



# GRADD

*Green River Area Development District*

**COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

**2024 UPDATE**



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GRADD accepting the 2023 Peggy Satterly Spirit of Kentucky Award for the Lisman Workforce Complex project. SOURCE: GRADD

# 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

# CEDS COLLABORATORS

**Mike Baker**

Hancock County Industrial Foundation

**Jim Davis**

Independence 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 (Daviness)

**Sandy Dant**

First Security Bank (McLean)

**Monte Davenport**

Sebree Clerk (Webster) Independence Bank (retired)

**Brad Davis**

Greater Owensboro Economic Development Corporation (Daviness)

**Brandon Gentry**

Old National Bank (Daviness)

**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

**Miranda Robertson**

Independence Bank (Webster)

**Tina Snyder**

Hancock County Chamber

**Rachel Yarbrough**

Retired - Webster County Schools

**Marty Shephard**

Business Owner (Ohio)

**Judge Brad Schneider**

Judge/Executive Henderson County

**Judge Steve Henry**

Judge/Executive Webster County

**Judge David Johnston**

Judge/Executive Ohio County

**Judge Johnny "Chic" Roberts**

Judge/Executive Hancock County

**Judge Curtis Dame**

Judge/Executive McLean County

**Judge Adam O'Nan**

Judge/Executive Union County

**Judge Charlie Castlen**

Judge/Executive Daviess County

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Green River Area Development District (GRADD) evaluates and updates the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) through local planning with stakeholders. The CEDS serves as a blueprint for regional economic development and is updated annually to track progress toward community goals. The CEDS includes four main sections: the Summary Background, which provides information on the economic conditions of the region; the SWOT Analysis, which highlights regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats; the Strategic Direction, which builds on the SWOT to identify key goals and objectives for the next five-year period; and the Evaluation Framework, which identifies performance metrics to assess successful implementation of the CEDS and regional economic progress.

One of the primary challenges facing the region is low workforce participation. As of July 2024, Kentucky ranks 46th out of 51 (states plus Washington, D.C.) with a workforce participation rate of just 57.6%, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Several factors contribute to this issue in the GRADD region, including limited access to childcare, slow population growth, and barriers to workforce reentry for formerly incarcerated individuals. GRADD advisory committees have identified limited access to childcare as a major concern, a view that is strongly supported by data. A 2022 study by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation found that 58% of working parents not in the workforce cited caregiving responsibilities, particularly for children, as a primary reason for not seeking employment.

The GRADD region also faces a skills gap in the workforce. Initiatives have been implemented to cultivate needed skills, including:

- The Hire to Operate program offsets cost of Registered Apprenticeship Program participation for prospective water and wastewater operators and has had six graduates to date, with more anticipated in 2025.
- Henderson Community College was awarded \$450,000 for its MAINTech program, which provides industrial maintenance training to bridge the gap between current workforce skills and the talent needs of manufacturers, funded through the Delta Workforce Grant Program.
- The Webster County Workforce Training Equipment project was awarded \$326,000 through the States' Economic Development Assistance

Program (SEDAP) to purchase equipment for students at the Webster County Area Technical Center.

- QUEST Workforce grant supports workforce development, with eleven individuals currently enrolled in Work-Based Learning opportunities, sixty-one in Occupational Skills Training, and fifty-six job seekers having received assistance.

Along with addressing child care access and the skill gap, the region also faces the challenge of expanding broadband connectivity, particularly in rural areas. Advancements through partnerships with Kenergy and Conexon Connect have made significant progress, with Kenergy now connecting an average of 40 homes per day and signing up 66 homes daily. As of August 2024, 2,536 miles of fiber have been installed, and as of September 15, 2024, 7,172 members have been connected.

Another significant challenge facing the GRADD region is a shortage of housing. Ensuring adequate housing stock is critical to support the multiple new and growing industries in the region. Stakeholders cited a need to coordinate local and state incentives to encourage private development. Stakeholders also encouraged flexible zoning and communication between local officials and housing developers.

Industries in the Green River Area Development District have faced significant closures recently, impacting the local economy and workforce.

- Century Aluminum in Hawesville temporarily shuttered in August 2022, resulting in layoffs for 628 smelter employees. After a year's closure, the plant has remained shut down.
- Daicel Safety Systems Americas Inc. plant in Beaver Dam permanently closed in March of 2024, resulting in layoffs of 290 employees.
- Daramic LLC closed down its manufacturing facility, effective September 6th. This closure resulted in the layoff of 158 employees.
- Hickory Springs Manufacturing also closed permanently resulting in the layoff of 40 employees.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

However, new and expanding industries are emerging to help revitalize the region and provide new opportunities:

- Swedish Match is creating 450 well-paying jobs and moving to a 24/7 schedule.
- River View Coal broke ground in 2023 and the project is expected to be completed in December of 2024. This will be an expansion into Henderson County that will create 260 well-paying jobs.
- Mizkan is expanding their current facility that will create 44 new jobs, which will pay an average hourly wage of \$29.
- Pratt Industries has created 321 jobs with an average wage plus benefits of \$39 per hour.
- Western Kentucky Distilling Co. completed its first rickhouse. It employs 25 people, operates 24/7, and will grow to 30 employees at \$31.25/hour.

Aging water and wastewater infrastructure remain concerns in the region, and stakeholders stress the need for industrial site development to attract new industries. The GRADD region received \$8.7 million and \$13.1 million in funding from the Cleaner Water Program, which allocated funds based on county population for priority projects. As of September 2024, 54 Cleaner Water Program projects are active in the region. Transportation in the region has made progress with [# OF PROJECTS HERE] projects, including:

- The I-69 Ohio River Crossing project, a bi-state initiative between Henderson, Kentucky, and Evansville, Indiana, will add a new bridge over the Ohio River by 2032. This project includes a six-mile extension of I-69, nine new bridges, seven rehabilitated bridges, and new interchanges at US 60 and US 41. It also involves developing roads around the bridge and four-lane highways to ease industrial traffic and boost regional growth. The total investment of the project so far is projected to be \$292 million.
- The Rockport Railroad Bridge, connecting Ohio and Muhlenberg counties across the Green River, is still in progress with \$17.3 million from the Department of Transportation as part of its Infrastructure for

Rebuilding America (INFRA) program. The bridge serves as critical infrastructure for transportation of goods across Kentucky. Construction will be starting in 2025.

- Construction has begun on widening projects on KY 54 in Daviess County and US 60 in Hancock County with a total cost \$41.6 million. These projects will ensure safer transportation through these heavily trafficked roadways.

This CEDS highlights quality of life as crucial for economic development, focusing on recreation and health care to attract people and industries. Several projects enhancing these aspects are underway, with some already completed this year, driving regional population and economic growth.

