleration Center
- Roanoke County - Explore Park infrastructure and camping facilities
- Roanoke County - 419 Town Center Plan
- Roanoke Valley Broadband Authority established; Phase 1 complete
- Roanoke Valley Greenway Plan
- Salem - Apperson Drive Stormwater Improvements
- Vinton - Roland E. Cook & William Byrd School Redevelopment
- Vinton - Vinton Motors, Gish Mill & Former Vinton Branch Library Redevelopment
- Vinton - Reopening of Rosie's Gaming Emporium
- Vinton - Ice-rink re-installation at Lancelot Sports Complex
- Western VA Regional Industrial Facility Authority - Wood Haven Technology Park

## Metrics/Performance Measures

The Roanoke Valley - Alleghany Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy will be a living document, updated and monitored on an ongoing basis by the RVAR CEDS Strategy Committee. The RVAR CEDS Committee will produce an annual report to be reviewed by the Planning Organization board (board of the Roanoke Valley - Alleghany Regional Commission) and submitted every year to the Philadelphia Region Office of the US Economic Development Administration detailing programmatic success, implementation efforts, and with an updated list of priority projects each year. The CEDS Committee needs a series of process metrics with which it can evaluate the effectiveness of the overall CEDS process in meeting the goals set for the CEDS process and in matching the overarching principles of the CEDS planning process as designed by the US Economic Development Administration and as laid out in the most recent final rule.

The metrics as set forth in this section of the report will be utilized by staff and the Committee in evaluating program success. These metrics will be compiled each year and included in the Annual Report to be submitted to the US EDA.

The CEDS process is designed to be a collaborative process involving traditional public sector economic development agencies, local governments, higher education, nonprofits, chambers of commerce, and groups representing labor and minority concerns, and private sector businesses and individuals. The following metrics measure the inclusiveness of the process, participation, and other general parameters related to the process.

1. Include a discussion of current CEDS Committee structure and whether federal regulations pertaining to EDA-funded CEDS processes and make-up of the Strategy Committee (13 CFR 303.6) are being fulfilled.

The RVAR CEDS Committee meets all relevant EDA regulations regarding its composition and process. The private sector and representatives of elected bodies, economic development, workforce development, higher education, labor, and minority groups all have voting seats on the committee. Additionally, other stakeholders from local economic development office and utility companies are invited to CEDS committee meeting on a regular basis. Meetings are also open to the public and dates and locations are published on the CEDS meeting calendar and the RVAR meeting calendars online.

2. Determine how many economic development organizations, business development organizations, higher educational organizations and localities are represented on the RVAR CEDS Committee.

Criteria: Organizations/localities represented on the CEDS Strategy Committee

- A. Fewer than 8 (Needs Improvement)
- B. 8 to 12 (Good)

C. More than 12 (Excellent)

Currently, there are 17 different localities and organizations represented on the CEDS Committee. This number does not include each of the private businesses represented as each private sector member is counted as an official representative of the government which appointed them.

3. Take efforts to ensure that all eligible applicants are aware of the CEDS process and that a wide range of community organizations are represented in the project package.

Criteria: Organizations/localities represented as 'responsible agencies' on the Project Package.

- A. Fewer than 10 (Needs Improvement)
- B. 10 - 20 (Good)
- C. More than 20 (Excellent)

Project submissions have been received from a variety of sources throughout the CEDS process. Currently, the project package includes projects from 19 different localities and organizations.

4. Ensure that the collaborative planning process leads to projects that are collaborative in nature involving a wide number of partners in the project development process.

Criteria: Organizations/localities represented as 'partners' on the Project Package.

- A. Fewer than 10 (Needs Improvement)
- B. 10 - 20 (Good)
- C. More than 20 (Excellent)

The projects recommended in the CEDS are typically large and require the time and resources of numerous partners to implement. All organizations and localities will work collaboratively to implement projects.

5. Ensure that the RVAR CEDS recommends projects that will lead to direct increases in employment and/or retention of existing jobs.

Criteria: Number of new jobs and/or existing jobs expected to be created or retained as a result of implementation of the CEDS vital projects.

- A. Fewer than 300 (Needs Improvement)
- B. 301 to 600 (Good)
- C. More than 600 (Excellent)

Several of the projects will create jobs. However, more work needs to be done to accurately forecast increases in employment.

6. Ensure that the RVAR CEDS recommends projects that will lead to investment from the private sector.

Criteria: Number of projects in the priority list that have private funding committed.

- A. No Projects with Private Funds Committed (Needs Improvement)
- B. 1-2 Projects with Private Funds Committed (Good)
- C. More than 2 Projects with Private Funds Committed (Excellent)

As was mentioned in the initial CEDS document, this metric is the most difficult to meet and track. The majority of projects are still under development. Most have not been financially structured and exact funding sources have not yet been determined. There are no current private funds committed to any vital projects. This is likely to change as the projects gain momentum.

## Section 5: Annual Project Package

### Project Prioritization Methodology

Development of the 2021 Annual Project Package was a collaborative effort involving CEDS Committee members, localities, and other organizations responsible for project submission and coordination, and the RVARC staff. Staff solicited projects for inclusion in the strategy from Committee Members, localities, and other organizations known to have active economic and/or community development projects in the region. These entities were sent a project information sheet and encouraged to submit information on projects for inclusion in the strategy. Localities and other stakeholders were also asked to update and or revise projects that were already on the list.

Changes to the project prioritization method have been made over the years to reflect the changing goals of the CEDS Committee and the localities that make up the Roanoke Valley - Alleghany Region. The Project List is composed of projects that are of a short timeframe (5 years or less), have identified possible sources of funding, and localities are actively pursuing. These projects will have a more immediate impact on the economy of the region than those listed on the Vision Project List. The Vision List is comprised of projects that localities wish to undertake, but at this time the projects are lacking one or more key components such as funding source, political support, or final design. Projects on the Vision List are expected to be underway within 5-10 years.

In an effort to focus the Committee's work a Priority Projects List was developed in 2021. The intent of this exercise was to create a short list of priority projects that the CEDS Committee members will be able to actively support and advocate for moving forward. Committee members submitted their top three projects which were combined into a list of 25 projects for review and nomination to the priority list. Following review of the initial submissions at a CEDS sub-committee work session, members were asked to vote for 10 projects. These votes were tallied and sent back out to Committee members and then discussed at a second work session where the top ranked projects were reviewed. The CEDS Committee selected the seven priority projects shown in Table 23.

Table 23: Priority Projects

Project Description
Expand broadband access across the greater region.
Implementation of recommendations from Regional Career and Technical Education Center Study.
Additional flights and runway capacity at Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport.
Alleghany Co & Covington site development under Joint Revenue Sharing agreement.
Wood Haven Technology Park development and related Transportation Network Improvements.
Explore Park (joint efforts by Roanoke County and Bedford).
Implementation of recommendations from Regional Housing Studies.

## **Appendix A - Opportunity Zone Summary**

**Appendix B - RVARC Board and Strategy Committee**



## **Appendix C - Meeting Agendas and Summaries**

## **Appendix D - Resolution of Adoption**