

One Valley

Overview: One Valley is an environmental and civil rights non-profit which seeks to lift and unite the entire Roanoke (Virginia) Valley by helping to create an inclusive community that celebrates both diversity and commonality.

One Valley had its origin in a three-year-long series of Community Conversations beginning in 2014. In the summer of 2017, after five years of building partnerships and relationships with local businesses, other non-profits, Roanoke City government, and Virginia Tech, One Valley formed a transition steering committee and secured its 501(c)3 designation. It set to work on its first three projects: the daylighting of Cedar Run; a Northwest Roanoke community garden/urban farming initiative; and the George Washington Carver Environmental Education Center, with the goal of completing its first three projects by 2022. Progress has been steady and continues on all three projects.

One Valley seeks to impact the entire Roanoke Valley socially, economically and in terms of environmental awareness. At the same time, in a city (Roanoke, the “Star City of the South”) that is still regarded as one of the most segregated cities in the South, One Valley focuses specifically on Northwest Roanoke City, the historic African-American community in the Roanoke Valley. One Valley has a ten-person, all-volunteer founding steering committee.

One Valley encourages: the creation of sustainable community-centered institutions; support for urban farming community gardens and other activities that promote healthy living and food accessibility; demonstration and implementation of local storm water management stewardship options and opportunities; continuation of community conversations that address underlying racism in the Roanoke Valley; provision of job-training opportunities to raise the Northwest Roanoke community economically; promotion of alternative energy, green infrastructure, and technologies that link communities.

The Urban Farming Initiative will create a network of urban farms on some of the numerous vacant lots in Northwest Roanoke city. Community members involved in this initiative will be taught to run independent commercial agriculture operations on the farm lots, which will provide job training and employment, and transform the network into Roanoke’s first community-led commercial urban agricultural enterprise, serving as a model for other neighborhoods throughout the Roanoke Valley. The initial, “demonstration” Community Garden has been up and running for three years, producing food for community members who work the garden and for selling at local farmers’ markets.

Daylighting all of Cedar Run, much of which was built into an underground culvert during Roanoke’s 1960s urban renewal, will: preserve and enhance the natural hydrology of the stream; improve water quality; restore the channel to a more natural condition, thus helping to mitigate downstream and downtown flooding by redirecting runoff into a natural channel and reducing peak flows; provide an opportunity to educate the Roanoke Valley on stormwater management techniques and low impact development; and help lay the ground work to revitalize the Northwest community and its economy while improving livability.

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One Valley's centerpiece project is the George Washington Carver Environmental Education Center. The Carver Center will be the first independent educational entity in Northwest Roanoke designed to attract and teach students and adults from every part of the Roanoke Valley. It will contain a science lab and classrooms to deliver environmental and healthy living education for students K-12 as well as for adults. It will include a working and teaching kitchen to provide education, training and career opportunities as well as locally grown food for a restaurant and market on the Center grounds.

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