From data and information collected in the Summary Background and the SWOT Analysis, the CEDS committee identified the following six goals as GRADD's top priorities for the next five years:

1. Grow and cultivate the region's workforce.
2. Strengthen broadband and cell availability.
3. Expand access to adequate housing.
4. Attract new industries to the region.
5. Upgrade infrastructure systems.
6. Improve the quality of life for residents.

# SUMMARY BACKGROUND

## WORKFORCE

A September 2021 report by the Kentucky Chamber Foundation, *20 Years in the Making: Kentucky's Workforce Crisis*<sup>1</sup> 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
- A need for better transportation, infrastructure, and broadband

The Green River Workforce Development Board has identified these issues as the primary challenges impacting GRADD's workforce. To ensure regional competitiveness, these challenges must be addressed through targeted projects. The Board has been instrumental in bridging gaps for laidoff employees, individuals lacking technical skills, and those reentering the workforce after incarceration.

The Reentry Success Program is a collaborative effort between the City of Owensboro, Daviess County Fiscal Court, Daviess County Detention Center, Greater Owensboro Economic Development Corp and Owensboro Community and Technical College. The program allows inmates to take online classes on information technology, problem solving, personal development, and job skills. Mock interviews are also utilized with local industry to help prepare inmates even further once released. Since the program began in late 2022, over twenty people have graduated in three cohorts.

In response to the economic impact caused by the Century Aluminum closure, the U.S. Department of Labor awarded \$1,798,844 of National Dislocated Worker Grant to the Green River Workforce Development Board to support employment and workforce training services for dislocated workers.

Alongside the National Dislocated Worker Grant, GRADD has utilized the Skills to Succeed Grant, which has resulted in the following impacts:

- 49 Individuals participated in Work Based Learning
- 170 Individuals were enrolled in Occupational Skills Training
- 146 Job seekers Assisted
- \$1,043,000 has been spent on training.
- \$103,125 was spent on supportive services.

GRADD offers the Rapid Response program, which delivers immediate support to workers impacted by layoffs or facility closures, assisting their transition to new employment opportunities. The closure of Daicel Safety

Systems triggered local Rapid Response activities to assist dislocated workers promptly. This program offers services to help workers transition quickly to new employment opportunities. Out of the 290 affected employees, 114 took advantage of the support provided by the Rapid Response team.

In October 2023, the Green River Workforce Development Board received a \$1.5 million dollar Quality, Jobs, Equity, Strategy and Training (QUEST) Grant in partnership with the Kentucky Department of Workforce Development. The QUEST Disaster Recovery National Dislocated Worker Grant is funded through the Department of Labor. The grant has been funded for a three year period and will end September 2026. The focus of the grant is to serve individuals whose employment has been negatively impacted by the pandemic, including individuals from marginalized and underserved populations who have been disproportionately impacted to enter, return to or advance in high-quality jobs.



Henderson receives award for the HCC Lab Expansion Project. SOURCE: HCC

Investments in workforce programs are important for the development of skilled future workforce to fill high demand jobs that come with bringing in new industry. To help increase the number of skilled workers in the region, the Delta Regional Authority (DRA) has been involved in multiple workforce projects:

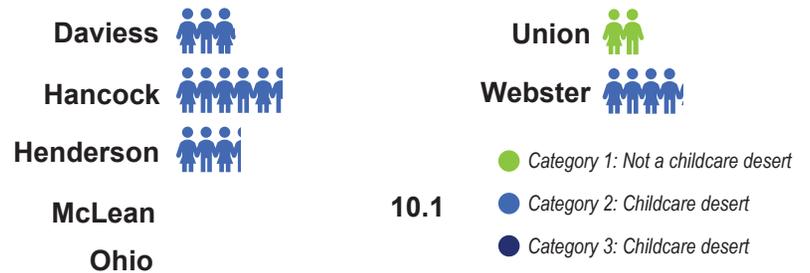
# SUMMARY BACKGROUND

## WORKFORCE

- DRA funded the Henderson Community College Advanced Manufacturing Lab Expansion project with \$650,501 to purchase enough equipment to double the Advanced Manufacturing Center’s lab stations and fund the addition of an eight-station robotics lab. These assets will be used in classrooms to train the future workforce. Students training in this program with these tools will go on to work in local industries that are in high demand.
- The Webster County Workforce Training Equipment project in Dixon, Kentucky, has been awarded more than \$326,000 to purchase workforce training equipment for students in manufacturing, healthcare, industrial, and computer-aided design career tracks at the Webster County Area Technical Center through the States' Economic Development Assistance Program (SEDAP).
- Union County Public Schools was awarded \$8 million to support renovations at the district's vocational education center. Renovations include updating portions of the building that do not meet ADA requirements, renovating welding exhaust systems, and adding a sprinkler system, emergency lighting, and fire alarms to increase safety throughout the building.

more than three children per available child care slot in licensed facilities. Lack of available childcare and childcare cost 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%<sup>2</sup>. A survey from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce discovered 58% of American parents are unable to find childcare and 26% unable to afford childcare leading to half of all workers and nearly 60% of parents citing lack of childcare as a reason for leaving work<sup>3</sup>. The survey also cited the cost of childcare as a barrier for women to return to the workforce. Even when childcare is available, it is often so expensive that it does not financially benefit a parent to work and pay for childcare simultaneously. Limited access to affordable childcare reduces workforce participation, especially among women, shrinking the local talent pool and hindering economic growth. Expanding childcare options would boost labor force participation, benefiting both families and the regional economy. Projects and focuses are well in mind to help ease this large problem in our workforce. With the incentives for more childcare options to become available, this would help boost the workforce participation.

### Child Care Deserts in the GRADD Region by County Children Per Available Childcare Slot



As previously identified, the lack of accessible childcare in the GRADD region poses a significant challenge for our communities. According to the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, every GRADD county except Union County is considered a child care desert<sup>1</sup>, meaning there are

1. Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services. Child Care Deserts by County.
2. U.S. Census Bureau. 2020 Census. Workforce Participation Rate by Sex.
3. U.S. Chamber of Commerce Poll: The COVID-19 Unemployed. Published 6/3/22.

# SUMMARY BACKGROUND

## BROADBAND

Broadband access is a vital need to promote economic development in the region. According to the rankings provided by the BroadbandNow initiative, Kentucky ranks 43rd in broadband subscription rate as of September 2024<sup>1</sup>. 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.

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.

In 2024, Kentucky made significant progress with its Digital Equity Plan, part of the broader effort to improve broadband access across the state. The Kentucky Office of Broadband secured \$874,236 from the State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program to address disparities in digital access, skills, and affordability. In April 2024, the Department of Commerce had accepted Kentucky's Digital Equity Plan, which outlines steps to promote digital inclusion and bridge the digital divide throughout the state.

Additionally, in March 2024, the state launched the \$1.44 billion Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program, which will fund efforts to implement the digital equity initiatives outlined in the plan. This program will support activities to enhance broadband access, digital literacy, and the affordability of internet services, especially for underserved populations in both rural and urban areas.

