



GRADD

Green River Area Development District

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

2022 - 2027



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Webster County barn

CEDS MEETINGS

EDC CEDS Committee Kickoff – 4/6/22

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Regional Transportation Committee Meeting – 8/31/22

EDC CEDS Committee Review – 9/7/22

Water Management Council – 9/15/22

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



CEDS COLLABORATORS

Jodi Ashby

Ohio County Economic Development Alliance

Mike Baker

Hancock County Industrial Foundation

Doug Bell

German American Bank (Henderson)

Tammy Belt

United Community Bank (Union)

Christina Carpenter

Ohio County Economic Development Alliance

Melissa Coker

Union County First

Greg Collins

Commonwealth Bank (Union) (retired)
Citizen (Davies)

Sandy Dant

First Security Bank (McLean)

Monte Davenport

Independence Bank (Webster)

Brad Davis

Greater Owensboro Economic Development Corporation (Davies)

Brandon Gentry

Old National Bank (Davies)

Chad Gregory

Hancock County Bank

Barbara Howard

Farm Credit Services of Mid-America (McLean)

Kim Humphrey

River View Coal (Union)

Will McDowell

Kentucky Utilities (McLean)

Katie Peak

Cecilian Bank (Ohio)

Andy Rideout

Henderson County Cooperative Extension Services

Whitney Risley

Henderson County Economic Development

Meredith Steiner

Webster County Community and Economic Development

Matt Wright

W2 Pallets (Hancock)

Rachel Yarbrough

Retired - Webster County Schools

PUBLIC & PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

ConnectGRADD Inc.
GRADD Board of Directors
GRADD Hazard Mitigation Council
GRADD Regional Transportation Committee
GRADD Water Management Council
Greater Owensboro Economic Development Corporation
Green River Area Council on Aging
Green River Economic Development Corporation
Green River Regional Health Council
Green River Regional Industrial Development Authority
Green River Workforce Development Board
Hancock County Industrial Foundation
Henderson Community College
Henderson Economic Development
Kentucky Career Center
Kentucky State Data Center
Madisonville Community College
Murray State Small Business Development Center
Ohio County Economic Development Alliance
Owensboro Community & Technical College
Union County First
United Way of Ohio Valley
Webster County Community & Economic Development
Webster County Economic Development Council
Webster County Industrial Development Authority
West Kentucky Coalition
West Kentucky Regional Industry Development Authority



Union County sunrise

SUMMARY BACKGROUND

WORKFORCE

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a long term impact on the workforce by accelerating preexisting trends and magnifying weaknesses in Kentucky's economy. Workforce participation rate in the United States has been on the decline since the year 2000, with Kentucky's rate already trailing behind the nation.¹ As of July 2022, Kentucky's workforce participation rate ranks 45th out of 51 (states + Washington, D.C.) at just 58.1%². While the workforce participation rate is declining, the Kentucky Center for Statistics projects nearly 2.2 million job openings in Kentucky between 2019 and 2029². A September 2021 report by the Kentucky Chamber Foundation, *20 Years in the Making: Kentucky's Workforce Crisis*³ found that the major causes of the workforce crisis in Kentucky include:

- A gap between the skills workers have and the skills employers need
- Slow population growth
- Incarceration and criminal backgrounds
- A lack of access to childcare services
- Poor health of working age adults
- A need for better transportation, infrastructure and broadband

The Green River Workforce Development Board concurred that these issues at the state level are the same primary issues affecting GRADD's workforce. Health, transportation, infrastructure and broadband are discussed later in this document.

Skills Gap

In September 2022, the Webster County Fiscal Court held a ribbon cutting for the Lisman Workforce Complex. The facility was acquired from a former coal mine facility using grant funds from the Delta Regional Authority and Community Development Block Grant and converted into a training facility highly in-demand technical career paths. Madisonville Community College will utilize the facility to increase their CDL and utility lineman training program cohort size and develop a new diesel mechanic program. With a shortage of local workers with CDL and lineman training, companies have resorted to hiring individuals

outside of the area. However, these workers often stay only long enough to gain the experience needed to qualify for jobs back home, creating a continuous deficit of skilled and experienced employees for local companies. Both the CDL and utility lineman program at MCC's main campus have had long wait lists for years. The Lisman Workforce Complex will enable more local workers to become certified and more quickly enter the workforce.

OCTC received a grant from the National Science Foundation



Utility lineman training at the Lisman Workforce Complex

to enhance Industry 4.0 training, which is critical in the post-pandemic manufacturing industry. The new three-year initiative, titled Reskilling Manufacturing Technicians Post-COVID with an Industry 4.0 Competency-Based Solution began May 1, 2022. The program will build partnerships between the college, industries and other stakeholders to upskill incumbent workers and build a pipeline of new highly skilled technicians, and encourage underserved groups to consider manufacturing as a viable career choice.

Throughout the United States, there is an increased demand for water/wastewater treatment services as the population increases and experienced water/wastewater systems operators are retiring. The Hire to Operate (H2O) project utilizes the Kentucky Rural Water Association's

SUMMARY BACKGROUND

WORKFORCE

Registered Apprenticeship Program to train ten water and wastewater apprentices in the Delta Regional Authority counties of Henderson, McLean, Union and Webster. Apprentices will become certified Water/Wastewater Systems Operation Specialists for local utilities. H2O will elevate the required skills to meet progressing technology demands and create a talent pipeline to replenish the qualified pool of operators.

Population Growth

The population of the United States grew 7.4% between the 2010 and 2020 Census, while Kentucky grew 3.8% and GRADD grew only 1.3%. Daviess and Hancock grew faster than the state average at 6.9% and 6.2% respectively, while all other GRADD counties had a population decline.⁴ Union County had the most significant population decline rate at -8.9%.

Incarceration and Substance Use

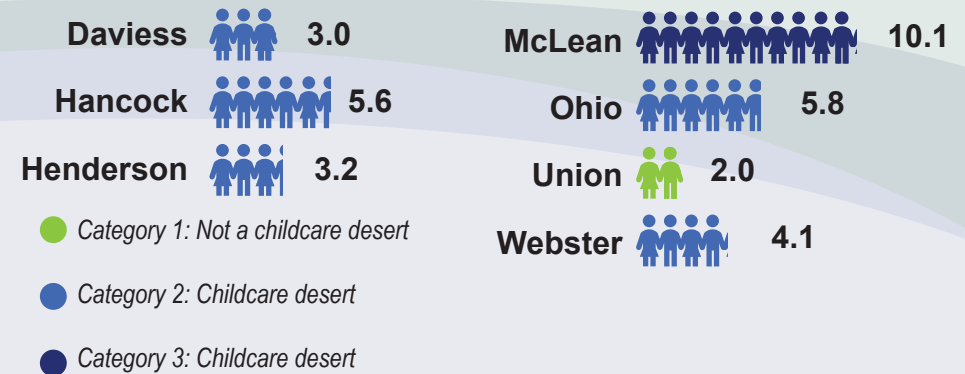
The Daviess County Detention Center is working with Owensboro Community & Technical College (OCTC), the Daviess County Fiscal Court, the City of Owensboro and the Greater Owensboro Economic Development Corporation to provide workforce skills training for inmates through their Reentry Success Program. The program focuses on enhanced operator certification, as well as IT training and other essential workforce skills. The first cohort began classes in July 2022 with forty inmates enrolled in the program.

The Ohio County Fiscal Court used funding from their State and Local Coronavirus Fiscal Recovery Funds allocation to create a new reentry program called Assisting Returning Citizens with Hope, or A.R.C.H. The program's goal is to break the recidivism cycle by providing released inmates with resources they need to succeed in society in areas including employment, mental health, substance use treatment and housing. A.R.C.H. works with second-chance employers to place program participants with employment and has currently successfully placed all participants interested in returning to work with a job.

