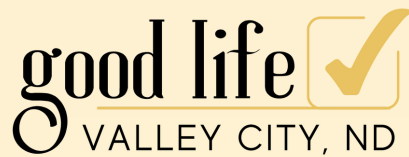




# VALLEY CITY GOOD LIFE

*Elevating Valley City's Visibility*





## ABOUT:

With the goal of elevating Valley City's visibility to potential new residents and leveraging the State's efforts, the Valley City Good Life Campaign is more than just a marketing campaign. It's establishing connections with interested leads to form a personalized invitation and assist in creating their path to relocation to address the workforce shortage in Barnes County.

## MANY MOVING PARTS

The Valley City Good Life Campaign uses a variety of marketing methods to apply an innovative mix of advertising and recruiting across multiple platforms. Throughout this report you'll hear of our work regarding the following partnerships and projects:

- **ROLECALL** - national recruiting agency
- **CHEZY** - hybrid video & tech company
- **BILLBOARD**
- **UPDATED WEBSITE**
- **SOCIAL MEDIA PAGES**
- **ADSHARK** - digital marketing agency



Our local efforts are driven by the state's current recruiting campaign as well as national and local trends. Statistics show 40% of Americans are either moving or considering moving to a small or mid-sized city. ND Tourism reported their promotional campaign created a "halo effect" that went beyond motivating travel.

**"RIPPLE EFFECTS OF  
ADVERTISING NORTH  
DAKOTA POSITIVELY  
IMPACTED THE STATE'S  
IMAGE AS A PLACE TO LIVE,  
WORK, START A BUSINESS,  
ATTEND COLLEGE, PURCHASE  
A HOME AND RETIRE."**

- ND Tourism, 2021 Annual Report







## **ROLECALL**, national recruiting agency

RoleCall's work focuses on the questions traditional place marketing campaigns fail to answer. They work with communities around the country to capture the spirit of place and give a detailed report of themes, observations and best practices to ensure individualized talent attraction initiatives honor each community's unique aspects and challenges.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Our work with RoleCall began with open and honest conversations with (24) community stakeholders and employers regarding a variety of Valley City attributes. RoleCall uses these conversations to capture a community's spirit of place. This moment was crystalized for Valley City when the group was discussing what a warm, welcoming place Valley City is and one person raised their hand and said, "Actually, I don't think that's true."

After describing how difficult it had been for her as a newcomer to feel fully invited into a community where many residents had lived their whole life, the room responded with compassion and curiosity. The information shared was important, but the real moment when Valley City's true character came was in the aftermath of this comment. This honest, vulnerable critique was taken with grace and a drive to be better. There was an attitude of "How do we fix this?" That's Valley City.

Honest. Real. Introspective. Determined. Gritty. Passionate. Curious. Ready and excited to do the work necessary to grow.



## ROLECALL - Part I

# THEMES, OBSERVATIONS & BEST PRACTICES

- Valley City - Barnes County EDC is pragmatic, effective and well-respected.
  - Seeds of success are already planted; the EDC's goals of expanding Valley City's place marketing and talent attraction efforts are built on a foundation of trust and respect.
  - From major projects that will shape the future of the community, to personalized assistance that directly impacts the lives and livelihoods of business owners and community members, this small team is dedicated to help however they can.
- Loyalty takes time to build, but once it's locked in, it's forever.
  - Interesting pattern: many people who relocated to Valley City, didn't initially like it. Individuals described a slower timeline to connect with this place and feel anchored.
  - Community engagement is the common denominator in place loyalty and belonging. All talent attraction efforts must include defined, thoughtful invitations to facilitate community involvement and expedite this feeling.
- "Say yes and figure it out."
  - "Yes" is Valley City's default answer when discussing big goals, projects and possibilities. This community loves rallying around people and ideas to make things happen.
- A tight-knit community is also an insular one.
  - A tight-knit community is an incredible asset and selling point, but it can also be a barrier for newcomers trying to find a sense of belonging.
  - Defined paths for newcomers and college graduates to find their sense of place (community onboarding) needs to be at the forefront of all Valley City's talent attraction programming.
- VCSU is a priceless talent pipeline.
  - The university brings young people into the community, the next step needs to be engaging and retaining them.
  - Common themes:
    - Lack of awareness of things to do; a marketing and communication issue
    - Appreciation for networking assistance
    - Students plan to either move home or to a bigger city post-college; plant the seed of staying in Valley City





## ROLECALL - Part II

# DO-IT-YOURSELF SOLUTIONS

### 1. Provide employers with a Community Onboarding toolkit

**WHY:** Employers are struggling to attract new candidates, but they're also struggling to retain the ones they have. Valley City is a welcoming and tight-knit community that can be difficult for newcomers to break into. The EDC has the power to expedite the Community Onboarding process for new candidates and take some of this work off the shoulders of employers and HR managers.

**HOW:** The EDC can provide employers with tangible assistance with Community Onboarding and reach newcomers who might otherwise slip through the cracks.

