

Lehigh Valley

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



STRATEGIC PLAN
2025 – 2027

A Message from the President & CEO

The Lehigh Valley is one of America's economic transition success stories. As Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation (LVEDC) marks its 30th Anniversary, the region has transformed from the loss of heavy industry and textile manufacturing to a new, diverse 21st century economy - still anchored by manufacturing - but much larger and creating more economic prosperity for the region's growing population.

The economic renaissance from 1995 to 2025 was driven by a regional collaboration across two counties, three cities, and 62 municipalities led by a partnership of the public and private sectors anchored by a strategic approach that built upon the region's competitive assets of geography, quality of life, education and training, and people. Today, the Lehigh Valley is one of Pennsylvania's largest population centers and economies and one of the fastest growing mid-sized markets in the U.S.

"Most of the challenges and needs of 30 years ago were replaced by a new set that comes with growth and prosperity."

Don Cunningham
President & CEO
Lehigh Valley Economic
Development Corporation



In 2025, the Lehigh Valley has:

- Its largest population ever with 708,644 residents, a 28% increase since 1995.
- Its largest annual Gross Domestic Product at \$55.7 billion, more GDP than three states, and up from \$27.4 billion in 2004.
- A top U.S. manufacturing center with \$9 billion in annual output, more than 37,000 workers, and 700 manufacturers, accounting for 16% of the regional economy. (Manufacturing is 12% of the U.S. economy.)
- Its largest number of jobs, 340,087, a growth of 37% since 1995.
- Among the fastest growing population of young people (ages 18-34) in Pennsylvania, which has grown 5.9% since 2020.
- A median household income (\$81,709) that outpaces Pennsylvania (\$76,081) and the U.S. (\$78,539) and a poverty rate (10.5%) lower than the state (11.8%) and the nation (12.4%).

The transformation of the Lehigh Valley and its economy didn't happen by accident. Strategic planning, capitalizing on existing assets and creating new ones, has been at the core of that success, along with understanding the region's strengths and weaknesses and competitive realities with other markets and nations.

That process continues with LVEDC's Strategic Plan 2025-2027. Every three years, LVEDC's Board of Directors, which is comprised of the leadership of the region's largest and most critical employers, educational institutions, largest governments, and regional non-profits, commissions an independent review of Lehigh Valley's assets and challenges.

708,644
POPULATION

\$55.7 Billion
GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT

\$9 Billion
MANUFACTURING OUTPUT

Surveys, interviews, and focus groups were done with a cross section of public and private stakeholders to ensure broad stakeholder input in the development of a strategic economic development plan for the region.

Once again, the board engaged Garner Economics of Atlanta, Ga., to conduct an independent assessment of the region's strengths and weaknesses in comparison to its competition across the country. Those assessments and Garner's recommendations for the Lehigh Valley are part of the three-year plan.

These are new times in the Lehigh Valley. Most of the challenges and needs of 30 years ago were replaced by a new set that comes with growth and prosperity. Many of the market's biggest challenges are a reaction to growth: a shortage of housing units and affordability challenges, resident and local government opposition to development projects, and a pressing need to continue finding and training workers.

For the first time, the LVEDC strategic plan reaches beyond economic development boundaries. The Garner report targets regional issues that involve a wide range of stakeholders and local, state, and federal policymakers. They include the development of affordable workforce housing options, employer-sponsored private/public childcare, and dedicated economic development funding models for the state.

LVEDC's new strategic plan continues its rifle shot approach to recruiting companies in specific industries, such as life sciences, pharmaceuticals, advanced manufacturing, biomedical R&D, health care, regional and corporate headquarters, creatives services, and quality of life developments.



Strategic Plan 2025-2027 continues to prioritize our work in education and talent supply, development site preparation, marketing, communications, research and data analysis, quality of place growth and marketing, and the continued development of regional coalitions and sub-coalitions. It focuses as much on retaining and growing existing companies and developing entrepreneurs as it does the attraction and recruitment of new companies. The plan places importance on reusing former industrial properties and infill parcels in urban centers and growing the quality of life in downtowns.