Childcare Access

There is a great need in the GRADD region for more childcare facilities. According to the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, every GRADD county except Union County is considered a Child Care Desert, meaning there are more than three children per available child care slot in licensed facilities.⁷ Lack of available childcare can prevent parents, especially mothers, from working so they can stay home to care for children. GRADD's female workforce participation rate is 53.8%, compared to the overall rate of 58.7%.⁵ According to a 2021 survey by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 24% of Americans not in the workforce cited care for children or other family members as a main reason for not looking for work.⁶ The survey showed that more women than men highlighted this issue as a barrier to workforce participation.

Children Per Available Childcare Slot



1. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment 2000-2022.
2. Kentucky Center for Statistics Occupational Outlook 2019-202
3. Kentucky Chamber Foundation. *20 Years in the Making: Kentucky's Workforce Crisis*
4. U.S. Census Bureau. 2010 Census and 2020 Census population data.
5. U.S. Census Bureau. 2020 Census. Workforce Participation Rate by Sex.
6. U.S. Chamber of Commerce Poll: The COVID-19 Unemployed. Published 6/3/22.
7. Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services. Child Care Deserts by County.

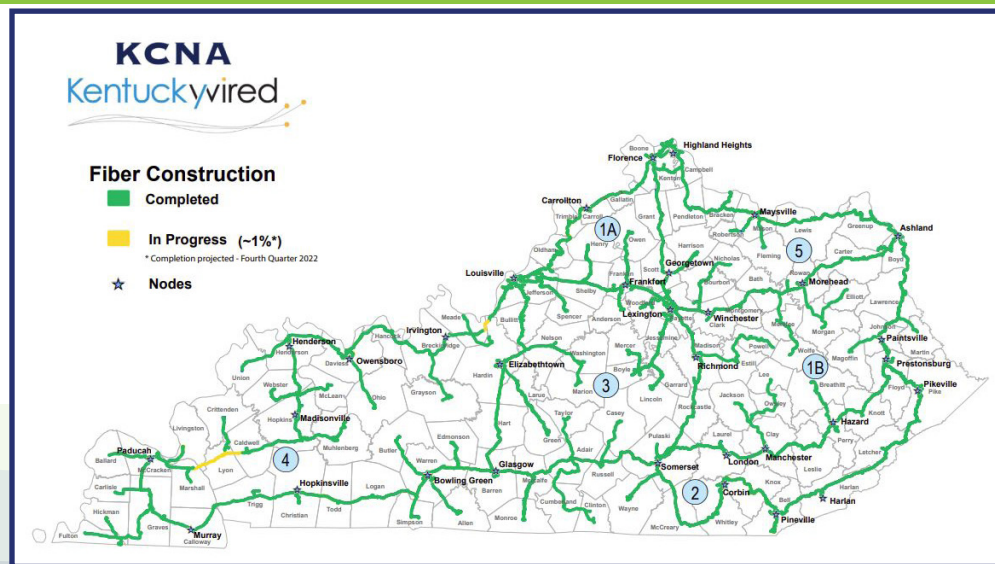
SUMMARY BACKGROUND

BROADBAND

Improved broadband access is the greatest need to promote economic development in the region. According to U.S. News' 2021 Best States rankings, Kentucky ranks 17th among all states in access to high-speed broadband and the broadband subscription rate, according to data from the Census Bureau and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC)¹. According to the rankings, Kentucky ranks 42nd in broadband subscription rate. The Green River region is primarily rural and many portions of the area have inadequate or no internet access. Issues with obtaining adequate internet access are struggles shared by both households and large companies, particularly in rural areas.

ConnectGRADD is a partnership between WATCH Communications and GRADD that provides internet services to rural areas in the seven GRADD counties and Hopkins County. Currently, ConnectGRADD provides service at download speeds of two megabits per second (Mbps) to 20 Mbps to approximately 1,300 rural households. The FCC has identified 25 Mbps as the benchmark for adequate service speed. Connect GRADD is working to improve service to meet those benchmarks, but that process will take time. In 2021, McLean County Fiscal Court was awarded \$498,900 from the Delta Regional Authority to replace a broadband tower that houses equipment from WATCH Communications. This project will raise the height of the communication equipment to allow for increased coverage in McLean County.

KentuckyWired is a state-funded project to construct over 3,000 miles of high-speed, high-capacity fiber optic cable. Kentucky is the first state in the nation to build an open-access fiber optic cable network in every county. This project began in 2015 and is now expected to be completed by the end of 2022. As of September 2022, 99% of the total fiber optic cable construction was completed. All work in the GRADD region is complete. KentuckyWired is a middle-mile initiative to provide the necessary infrastructure and encourage Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to connect to the network and bring faster, more reliable internet to rural areas where previously it would have been too expensive with too low an expected payoff for ISPs to consider serving.



KentuckyWired construction map as of September 2022.

Although broadband availability has been a recognized issue for many years throughout rural America, the COVID-19 pandemic magnified the need for digital access and underscored the many impacts a lack of adequate broadband has on rural communities. Fast and accessible broadband became a necessity for work, school, telehealth, entertainment and communication during the height of the pandemic. The pandemic especially highlighted the digital divide between well-connected areas and those without quality broadband accessibility.

While the migration of services online was initially spurred by social distancing requirements during the pandemic, they have become the “new norm” for many. People and industries alike are increasingly relying on broadband for their daily needs. Communities will need to increase reliable broadband availability to remain viable to attract businesses, industries and people. In 2022, internet infrastructure has become almost as critical to the wellbeing of a community as traditional forms of public infrastructure.

1. U.S. News Best States Internet Access Rankings.

HIGHLIGHTING RESILIENCE

COVID-19 ECONOMIC RECOVERY

In response to the pandemic, the Kentucky Area Development Districts partnered with the Kentucky Department for Local Government (DLG) and the Economic Development Administration (EDA) through a partnership planning grant funded by the Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act. This allowed GRADD to hire two staff to develop an Economic Recovery and Resiliency Plan, assist communities in the development of recovery and resiliency initiatives and provide technical assistance for reporting requirements associated with the many COVID-19 recovery funding streams.

Through analysis conducted for the Economic Recovery and Resiliency Plan, four main pandemic resiliency themes emerged: broadband; adaptability; trust and communication; and disaster preparedness planning. These four themes were identified as key initiatives to recovery and to building resilience against future economic shocks. The plan recommended utilizing COVID-19 funding opportunities for projects that strengthened one or more of these four categories.

Two funding opportunities available to the cities and counties were the Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF) and the American Rescue Plans State & Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (ARPA SLFRF). Both opportunities allocated funds to every city and county in response to the pandemic. CRF, funded through the CARES Act, was aimed at keeping cities and counties safe and operating during the height of cases. Communities used these funds in a variety of ways to address their immediate needs with the onset of the pandemic.

Projects included:

- Purchase of PPE
- Purchase of cleaning supplies
- Purchase of hand sanitizer
- Payroll of critical frontline employees
- Building modifications for social distancing
- Purchase of hardware and software to facilitate virtual meetings and telework

The ARPA SLFRF could be used to replace lost revenue due to the pandemic. This flexibility enabled the funds to be used for steady-state resiliency initiatives to mitigate the potential impact of another similar event on the community and economy.

SLFRF projects included:

- Water/wastewater improvements
- Acquisition and development of public parks
- Purchase of communication equipment
- Broadband improvements and hotspot installation
- Premium pay for essential workers
- Small business grants

The Economic Development Administration (EDA) awarded GRADD \$3.6 million in EDA CARES Act Recovery Assistance to capitalize and administer an RLF to provide critical gap financing to small businesses and entrepreneurs adversely affected by the coronavirus pandemic. GRADD issued 53 loans that created or retained 428 jobs in the region with these funds. Thirty-two of these loans were issued to minority and/or woman owned businesses. Loans ranged from \$5,000 to \$250,000.