**WHAT:** A toolkit for Valley City employers to help new and current employees understand and access all the region has to offer, including:

- Information about assistance available from the EDC
  - Community tours
  - Assistance with housing and childcare needs
  - Support for trailing spouses
  - Easy access to Community Onboarding Champion
- Newsletter sign-up for weekly or monthly events listings
  - Need to proactively cut through the "there's nothing to do here" myth
- Community connectors with different interests/areas of expertise
  - Think of those community connectors who know everyone and truly love Valley City: they're your ambassadors and you can activate them to engage newcomers



**"WHO BETTER TO HELP A NEWCOMER LOVE VALLEY CITY THAN SOMEONE WHO ALREADY DOES."**

- Kara Anderson, Community Onboarding Champion



## DO-IT-YOURSELF SOLUTIONS

### 2. Define Partnership with VCSU and build new grad cohort

**WHY:** VCSU is a huge asset for talent attraction. Let's get more students to stay with defined pathways and assistance.

- A common refrain from college grads weighing where to move, "All I needed was a job offer and someone who cared." Valley City has both!

**WHAT:** Partnership with career center and increased communication with students and university staff.

- Strengthen and formalize connections and personalize assistance: Are VCSU students aware how willing and able the EDC is to help them connect with employers? Get students (and the university) excited about local job connections.

**HOW:** Give grads their own "Path to Yes" based on their specific needs:

- Job/career guidance
- Housing assistance
- Young Professionals Network
- Community involvement
- Mentorship
- Things to do

#### 2a. Define and Facilitate a Student Retention Program: "Give Us A Year"

**WHY:** It's not enough to say "Please stay" and hope it translates to student retention. Let's give students some structure and define their next steps.

- Students need defined support and an invitation to stay.
- Need to hammer home the fact that staying in Valley City isn't about a lack of other options, it's a bold, proactive choice about the kind of life you want to have, and setting yourself up for success.
- By not asking them to commit for life, we're lowering the stakes and increasing the odds of them giving Valley City a shot.

**WHAT:** A structured program inviting VCSU grads to commit to staying in Valley City for one year post-graduation.

- "See what you can do here in a year. We'll help."
- Highlight the opportunities to beef up your resume, make connections, gain real experience and make a difference.
- Creating a cohort of students who have said "Yes!" to this challenge provides camaraderie and built-in support: two things they're hungry for.

**HOW:** EDC markets program, convenes cohort, and provides support in key areas:

- Job search
- Things to do
- Peer group
- Community involvement
- Networking and membership
- "What's your big goal for the year? We'll help you make it happen."





"THE PEOPLE IN THIS COMMUNITY ARE WHAT SETS US APART; THEY ARE THE DIFFERENCE. VALLEY CITY IS BLESSED WITH CREATIVE, ENGAGED, ENERGETIC 'DOERS' AND LEADERS FROM ALL ASPECTS OF EMPLOYMENT AND EXPERIENCE."

- Paige Bjornson, Regional President, Dacotah Bank

## ROLECALL - Part II

# DO-IT-YOURSELF SOLUTIONS

### 3. Convene business and community leaders to share best practices

**WHY:** There's a culture of collaboration in Valley City's business community, and a hunger to share successes and commiserate around struggles. There's also a need for more structured communication between the EDC and the business community to increase understanding and participation.

- There were collective "aha moments" in RoleCall's focus groups that can be expanded and built upon.
- Valley City has unique challenges and opportunities; solutions and ideas should be specific.
- Employers can learn from each other: What's working in terms of talent attraction? What's not?
- EDC can learn from employers: How can we specifically support you in your talent attraction and retention efforts?

**WHAT:** EDC-hosted gatherings on a regular basis with guided conversation.

- Can be monthly or quarterly; regular cadence is key.
- Use this group to increase and improve internal stakeholder communication. Let them know the work you're doing on their behalf and WHY. They need to understand that every project undertaken by the EDC is ultimately for them.

**HOW:** Invite businesses to join — and encourage them to invite others.

- Personal and proactive invitations are threaded through every piece of Valley City's talent attraction strategy, from external audiences (potential new residents) to internal ones (employers).





## ROLECALL - Part II

# DO-IT-YOURSELF SOLUTIONS

### 4. Gather and activate Young Professionals

**WHY:** There's a cool, young energy in VC. Let's harness it and grow it.

- To keep young people in Valley City, we have to foster connections with peers.
- Common reason for leaving is lack of peer group/things to do.

**WHAT:** A Young Professionals group that's involved, inviting, and visible.

- Activate! This can be the reason someone stays: make them feel like they're **part of something**.

**HOW:** EDC hosts meetings, gatherings, and events.

- Happy hours, volleyball leagues, volunteer events, classes, mentorships
- Give people leadership opportunities.
- Junior board is a possibility in the future, but start with fun, casual meetups to build connection and investment in the group.

### 5. Implement lead capture strategy

**WHY:** The EDC has the capacity and ability to offer personalized assistance to new residents and candidates — you need a central place to collect them and engage with them.

**WHAT:** Can be as simple (and free!) as a Google Form to gather key information. Fields we'd recommend including on the form:

- Name, email address
- What's your moving timeline?
- Ever lived in Valley City before?
- Where do you currently live?
- Choose your desired industry (offer options that align with region's key industries and an open field for "other")
- What's your current job title?
- Tell us a few of your interests and hobbies (offer options + an open field for "other")
- What caught your attention about Valley City? Any questions right off the bat we can help you with?