Kentucky's broader strategy includes ensuring affordable broadband for low-income households through programs such as the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) and further infrastructure investments aimed at expanding reliable internet service across the state. A collaborative project led by Kenergy and Conexon Connect to construct 7,200 mile of fiber-to-the-home network in rural areas of Western Kentucky is underway. Advancements through partnerships with Kenergy and Conexon Connect have made significant progress, with Kenergy now connecting an average of 40 homes



*Construction of communications tower in McLean County. SOURCE: GRADD per day and signing up 66 homes daily. As of August 2024, 2,536 miles of fiber have been installed, and as of September 15, 2024, 7,172 households have been connected. The percentage of broadband subscriptions is continuing to climb higher every year for each county within the GRADD region. DRA projects such as the McLean County Broadband Tower will improve broadband service and emergency services within the GRADD region as well.*

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

# SUMMARY BACKGROUND

## EQUITY

The GRADD region is dedicated to serving all people within the region, demonstrated through annual diversity, equity and inclusion training for all GRADD staff and board members. This training enhances cultural competency and provides staff and local leaders with skills to address the unique needs of the diverse population they serve. GRADD also ensures that traditionally underserved populations are a part of strategic planning for communities.

GRADD follows the Justice40 initiative to ensure at least 40% of federal investment benefits reach disadvantaged, underserved communities. This effort improves access to clean water, safe parks, local jobs, and economic opportunities. The Kentucky Department of Aging and Independent Living also emphasizes equity in services for these groups through ongoing training.

Communities in the region have developed accessible public projects, such as installing an elevator in Union County's historic courthouse for disabled access and creating ADA-accessible recreational facilities in several parks. McLean County's Myer Creek Park also installed ADA-accessible playground equipment and made the entire park ADA compliant.

GRADD counties were once key coal-producing areas in Kentucky but have seen significant economic declines due to the downturn in the coal



Gov. Andy Beshear talks with Col. Jaclyn Chatwick and Capt. Chris Park during the IRT mission. SOURCE: The Hendersonian

industry. This has resulted in job losses and reduced income levels. The Interagency Working Group (IWG) has been crucial in helping these counties secure federal funding to support economic diversification through renewable energy projects, environmental remediation, and infrastructure improvements, stabilizing the local economies and generating new jobs. The IWG has provided assistance in the form of rapid response teams that help communities solidify paths for economic diversification, as well as provides resources of funding sources through the funding clearinghouse portal. In GRADD counties hit by coal's decline, the IWG has secured funds for economic diversification, renewable energy, environmental remediation, and infrastructure upgrades.

The Henderson Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) mission, part of the Green River Area Wellness Mission, provided free medical, dental, optical, and veterinary services to underserved communities in Western Kentucky. Organized by the Delta Regional Authority and the U.S. Department of Defense, this initiative aimed to bridge healthcare access gaps while also enhancing military personnel's readiness. The services were available to all residents without any income or residency requirements. An estimated total of \$1,000,000 in healthcare services were provided. The mission served 1,642 patients, performed 34,161 procedures, and 917 eyeglasses were fabricated.



Playground at Myer Creek Park in McLean County, Kentucky SOURCE: Map Quest

# SUMMARY BACKGROUND

## INDUSTRY

Industries within the Green River Area Development District have experienced numerous closures recently, which has adversely affected the local economy and workforce. Century Aluminum in Hawesville temporarily closed in August 2022, resulting in layoffs for 628 smelter employees. After being closed for two years, the plant has remained shut down. Daicel Safety Systems Americas Inc. plant in Beaver Dam permanently closed in March of 2024, resulting in layoffs of 290 employees. Daramic LLC closed down its manufacturing facility, effective September 6th. This closure resulted in the layoff of 158 employees. Hickory Springs Manufacturing also closed permanently resulting in the layoff of 40 employees.

While, 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 2.5 million tons of coal in the second quarter of 2023, compared to 2.6 million tons produced by all Eastern Kentucky coal producing counties.<sup>1</sup> Union County's only coal producing company, River View Coal, broke ground on its expansion to Henderson County in July 2023. 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 coal industry also spurred more economic growth with the expansion of Mine System Solutions (MSS), one of only six companies worldwide that service electric haul trucks used in heavy mining operations. GRADD participated in this project by lending \$250,000 from the GRADD Revolving Loan Fund to purchase new equipment that will allow business growth.

Western Kentucky Distilling Co. opened in 2023 in Ohio County, employing 25 people with plans to expand to a staff of 35 over a 15 year period. The distillery offers an average pay, including benefits, of \$31.25 an hour. A \$700,000 Community Development Block Grant helped extend water and sewer lines to the project site and construct an access road.

Webster County was awarded \$2.1 million to invest in land for economic development. The \$2.1 million will be used to acquire around 40 acres of property in Providence and extend 2,200 feet of waterline and 2,000 feet of sewer line for economic development. The goal of developing this area is to attract potential investors in the manufacturing industry. In Daviess County, the Greater Owensboro Economic Development Corporation (GOEDC) has

proposed development of a 184-acre industrial park.

Mizkan America has also been able to provide EOA Infrastructure where they are installing a new waterline to help their plant expand their operations and create 44 new jobs. Mizkan America's expansion shows how the use of local resources and economic incentives can drive business growth in regional economy. In 2023, Pratt Industries opened a new \$500 million paper mill and box factory in Henderson. This investment is creating over 320 jobs, making it one of the largest economic developments in the region in over 25 years. The Owensboro Riverport Authority received \$1.3 million for the construction of the waterline loop in the fiscal year 2024-2025, as part of Kentucky's infrastructure funding efforts to improve riverports.

Swedish Match is investing \$232 million to expand its Owensboro facility. When the project is completed, it will create 450 well-paying jobs. The manufacturer will be moving to a 24/7 schedule. This will be moving away from a 24-hour, five day a week schedule. This expansion is projected to have a \$277 million annual economic impact and add 410 indirect jobs.

Pratt Industries' \$500 million investment that has created a 500,000 square foot box factory and a large paper mill. This plant is expected to recycle at least 60,000 tons of trash each month. This plant opened in fall 2023 in Henderson, creating 321 jobs with an average wage plus benefits of \$39 per hour.

Seven Opportunity Zones have been designated within the GRADD region to incentivize private investment in economically disadvantaged communities by offering significant tax benefits to investors. Ohio County has two of these census tracts, Union County has one, Webster County also has one, Henderson County contains one, and Daviess County includes two census tracts. Currently, GRADD collaborates with the Cabinet for Economic Development, the Greater Owensboro Economic Development Corporation, and other local partners to fully leverage the potential of these Opportunity Zones and drive long-term regional growth.