COVID RLF Client Jamaican Yard Vibes

SUMMARY BACKGROUND

INDUSTRY

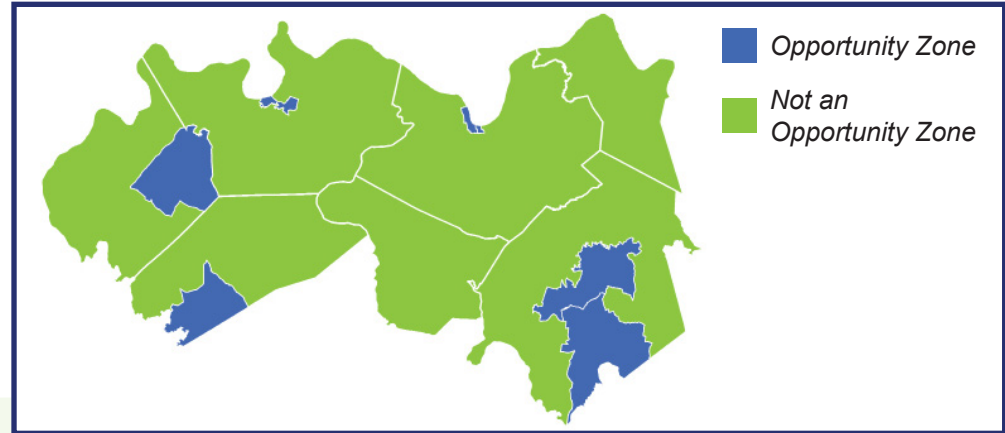
COVID-19 and other global economic changes have impacted local industries, resulting in job loss. Century Aluminum notified employees in June 2022 that their Hawesville plant would shut down in August, resulting in layoffs for 628 smelter employees. The company cited rising energy costs as the cause of the shutdown, linked in part to the war in Ukraine. The plant is estimated to remain closed between nine and twelve months. In January, Tyson Foods laid off 200 workers at their facility in Robards due to an increased demand for ready-to-eat products, which are produced at Tyson's automated plants.

The coal industry has been declining across much of the U.S., including Kentucky. However, Union County has continually seen growth in both coal employment and production. Union County has been the leading coal producer in Kentucky since 2012, producing 2.7 million tons of coal in the first quarter of 2022, compared to 2.8 million tons produced by all Eastern Kentucky coal producing counties.¹ Union County's only coal producing company, River View Coal, announced an expansion to Henderson County in September 2022. The company will create a new 30,000 square foot facility with a \$35 million investment expected to be completed by December 2024. The project will create 260 well-paying jobs.

The Kentucky Economic Development Finance Authority will provide \$1 million in tax incentives for The Kentucky Whiskey Co. LLC to build a new distillery in Ohio County. Kentucky Whiskey plans to invest \$17.7 million in the project. The distillery will start with 25 employees and grow to 30 over a 15-year-period with an average pay, including benefits, of \$31.25 an hour. An additional \$700,000 Community Development Block Grant will help extend water and sewer lines to the project site and construct an access road.

In the last two years, the electric vehicle battery industry has expanded in Kentucky. In September 2021, Ford announced construction of the new BlueOval SK Battery Park in Glendale, and in April 2022, Envision AESC announced they would construct an electric battery plant in Bowling Green. These projects are the two largest

economic development announcements in Kentucky history, and each plant is located about an hour away from the GRADD region. With this new industry developing in Kentucky, there may be interest by other related industries to locate in the GRADD region.



Map of Opportunity Zones in the GRADD region

Opportunity Zones

Seven Kentucky Opportunity Zones were established in the GRADD region by the U.S. Department of the Treasury and the Internal Revenue Service in 2018. Opportunity Zones were created to encourage long-term private investment in low-income urban and rural communities by offering tax incentives to investors. In the GRADD region, Opportunity Zones have prompted little interest or investment. Researchers from the University of California-Berkeley examined 2019 investments in Opportunity Zones and found that only 16% of Opportunity Zones received any investment that year. The study found that rural areas received little to no investment and that a majority of investments in Opportunity Zones were businesses specializing in real estate, construction and finance rather than industry.²

1. Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet, Quarterly Coal Reports 2012-2022.

2. Kennedy, Patrick and Wheeler, Harrison. *Neighborhood-Level Investment from the U.S. Opportunity Zone Program: Early Evidence*.

HIGHLIGHTING RESILIENCE

PRATT PAPER

On July 29, 2021, Governor Beshear and Pratt Paper LLC announced a \$500 million investment to construct a new recycled paper mill and corrugated box factory in Henderson. Pratt Paper will build two facilities: a state-of-the-art 650,000 square foot paper mill and a 500,000 square foot corrugator. The project will create an estimated 500 jobs with an average wage plus benefits package of \$39 per hour and 700 construction jobs. The paper mill is expected to be completed by fall 2023 and the corrugator by the end of 2026.



Mayor Steve Austin addressing the crowd at the Pratt Paper announcement
SOURCE: Sam Owens/The Gleaner

This project is the largest industrial investment with the most jobs created in Western Kentucky in twenty-five years and the largest investment ever made by Pratt Paper. Pratt brings a new type of industry to the GRADD region. With a rising global demand for eco-friendly goods, industries producing recycled and sustainable products like Pratt are likely to grow in coming years. Pratt's recycled cardboard products will support Kentucky's thriving logistics and distribution industry, which

employs nearly 75,000 people at 540 facilities statewide.¹ An increase in online ordering throughout the pandemic expanded these industries in Kentucky and led to a greater demand for packaging products, like the cardboard boxes produced by Pratt. Post-pandemic, e-commerce has continued to grow, although at a slower rate than during the pandemic.²

The Pratt Paper project is a collaborative effort between stakeholders. Henderson Economic Development, the City of Henderson, Henderson County Fiscal Court and state partners worked together to provide incentives to Pratt to choose Henderson over other competing locations. The City of Henderson and Henderson Municipal Gas were awarded \$1.5 million from the Delta Regional Authority and \$3 million from the Economic Development Administration to construct new natural gas pipeline to provide the necessary energy for Pratt facilities. Kentucky Economic Development Finance Authority provided Pratt Paper with \$14 million in tax incentives over 15 years to encourage them to locate in Kentucky, alongside \$3.5 million in tax incentives through the Kentucky Enterprise Initiative Act.



Construction at the Pratt Paper site in Henderson
SOURCE: Henderson Economic Development

1. Team Kentucky. https://ced.ky.gov/Existing_Industries/Logistics_Distribution
2. Digital Commerce 360 analysis of U.S. Department of Commerce data; August 2022

SUMMARY BACKGROUND

INFRASTRUCTURE

GRADD has made improving water and sewer infrastructure a top priority. One of the largest obstacles to infrastructure projects is the high cost associated with major water and sewer projects. The Kentucky Infrastructure Authority (KIA) works to develop water and sewer infrastructure throughout the state by helping communities secure the funding needed to complete projects. KIA works with the Area Development Districts to maintain the Water Resource Information System (WRIS), an online database of identified projects under the Safe Drinking Water Act and the Clean Water Act. The WRIS portal is critical in helping communities identify and prioritize their water and sewer needs and develop their projects and find funding assistance. The WRIS portal also contains mapping and general information about water and wastewater systems throughout the state, which can also be a helpful tool in identifying needs and developing projects. Several major projects are underway in the GRADD region.