**HOW:** Include call-to-action on all outbound marketing (videos, social campaigns, etc) to drive traffic to form.

- See your future in Valley City yet? Fill out this form and we'll help you get here.
- Tell us a little bit about yourself to get connected with a Valley City local!
- Want help finding a job and a community? Answer a few questions to get started.

## ROLECALL - Part III

# PARTNERSHIP WITH ROLECALL

RoleCall was created to build infrastructure to support talent attraction marketing efforts — it's one thing to tell the world how great Valley City is, it's another to capture leads, connect candidates with jobs and onboard them into the community. This is the "what's next" piece, where targeting and tracking new residents from capture to conversion takes place.

The following section is a road map to bringing the next phase to life and how RoleCall will continue to support.

### 1. WayFinders

Community Onboarding is central to Valley City's talent attraction strategy, and having a comprehensive platform to connect newcomers, capture leads, and engage current residents can be that "front door" the community needs.

A WayFinders program from RoleCall can be customized to Valley City and provide a central portal for newcomers to engage with current residents, and for the EDC to manage connections and "Paths to Yes."

### 2. Ongoing Consulting: Inbound Marketing Strategy & Support

RoleCall is here to help, formally or informally. Let us know how we can best support your ongoing work! A few things we can assist you with on a project-by-project basis or with a monthly retainer for regular check-ins:

- Lead Nurturing 101
- Community Onboarding and Engagement
- Messaging and marketing support
- General brainstorm sessions!





## ROLECALL - Part III

# MARKETING DIRECTION & PERSONAS

In this section, we'll dive a little deeper into our recommendations for talent attraction-specific marketing strategy, messaging, and targeting.

**VOICE:** Valley City's voice is *driven, passionate, active, altruistic, honest and inviting*. This is a place that rallies to get things done, that isn't afraid to be real, dream big and do the work to grow in every sense of the word.

### KEY ASSETS:

- Outdoor recreation and natural beauty
- Active lifestyle
- Community involvement and volunteering
- Work/life balance
- "Yes people" + optimism
- Personalized service and assistance

### KEY MESSAGES:

#### 1. We want you here.

Valley City is a proactive and honest place, and its talent attraction message aligns with that: "We want you here. Let's make it happen."

#### 2. If you put in the work, so will we.

The personas we're going after aren't afraid to put in the work, but they're looking for a place that will match their drive and vision. Valley City - Barnes County will.

#### 3. Bring us your big ideas.

This is a visionary community where people love to say "YES!" So, what's your big idea, and how can we help bring it to life?

# MARKETING DIRECTION & PERSONAS



Based on RoleCall's assessment of Valley City's opportunities, assets and talent needs, the following personas have been identified targets in an external talent attraction campaign.

## 1. The Grad (or soon-to-be-grad)

**Age:** 19-24

**Location:** VCSU specifically, as well as other colleges in ND and beyond

**Career Stage:** Early or internship

**Family:** Single

### Motivations and Priorities

- Personal connections and assistance defining their path
- Exciting job offer in their field
- Welcoming network of peers and mentors
- Invitation to make a difference in a growing community
- They have an assumed trajectory of Home → Valley City → Home. Valley City must be proactive to interrupt those assumptions and provide an alternative
- Access – to other cities, especially Fargo, but also to the outdoors, to opportunities to effect change, to leaders and mentors

### Messages that Resonate

- “Give us a year,” see what you can do in a year here compared to other places.
  - Issue an invitation to grads to stay one year beyond graduation.
  - Formalize with small cohorts of grads: check in with them over the year, help them set goals and meet them, connect them with resources and mentors, tell their stories externally.
- “Start your career here” (not “Raise your kids here”)
  - Is Valley City a great place to raise a family? Yes. Do college grads care about that? No. In fact, it can alienate them. Be specific in your messaging and focus on what matters to them: career opportunities, fun events and things to do, welcoming and energetic social scene.
- “We’ll invest in you and your goals.”

### Where and How to Reach Them

- VCSU Career Center outreach and partnership
- Connecting them to Valley City (beyond campus) well before they’re making their location decision is crucial: events, outreach and invitations should draw them into the community.
- In-person events
- Interrupt trajectory of Home → Valley City → Home
- Social media (Instagram and LinkedIn are good bets)







## ROLECALL - Part III

# MARKETING DIRECTION & PERSONAS

### 2. The Commuter

**Age:** 25-50

**Location:** Works in Valley City, lives elsewhere

**Career Stage:** Mid-Career

#### Motivations and Priorities

- Cutting down (or eliminating) commute
- Easier pace of life + work/life balance
- Outdoor recreation
- Tight-knit community with a small-town feel

#### Messages that Resonate

- Live where you work!
- Easier access to the things that really matter; living in Valley City means you'll still have access to Fargo, but you'll be able to enjoy the outdoors, tight-knit community, local events and a small-town feel all the time
- Embed yourself in an incredible community of doers
- Opportunities to move the needle and make a difference

#### Where and How to Reach Them

- Distribute communication to employers to share with commuter employees
- Billboards:
  - "If you lived here, you'd be kayaking now."
  - "What would you do with an extra two hours a day? We have some ideas." [show activities in Valley City]