Our work is grouped in five areas - targeted development, targeted sites, targeted talent, knowing thyself and telling our story, and building partnerships and place. The five areas include 20 initiatives summarized in this overview.

In a world of rapid technological advancements and interconnection, the Lehigh Valley must continue to monitor change, adapt, and stay ahead of where the world is going. It's that approach that has driven the region's storybook economic renaissance.

Data Sources: U.S. Census Population Estimates, 1995-2024; U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2023; Chmura Economics JobsEQ, Q1 2025; and American Community Survey, 2023 5-year estimates.

341,325
JOBS

\$81,709
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

10.5%
POVERTY RATE

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.





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.



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.





Our Principles

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

We will maximize the financial resources and partnerships that are available to us in an efficient, professional, and value-added manner.

To Know Thyself...

We will be an important 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...

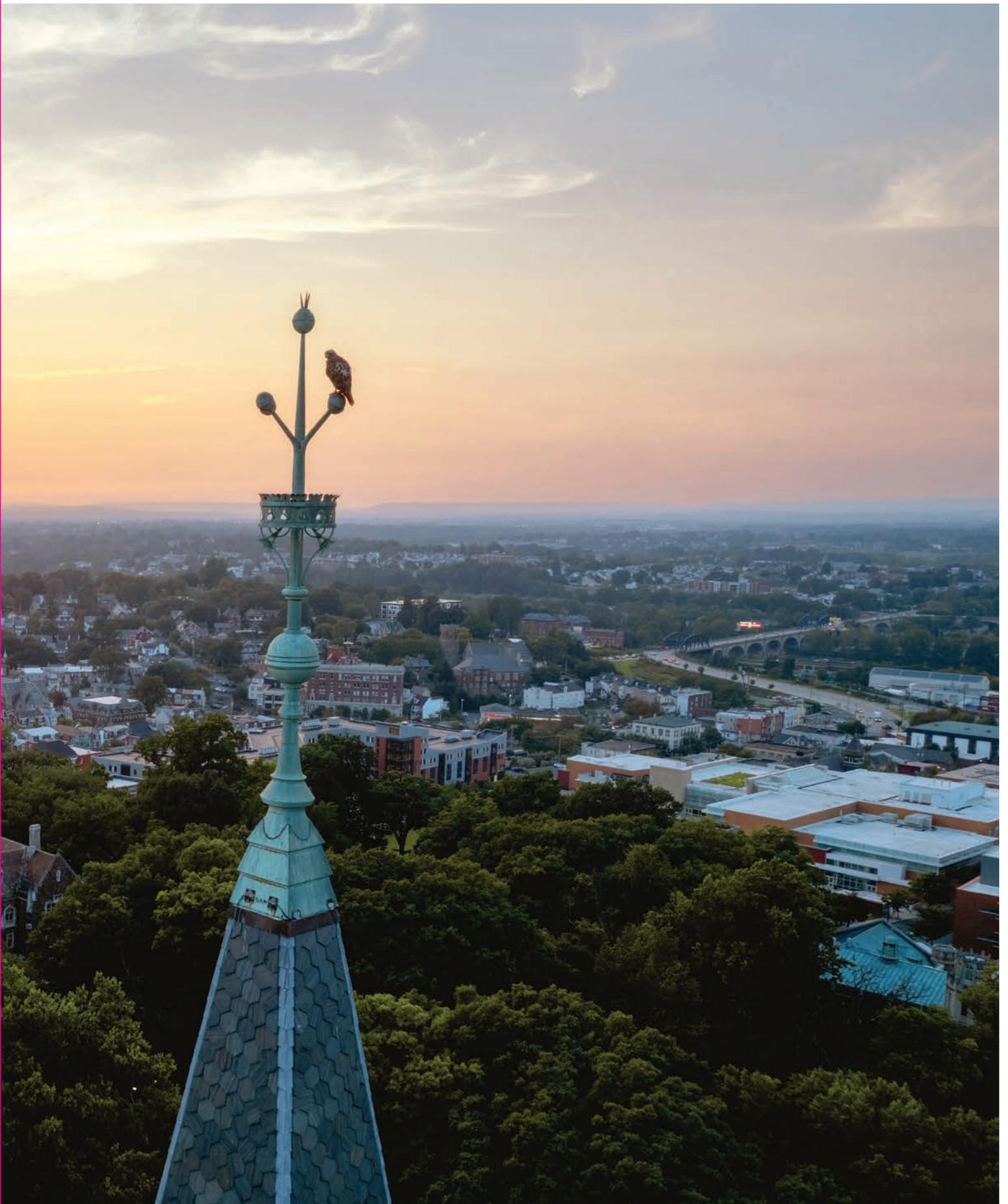
We will form partnerships, be a resource and a connector for stakeholders that have a role in making it easier for businesses to come here and grow here by making the complex simple and identifying the challenges and creating strategies to improve economic growth.