The Earle C. Clements Job Corps Academy in Union County is a tuition-free residential education facility specifically targeting underserved populations. The Job Corps Sanitary Sewer serves the Job Corps and many businesses nearby. After decades of use, the sewer system must undergo a major replacement project to prevent total failure and the closure of the Job Corps and businesses that rely on it. The project will resolve major infiltration and inflow issues by replacing oversized sewer lines and roughly 300 brick manholes, as well as rehabilitating 67,000 linear feet and replacing 18,000 linear feet of sewer.

In Ohio County, there is a project to rebuild the current 1,000 linear foot ductile iron intake line that is failing and physically falling apart at River Road in Cromwell. If this line were to fail, it would seriously affect all 6,013 customers, including the cities of Beaver Dam, Centertown and Fordsville. The project includes construction of two new submerged intake screening structures, installation of 16-inch ball joint DIP supply lines, construction of an elevation valve access platform, assembly of two intake screenings on Green River, construction of

micropipe foundation for intake screening assemblies, connection to the existing supply line, and erosion control and bank stabilization. By using existing intake screens and a supply line in operation, it will minimize time required for change over to the new system.

The Whitesville Sewer Plant is nearing its lifespan of forty years and will soon require replacements and technology upgrades in order to maintain safety and efficiency standards. Two of the current blowers have malfunctioned and are no longer in use, and the plant will not be in compliance until they are functioning again. There is currently a real possibility that an overflow of wastewater from the lagoons will enter fields and ditches surrounding the treatment plant, posing a health risk for the surrounding community. The project will include the replacement of three blowers, improvements to the UV disinfection system, removal of solids from the lagoons, rehabilitation of the effluent pump station and gravity filters, replacement of leaking air head piping and installation of additional aeration headers.

The Sebree Sanitary Sewer System is also undergoing a replacement. This project will ultimately replace approximately 8,900 linear feet of 8-inch clay pipe, lower an exposed sanitary sewer main and the replace a failing retaining wall. The project impacts all 665 users, including thirty-five industrial customers. If the sewer fails, the entire city and industrial park will be with out service. The completion of this project will not only provide better service to the city's customers, but it will also prevent hazardous conditions if the retaining wall were to fail.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds served various strategic investment projects by local governments, some of which earmarked for infrastructure upgrades. Kentucky distributed these funds with the Cleaner Water Program. GRADD communities used these funds for long-term projects to increase the resilience of their water and wastewater infrastructure. Over \$7.9 million across 35 projects was distributed to GRADD communities.

SUMMARY BACKGROUND

INFRASTRUCTURE

A bi-state plan to build a bridge connecting the Indiana and Kentucky I-69 segments is under construction. The bridge will connect Henderson, KY to Evansville, IN and complete the Kentucky portion of I-69. The project has been divided into three sections of construction. Work is underway on Section I in Kentucky with improvements from KY 425 to US 60. Construction on the new bridge, Section II, is expected to begin in 2027. In June 2022, Governor Beshear announced the I-69 Ohio River Crossing project would receive \$250 million in the upcoming state budget for transportation infrastructure. Construction of the bridge is estimated to be complete by 2032. Section III will improve the approach on the Indiana side of the crossing, with construction expected to begin in 2024.



Groundbreaking of the I-69 Crossing Project

Door-to-door public transportation for people with disabilities is provided throughout all seven counties at low or no cost by the Green River Intra-Transit System (GRITS). Medicaid-eligible clients without vehicles are provided transportation to approved Medicaid appointments at no cost. Fee-per mile service is available to the general public to anyone for any purpose. Fixed-route public transportation is available in Owensboro and Henderson through the Owensboro Transit System (OTS) and the Henderson Area Rapid Transit (HART). OTS and HART do not operate on Sundays. Fixed-route public transportation isn't available anywhere else in the region, limiting resources and opportunities for rural residents.

Henderson and Owensboro have riverports that are certified Foreign Trade Zones and have access to road and rail traffic. Having access to river transportation is a huge advantage, as barges are able to carry more cargo using less fuel than other methods of transportation. The ports are connected by the Ohio River to the Mississippi River System, which is one of the largest and most important trade networks in the U.S.

In September 2022, GRADD was awarded \$17.3 million from the Department of Transportation as part of its Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) program to rehabilitate the century-old Rockport Railroad Bridge, which connects Ohio and Muhlenberg counties across the Green River. The project is a collaboration with Paducah & Louisville Railway, Inc., (P&L) and will replace the bridge's deck, improve its approaches and upgrade the electrical and mechanical components that allow the bridge to rise and accommodate river traffic. The bridge is P&L's main rail line in Ohio County and is critical infrastructure for transportation of goods across Kentucky.

SUMMARY BACKGROUND

QUALITY OF LIFE & HOUSING

Community services affect the quality of life of residents. Community development projects enhance the services that cities and counties provide. Leveraging local funds with grant funding allows GRADD communities to develop quality recreational, public safety and public health services. With better facilities, communities can improve the quality of life of residents while retaining and attracting skilled workers who will continue growing the economy.

Several recreation projects were recently funded through the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Parks in Beaver Dam and Clay are undergoing upgrades with this funding. Vastwood Park in Hancock County is getting a new spray park. Henderson is building a new sports complex to provide space for no- and low-cost youth sports organizations. Creating accessible outdoor spaces for residents to enjoy is important to local officials and appreciated by residents. Webster County recently purchased property for its first county park. Although it needs to be developed from the ground up, many in Webster County look forward to the possibilities of the outdoor spaces it will provide.



Site of new park in Webster County
SOURCE: Webster County EMA Jeremy Moore

Fire departments are important to residents' quality of life. Henderson fire department was awarded Assistance to Firefighter grants three years in a row for various equipment and training programs, enhancing the quality of service the department brings to the community. A Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) project for Dukes Fire Station in Hancock County is moving forward, and the Livermore fire station renovation CDBG in McLean County was completed in 2021.



New Livermore fire station
SOURCE: Freddie Bourne/McLean County News

Stakeholders across all CEDS planning meetings cited lack of available housing units as a major concern. There is a lack of adequate data showing housing needs by county. However, an NPR report from June 2022 examined 800 cities and towns, including Owensboro. The report states that the Owensboro metro area had its housing needs met between 2012-2014, but had entered a shortage between 2017-2019.²

1. United States Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

2. Arnold, Chris; Benincasa, Robert; Ganun, Jacqueline; and Chu, Haidee. *There's a massive housing shortage across the U.S. Here's how bad it is where you live.* NPR. 7/14/22

HIGHLIGHTING RESILIENCE

GROWING TOURISM INDUSTRY

Owensboro remains a cultural and tourist hub for the western part of the state. Home to the Bluegrass Music Hall of Fame and Museum, Owensboro also declared itself the Bluegrass Capitol of the World in November 2021. The RiverPark Center hosted a summer concert series, putting on free concerts for locals. The city was also home to the annual ROMP Music Festival which boasted popular bluegrass artists including Marty Start and The Steeldrivers. ROMP tends to attract crowds of 25,000 each year from all over the world. Some events in the last few years operated with limited capacity and required masks in some areas depending on the state of Covid in the area, but venues and communities got creative in their ability to continue offering tourism attractions for the area.



*New trailhead sign for Livermore Trail Town
SOURCE: Kentucky Tourism*

The City of Livermore was certified as the 25th Kentucky Trail Town. The Department of Tourism announced that Livermore in McLean County was to be an official trail town, saying “Outdoor recreation is a major economic driver for both Kentucky and the United States. There are thousands of miles of trails and waterways throughout the Commonwealth. These trail towns offer the perfect destination for long

distance adventures or day trips and we are excited to have Livermore join the other 24 destinations who have received this designation.” The Kentucky Trail Town Program is a tourism and economic development initiative designed to help towns capitalize on outdoor and travel opportunities within their communities. Activities that can be found in Livermore include sports on the Rough and Green rivers and three new bicycling routes. They are also home to a local sporting goods supply store offering a canoe and kayak livery, as well as a new River Trails Inn, providing overnight rentals.