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

# HIGHLIGHTING RESILIENCE

## HIRE TO OPERATE (H2O) PROJECT

Advancements in water treatment and supply technology have increased the skills and training required of certified operators, increasing the cost and difficulty to obtain certifications. According to the 2022 Kentucky Water Workforce Survey, approximately 55% of Kentucky water and wastewater utilities do not have enough operators<sup>1</sup>. The Green River Water/Wastewater Survey, conducted in February 2023, revealed that twenty systems operations specialists are eligible to retire in the next two to five years in the GRADD region. Water and wastewater operators have struggled to find qualified replacements for the retiring workforce due to a lack of technically skilled applicants. As a last resort, several utilities in the area have had to borrow operators from neighboring utilities. These operators are stretched thin, serving multiple water and wastewater systems to mitigate the severe shortage.

In 2020, GRADD received a \$150,000 investment from the Delta Regional Authority (DRA) to create the Hire to Operate (H2O) program. DRA funding was used to enable water and wastewater apprentices in the Green River region to participate in the Kentucky Rural Water Association's (KRWA) Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP). Eight graduates of the program became certified Water/Wastewater Systems Operation Specialists.

In 2023, GRADD received an additional \$450,000 from the DRA to expand the H2O project, enabling 17 new water and wastewater operator apprentices. The funds cover \$22,247 for On-the-Job Training and up to \$2,700 for Related Technical Instruction per apprentice. The project targets new workforce entrants, dislocated and incumbent workers, high school students through CTE programs, and veterans joining or rejoining the workforce.

KRWA's RAP supplements experience with structured educational goals. The curriculum are designed to enhance and prepare apprentices to be fully qualified in multiple aspects of water and wastewater operations. Apprentices have the option to take classes from a variety of sources including KRWA, online, colleges, and others. All classes must be approved by the KRWA Apprenticeship Training Committee before receiving credit. Students receive additional mentoring throughout the two-year program where their progress is tracked and benchmarked. The combination of experience coupled with a planned education curriculum accelerates the apprentice to fill operator

positions at all levels of system classification. The apprenticeship program will create a talent pipeline to replace Kentucky's aging workforce.

The H2O project assists local water and wastewater utility companies with the cost and implementation of enrolling employees to participate in KRWA Registered Apprenticeship Programs. The H2O program will benefit



*H2O apprentices.* SOURCE: GRADD  
both local utility employees and communities by making water/wastewater employees more skilled and resilient to economic shock, and by providing communities with water and wastewater operators who have the necessary skills to ensure safe and sanitary water and wastewater service.

In August 2022, the H2O project was selected to receive a National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Aliceann Wohlbruck Impact Award and was invited to present the project at the 2022 NADO Conference. This award honors significant advances in community and economic development. Additionally, GRADD was invited to share information about the project's design and successes on a panel of over 80 attendees with the Syracuse University Center for Sustainable Community Solutions through the Environmental Finance Center.

# SUMMARY BACKGROUND

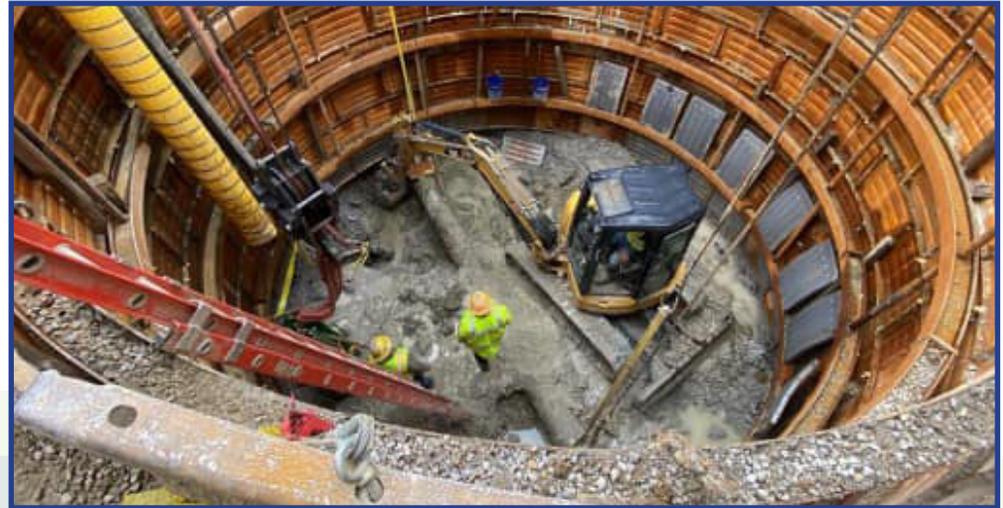
## INFRASTRUCTURE

GRADD has made enhancing water and sewer infrastructure a top priority, as the costs associated with these large-scale projects to replace aging infrastructure present a significant barrier to local governments and rate payers. The Kentucky Infrastructure Authority (KIA) plays a vital role in supporting these efforts and works alongside Area Development Districts to help identify and prioritize water and sewer infrastructure needs, develop projects, and find funding assistance.

In response to the pandemic, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) provided funds to support infrastructure development, with the Kentucky General Assembly allocating \$500 million of those funds based on population by county through the Cleaner Water Program. Through two rounds of grants, this program helped fund ninety-two projects in the GRADD region, totaling \$23.5 million worth of Cleaner Water investments. GRADD staff worked closely with local governments and utilities in each county to prioritize and reach consensus on the funded infrastructure projects, with most focused on improving long-term resilience in their water and wastewater systems.

Looking ahead, newly established funding avenues will offer more opportunities for local utilities to replace their aging infrastructure. The KYWWATERS program is designed to provide \$150 million in grants and loans for water and wastewater projects, with the first round of projects selected to be announced in April 2025. The Cabinet for Economic Development's new GRANT program will also provide \$200 million in state matching funds to leverage federal grant application dollars.

Major projects have highlighted infrastructure planning recently in the GRADD region. The City of Morganfield and Union County Fiscal Court have recently completed their \$6.3 million Job Corps Sewer System Rehabilitation, relining or replacing 67,000 linear feet of collector sewer that was originally installed eighty years ago. As the next phase of their sewer rehabilitation project, Morganfield was awarded a \$1.3 million loan from KIA to begin planning and design to rehabilitate their wastewater treatment plant, also constructed more than eighty years ago. The City of Sacramento is preparing to embark on a complete rehabilitation of their sewer system, converting customers from a force main system requiring ongoing maintenance to a gravity collection system. The GRANT program was used to provide \$1.25 million in matching funds to the \$1.25 million CDBG grant awarded. The City of Sturgis is working to complete a funding package through KIA to complete the \$4.67 million



*Unearthed manhole in Morganfield as part of the Job Corps Sanitary Sewer Rehabilitation. SOURCE: GRADD*

rehabilitation of their wastewater treatment plant, which already includes \$2 million in funding from the Delta Regional Authority, just over \$1 million in Cleaner Water Program funds, and \$700,000 from Union County Fiscal Court. Ohio County Water District has nearly completed a \$6.2 million project to replace their intake line on the Green River, which provides raw water to the treatment plant serving most Ohio County residents. The City of Morganfield supplies finished drinking water to nearly all residents of Union County. They have received a \$7 million loan from KIA to add a Granular Activated Carbon Contactor tank to their water treatment plant, a necessary upgrade to comply with new Division of Water and Environmental Protection Agency regulations. The City of Providence is in the final stages of completing the funding package for a nearly \$15 million project to rehabilitate collector sewer lines, upgrade the wastewater treatment plant, and install new water lines throughout the city. The City of Lewisport was awarded a loan through KIA to begin construction of their new \$14 million Hancock County Regional Water Treatment Plant.

