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**RIVANNA**  
WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY  
& SOLID WASTE AUTHORITY

# STRATEGIC PLAN 2023



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## MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*The Rivanna Authorities have continued to improve the water, wastewater, refuse and recycling services we provide for our community since our most recent Strategic Plan was crafted in 2018.*

Through the engagement and professionalism of our staff, and with support from our Boards of Directors, our culture of continuous operational and safety improvements has flourished over the last five years. With guidance from our Strategic Plan, development of our workforce has increased, the operational effectiveness of our programs has improved, and the master planning and construction of our infrastructure has grown in a financially responsible manner. Despite the unthinkable pandemic endured in 2020, our workforce has persevered at our work sites to provide uninterrupted services 24/7/365 to support our community. Throughout this challenging period, our Strategic Plan has helped us visualize and prioritize our course moving forward.

Our opportunities will continue with the 2023 update to our five-year Strategic Plan. Successful completion of our environmental stewardship goals will remain constant, while a heightened focus on sustainability and strategic workforce planning with diversity, equity and inclusion will help us to strengthen our team and continue our legacy of successful service.

Thank you for all you do to support our Authorities.

**William I. Mawyer, Jr., PE**  
Executive Director  
Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority and Rivanna Solid Waste Authority

# INTRO

*Building on the success achieved in its 2018 Strategic Plan, the Rivanna Authorities (Rivanna) initiated an update to its plan in 2022. The strategic framework presented in this document will help guide investment, allocate resources, and provide a structure for annual reviews to assure that long-term goals and objectives are achieved.*

## PROCESS

### RIVANNA'S STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS WAS DESIGNED TO ENSURE:

- A shared vision of Rivanna's ultimate priorities. Organizations driven by clear purposes and shared values have a greater capacity to succeed than those that are not. Rivanna's strategic planning process was inclusive, with opportunities for participation by the Boards of Directors, employees, and external stakeholders.
- A collective understanding of the available resources, the environment, and the principles upon which strategies will be based. One key element of the strategic planning approach included the need to focus on short-term goals that will support a long-term vision.
- Acceptance of the direction and urgency of the strategic and operating plans, which will be integrated into the way Rivanna is operated on a day-to-day basis. From an implementation standpoint, it was very important for the plan to have clear alignment with the people and roles necessary to ensure accountability and progress on each of the strategic priorities.

### TO ACHIEVE THESE CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS,

Rivanna's strategic planning process involved input from a broad group of internal and external stakeholders and involvement of more than 85 employees in the strategy development process. Major elements of the process included:

#### **Kick-off Workshop**

- The Core Team met to review the implementation progress and process used with the 2018 Strategic Plan. The group discussed accomplishments, where work was still underway, and what some of the focus areas might be for continued success in the future.

#### **Stakeholder Engagement**

- Input was obtained from Board members, employees, and external stakeholders through a combination of interviews, an online employee survey, facilitated sessions, and three employee focus groups.

#### **Foundation Workshop**

- The Core Team met to consider stakeholder input and to update the organization's Vision, Mission, Values, and Priorities.

#### **Strategy Workshop**

- The Core Team made preliminary decisions concerning the measures and strategies to be included in the final plan.

## COMMUNITY PROFILE

The Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority was created in 1972 by the City of Charlottesville (City) and Albemarle County (County) to provide wholesale water supply, water treatment, and wastewater interception and treatment for the City and County. In 1990, the Rivanna Solid Waste Authority was created by the City and County to assume operation of the existing Ivy Landfill, which later closed in 1998. While the Water and Sewer Authority has two main customers (the City and County), the Solid Waste Authority currently provides recycling, refuse, and household hazardous waste disposal services for more than 20,000 City and County residents and businesses each month.

The Authorities are located in central Virginia. Charlottesville is surrounded by Albemarle County, but the City and County are two separate entities. According to the US Census Bureau, both the City and the County have experienced significant population growth over the last several decades. The City's population increased by 15% or 6,212 residents between 1990 and 2020 to 46,553, but dropped slightly in 2021 to 45,672. The County has increased by 65% or by 44,355 residents over the last 30 years, for a total population of 113,535 in 2021. The median household income in the City is \$59,598, which is lower than both that of the County (\$84,643) and the national median (\$67,521), according to the US Census. The average unemployment rate for the Charlottesville Metropolitan Statistical Area was 3.4% in 2021, which is almost 2% lower than the national average. In 2021, Liveability.com ranked the City as the 5th best city to live in America.

