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Innovation, Technology, Entrepreneurship and the Great Outdoors in West Virginia



Mike Graney
West Virginia Department
of Commerce

Mike Graney serves as the Deputy Secretary of the West Virginia Department of Commerce. Prior to this role, he served as the Executive Director of the West Virginia Development Office, working to increase prosperity and quality of life in West Virginia by helping businesses locate to a new site, expand existing facilities, export goods and provide training to employees.

West Virginia is writing a new book on economic development, and one of the first chapters is titled “Look outside.” Because when companies, prospects, and prospective employees see our beautiful mountain scenery and all it has to offer, they fall in love with Almost Heaven.

As the West Virginia Department of Commerce helps existing businesses expand and works on attracting new businesses to locate in West Virginia for the first time, quality of life has become one of the most important things to employers.

This could not be more apparent as we helped Virgin Hyperloop find a location for their global certification center. We learned their staff of young engineers are looking for a place where they can live, work and play and enjoy both professional and personal opportunities. We also learned that many Virgin Hyperloop engineers are rock climbers, mountain bikers

and anglers. When it comes to that, West Virginia obviously wins.

Virgin Hyperloop was recently recognized by Business Facilitates magazine as one of the top 12 “Deals of the Year.” And our outdoor economy, our outdoor access and activities played a part in making this project a reality for our state.

But more than one company is taking notice of what West Virginia has to offer. As we talk to employers, we are finding that the investment we have made in protecting, improving, preserving, and promoting our outdoors supports our economic development efforts.

Businesses tell us our workforce is loyal (employee retention lowers operating costs), the cost of living is less here (employees have more resources to invest in themselves), and the quality of life – well, that speaks for itself.





Quality of life, low cost of doing business, and aligned support from local, state and federal stakeholders are qualities that are easy to promote. Take a look at this list of recent headlines and the innovative, global brands that are saying “Yes” to West Virginia:

- **Virgin Hyperloop** to build Global Hyperloop Certification Center in West Virginia
- **West Virginia Methanol** to open \$350 million plant in West Virginia
- **Gruppo Fanti** to open first United States manufacturing plant in West Virginia
- **Mitsubishi** expands West Virginia operations
- **Clorox** to open new manufacturing facility in West Virginia
- **Klockner Pentaplast** expands West Virginia production facility
- **Blue Rock Manufacturing** to bring new manufacturing facility to West Virginia
- **Infor** global technology company will open location in West Virginia
- **Pratt & Whitney** will invest \$30 million in its engine services facility in West Virginia

- **Toyota** plant expands, bringing new jobs to West Virginia
- **Northrop Grumman** plant expansion project at Allegany Ballistics Laboratory bringing new jobs to West Virginia
- Steady hiring continues for **Intuit & Alorica** in West Virginia

More companies are saying “Yes” to West Virginia. Don’t believe me? Just take a look on LinkedIn. Search #YesWV to see what I mean. Our state is prepared to respond to any and all inquiries from companies seeking to create a competitive advantage for their business by expanding or locating here.

West Virginia, look around, look outside, look at the economic diversification that is occurring. Embrace what we have, protect it, enjoy it, and promote it. We certainly are and it is paying off. ▾