## ROLECALL - Part III

# MARKETING DIRECTION & PERSONAS

### 2. The Young Family

**Age:** 25-35

**Location:** Midwestern Metros

**Career Stage:** Mid-Level Executive

**Family:** Spouse and young kids

#### Motivations and Priorities

- Safe place to raise a family
- Opportunities for growth in all areas: career, social life, personal development
- Connected, welcoming community

#### Messages that Resonate

- Everything you need is here – metropolitan amenities with no traffic
- Go to work, get home for dinner
- Tons of opportunities for both adults and kids
- Family-Friendly Activities

#### Where and How to Reach Them

- Social media: for this group, focus on Facebook and Instagram
- Many of this group will also fall into the “boomerang” category, so once you post your videos, encourage social sharing: “Know a family who would thrive in Valley City? Send them this video!”

**"VALLEY CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS IS THE PERFECT MIX OF SMALL SCHOOL ATMOSPHERE AND BIG SCHOOL OPPORTUNITY."**

- Josh Johnson, Superintendent, Valley City Public Schools

## ROLECALL - Part III

# MARKETING DIRECTION & PERSONAS

### 4. The Boomerang

**Age:** 25-45

**Location:** Grew up in Valley City, lives elsewhere

**Family:** Young kids or wanting kids soon

#### Motivations and Priorities

- Proximity to family
- Outdoor recreation and active lifestyle
- Chance to shape the future of a place that means a lot to them

#### Messages that Resonate

- “Bring your big ideas here!”
- Opportunities for personal, family, and career growth
- Nostalgic and family-centric messaging: “Raise your kids where you were raised” or “Live near your parents.”

#### Where and How to Reach Them

- In-person events especially around the holidays
- Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn
- Activate the moms: once you have a link capture strategy, ask local parents to send it to their kids who have moved away. The incentive offered from the EDC: help finding a great job and getting them reconnected with the community.



## APPENDIX

The appendix in the back of this report contains supplemental information RoleCall gathered from MapDash. These data snapshots provide a good overview of Barnes County and Valley City. These insights can help inform and contextualize your talent attraction efforts by illustrating the type of people who already live here and the current workforce.





## CHEZY, hybrid video & tech company

Chezy is a national creative services company providing clients with high-quality video and photography. Chezy was created to deliver reliable creative content for storytelling purposes.

## INTRODUCTION, EXECUTION & USES

In a world where video marketing is increasingly important to tell your story, the Valley City Good Life Campaign needed an engaging, consistent public presence to succeed. That's where our work with Chezy came into play. We quickly began conversations with Chezy utilizing RoleCall's findings and suggestions to form a detailed storyboard of our goals and uses for the videos. Our final products from Chezy consist of:

- (5) Community stakeholder interviews
- (2) Industry specific recruiting tools
- (2) Community stakeholder interview mashups
- Valley City sizzle reel
- Summer Vikes on Central highlight reel
- Interview with our Director of Development, Jennifer Feist

### Video Uses

- Elevate Valley City - Barnes County's online presence
  - Create awareness to quality of life available
- Local and state website enhancement
  - [developvcbc.com/goodlife](http://developvcbc.com/goodlife)
  - [findthegoodlife.com/cities/valleycity](http://findthegoodlife.com/cities/valleycity)
- Recruiting tool
  - Show potential new residents what life is like before they arrive
  - Raw footage can be tailored to specific employer needs







## BILLBOARD

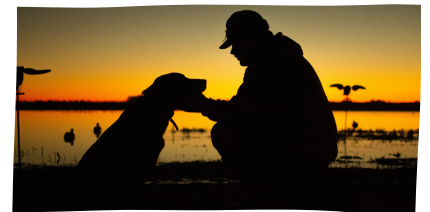
In collaboration with Valley City Tourism, a brand new billboard highlighting specialty shops and quality of life has been placed west of Valley City along I-94. Billboards are an effective out-of-home advertising strategy that target a broad audience. The Valley City Good Life Campaign strives to reach across multiple platforms and demographics.

*developvcbc.com*

## UPDATED VCBCDC WEBSITE

An appealing, active online presence has become vital to businesses, organizations, and communities. The VCBCDC website was outdated, overwhelming for site visitors, and lacked the functionality needed to properly provide information and gather data. The new website has significantly fewer pages while providing quality content, is visually appealing, and has a page dedicated to the Valley City Good Life Campaign. Information such as employment opportunities, housing options, video testimonials and recreation opportunities are highlighted on this page. Most importantly, there is a short form for interested individuals to complete. Once this form is submitted, the Community Onboarding Champion will reach out to answer questions, provide information, and begin establishing connections within the community. This human connection is a unique and vital part of both the State and Local campaigns.

The new website creates efficiencies within the operations of the Development Corporation and provides an appealing and engaging resource for potential businesses and residents to gather the information they need.





