



# STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2024

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A Message from LVEDC  
**President & CEO**



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**Our goal is to ensure that Lehigh Valley employers can prosper and that everyone who lives here can find good jobs that meet their skill and education level.**

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A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Don Cunningham', written in a cursive style.

**Don Cunningham**  
*President and Chief Executive Officer*

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Every three years, LVEDC commissions an independent review of the Lehigh Valley and engages a variety of public and private partners to help develop a strategic plan based on the region's economic development needs, goals, and opportunities.

Summarized here, is LVEDC's 2021-2024 strategic plan. It includes our vision, values, mission, principles, and initiatives to help guide our organization's work and the Lehigh Valley's future.

The world was turned upside down in 2020 and 2021. Not only did the COVID-19 pandemic take a catastrophic toll on life and health it also brought tremendous economic and social change.

It was – and is – a transformational event.

The economic change wrought by the global pandemic has created new challenges and opportunities for economic growth both across the world, the nation, and the Lehigh Valley.

Change that was taking place was accelerated.

The movement away from shopping in stores to ordering online was super charged as people needed to avoid places crowded with other people.

The availability of workers, particularly those with the right skills, became more challenging, shifting the supply and demand balance toward employees, driving up wages, benefits, and bonuses.

The unforeseen also emerged.

Global supply chains were so disrupted it ended the reliability of goods made and shipped across oceans arriving when needed.

Office workers began working from home, often new homes many miles or states away from employers.

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## In the transformation lies new realities and opportunities for the Lehigh Valley.

- Health care – our largest employment sector – is even more important to the economy. New medical technologies are expanding the skills needed by health care workers.
- Domestic production of pharmaceuticals, medical supplies, and diagnostics has made life sciences one of the fastest growing sectors in the U.S. and the Lehigh Valley.
- Supply chains are becoming more regional and less global, increasing demand for manufacturing in the U.S. Manufacturing is the Lehigh Valley's second largest economic sector and continues to grow.
- Foreign direct investment, particularly from Europe, is again increasing. Companies want to produce goods closer to large bases of U.S. customers. The Lehigh Valley's location provides access to 30 percent of U.S. consumers in an eight-hour drive.
- Office workers have moved from large urban markets to secondary regions like the Lehigh Valley because of remote work. The Lehigh Valley was listed in one study as a top 15 market in the U.S. for remote workers.
- Companies seek markets where talent lives, and costs are lower. The Lehigh Valley has one of the fastest growing population of workers under age 40 on the East Coast and is very affordable compared with other Northeast markets.
- E-commerce will continue to grow as more goods are ordered online. The Lehigh Valley will remain a major center for e-commerce on the East Coast.
- Demand for distribution and supply chain centers, particularly cold storage of food and pharmaceuticals, will grow. Through zoning and smart planning, Lehigh Valley municipal governments will need to strike a balance in accommodating some e-commerce and distribution while also encouraging development of smaller buildings for manufacturing, production and life sciences through zoning, tax abatements or set-aside requirements.

The Lehigh Valley is positioned well for continued economic growth in traditional areas of strength along with opportunities that are emerging in a post-pandemic economy. Toward this end, LVEDC commissioned Garner Economics of Atlanta, Ga., to conduct an independent assessment of the region's strengths and weaknesses in comparison to our competition across the country. Those assessments and Garner's recommendations for the Lehigh Valley region are part of this three-year plan.

It is critical to "know thyself." Without self-examination and understanding, we cannot develop a smart plan for the future.

LVEDC is not a company, it's a coalition of private employers, municipal governments, educational institutions, and every entity that has a stake in the economic growth and prosperity of the Lehigh Valley. Our goal is to ensure that Lehigh Valley employers can prosper and that everyone who lives here can find good jobs that meet their skill and education level. It's difficult to meet that goal. That's why it's necessary to keep working, planning, and preparing as a region.

No one person, group, government, or employer drives the Lehigh Valley's economy. The decisions we make and the actions we take each day decide what we will become. To the extent we can share a plan and a vision that encourages everyone to play a part, together, we can ensure a future even brighter than our past and present.





An aerial photograph of a river valley. In the foreground, a large river flows from the bottom left towards the right. A green steel truss bridge spans the river in the lower right corner, with several cars visible on it. To the left of the bridge, a smaller, older wooden truss bridge crosses the river. In the middle ground, a concrete dam with a small waterfall is visible on the right side of the river. The background is filled with dense green trees and a small town or village nestled in the valley. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds.

## Our Mission

The mission of the Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation is to market the economic assets of the Lehigh Valley and to create partnerships to support the recruitment, growth and retention of employers and the creation of jobs for people of all skill and education levels.











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## Our Vision

Our vision is of a diverse Lehigh Valley economy that provides economic growth and opportunity for people of all skill and education levels and strengthens all our cities, boroughs, and townships.

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## Our Values

*Find a way:* We do what it takes to solve the problem or find the answer

*Build the team:* We work with each other and all partners to find solutions

*Collaborate:* We are the region's economic connector

*Inspire trust:* Treat all equally and fairly and focus on the big picture

*Results first:* Focus our work and efforts on outcomes, not on process



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## Our Principles

### *To Create Value and Use What We're Given...*

We will serve the people, the employers, and the governments of the Lehigh Valley by maximizing the financial resources and partnerships that are available to us in an efficient, professional, and value-added manner.