With ongoing projects and new funding streams like the GRANT program and KYWWATERS on the horizon, GRADD continues to make significant strides through partnerships with local government and utilities in strengthening the region's infrastructure for the long term.

# SUMMARY BACKGROUND

## TRANSPORTATION

Quality transportation remains critical for economic growth. Thirty key projects totaling \$153 million are leading the way as the GRADD region seeks to improve its infrastructure to attract new industries and support growth of existing industries, as well as to improve the quality of life for residents.

The Kentucky approach phase of the I-69 Ohio River bridge construction in Henderson began and is expected to conclude in 2025. Groundbreaking of the project took place in September 2024 with construction being complete in 2026. Work on the final portion – the new bridge itself – is expected to begin in 2027. Once complete, the bridge will complete the I-69 corridor in both Indiana and Kentucky and is expected to lead to a boom in economic development in the Tri-State area with the opportunity for businesses and industries to locate in the corridor of a major interstate.

Daviess County broke ground on one major project in 2023 and took a significant step forward on another. In August 2023, work began on a \$14.4 million upgrade to KY 331, which provides access to the Owensboro Riverport. The road is being widened and straightened to make it easier for semis to

navigate. The project makes the road safer for all users while also allowing the riverport to accommodate more traffic. The project is currently underway.

After two failed rounds of bids, the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet awarded a \$23.38 million contract for construction to begin on the widening of KY 54 from US 60 to Bold Forbes Way. Work has started in spring 2024. Future projects will improve the road from Bold Forbes to Jack Hinton Road.

The projects are put through the SHIFT (Strategic Highway Investment Formula for Tomorrow) scoring process and funding is assigned based on those scores. Through its Regional Transportation Committee and the Owensboro-Daviess County MPO, GRADD submitted 15 projects worth nearly \$153 million:

- Daviess: \$43,450,000
- Henderson: \$63,210,000
- Hancock: \$20,750,000
- McLean: \$8,300,000
- Ohio: \$21,416,000
- Union: \$43,537,000
- Webster: \$15,467,000

The Green River Area Development District (GRADD) has been awarded a \$172,000 grant from the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet to enhance road infrastructure in the region. This funding will be used to assess and improve transportation networks, focusing on road safety, connectivity, and accessibility. The improvements will benefit both residents and businesses by facilitating better transportation routes, promoting economic growth, and ensuring smoother access to key areas. This project is part of GRADD's broader commitment to regional development, aligning with the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy to enhance infrastructure and support long-term community growth.



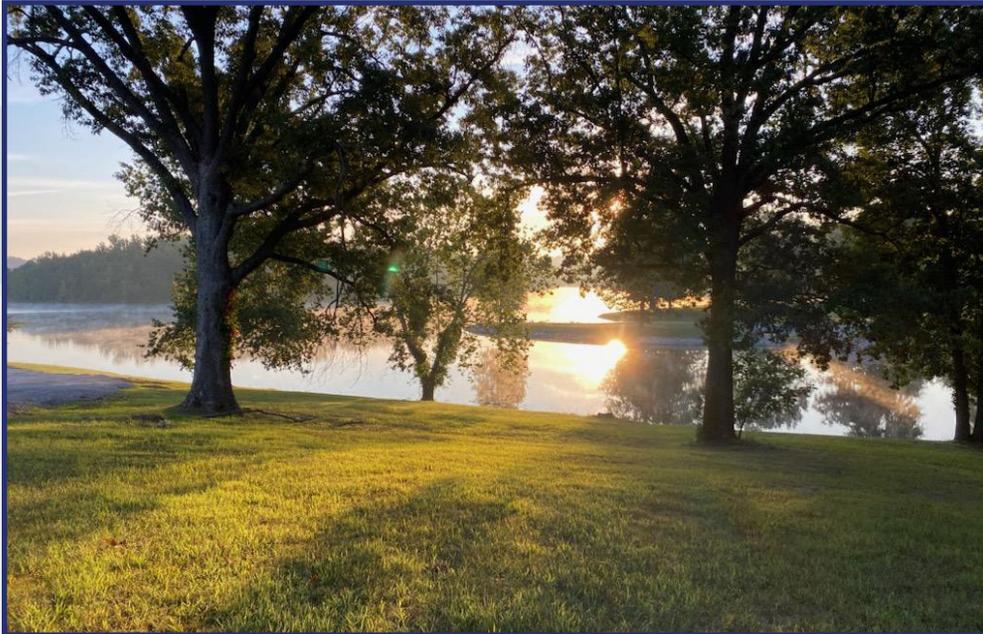
Groundbreaking for the future home of Interstate 69. SOURCE: Stantec

# SUMMARY BACKGROUND

## QUALITY OF LIFE & HOUSING

Community services affect the quality of life of residents. Community development projects enhance the services 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 Morganfield and Clay have undergone 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. Canaan Ridge Park in Webster County is a newly developed recreational area aimed at enhancing the quality of life for residents. The park features a boat ramp, picnic shelters, hiking trails, a lake, and a kayak launch,



Site of Canaan Ridge Park, a new park in Webster County

SOURCE: Webster County EMA Jeremy Moore

offering various outdoor activities for visitors.

Fire departments ensure the safety of our communities, so it is important to ensure they are well-equipped. The community of Poole in Webster County was awarded \$111,034 to purchase new gear to help keep their firefighters protected. A Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) project for Dukes Fire Station in Hancock County is expected to be completed soon.

Stakeholders across all CEDS planning meetings cited a 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<sup>1</sup>. With incoming industries and a need for a growing workforce, housing developments are an urgent need in the region. GRADD CEDS collaborators cited a need for both more multi-unit dwellings and single-family homes. Progress has been made in areas such as Henderson County that will build 300 new housing units and in Daviess County where a 10-home subdivision is under construction through Habitat for Humanity.

Further complicating the housing issue is the rising cost of construction. Supply chain issues post-pandemic have substantially raised the cost of construction and the time needed to secure building materials. GRADD CEDS collaborators stated that state and local incentives are needed to encourage housing developers. The CEDS committee also highlighted the importance of communication between local governments and housing developers and the need for flexible, planning-led zoning reforms. GRADD and community partners are participating in a housing coalition, which collaborates with federal and state programs to secure funding and resources. Kentucky faces a housing shortage, with a projected need for 290,000 new homes by 2029, as the region still hasn't fully recovered from the 2008 housing crisis.