## *Facebook & Instagram*

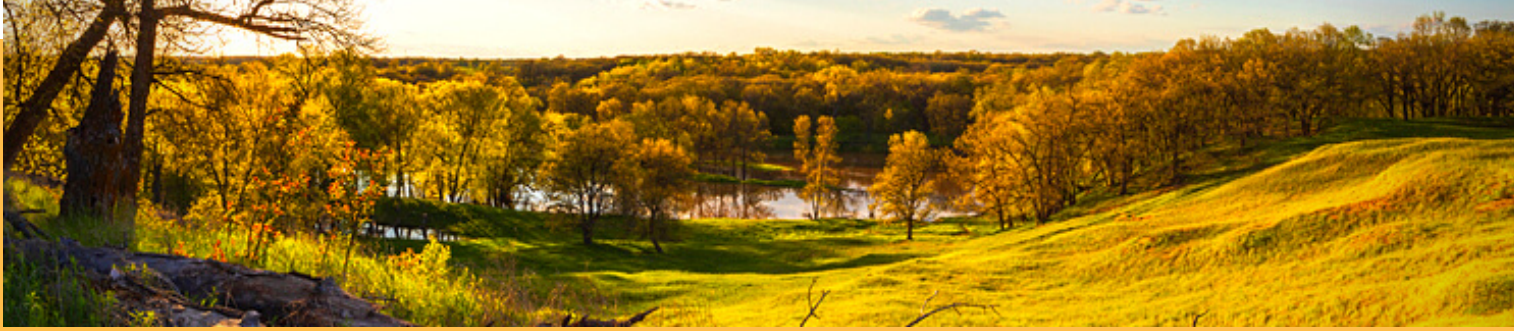
# **SOCIAL MEDIA CREATION**

Social media is an essential, cost-effective way to reach target audiences, nurture relationships and engage with individuals across the world. Facebook (Valley City Good Life) and Instagram (@vcgoodlife) accounts have been created to easily share content that supports the Valley City Good Life Campaign. Posts will cover topics such as recreation, employment, housing, education, and others that are valuable to potential residents. Businesses and community members are encouraged to follow these pages as well as like, comment and share posts to help highlight the great things Valley City has to offer.

*facebook.com/vcgoodlife*  
*@vcgoodlife*







## **ADSHARK** , digital marketing agency

AdShark is a premier full service agency focusing on digital advertising efforts to accelerate client growth. Their proven focus on PPC, SEO, web design and ROI tracking accelerates traffic and conversions.

### **PURPOSE & GOALS**

- Increasing qualified web traffic, form fills and general engagement from individuals and families interested in relocation to Valley City - Barnes County.
  - Focusing on key personas and regions, with a particular focus on pulling in younger demographics.
- Improving overall awareness about the benefits of living in Valley City - Barnes County.
- Providing meaningful reports and measurable data to highlight campaign success.

### **SCOPE OF WORK**

#### **Platforms**

- Facebook and Instagram Ads (Meta)
- YouTube Ads

#### **Setup**

- Research and creation of all marketing accounts and campaigns
- Development of ad creation (including copy writing and assets)
- Implementation of on-site tracking pixels and dashboard

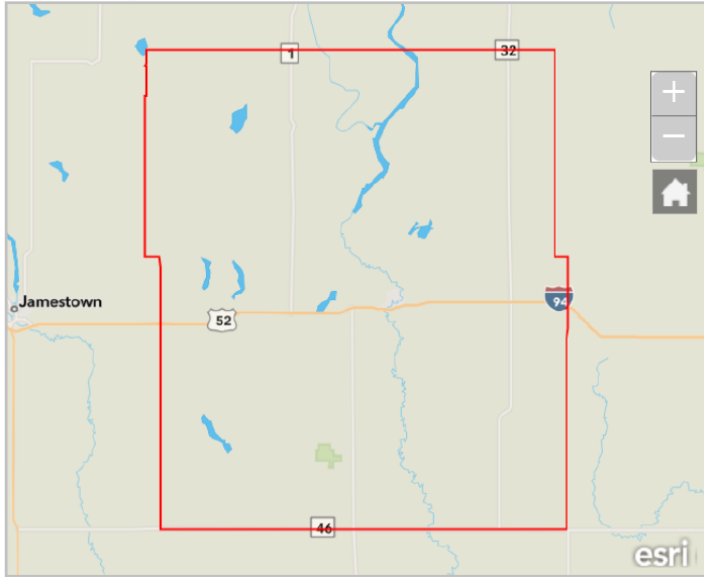
#### **Ongoing**

- Continual campaign management and strategy
- Ad split-testing, revisions and re-allocations
- Continual optimization based on results and campaign goals
- Dedicated digital strategist assigned to account
- Performance reviews and monthly insight meetings

#### **Summary**

The Valley City Good Life Campaign is our innovative response to the workforce shortage. This community-wide effort needs YOUR support to be successful. Be it joining the onboarding team, inviting a new coworker to supper, or sharing our social media posts, every effort will make a tremendous difference in overcoming our workforce challenges and building our community.