*Crowd at the Hank Williams Jr. concert at the Beaver Dam Amphitheater
SOURCE: the Messenger-Inquirer*

The Beaver Dam Tourism Commission was delighted to host country music legend and Grammy Award winner Hank Williams Jr. at the Beaver Dam Amphitheater as part of the First United Bank and Trust Concert series. The Beaver Dam Amphitheater saw a record-breaking crowd of about 6,000 people for the show. Since its first show in 2014, the Amphitheater has hosted visitors from all 50 states and 13 countries. The City of Beaver Dam was also the recipient of the 2021 Government Award, as a part of the Governor’s Awards in the Arts.

SWOT ANALYSIS

A SWOT Analysis is an identification of competitive assets to a region, as well as factors that could hinder economic development. A SWOT Analysis is a helpful tool to determine what features a region has implemented or needs to implement to strengthen and grow their economy.

Strengths are a region's competitive advantages, such as a skilled workforce or robust broadband availability.

Weaknesses are a region's competitive disadvantages, such as low educational attainment or high cost of living.

Opportunities are chances for regional improvement or progress, such as the potential expansion of an existing industry.

Threats are chances for negative impacts or regional decline, such as several companies considering relocating outside of the region.

STRENGTHS

- Precedent of collaboration between local officials and industries
- Strong collaboration between region's water and wastewater systems
- Excellent community colleges with technical training programs
- Strong network of senior centers & services
- Excellent mapping of infrastructure systems
- Strong K-12 school systems

WEAKNESSES

- Lack of decent affordable housing, especially single family homes and apartments
- Lack of comprehensive health care, especially in rural areas
- Poor rural accessibility to public transportation and sidewalks
- Lack of rural broadband and cell coverage
- Lack of childcare options and affordability
- Lack of four-lane highways for industries
- Lack of soft skills in labor force

OPPORTUNITIES

- Expansion of health care facilities
- Expanding tourism industry
- Future I-69 bridge
- Reentry programs for incarcerated individuals
- Potential to attract EV battery industry to region
- Cleaner Water Grant program funds

THREATS

- Loss of population to larger cities
- Low workforce participation rate
- Aging infrastructure
- Declining coal industry
- Rising cost of living
- Supply chain issues
- Retiring water and wastewater operators



ACTION PLAN

Goal 1: Grow and cultivate the region's workforce.

Goal 2: Strengthen broadband and cell availability.

Goal 3: Expand access to adequate housing.

Goal 4: Attract new industries to the region.

Goal 5: Upgrade infrastructure systems.

Goal 6: Improve the quality of life for residents.

GOAL 1

Grow and cultivate the region's workforce.

OBJECTIVE 1 - Develop childcare solutions for parents and other caregivers.

OBJECTIVE 2 - Enhance and expand technical education and training programs.

OBJECTIVE 3 - Support and develop training programs and other services for displaced workers, especially in coal communities.

OBJECTIVE 4 - Increase participation in reentry programs for formerly incarcerated individuals.

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

**Associate degree holders in population 25 years and over
2020 - 14,512 or 9.9%**

**Employment in manufacturing sector 16 years and over
2020 - 18,189 or 19.0%**

**Labor force participation rate
2020 - 58.7%**

**Total number of people in the civilian labor force
2020 - 100,276**

**Women in the civilian labor force
2020 - 47,254 or 53.8%**

WHY IS THIS OUR GOAL?

Availability of labor is one of the primary considerations of industries choosing a new location. With low workforce participation at both the national and state level, having a steady pool of skilled workers gives a region a strong competitive advantage in attracting industry. Availability of skilled labor is also necessary to retain existing industries.

Additionally, efforts that enable people who are currently unable to enter the workforce could help raise the standard of living in the region. Dual income families have higher household incomes than single income households, which could be a better option for some. Formerly incarcerated individuals who are able to secure stable and quality careers are at significantly lower risk of recidivism.¹

1. Duwe, Grant and Henry-Nickie, Makada. A better path forward for criminal justice: Training and employment for correctional populations. April 2021. Brookings.

GOAL 2

Strengthen broadband and cell availability.

OBJECTIVE 1 - Secure funding and work with Internet Service Providers to complete "last mile" projects.

OBJECTIVE 2 - Increase the number of Internet Service Provider options available, especially in rural areas.

OBJECTIVE 3 - Increase internet speeds, especially in rural areas.

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Percentage of population with 3+ broadband provider options

Daviess - 98.88%
Hancock - 44.62%
Henderson - 97.68%
McLean - 76.79%
Ohio - 60.24%
Union - 90.58%
Webster - 89.28%

Percentage of households with broadband access of 25 Mbps or more 2022 - 84.3%

WHY IS THIS OUR GOAL?

As highlighted by the pandemic, broadband is a necessity for industries, small businesses and individuals. Industries rely on broadband for operations and a region's broadband availability for employees may factor into a company's decision as to where to locate.

Small businesses utilize internet and cell for their day-to-day operations and can also expand online, allowing them to supplement local sales.

Individuals need access to high speed broadband for a variety of needs, including school, remote work, telehealth, communication and more.

Poor broadband and cell accessibility and speed hinders the economic growth of a region and makes it less competitive when attracting both new industries and workers.

GOAL 3

Expand access to adequate housing.

OBJECTIVE 1 - Encourage private development of single-family housing and apartments through local incentives.

OBJECTIVE 2 - Include and enforce housing codes to ensure housing stock is decent, safe and sanitary.

OBJECTIVE 3 - Support affordable housing projects and shelters.

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Housing cost-burdened households (monthly housing costs greater than or equal to 30% of household income)

Housing units with a mortgage - 23.6%

Housing units without a mortgage - 10.1%

Occupied units paying rent - 39.1%

Owner-occupied housing units

2020 - 58,876 or 68.9%

Housing constructed after 2014

2020 - 2.5% or 2,382 units

WHY IS THIS OUR GOAL?

Lack of adequate housing is a concern shared across much of the U.S. There are not enough single family or multi-family housing units being built in the GRADD region to accommodate economic growth. It is critical that local officials work with development companies to encourage new housing construction.

Several local officials also cited issues with maintenance of rental properties. More stringent code enforcement is needed to ensure renters have access to decent, safe and sanitary housing options.

GOAL 4

Attract new industries to the region.

OBJECTIVE 1 - Develop infrastructure at industrial sites.

OBJECTIVE 2 - Coordinate with Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development to identify and market potential sites for investors.

OBJECTIVE 3 - Coordinate with private landowners to maintain lists of potentially available properties for purchase and development.

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

**Number of shovel-ready and build-ready sites
2022 - 14 shovel ready sites & 3 build ready sites**

List of new industries in region since 2022

INDUSTRY	COUNTY	INVESTMENT	JOB CREATED

WHY IS THIS OUR GOAL?

Growth of new industries will allow the GRADD region to diversify its economic base and become more resilient to changes in the economy. New manufacturing industries generate quality, well-paying careers and may stimulate the development of other industries.

It is vital that GRADD cities and counties coordinate with state and federal partners to develop and market industrial sites to interested companies. Improvements to sites to become competitive are incredibly costly. Collaboration between investors, state and federal partners, local governments and organizations can reduce the financial burden on cities and counties and facilitate new investments in the region.

GOAL 5

Upgrade infrastructure systems.

OBJECTIVE 1 - Develop four-lane highways to encourage new industry and improve truck and traffic flow.