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.

LVEDC Initiatives 2025–2027

- Targeted Development
- Targeted Sites
- Targeted Talent
- Know Thyself and Tell Our Story
- Build Partnerships and Place



Targeted Development

LVEDC is sharpening its focus on attracting companies in strategic industry sectors that drive future economic growth and offer high-value jobs.

- Life Sciences, Pharma, and Biomedical
- Advanced Manufacturing, Technology, and Production
- Professional and Creative Services
- Food and Beverage Processing

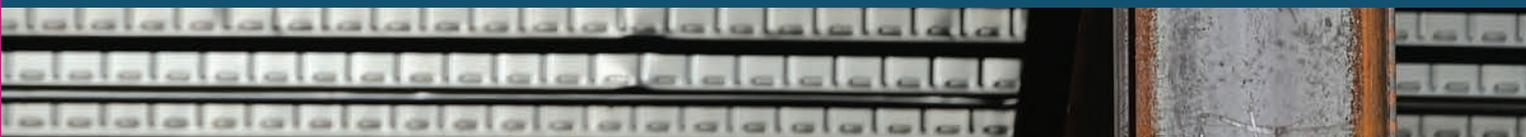




Targeted Sites

An established market, the Lehigh Valley is pursuing a deliberate economic development strategy that emphasizes the reuse of former industrial sites and urban infill areas to support job opportunities and quality of life rather than developing greenfields.

- Redevelopment and Brownfield Reuse
- Urban Asset Growth and Infill Opportunities
- Site Preparedness and Readiness
- Engagement of Policymakers and Developers to Create Needed Product





Targeted Talent

There will be a continued focus on attracting and developing talent linked to private-sector job creation. The approach helps existing employers as much as those recruited to the Lehigh Valley.

- Market for Talent Growth
- Understand Evolving Skills Gaps and Talent Needs
- Link Students to Employers: Internships, Apprenticeships
- Strengthen and Build Education and Employer Coalitions

Know Thyself & Tell Our Story

To strengthen the Lehigh Valley's competitive position, LVEDC will focus on deepening its understanding of the region and communicating why it is an attractive place to live, work, and do business.

- Collect and Communicate Economic and Community Data
- Benchmark and Communicate Region's Competitive Realities
- Expand Adoption of Regional "Made in Lehigh Valley" and Quality of Place Marketing
- Increase Earned Media Coverage and Online Marketing of Region



Build Partnerships & Place

To strengthen the Lehigh Valley's competitive position, LVEDC will build on three decades of transformation driven by unprecedented regional cooperation among municipalities, public leaders, and private-sector partners. LVEDC will continue to grow and diversify its coalitions to strengthen competitiveness, expand opportunity, and support a thriving regional economy.

- Grow Public-Private Coalition and Create Targeted New Sub-coalitions
- Broaden Coalition on Unified Regional Marketing
- Engage Policymakers to Increase Competitiveness and Development Opportunities
- Engage and Support Housing, Childcare, and Quality of Life Initiatives
- Support Coordination of Entrepreneurial Ecosystem to Grow Startup Businesses





Outdoor Economy & Quality of Place

LVEDC will support development of the outdoor economy and other entertainment and tourism initiatives to enhance the Lehigh Valley's quality of place and visitor experience.

- Amusement and Sports Facilities
- Outdoor Recreation and Activities
- Sports & Recreation Retail
- Culinary and Lifestyle Economy



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