1. 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

# SUMMARY BACKGROUND

## CLIMATE RESILIENCY

Climate resiliency is critical in the GRADD region, indicated by recent occurrences in extreme weather across Kentucky. During 2022-2024, eleven severe storms, one drought, one winter storm and one flooding billiondollar disasters affected Kentucky, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). As of September 2024, the GRADD region has experienced two declared disasters. Union County declared an emergency following the tornado in April 2024, receiving individual assistance. In May 2024, McLean and Ohio Counties were also impacted by a disaster, receiving public assistance and Hazard Mitigation Funding. All three counties were awarded disaster relief funds. Over 28% of the 42 weather/climate disaster events in the United States since 2022 have impacted Kentucky<sup>1</sup>. These events cause costly damages to crops, buildings and infrastructure and pose threats to human lives. Efforts must be made to prevent or minimize the risks associated with these events.

GRADD's Hazard Mitigation Plan has placed a strong focus on generators at every emergency facility, ensuring that in the event of power outages, each facility can operate at full capacity. In 2023, generators were installed at Hancock County Rescue Squad building, Beaver Dam Fire Department in Ohio County, Sacramento Fire Station in McLean County and three generators to power emergency facilities in Daviess County. In 2024, generators were installed at Dukes Fire Station in Hancock County and at three wastewater pump stations in the City of Corydon.

The Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) is strongly utilized throughout the GRADD region to fund projects to enhance resilience against climate and weather disasters. Owensboro Municipal Utilities is applying for funding to strengthen the electric power infrastructure in an area identified in the Justice40 initiative, consisting of 1,481 residential properties, multiple commercial businesses, two elementary schools and a radio station that serves as a primary source of information for the citizens of the county.

GRADD has actively pursued funding through programs such as FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC), which helps states, local communities, tribes, and territories undertake hazard mitigation projects to reduce risks from disasters and natural hazards. As part of this initiative, the Commonwealth has contracted each of the ADDs to



Coal Communities House Bill 9 Workshop held in Murray, KY. SOURCE: White House Interagency Working Group Twitter/X @EnergyComm\_US

develop a regional energy resilience report, detailing the backup power needs and capabilities of critical facilities. This project began in August 2023 with the launch of the GRADD Community Energy Resiliency Survey and concluded in mid-2024 with the final report being delivered to the state. Additionally, Owensboro Grain is at high risk of severe flooding due to rising water levels from increased storms and rainfall, given its proximity to the river. To address this, an application will be submitted to FEMA's BRIC program in December 2024.

The outdated Hawesville Levee pump system risks failure during storms, which could cause flooding. To mitigate this, the city secured \$788,751 from the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program to renovate the storm water pump station, and the project is now underway.

The Sebree Solar project at the 4 Star Industrial Park will produce up to 400 megawatts of renewable energy, strengthening the local power grid.

1. NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) U.S. Billion-Dollar Weather and Climate Disasters (2023). <https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/access/billions/>, DOI: 10.25921/stkw-7w73

# 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. The city is also home to the annual ROMP Music Festival, which boasted popular artists including Marty Stuart, The Steeldrivers, and Dierks Bentley. ROMP attracts crowds of 25,000 each year from all over the world. Owensboro also hosts "Friday After 5" during the summer that attracts residents in and outside of the GRADD region. The Hawesville music group, Ole 60, performed at Friday After 5 to a crowd of 16,000+ people.

The Beaver Dam Tourism Commission continues to be a hub for entertainment and community involvement in Ohio County with another year of successful events. Since its first show in 2014, the Amphitheater has hosted visitors from all 50 states and 13 countries. The Amphitheater has hosted the artist, Nelly, where a record 6,200+ people attended. 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.

Jeffreys Cliffs in Hancock County was included in National Geographic's



ROMP Music Festival. SOURCE: Capture Kentucky

"Great Outdoors U.S.A.: 1,000 Adventures Across All 50 States" published in August 2023. The book includes twenty recreational opportunities in each state open to the public. Jeffreys Cliffs was officially opened to the public in 2018 and includes several walking and hiking trails.

Livermore in McLean County was certified as Kentucky's 25th Trail Town, enhancing tourism and economic growth through outdoor recreation. The town offers river activities, bike routes, a sporting goods store with canoe and kayak rentals, and the River Trails Inn for overnight stays. The Department of Tourism highlighted outdoor recreation as a key economic driver for both Kentucky and the U.S.

KORRRA offers the GRADD region a significant opportunity to grow its tourism industry by developing outdoor activities along the Ohio River. Plans



Blue Angels at Owensboro Air Show. SOURCE: Visit Owensboro

for hiking trails, water sports, and recreational areas aim to attract outdoor enthusiasts, which will boost local businesses, including hotels, restaurants, and shops. The increased foot traffic can stimulate job creation, enhance local tax revenues, and increase overall economic growth. By utilizing its natural resources, the GRADD region can position itself as a key destination for nature-based tourism, benefiting local communities and businesses.

# 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

Strategic Location

Diverse Economic Base

Workforce Development Programs

Natural Resources

Existing Infrastructure

Community Collaboration

## WEAKNESSES

Aging Infrastructure

Rural Workforce Challenges

Limited Diversification in Certain Sectors

Healthcare Accessibility

Poverty and Income Disparities

Environmental Concerns

## OPPORTUNITIES

Emerging Technologies

Renewable Energy Projects

Tourism Growth

Agriculture Innovation

Federal and State Grants

Cross-Regional Collaboration

Increasing Rural Broadband

## THREATS

Declining Population

Economic Dependency on Volatile Sectors

Climate Change

Global Competition

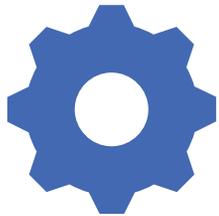
Regulatory Changes

Limited Investment Capital



# STRATEGIC DIRECTION

The Strategic Direction outlines GRADD's broad goals and objectives for economic development for the next five years. Goals are priority general intentions for the next five years. Each goal has several objectives, which are specific, measurable and concrete targets.



## GOAL 1

Utilize training programs to grow and cultivate the workforce.



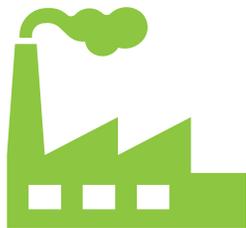
## GOAL 2

Strengthen broadband and cell availability.



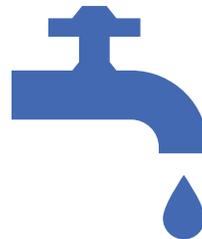
## GOAL 3

Expand access to adequate and affordable housing.