OBJECTIVE 2 - Develop roads in proximity to the future I-69 bridge.

OBJECTIVE 3 - Collaborate with neighboring Area Development Districts to prioritize transportation projects that cross ADD borders.

OBJECTIVE 4 - Support hazard mitigation efforts as identified in the GRADD Hazard Mitigation Plan.

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

WHY IS THIS OUR GOAL?

Road projects under contract for construction since 2022

PROJECT	COUNTY	INVESTMENT	STATUS

Water/wastewater projects under construction since 2022

PROJECT	COUNTY	INVESTMENT	STATUS

Projects in hazard mitigation plan completed since 2022

PROJECT	COUNTY	INVESTMENT	STATUS

Strong water, wastewater and transportation infrastructure are vital to both economic growth and the overall wellbeing of a community. Infrastructure is needed by industries and families alike. With constantly aging and sometimes failing infrastructure, investments in water, wastewater and transportation projects will always be a top priority.

Additionally, hazard mitigation projects are needed to ensure the protection of critical infrastructure during emergencies.

GOAL 6

Improve the quality of life for residents.

OBJECTIVE 1 - Create and develop community facilities including fire stations, libraries, senior centers, parks, community centers, sidewalks, public transit, etc.

OBJECTIVE 2 - Support the development of health care facilities and initiatives, including mental health and substance use treatment.

OBJECTIVE 3 - Support initiatives to reduce inequality and meet the needs of social minority groups, especially immigrant populations.

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Annual median household income

Daviess - \$54,881

Hancock - \$56,265

Henderson - \$50,471

McLean - \$54,181

Ohio - \$45,773

Union - \$49,812

Webster - \$44,540

Poverty rate

2020 - 16.8%

Unemployment rate

4.5%

High school graduation rate

2021 - 89.1%

WHY IS THIS OUR GOAL?

The quality of life in a community can contribute to population and employment base growth. Recreational opportunities, safety, health, education and other quality of life factors are becoming increasingly important determinants of a region's population growth and economic success.¹

Higher quality of life is associated with lower unemployment and poverty rates and higher rates of population growth, even in non-metropolitan areas. A 2021 study suggests that quality of life may even be more important than the quality of the business environment in determining a region's economic success.²

1. Weinstein, Amanda. *A Broader Vision of Quality of Life as Economic Development Policy*

2. Weinstein, Amanda. *An Aggregate Approach to Estimating Quality of Life in Micropolitan Areas.*

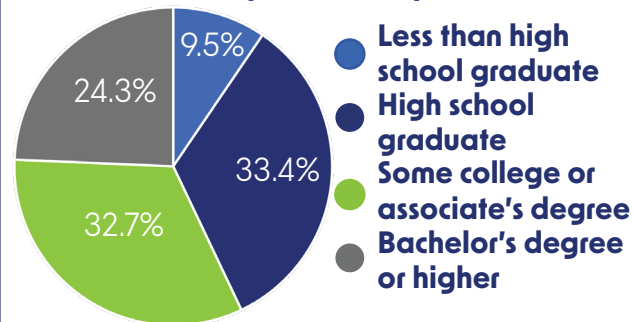
DAVISS COUNTY DATA

Population Data¹

2020 Population	Change since 2010
103,312	+6.89%
Median Household Income	Below poverty line
\$54,881	16.10%
Non-fluent English Speakers	Median Age
2,029	38.9 Years
Disabled Percent of Population	
16.4%	

Education¹

Attainment for Population 25 years and older



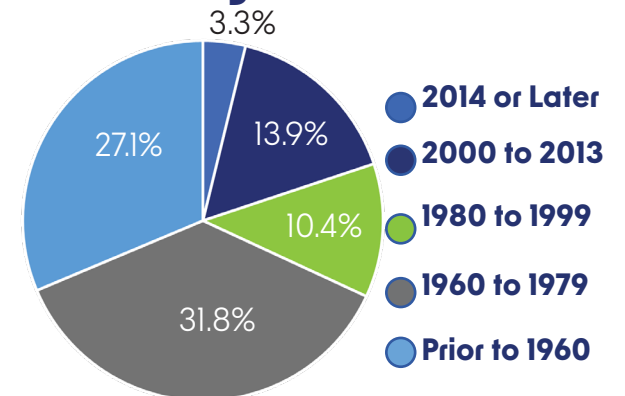
Housing¹



Median Home Value

\$167,900

Year Housing Structure Was Built



Households with Broadband Internet Subscription

90.8%

Cost Burdened Households*

Housing units with a mortgage

25.4%

Housing units without a mortgage

9.2%

Occupied units paying rent

40.5%

* 30% or more of income towards housing costs

Workforce¹

Total Labor Force	Labor Force Participation Rate	Annual Average Unemployment Rate ²
48,455	61.60%	4.3%

Largest Industries & Employment

Manufacturing	7,652 employees
Health Care & Social Assistance	7,546 employees
Retail Trade	5,027 employees
Educational Services	4,063 employees
Accommodation & Food Services	3,099 employees

County Priorities - OUTDATED

- Upgrade the Audubon and Natcher Parkways to interstate standards.
- Expand broadband accessibility in the county and provide redundancy in fiber optics.
- Increase public awareness of drug abuse and strengthen treatment opportunities.
- Continue identification and development of industrial parks.
- Promote regionalism among the GRADD counties, particularly in terms of solid waste coordination, animal shelters, prisons, and E911 call centers.

Sources

1. United States Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates
2. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force Data by County, 2021 Annual Averages

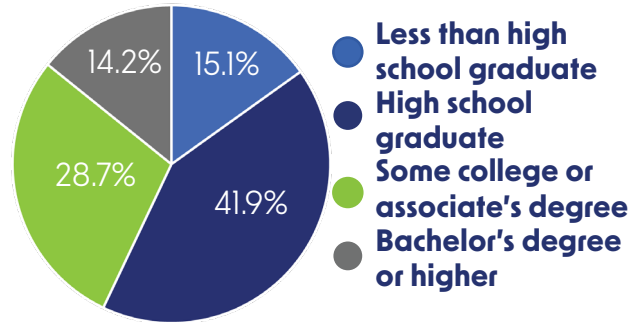
HANCOCK COUNTY DATA

Population Data¹

2020 Population	Change since 2010
9,095	+6.19%
Median Household Income	Below poverty line
\$56,265	15.30%
Non-fluent English Speakers	Median Age
27	40.5 Years
Disabled Percent of Population	
18.2%	

Education¹

Attainment for Population 25 years and older



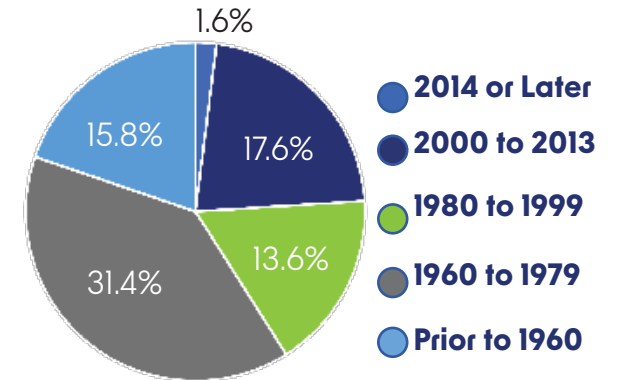
Housing¹

Housing Occupancy	Owner-Occupied	Renter-Occupied
	81.0%	19.0%

Median Home Value

\$113,600

Year Housing Structure Was Built



Households with Broadband Internet Subscription

79.3%

Cost Burdened Households*

Housing units with a mortgage

16.8%

Housing units without a mortgage

5.8%

Occupied units paying rent

45.2%

* 30% or more of income towards housing costs

Workforce¹

Total Labor Force	Labor Force Participation Rate	Annual Average Unemployment Rate ²
6,898	57.10%	4.4%