### *To Know Thyself...*

We will be the leading source of economic data and market intelligence on the Lehigh Valley economy, its assets, and resources to drive economic strategies, marketing efforts and the needs of our stakeholders.

### *To Tell Our Story...*

We will tell our economic story to increase awareness both inside and outside our region and across the world of the economic assets, advantages, and strengths of the Lehigh Valley to attract and support the growth of employers.

### *To Always Get Better...*

We will form partnerships, be a resource and a connector for stakeholders that have a role in making it easier for businesses to come here and grow here by making the complex simple and identifying the challenges and creating strategies to improve economic growth.

### *To Advocate and Coordinate...*

We will advocate for the improvement of economic assets and policies to strengthen the Lehigh Valley's ability to attract new employers, better prepare our workforce, serve our existing employers, and grow our entrepreneurs.



An aerial photograph of a city street scene. In the foreground, there's a street with cars and a building with a large, colorful mural on its side. To the right, a modern building with large windows and the word 'ZEST' on its facade is visible. In the background, there are more buildings, including a large brick building and a church with a steeple. Trees and greenery are scattered throughout the scene.

## Our Priorities

- Market the economic assets of the Lehigh Valley
- Recruit companies in targeted economic sectors
- Support the growth and retention of new and existing employers
- Promote and help to coordinate a skilled and prepared workforce
- Provide intelligence and data on the Lehigh Valley economy
- Expand public and private LVEDC investment and build partnerships for economic growth





## LVEDC Initiatives 2021-2024

Telling Our Story

Targeted Recruitment

Talent Strategies Development

Knowing Thyself and Seeing the Horizon

Focusing on the Hard-to-Do







## LVEDC Initiatives 2021-2024

### Telling Our Story

Tell the story of the Lehigh Valley's quality of place and assets to improve understanding of the region to support recruitment of talent, visitation, and new employers.

- Increase collaboration and investment in the Made Possible in Lehigh Valley campaign and expand the alliance of regional partners and companies. Market the message more strategically, particularly in a 100-mile radius where the Lehigh Valley is better known.
- Formalize the Made Possible in Lehigh Valley Alliance with an oversight committee of employers, educational institutions, governments, and regional organizations to expand the use of Made Possible branding.
- Spread the Lehigh Valley story through the generation of more earned media coverage by out-of-market outlets and platforms.
- Systematically expand network of contacts with economic development trade publications, national news media outlets, and business media.





## Targeted Recruitment

Market the high-quality assets of the Lehigh Valley to attract and retain employers in four high-value target sectors: Life Sciences and Pharmaceutical, Professional and Creative Services, Advanced Manufacturing and High-Value Production, and Food and Beverage Products.

- Conduct marketing campaigns targeted to specific audiences of influencers and asset managers with specific asset information on each target sector.
- Continue relationship building with site selectors, location advisors, and industrial and commercial real estate brokers.
- Produce video “virtual tour” of the Lehigh Valley for prospects and to use on the website.
- Re-engage with opportunities for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) marketing as they reopen for foreign companies looking to establish operations in the U.S.

## Talent Strategies Development

Continue the partnership between the education, training, and workforce community with employers of all sectors and sizes to understand the region’s skills gaps and workforce needs and to help match supply and demand.

- Engage with Lehigh Valley businesses in our target sectors to gather information on regional trends in the Lehigh Valley economy and to gain a better understanding of challenges and opportunities in attracting and retaining talent.
- Maintain relationships with Lehigh Valley colleges and universities and high schools to provide solutions to challenges around talent for Lehigh Valley employers.
- Continue to produce information that will support the growth of a Lehigh Valley talent pipeline through internships and identifying in-demand careers and skills.



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## LVEDC Initiatives 2021-2024

### Knowing Thyself and Seeing the Horizon

Provide research and data to increase understanding of the Lehigh Valley economy and its competitive position while staying ahead of new developments and economic and social change driving economic opportunities and challenges.

### Focusing on the Hard-to-Do

Advocate for and support more challenging economic development work in the areas of entrepreneurship and startups, urban asset growth and brownfield reuse, and planning and zoning tools to balance e-commerce and distribution with much-needed facilities for manufacturing or life sciences through zoning, tax abatements, or set-aside requirements.

- Reconvene the Priority Projects process using the Lehigh Valley Land Recycling Initiative to identify brownfield or difficult-to-develop urban properties that need public-sector support and coordinated efforts to make them economically feasible for redevelopment, primarily as sites for manufacturing.
- Continue to build relationships with county and municipal leaders and other regional organizations regarding development priorities, marketing support, financing programs, and two-way communications.
- Attend and participate in Council of Government and regional multi-municipal meetings to learn about regional planning efforts and observe ways that municipalities and elected officials are working on development issues.
- Continue to utilize the Entrepreneurship Council and reinvigorate the Lehigh Valley Land Recycling Initiative.
- Advocate to state and local partners and stakeholders on initiatives or policy changes that would improve the Lehigh Valley's competitiveness and opportunity for economic growth and job creation.







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Organizations applying for grants that require a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) to be filed with the application may request a copy of Lehigh Valley's CEDS alternative document from LVEDC at [lvedc@lehighvalley.org](mailto:lvedc@lehighvalley.org).