The largest regional employers are the University of Virginia/UVA Hospital/UVA Medical Center, Albemarle County, the City of Charlottesville, Sentara Healthcare, and the US Department of Defense. The area has a rich cultural heritage, having been home to Presidents Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and James Monroe, with the County housing Thomas Jefferson's estate, Monticello. Charlottesville's Downtown Mall is one of the longest outdoor pedestrian malls in the country, and the nearby Shenandoah National Park offers many recreational activities year-round.



South Rivanna WTP

# TRENDS

## POPULATION AND COMMUNITY

The population of Charlottesville (City) is stable with potential future growth on the horizon, while Albemarle County (County) has grown at a faster pace than the City. The University of Virginia (UVA) is also expanding, and there are new development projects for hotels, schools, and housing in the community. In general, while the population has increased, the utility service demand has not escalated simultaneously.

*...while the population has increased, the utility service demand has not escalated simultaneously.*

The regional political landscape is mostly stable, though turnover at partner organizations has made coordinating long-term water, sewer, and solid waste initiatives more challenging.

The City, County, and UVA have been supportive of Rivanna's activities, and continue to work collaboratively on regional utility and solid waste issues. While the Authorities are available as a resource, the City and ACSA generally take the lead on end-user engagement and outreach efforts.

From a service affordability standpoint, Rivanna closely manages its expenses to minimize negative financial impacts. Rivanna uses five- and ten-year rate models to project financial resource requirements on a rolling basis, but budgeting discussions are often political processes, as rising costs ultimately lead to end-user rate increases.

In the future, Rivanna may face financial constraints related to the magnitude of infrastructure investment required to support growth in the region.

## REGULATIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Rivanna's regulatory landscape is highly dependent on the political environment at the federal and state level. Remaining responsive to rapidly changing regulations impacts Rivanna's operations, capital planning, and organizational priorities. While emerging technology and innovative approaches can move quickly, Rivanna's planning efforts are evolving in response to changing regulatory conditions. Capital improvement project needs are expected to increase for the foreseeable future.

Public awareness and engagement is increasing, particularly around sustainability and reducing negative environmental impacts. Customers and stakeholders expect timely communication and responses, and national interest in PFAS, revisions to the Lead and Copper Rule, and updates to the Clean Water Act are driving local discussions. Rivanna has several environmental initiatives underway; for example, granular activated carbon was recently incorporated into water treatment processes, which improves water quality by removing chemical contaminants and disinfection byproducts.

The uncertain regulatory environment is expected to remain, and Rivanna's associated expenses will continue to increase as new regulations are established at the federal and state levels. The organization is working to stay on top of industry trends and new technologies through professional associations, and will continue to educate, engage in conversations, adapt, and adhere to regulations. Rivanna is also focusing on data-driven decision-making and gathering baseline information to build appropriate sustainability goals and targets.



## WORKFORCE SHIFTS

Rivanna maintains a professional and highly qualified workforce to support its infrastructure and operations. Like many similar organizations, Rivanna has needed to respond to workforce shifts as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the "Great Resignation." While Rivanna has generally been able to fill vacancies, certain positions are more challenging to attract a diverse pool of candidates and ultimately fill. As of July 2022, the unemployment rate in Albemarle County is 2.7%, which is lower than the state (3%) and national (3.6%) rates. Though unemployment rates in the surrounding area will likely remain low, Rivanna has had success in meeting its retention goals by being responsive to employee needs, offering development opportunities, and ensuring competitive compensation.

*As of July 2022, the unemployment rate in Albemarle County is 2.7%.*

The average age of Rivanna's workforce has declined and gender diversity in the workforce has increased. Board members and external stakeholders are engaged and focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion, which will likely continue into the future.

## TECHNOLOGY AND RISK PROFILE

Rivanna must regularly respond to and mitigate risks, including shifting focus to address new or different risk drivers resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. These risk drivers include public health, employee health, and supply chain concerns. Regionally, the focus on climate change mitigation and adaptation has increased over the last five years, as unpredictable and severe weather events are occurring at a greater frequency.

*Cyber security risks are on the rise for municipal and public services organizations across the country...*

Cyber security risks are on the rise for municipal and public services organizations across the country and were a major focus of America's Water Infrastructure Act (AWIA). In response to these threats, Rivanna has improved its cyber security posture, and continues to address aging infrastructure, devices, and network equipment challenges. Remaining vigilant against the on-going risk requires continuous technology systems updates and resources.