## GOAL 4

Attract diverse and emerging industries to the region.



## GOAL 5

Upgrade infrastructure and renewable energy.



## GOAL 6

Improve the quality of life for residents through recreational facilities.

# GOAL 1: Utilize training programs to grow and cultivate the workforce.

## OBJECTIVE 1

**Cultivate skills in the workforce by increasing the percentage of people aged 25+ with an associate degree by five percent.**

### PROGRESS

- **Dislocated Worker Trainings:** This program offers 28 credits in the I-TEC that help workers obtain associate degrees. As of May 2023, 11 dislocated workers completed all 28 credits and earned five OCTC certificates.
- **Summer Bridge Program:** 13 recent students earning 16 credit hours from Tech-X classes allowed students to work towards completion of an associate's degree.

## OBJECTIVE 2

**Develop childcare facilities in all counties to the extent that no county is considered a childcare desert.**

### PROGRESS

- \$700 million cease of temporary childcare funds across Kentucky from the federal government, which were allocated during the pandemic.

## OBJECTIVE 3

**Implement new technical education and training programs to attract industries.**

### PROGRESS

- **Henderson Community College Advanced Manufacturing-** Received DRA funds to purchase additional lab stations to increase participants and advance the technology used to complete the course.
- **Union County High School-** Received \$8 million dollars to revamp the technical school that will include updating to ADA compliance, welding exhaust system renovations and updating emergency systems throughout.
- **Webster County Area Technical Center-** Awarded more than \$326,000 to purchase workforce training equipment for students in manufacturing, healthcare, industrial, and computer-aided design career tracks at the Webster County Area Technical Center through the States' Economic Development Assistance Program.
- **Henderson Community College Delta Workforce Grant Program (DWPG)-** awarded \$450,000 for their Multi-skilled Advanced Industrial Maintenance Training (MAINTech) Program.

# GOAL 2: Strengthen broadband and cell availability.

## OBJECTIVE 1

**Secure funding and work with Internet Service Providers to complete "last mile" projects to provide internet to unserved or underserved households and businesses.**

### PROGRESS

- **Bipartisan Infrastructure Broadband Equity, Access and Development Program-**\$1.1 Billion dollars secured by the State to provide Kentuckians with affordable and reliable internet access in both rural and urban areas.
- **Kentucky's Better Internet Program-** House Bill 320 and House Bill 382 established Kentucky's Broadband Deployment fund to assist private sectors entities and governmental agencies in the cost of constructing "last mile" of high speed internet access to unserved and underserved households and businesses.

## OBJECTIVE 2

**Increase access to broadband in each county in the region.**

### PROGRESS

- **Kenergy Partnership with Conexon Connect-** Total connections of 7,172 and 2,536 miles of fiber has been installed. 40 homes per day are being connected within the GRADD region.
- **McLean County Broadband Tower-** Construction of 300' tower is near completion in the City of Calhoun this tower will serve 2,300 residents and provide download speeds up to 100 mbps and upload speeds up to 20 Mbps.

# GOAL 3: Expand access to adequate and affordable housing.

## OBJECTIVE 1

Encourage new housing construction through state and local incentives, such as tax incentives and streamlined zoning processes, resulting in at least 200 new housing units across the region by 2025.

### PROGRESS

- **Henderson County-** \$35 Million investment to build 300 new housing units.
- **Daviess County/Habitat for Humanity-** Daviess County has secured funding through a Community Block Grant funds to provide a Habitat for humanity subdivision that would include 10 homes in a 3-acre plot of land. Construction is underway for this project now.

## OBJECTIVE 2

Identify and secure funding for affordable housing projects and shelters to meet the demand in each county.

### PROGRESS

- **GRADD-**The Kentucky Housing Corporation TARGETs Operating Grant program awarded GRADD \$25,000 to conduct a housing study to determine housing struggles throughout the region.
- **City of Owensboro-** Accepted \$1 million dollars in Home investment Partnerships American Rescue Plan funds for future low-income housing projects.
- GRADD has joined a Housing Coalition focused on finding solutions to the regional housing shortage, with an emphasis on increasing the availability of affordable homes.

# GOAL 4: Attract new and emerging industries to the region.

## OBJECTIVE 1

Coordinate with the Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development to identify and market potential sites for investors with a goal of securing at least one new industrial investment in each county.

### PROGRESS

- **Mine System Solutions-** Union County received a \$7.1 million investment through Union County Industrial Development Authority, GRADD and community banks to secure Mine Systems Solutions (MSS) that is one of only six companies worldwide who service electric haul trucks used in heavy mining operations.
- **Alliance Coal** broke ground on a \$35 million coal mine project in Henderson County, bringing close to 300 new high paying jobs into the region.
- **Pratt Industries** completed construction on a \$500 million investment in Henderson County and has created over 300 jobs.
- **South Sebree Industrial Park-** Through KDPI the South Sebree Industrial Park was awarded \$450,000. The project focuses on developing 42.98 acres through infrastructure improvements like road construction, utility installation, and floodplain elevation to attract industrial investments.
- **Greater Owensboro Economic Development Corporation-** A municipal order was made supporting the GOEDC's submittal of an economic development application to the Kentucky Economic Development Cabinet for matching funds

## OBJECTIVE 2

Attract new industries in emerging clusters, especially distilling and electric vehicle battery production.

### PROGRESS

- **Western Kentucky Distilling Co. -** Ohio County has completed its first rickhouse in the Western Kentucky Distillery and opened to the public in September of 2023 and will continue to expand the bourbon industry in Ohio County.
- **Green River Distilling-**Hancock County has completed one rickhouse to store bourbon for Green River Distillery and is in progress of constructing eight more. This project will initially start with 15 jobs created and rise to 25 by fourth year operation.

# GOAL 5: Upgrade infrastructure and renewable energy.

**OBJECTIVE 1** Develop water, wastewater and transportation infrastructure to priority industrial sites.

## PROGRESS

- **Webster County** received \$2 million to purchase land in Providence for the extension of water and sewer lines.
- Owensboro Riverport received \$1 million to install a waterline to better attract industries.

**OBJECTIVE 2** Develop four-lane highways to encourage new industry and improve traffic flow.

## PROGRESS

- **Hancock County**- In April of 2023 work began to widen Hwy 60 to accommodate high volumes of traffic flow and industrial traffic.
- **Daviess County**- Accepted a \$23.38 million bid to begin on construction of Hwy 54 to widen to help increase flow of traffic.

**OBJECTIVE 3** Secure funding for water and wastewater projects identified in the WRIS portal.

## PROGRESS

- GRADD region received over \$8 million in the first round of funding and over \$13 million the second round of funding. Projects completed with this funding were HWY 54 water line relocation, City of Sebree sanitary sewer replacement and multiple meter replacement projects. Other projects, such as the Hancock Water Treatment Plant and Morganfield GAC Tank, were funded separately.

