



Rural roots. Big ideas.



Team



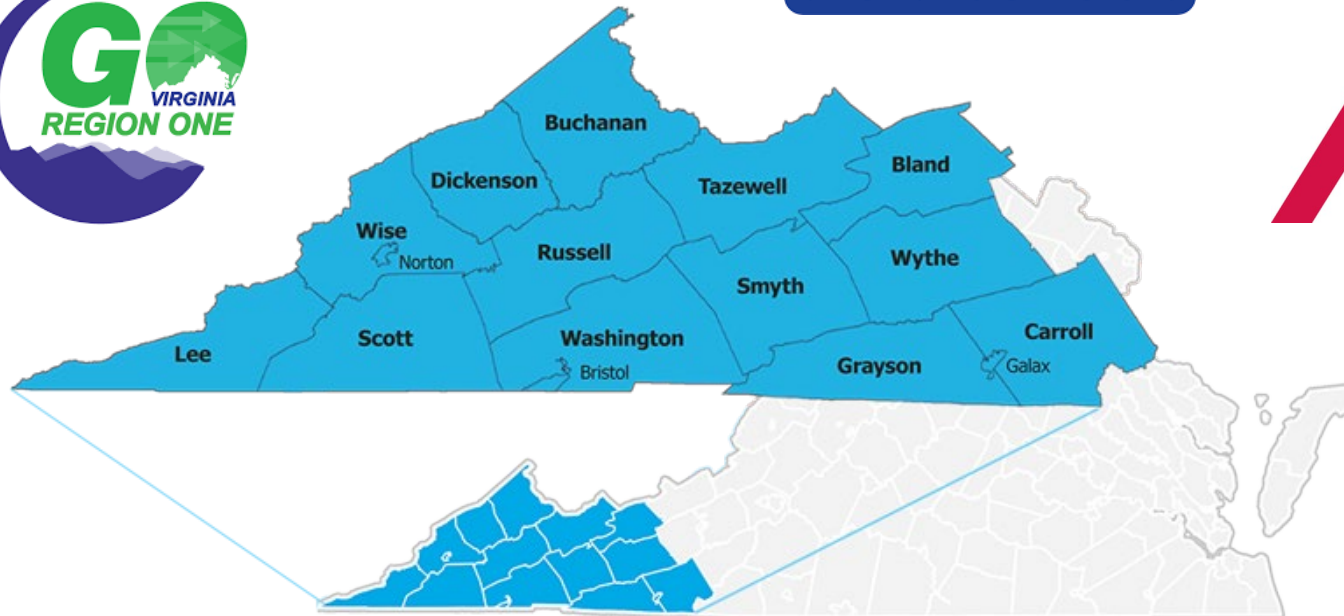
**COALFIELD
STRATEGIES**

HUNTON
ANDREWS KURTH

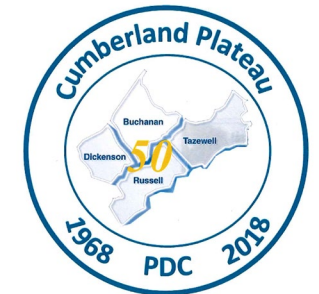
Partners



Regionally Focused



**Mountain Empire
Community College**



Game Plan

- ★ Market the region, attract new investment and the bring jobs of the future to Southwest Virginia
- ★ Bring new relationships to bear
- ★ Push “Big Ideas”
- ★ Focus on the “Future of Work”

New Playbook

Editorial

Why InvestSWVA matters

Here's a new attempt to build a new economy.

Something happened Thursday in Abingdon that might turn out to be very important.

To explain it, though, we need to rewind back to early 2017 and a curious political dispute that baffled many. The Republican legislators who represent the Southwest persuaded their colleagues in the General Assembly to put language in the state budget requiring the Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority to give \$500,000 to the Lenowisco Planning District Commission to fund a new marketing initiative for the entire region. Gov. Terry McAuliffe vetoed that provision and for a brief time the state's political attention was turned to a place where it's usually not: Southwest Virginia. At the time, there were dark rumors about what was really going on. It didn't help that the

have here is a high-powered effort to change the economy of Southwest Virginia. That's worth paying attention to.

Why do we need one more economic development entity? That's a good question that ideally has a good answer. Kilgore's concern has been that there's no single entity trying to sell all of Southwest Virginia on a national or international level. There are lots of agencies serving individual communities or even multiple communities — but nothing covering everything from Wythe and Carroll counties west, which this initiative will. The Virginia Economic Development Partnership covers the whole state, but legislators in Southwest Virginia wanted something that had a singular focus on their region. Now they have it, at least for the next two years — which is what the project is funded for.

TRUTH. ACCURACY. FAIRNESS.