**10,434**  
Daytime  
Population

**17**  
Schools

**665**  
Businesses

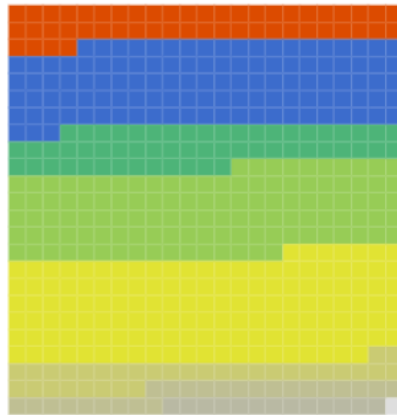
Daytime Population Composition



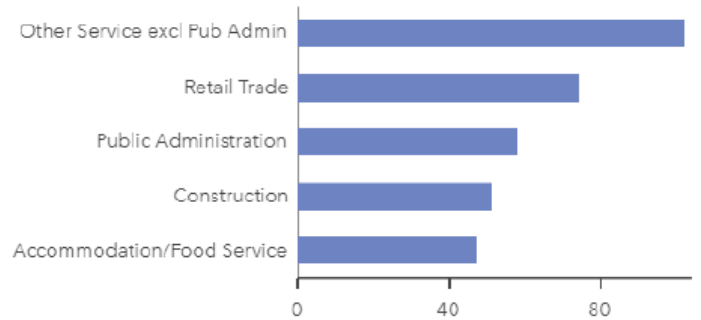
● Workers (5,340) ● Residents (5,094)

Educational Attainment

Grad/Prof Degree	9%
Bachelor's Degree	21%
Associate's Degree	10%
Some College	21%
High School Diploma	26%
GED Equivalent	6%
9-12th / No Diploma	4%
< 9th Grade	2%

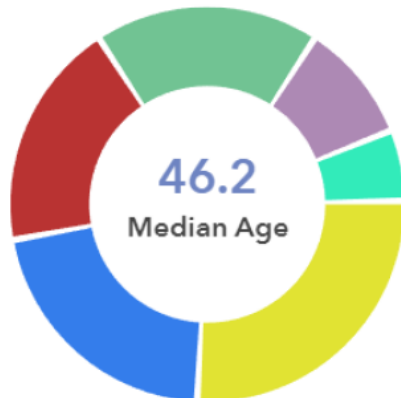


Top 5 Business Types

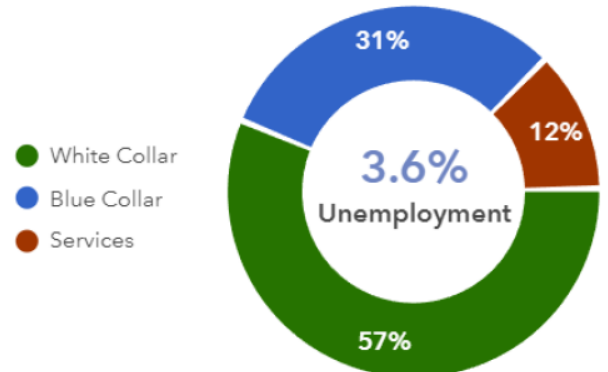


Generational Predominance

- Baby Boomer (Ages 55 - 73)
- GenZ (Ages 3 - 20)
- Millennial (Ages 21 - 38)
- Gen X (Ages 39 - 54)
- Silent / Greatest Gen (74+)
- Gen Alpha (Ages <3)

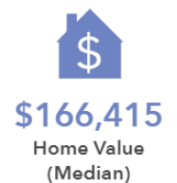
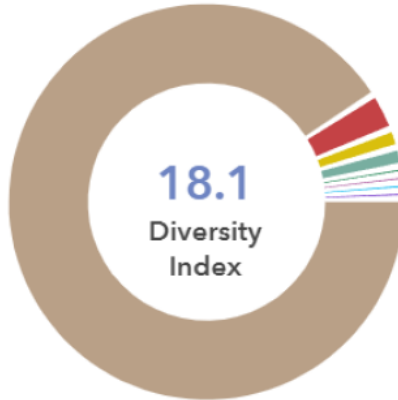


Employment Type (Residents)