Rivanna's Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system has expanded to exceed the number of people available to support the system, and both the volume and complexity of the data required are increasing. Currently, Rivanna relies on contractors to do initial SCADA programming, but contractors are also short-staffed.

# SOAR

THE RIVANNA AUTHORITIES UTILIZED A ***STRENGTHS, OPPORTUNITIES, ASPIRATIONS, AND RESULTS (SOAR)*** ANALYSIS TO FORM THE BASIS FOR ITS STRATEGIC PLAN.



## STRENGTHS

- Professional, Knowledgeable Workforce
- Excellent Product Quality
- Leadership and Organizational Culture
- Capital/Long-range Planning
- Responsive and Reliable
- Sufficient Resources (e.g., Financial, Operational, Internal Expertise)



## OPPORTUNITIES

- Increased Regional Visibility
- Employee Recruitment and Retention
- Environmental Stewardship
- External Partnerships to Support Rivanna Goals (e.g., PVCC)
- Cohesive, Shared Vision for Solid Waste
- Organizational Focus on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion



## ASPIRATIONS

- Regional Leadership – a Model for Others
- Excellent Workforce Development and Engagement
- Updated Facilities and Infrastructure
- Streamlined and Efficient Operations
- Stakeholder and Community Understanding



## RESULTS

- Communication and Collaboration
- Environmental Stewardship
- Workforce Development
- Optimization and Resiliency
- Planning and Infrastructure

Beaver Creek Reservoir

# STRATEGIC DIRECTION

## VISION

To serve the community as a recognized leader in environmental stewardship by providing exceptional water and solid waste services.

## MISSION

Our knowledgeable and professional team serves the Charlottesville, Albemarle, and UVA community by providing high-quality water and wastewater treatment, refuse, and recycling services in a financially responsible and sustainable manner.

## VALUES

**INTEGRITY:** We are open and transparent, led by example, and are committed to ethical behavior

**TEAMWORK:** We work collaboratively to help each other succeed and serve the community

**RESPECT:** We treat our fellow employees, customers, business partners, and stakeholders with dignity and respect by embracing their diverse backgrounds and experiences

**QUALITY:** We deliver exceptional services and products, serve our community responsibly, and safeguard natural resources

## PRIORITIES

*Communication and Collaboration*



*Environmental Stewardship*



*Workforce Development*



*Optimization and Resiliency*



*Planning and Infrastructure*



# STRATEGIC framework

### VISION

To serve the community and be a recognized leader in environmental stewardship by providing exceptional water and solid waste services