Big Stone Gap's Thomas Jones nominated for NFL Hall of Fame
SPORTS » B1



V-T GAME
Vikings, Bearcats to meet for bragging rights in gridiron clash
SPORTS » B1



BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

FRIDAY, September 13, 2019

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'IT'S COMMITTED TO ADVANCING BIG IDEAS'

InvestSWVA

Partnership to focus on bringing more technology jobs to Southwest Virginia

BY JOE TENNIS
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER
ABINGDON, Va. — Regional business leaders and legislators touted a new partnership announced Thursday, seeking to lure more technology jobs to Southwest Virginia.

"It's committed to advancing big ideas," said Will Payne, managing partner of Coalfield Strategies LLC, a marketing firm based in Bristol, Virginia. Payne is now the project lead for the Southwest Virginia Regional Marketing Initiative, dubbed "InvestSWVA."

"We will focus on energy innovation and the future of work in Southwest Virginia, attracting and

retaining young talent by focusing on high-tech, high-wage jobs that keep GO Virginia Region One a priority," Payne said at a Thursday news conference, held at the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center in Abingdon.

The project spans the entire GO Virginia Region One footprint — from the coalfield counties of Buchanan, Dickenson, Lee, Scott, Wise, Tazewell and Russell in the west to the agricultural-based mountains and valleys of Washington, Grayson, Smyth, Wythe, Carroll and Bland counties in the east. That region also includes

See **INVESTSWVA**, Page A6



Will Payne, project lead for InvestSWVA, speaks Thursday at the launch of the Southwest Virginia Regional Marketing Initiative.

“We will focus on energy innovation and the future of work in Southwest Virginia, attracting and retaining young talent by focusing on high-tech, high-wage jobs that keep GO Virginia Region One a priority.”

— Will Payne, managing partner of Coalfield Strategies LLC

Leading with Tech

Wednesday, October 23, 2019

OPINION

What Amazon's visit to Southwest Virginia means for our region

By Ben Chafin, Terry Kilgore,
Israel O'Quinn and Todd Pillion

The writers are all state legislators who represent district in Southwest Virginia.

Something big happened this week: Amazon visited Southwest Virginia. And it wasn't just big for the most obvious reason – Amazon. It was big because, for the first time, Southwest Virginia is being seriously included in conversations about how to attract more high-tech investment to Virginia and make sure we have a workforce prepared to fill the jobs that follow.

Much of this conversation is due to a new regional economic development marketing campaign that launched recently called InvestSWVA. The purpose of InvestSWVA is to strategically pursue economic development opportunities for our region.

The initiative is regional – it encompasses all of Go Virginia Region One. In all, InvestSWVA is focused on 13 counties and three cities in Southwest Virginia.

InvestSWVA is making sure that our region is at the table for conversations about high-tech investment in Virginia, and seriously considered for economic development opportunities when an employer decides they want to invest in our state.

Additionally, the initiative is laser-focused on identifying potential economic development for Region One, particularly taking into account the unique features and opportunities that our region has to offer: A good quality of



Courtesy of InvestSWVA
Gov. Ralph Northam (at right, center of table) held a business roundtable in St. Paul Monday that included several Amazon executives. Two are seen here. In the far corner is Brian Moore, senior manager for public policy. Just right of the governor is Ardine Williams, vice president of People Operations and Workforce Development.

data centers.

The topics that came up during the roundtable aren't necessarily new, but this time they had a serious audience. And conversations will continue through the work of InvestSWVA and the efforts to bring together state, regional, and local economic development authorities to work to identify strategic investments and partnerships we can pursue.

Thanks to the new InvestSWVA initiative, there are already a number of strategic partnerships in place.

The Northern Virginia Technology Council and the Data Center Coalition are actively working with InvestSWVA to make sure their members are aware of opportunities to expand or invest in this region.

Point Broadband is supporting InvestSWVA because they are on the frontlines of making sure high-speed fiber is available to businesses in every corner of our cities and

initiative are all of the economic development authorities from the Virginia Economic Development Partnership to the Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority, Virginia's Industrial Advancement Alliance, the Southwestern Virginia Technology Council and all of the local economic development offices in the 13 counties and three cities in Go Virginia Region One. And, Project Oasis – a new data center marketing campaign – is leveraging the expertise of these entities as well as the major power and broadband providers throughout the region.

Finally, as the state legislators representing this region, we are co-chairing this initiative. For far too long, Southwest Virginia has missed out on opportunities because we weren't ready for them or we weren't aware of them. That will no longer be the case. We have the attention, team, and plans in place to market our region as ready for investment



PROJECT OASIS

Vision for SWVA

- ★ Hotbed for energy innovation
- ★ Significant player in the craft beverage industry
- ★ Location of choice for data centers
- ★ Home to high-tech companies looking to grow



Rural roots. Big ideas.