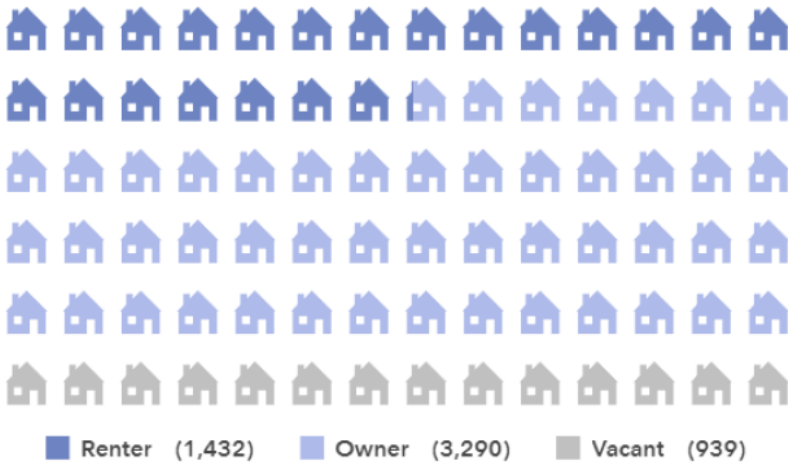


Race and Ethnicity

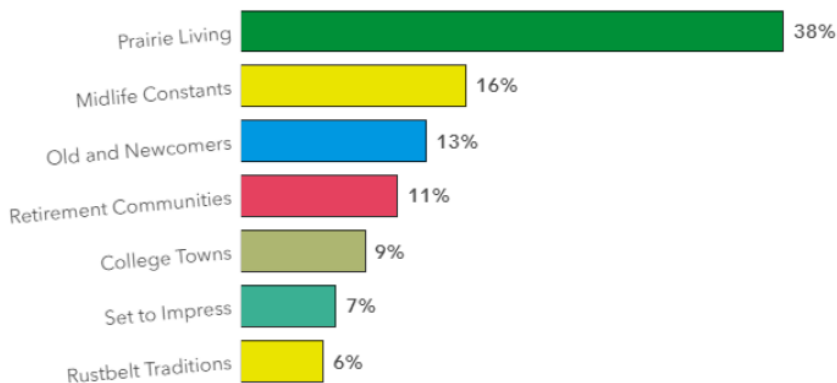
- White Pop
- Multiple Races
- Black/ African American
- Hispanic
- American Indian
- Asian Pop
- Other Race
- Pacific Islander