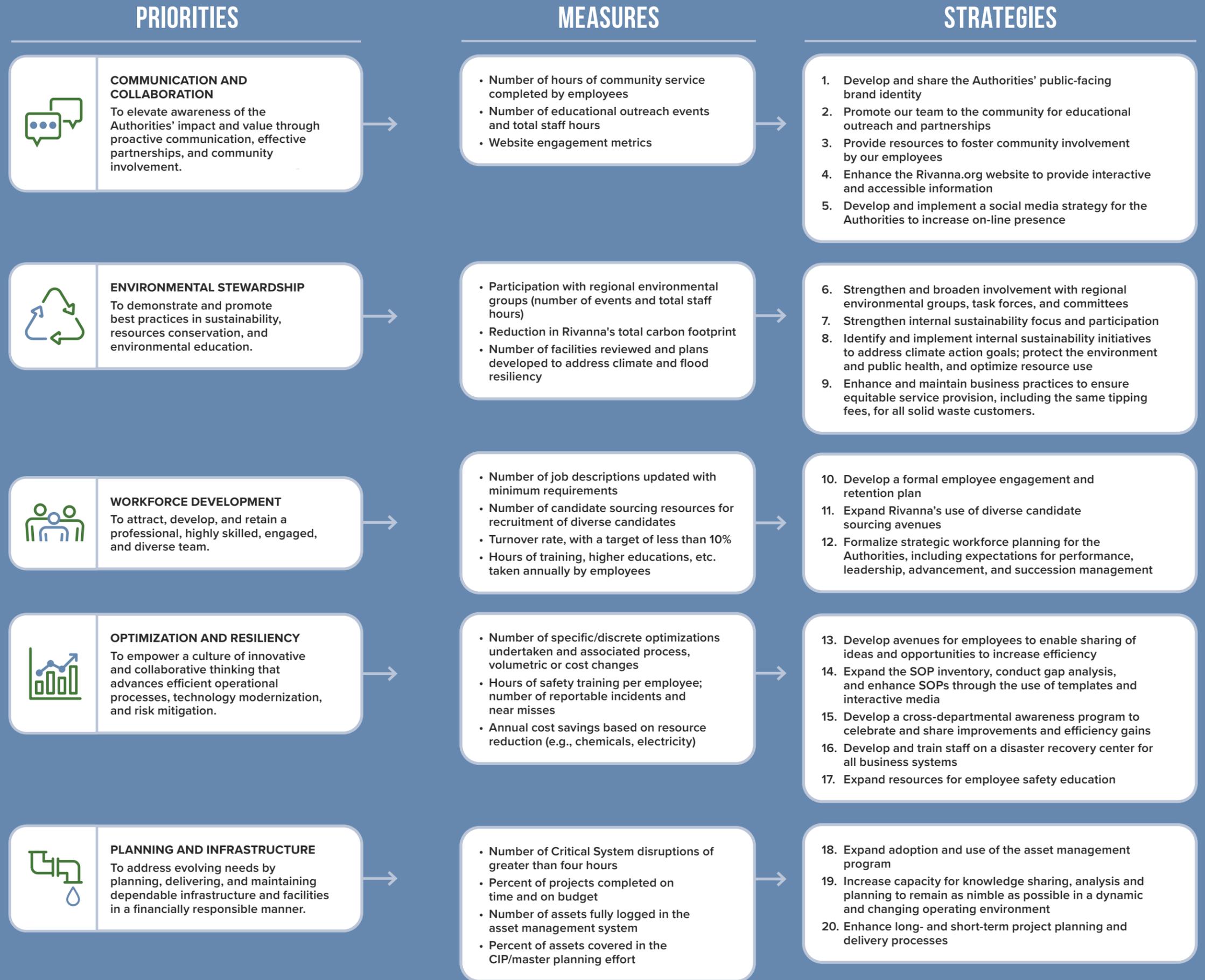
### VALUES

The Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority and Rivanna Solid Waste Authority are committed to the following values:

- Integrity
- Teamwork
- Respect
- Quality

### MISSION

Our professional team of knowledgeable and engaged personnel serve the Charlottesville, Albemarle, and UVA community by providing high quality water treatment, refuse, and recycling services in a financially and environmentally responsible manner





## COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

*To elevate awareness of the Authorities' impact and value through proactive communication, effective partnerships, and community involvement.*

Communication and collaboration is a key focus area for the Authorities. Fostering a culture that supports open communication and strengthens partnerships has been essential for regional projects, such as working with the County on public information dissemination and dam safety initiatives. The Rivanna Solid Waste Authority has increased its positive media coverage and advertising for special events, including the Oyster Shell program and Pumpkin Smash event. Additionally, Rivanna has leveraged regional relationships with other utilities and industry associations to implement best practices, and has worked to increase its brand exposure through its Riverfest, Fix a Leak, and Imagine a Day Without Water campaigns.

Existing strategies will be leveraged over the coming years to refresh and build awareness of the Authorities' brand identity and utilizing the organization's website to provide interactive and accessible information. Rivanna will continue to cultivate community engagement opportunities for employees with educational outreach, resources, and partnerships.

### STRATEGIES

- Develop and share the Authorities' public-facing brand identity
- Promote our team to the community for educational outreach and partnerships
- Provide resources to foster community involvement by our employees
- Enhance the Rivanna.org website to provide interactive and accessible information
- Develop and implement a social media strategy for the Authorities to increase on-line presence



Ivy Material Utilization Center



## ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

*To demonstrate and promote best practices in sustainability, resources conservation, and environmental education.*

Rivanna has committed to maintaining and enhancing the long-term health of the community and environment by providing recycling education and hosting special collection days for household hazardous waste and electronic materials. To support efforts in exceeding regulatory requirements, the Authorities' have launched a greenhouse gas inventory pilot project and are working to develop a climate resilience and action plan.

A continued focus will involve building strategic partnerships with regional environmental groups. Additionally, Rivanna will lead internal initiatives to support sustainability participation and opportunities to reduce resource use and carbon footprint.