Largest Industries & Employment

Manufacturing	1,344 employees
Health Care & Social Assistance	474 employees
Retail Trade	428 employees
Educational Services	296 employees
Construction	164 employees

County Priorities - OUTDATED

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Sources

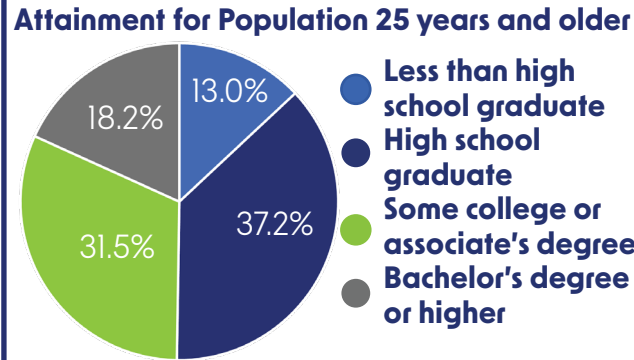
1. United States Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates
2. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force Data by County, 2021 Annual Averages

HENDERSON COUNTY DATA

Population Data¹

2020 Population	Change since 2010
44,793	-3.15%
Median Household Income	Below poverty line
\$50,471	18.20%
Non-fluent English Speakers	Median Age
446	41.1 Years
Disabled Percent of Population	
21.7%	

Education¹



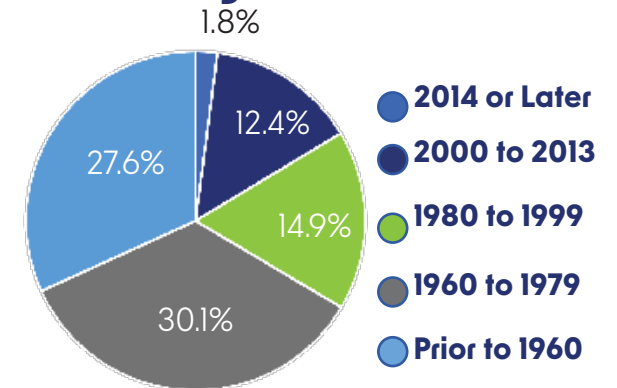
Housing¹



Median Home Value

\$133,200

Year Housing Structure Was Built



Households with Broadband Internet Subscription

79.2%

Cost Burdened Households*

Housing units with a mortgage

24.0%

Housing units without a mortgage

13.6%

Occupied units paying rent

42.5%

* 30% or more of income towards housing costs

Workforce¹

Total Labor Force	Labor Force Participation Rate	Annual Average Unemployment Rate ²
21,273	58.20%	4.5%

Largest Industries & Employment

Manufacturing	3,904 employees
Health Care & Social Assistance	3,509 employees
Retail Trade	2,032 employees
Construction	1,711 employees
Educational Services	1,484 employees

County Priorities - OUTDATED

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- Continue identification and development of industrial parks.
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Sources

1. United States Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates
2. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force Data by County, 2021 Annual Averages

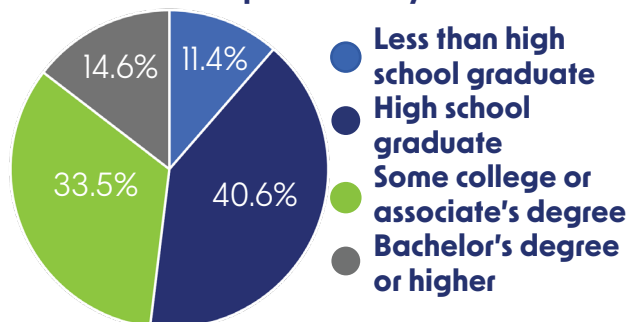
MCLEAN COUNTY DATA

Population Data¹

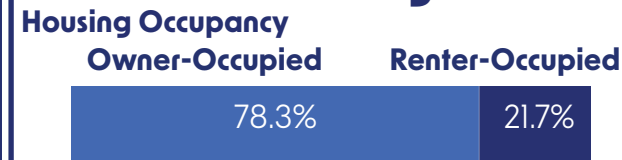
2020 Population	Change since 2010
9,152	-3.98%
Median Household Income	Below poverty line
\$54,181	13.00%
Non-fluent English Speakers	Median Age
79	43.7 Years
Disabled Percent of Population	
21.5%	

Education¹

Attainment for Population 25 years and older



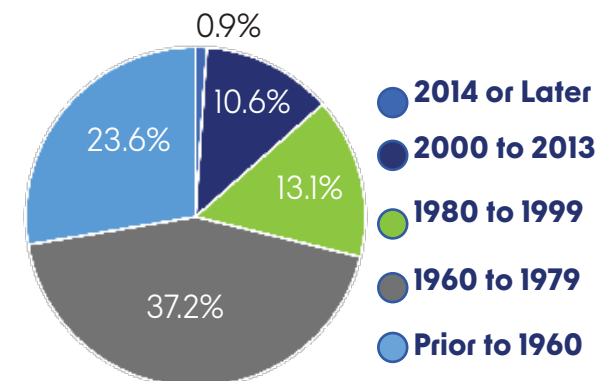
Housing¹



Median Home Value

\$111,800

Year Housing Structure Was Built



Households with Broadband Internet Subscription

79.3%

Cost Burdened Households*

Housing units with a mortgage

19.7%

Housing units without a mortgage

8.2%

Occupied units paying rent

41.6%

* 30% or more of income towards housing costs

Workforce¹

Total Labor Force	Labor Force Participation Rate	Annual Average Unemployment Rate ²
3,991	54.40%	4.3%

Largest Industries & Employment

Manufacturing	601 employees
Health Care & Social Assistance	489 employees
Retail Trade	402 employees
Educational Services	318 employees
Construction	274 employees

County Priorities - OUTDATED

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- Increase public awareness of drug abuse and strengthen treatment opportunities.
- Continue identification and development of industrial parks.
- Promote regionalism among the GRADD counties, particularly in terms of solid waste coordination, animal shelters, prisons, and E911 call centers.

Sources

1. United States Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates
2. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force Data by County, 2021 Annual Averages

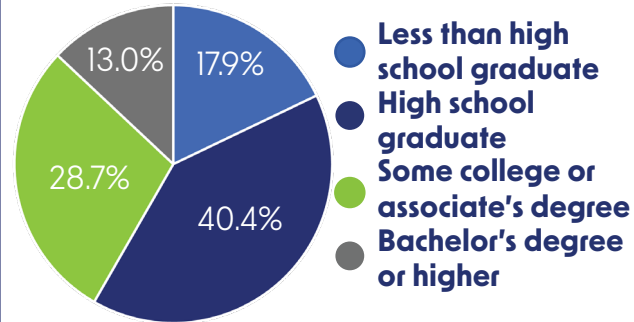
OHIO COUNTY DATA

Population Data¹

2020 Population	Change since 2010
23,772	-0.29%
Median Household Income	Below poverty line
\$45,773	16.20%
Non-fluent English Speakers	Median Age
353	40.6 Years
Disabled Percent of Population	
17.8%	