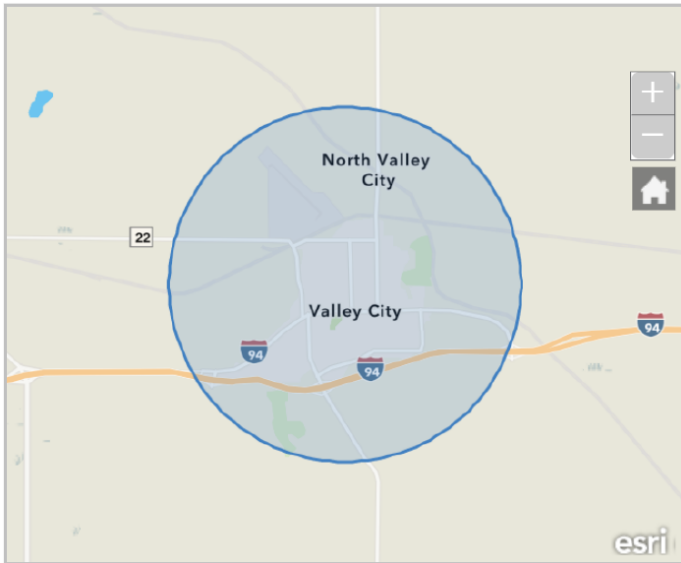
Housing Tenancy



Top Lifestyle Segments





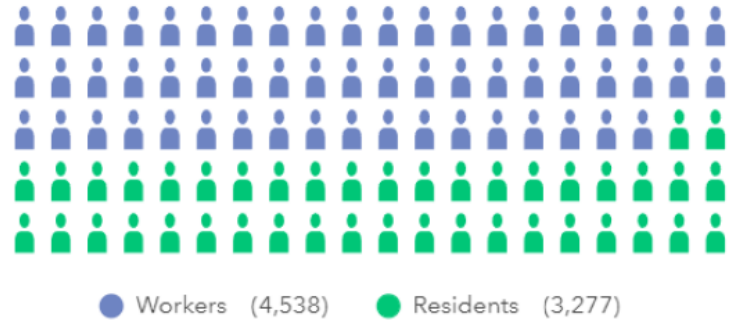


**7,815**  
Daytime  
Population

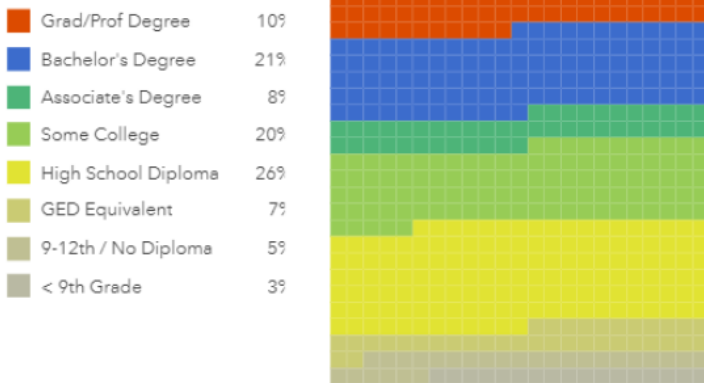
**13**  
Schools

**473**  
Businesses

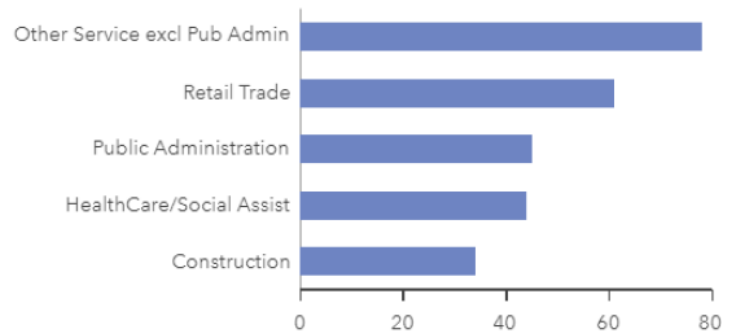
Daytime Population Composition



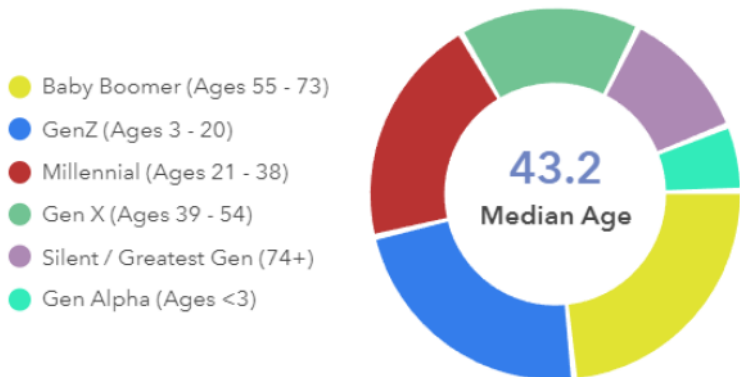
Educational Attainment



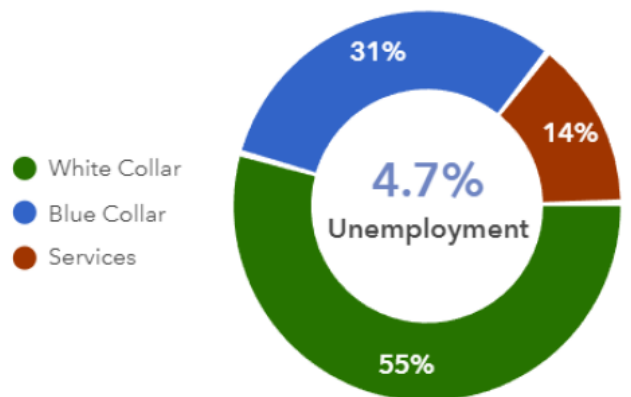
Top 5 Business Types



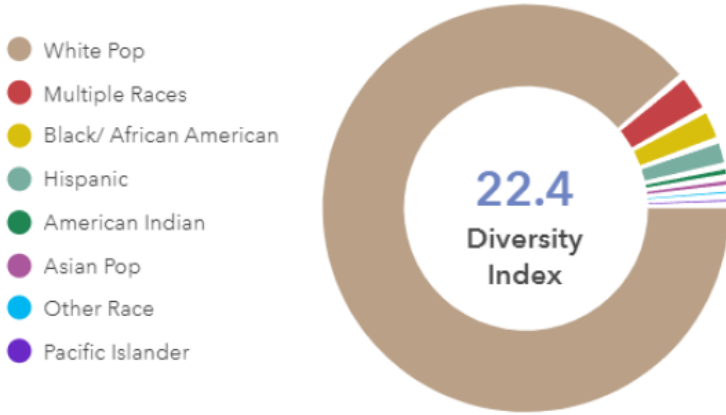
Generational Predominance



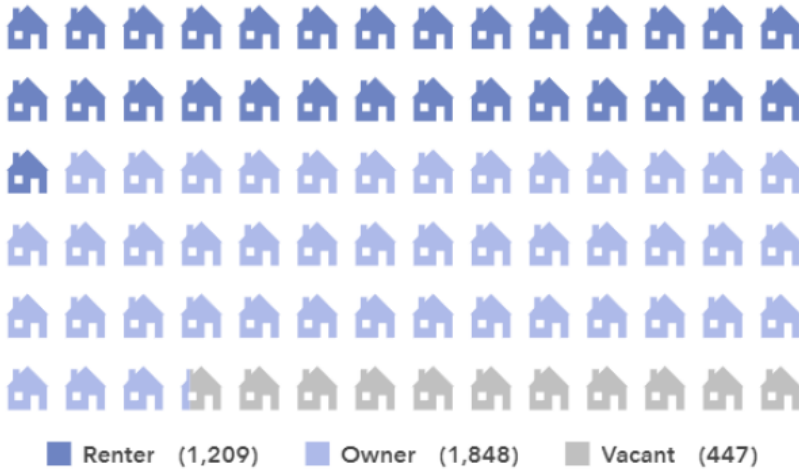
Employment Type (Residents)



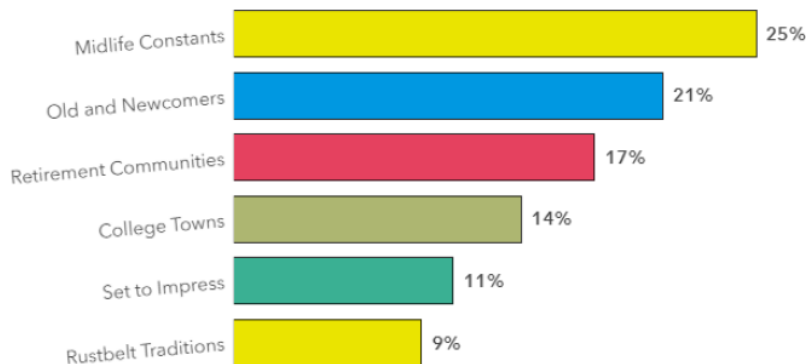
Race and Ethnicity



Housing Tenancy



Top Lifestyle Segments







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