### STRATEGIES

- Strengthen and broaden involvement with regional environmental groups, task forces, and committees
- Strengthen internal sustainability focus and participation
- Identify and implement internal sustainability initiatives to address climate action goals; protect the environment and public health, and optimize resource use



## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

*To attract, develop, and retain a professional, highly skilled, engaged, and diverse team.*

The Authorities have made significant progress in the Workforce Development area since the 2018 Strategic Plan. Over that period, Rivanna has regularly updated its compensation and five-year staffing plan – an effort that recently included providing employees with a well-received cost-of-living adjustment. Additionally, progress has been made with identifying employee career paths, with this continuing to be a priority for leadership moving forward. Currently, Rivanna has an apprenticeship program in place that supports recruitment goals. A training and development program has been established with Piedmont Valley Community College (PVCC) to focus on leadership training, CDL licensures, management coaching, and math tutoring for operators working to increase their certification levels. Rivanna will continue to invest in its employees with programs such as tuition reimbursement and implement other engagement opportunities to support retention initiatives.

Going forward, plans to support the workforce involve developing an employee engagement plan, which will allow leadership to conduct a gap assessment of employee-focused policies and review the organization's benefit plan to identify areas of improvement that align with retention efforts. Continued success in recruiting a strong workforce will require building awareness and promoting Rivanna as an employer of choice, as well as expanding the avenues and platforms used to reach potential employees. Formalizing the professional development process will help employees to understand performance expectations and career progression, while also strengthening the organization by formalizing avenues for knowledge transfer and succession planning.

### STRATEGIES

- Develop a formal employee engagement and retention plan
- Expand Rivanna's use of diverse candidate sourcing avenues
- Formalize strategic workforce planning for the Authorities, including expectations for performance, leadership, advancement, and succession management



## OPTIMIZATION AND RESILIENCY

*To empower a culture of innovative and collaborative thinking that advances efficient operational processes, technology modernization, and risk mitigation.*

Efficiency and innovation across the organization has been a continued commitment that will continue into the future. For example, the Authorities' have developed a culture of safety by hiring a full-time Safety Manager, updating its safety manual, and providing more training centered on safety. Additionally, efforts to improve key business and operational processes such as document management and process flows have yielded greater operational efficiency. The Authorities have also taken advantage of favorable interest rates and refinanced bonds in support of effective financial management.

Over the next several years, Rivanna will continue to foster a work environment for employees to collaborate and increase efficiency by developing a cross-departmental program to pursue and celebrate innovation and performance improvements. Rivanna is also creating an SOP inventory and disaster recovery center for all business systems.

### STRATEGIES

- Develop avenues for employees to enable sharing of ideas and opportunities to increase efficiency
- Expand the SOP inventory, conduct gap analysis, and enhance SOPs through the use of templates and interactive media
- Develop a cross-departmental awareness program to celebrate and share improvements and efficiency gains
- Develop and train staff on a disaster recovery center for all business systems
- Expand resources for employee safety education





## PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

*To address evolving needs by planning, delivering, and maintaining dependable infrastructure and facilities in a financially responsible manner.*

Maintaining reliable infrastructure is a core function for the Rivanna Authorities. Over the last several years, the Authorities have created a strategic asset management plan, conducted a pilot for implementation, created a position to oversee asset management, and are now working to fully implement the Authorities' program. All of the Authorities' master plans have been updated and are now being evaluated on a five-year cycle, and the organization is in the process of implementing CityWorks to manage asset replacement and maintenance activities.

Existing initiatives will include expanding the adoption and use of the asset management program to enhance long-and-short-term project planning and delivery processes. Moreover, Rivanna will increase its capacity for knowledge sharing and analysis to support goals for maintaining dependable infrastructure.

### STRATEGIES

- Expand adoption and use of the asset management program
- Increase capacity for knowledge sharing, analysis and planning to remain as nimble as possible in a dynamic and changing operating environment
- Enhance long- and short-term project planning and delivery processes



South Rivanna WTP

# REALIZING THE VISION

*Our vision is "To serve the community and be a recognized leader in environmental stewardship by providing exceptional water and solid waste services"*

To make our vision a reality, we have created this plan, with the input of our staff and our external stakeholders, to ensure that we meet and exceed their expectations. Building on the momentum achieved through successful implementation of the 2018 Strategic Plan, Rivanna is committed to leveraging cross-functional teams, involving employees across the organization in strategic initiatives, and regularly communicating updates with its Boards of Directors, employees, stakeholders, and public.

Rivanna is grateful to all the individuals who took the time to provide input during this strategic planning process, and we look forward to sharing our progress and success as we work to achieve our strategic plan.



[WWW.RIVANNA.ORG](http://WWW.RIVANNA.ORG)

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