Education¹

Attainment for Population 25 years and older



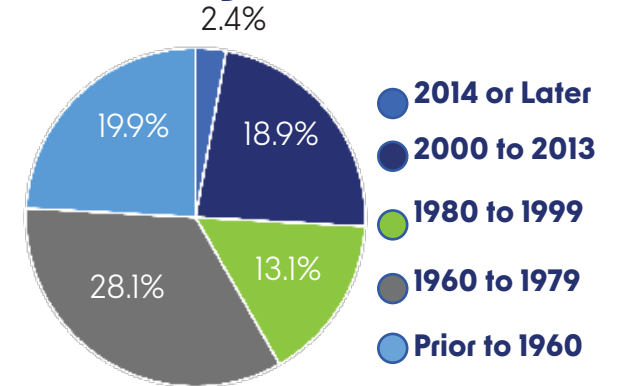
Housing¹

Housing Occupancy	Owner-Occupied	Renter-Occupied
	77.8%	22.2%

Median Home Value

\$90,400

Year Housing Structure Was Built



Households with Broadband Internet Subscription

75.3%

Cost Burdened Households*

Housing units with a mortgage

24.5%

Housing units without a mortgage

8.0%

Occupied units paying rent

28.6%

* 30% or more of income towards housing costs

Workforce¹

Total Labor Force	Labor Force Participation Rate	Annual Average Unemployment Rate ²
10,777	57.00%	5.5%

Largest Industries & Employment

Manufacturing	2,213 employees
Health Care & Social Assistance	1,199 employees
Retail Trade	1,086 employees
Educational Services	961 employees
Construction	753 employees

County Priorities - OUTDATED

- Upgrade the Audubon and Natcher Parkways to interstate standards.
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- Continue identification and development of industrial parks.
- Promote regionalism among the GRADD counties, particularly in terms of solid waste coordination, animal shelters, prisons, and E911 call centers.

Sources

1. United States Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates
2. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force Data by County, 2021 Annual Averages

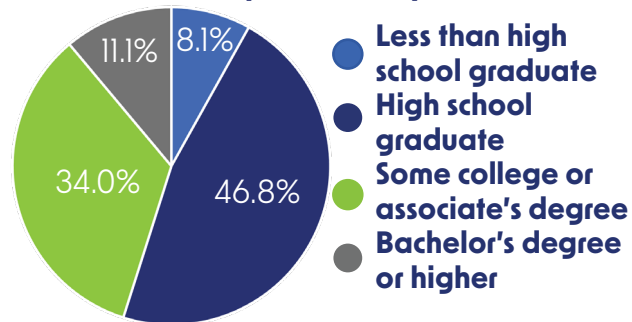
UNION COUNTY DATA

Population Data¹

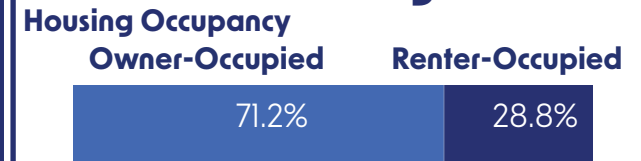
2020 Population	Change since 2010
13,668	-8.92%
Median Household Income	Below poverty line
\$49,812	18.20%
Non-fluent English Speakers	Median Age
142	38.0 Years
Disabled Percent of Population	
22.7%	

Education¹

Attainment for Population 25 years and older



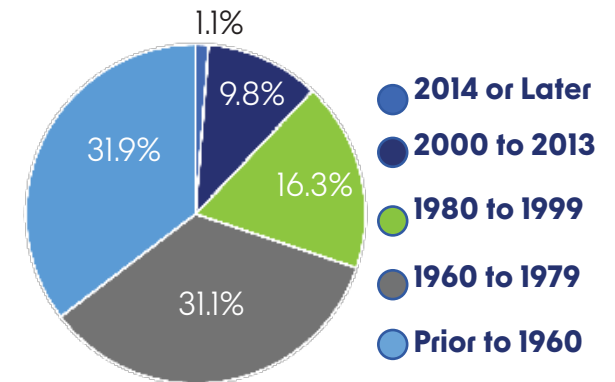
Housing¹



Median Home Value

\$90,900

Year Housing Structure Was Built



Households with Broadband Internet Subscription

80.5%

Cost Burdened Households*

Housing units with a mortgage

11.4%

Housing units without a mortgage

7.8%

Occupied units paying rent

26.6%

* 30% or more of income towards housing costs

Workforce¹

Total Labor Force	Labor Force Participation Rate	Annual Average Unemployment Rate ²
6,642	54.30%	4.4%

Largest Industries & Employment

Manufacturing	1,071 employees
Health Care & Social Assistance	936 employees
Retail Trade	562 employees
Construction	491 employees
Mining, Quarrying, & Oil & Gas Extraction	435 employees

County Priorities - OUTDATED

- Upgrade the Audubon and Natcher Parkways to interstate standards.
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- Increase public awareness of drug abuse and strengthen treatment opportunities.
- Continue identification and development of industrial parks.
- Promote regionalism among the GRADD counties, particularly in terms of solid waste coordination, animal shelters, prisons, and E911 call centers.

Sources

1. United States Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates
2. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force Data by County, 2021 Annual Averages

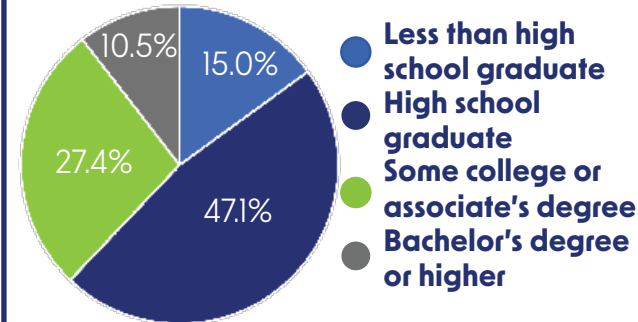
WEBSTER COUNTY DATA

Population Data¹

2020 Population	Change since 2010
13,017	-4.43%
Median Household Income	Below poverty line
\$44,540	20.60%
Non-fluent English Speakers	Median Age
234	40.8 Years
Disabled Percent of Population	
27.5%	

Education¹

Attainment for Population 25 years and older



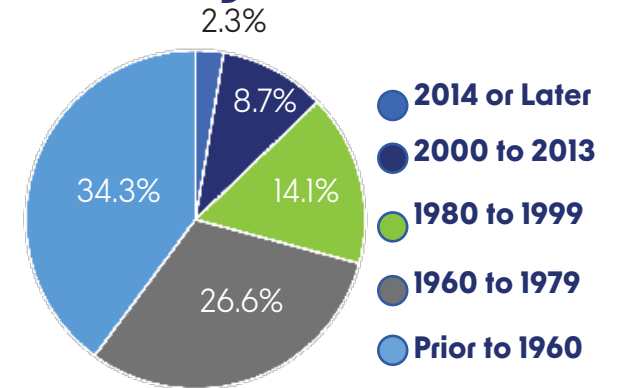
Housing¹

Housing Occupancy	Owner-Occupied	Renter-Occupied
	72.8%	27.2%

Median Home Value

\$76,200

Year Housing Structure Was Built



Households with Broadband Internet Subscription

74.2%

Cost Burdened Households*

Housing units with a mortgage

27.5%

Housing units without a mortgage

15.2%

Occupied units paying rent

29.3%

* 30% or more of income towards housing costs

Workforce¹

Total Labor Force	Labor Force Participation Rate	Annual Average Unemployment Rate ²
5,338	51.60%	4.5%

Largest Industries & Employment

Manufacturing	1,404 employees
Health Care & Social Assistance	632 employees
Retail Trade	484 employees
Educational Services	443 employees
Transportation and Warehousing	431 employees

County Priorities - OUTDATED

- Upgrade the Audubon and Natcher Parkways to interstate standards.
- Expand broadband accessibility in the county and provide redundancy in fiber optics.
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- Continue identification and development of industrial parks.
- Promote regionalism among the GRADD counties, particularly in terms of solid waste coordination, animal shelters, prisons, and E911 call centers.

Sources

1. United States Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates
2. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force Data by County, 2021 Annual Averages