**OBJECTIVE 4** Secure funding for projects identified in the GRADD Hazard Mitigation Plan.

## PROGRESS

- GRADD is finalizing a risk assessment add-on to the Hazard Mitigation Plan, introducing new local strategies for each county to assess existing projects and leverage state and federal funding for hazard mitigation and infrastructure resilience.
- The Hazard Mitigation Plan update process started and is expected to be complete in 2026.

# GOAL 6: Improve the quality of life for residents through recreational facilities.

## OBJECTIVE 1

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

### PROGRESS

- **Webster County Senior Center-** received \$319,356 in funds through CDBG to provide an open outdoor space that can enclose to provide a safe area to spread out and enjoy outdoor space and installation of ADA compliant ramps.
- **City of Morganfield-** received \$144,625 in Land and Water Conservation Funds to build an accessible splash pad, ADA bathroom and parking lot.
- **Union County Moffit Lake-** received \$100,000 in Land and Water Conservation funds to repave existing roadways and a basketball court.
- **Dukes Fire Station-**received CDBG funds to construct a new fire station with plans to begin construction at the beginning of 2024.

## OBJECTIVE 2

**Identify and secure funding for the development of healthcare facilities and initiative, including mental health and substance use treatment.**

### PROGRESS

- **Yellow Banks Recovery Center-** Opened its doors in August of 2023 in the City of Owensboro to help serve those in recovery with job training, education and life skills. Yellow Banks will eventually serve 300 women healing from addiction.
- **The Center of Addiction Recovery of Henderson Inc-** The WARM facility under the Center of Addiction Recovery of Henderson received funds from the CDBG funds to support administrative cost.

# EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The Evaluation Framework is a set of measures selected to track economic progress. These measures gauge how successful the goals and objectives in the Strategic Direction have been towards economic growth and increasing prosperity.

	2010	2020	2025 Goal
<b>Percentage of owner-occupied housing units<sup>1</sup></b>	72.0%	68.9%	70%
<b>Cost-burdened households* - Renters<sup>1</sup></b>	42.7%	39.1%	38%
<b>Cost-burdened households* - Homeowners with a mortgage<sup>1</sup></b>	26.1%	23.6%	22%
<b>Percentage of housing constructed after 2014<sup>1</sup></b>	**	2.5%	10%
<b>Poverty rate<sup>1</sup></b>	16.8%	16.8%	15.8%
<b>High school graduation rate<sup>2</sup></b>	82.4%	89.1%	92.0%
<b>Associate degree holders in population 25 years and over<sup>1</sup></b>	11,393	14,512	16,000
<b>Employment in manufacturing sector 16 years and over<sup>1</sup></b>	19,317	18,189	19,000
<b>Labor force participation rate<sup>1</sup></b>	59.5%	58.7%	60%
<b>Total number of people in the civilian labor force<sup>1</sup></b>	99,762	100,276	102,000
<b>Percentage of women in the civilian labor force<sup>1</sup></b>	65.9%	53.8%	55%
<b>Number of shovel-ready sites<sup>4</sup></b>	**	14	16
<b>Number of build-ready sites<sup>4</sup></b>	**	3	5
<b>Percent of households with access to 25 Mbps broadband<sup>1</sup></b>	†	†	≥90% in all counties
<b>Annual median household income<sup>1</sup></b>	†	†	+5% in all counties

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

2. Kentucky Department of Education, Kentucky's School Report Card

\*monthly housing costs greater than or equal to 30% of household income

\*\*data not available

†data available by county in the statistics pages of this document

# DAVIESS COUNTY STATISTICS

## POPULATION<sup>1</sup>

2022 Population      Change Since 2010

**102,916**      **+6.48%**

Median Age

**38.7**

Median Household Income

**\$64,021**

Percent of Population Below Poverty Line

**13.98%**

Percent of Population with Disability

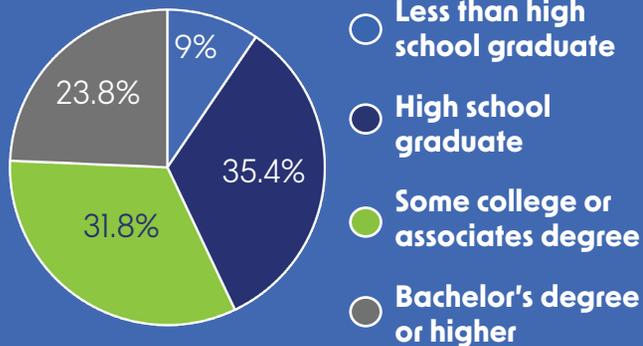
**16.5%**

Limited English Proficiency Population

**2,029**

## EDUCATION<sup>1</sup>

Attainment for Population 25 years and older



## WORKFORCE<sup>1</sup>

Total Labor Force

**49,538**

Labor Force Participation

**61.6%**

Annual Average  
Unemployment Rate<sup>2</sup>

**4.3%**

## LARGEST INDUSTRIES & EMPLOYMENT<sup>1</sup>

	Manufacturing	8,486 employees
	Health Care & Social Assistance	7,230 employees
	Retail Trade	5,101 employees
	Educational Services	3,928 employees
	Accommodation and Food Services	3,244 employees

## HOUSING<sup>1</sup>

Cost Burdened Households

Paying rent

**40.5%**

With a mortgage

**25.4%**

Without a mortgage

**9.2%**

Median Home Value

**\$171,100**

Households with Broadband Internet Subscription

**88.4%**

Housing Occupancy

67.9%

Owner

32.1%

Renter

Age of Housing Units

**2020 or Later**

0.6%

**2000 to 2019**

19.8%

**1980 to 1999**

23.4%

**1960 to 1979**

30.2%

**Prior to 1960**

26.3%

## COUNTY PRIORITIES

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

# HANCOCK COUNTY STATISTICS

## POPULATION<sup>1</sup>

2022 Population **9,058** Change Since 2010 **+5.76%**

Median Age **41.2**

Median Household Income **\$68,102**

Percent of Population Below Poverty Line **15.1%**

Percent of Population with Disability **20.7%**

Limited English Proficiency Population **27**

## WORKFORCE<sup>1</sup>

Total Labor Force **6,898**

Labor Force Participation **57.1%**

Annual Average Unemployment Rate<sup>2</sup> **4.4%**

## LARGEST INDUSTRIES & EMPLOYMENT<sup>1</sup>

	Manufacturing	1,342 employees
	Health Care & Social Assistance	299 employees
	Retail Trade	276 employees
	Educational Services	276 employees
	Construction	155 employees

## HOUSING<sup>1</sup>

Cost Burdened Households

Paying rent **45.2%**

With a mortgage **16.8%**

Without a mortgage **5.8%**

Median Home Value

**\$116,800**

Households with Broadband Internet Subscription

**84%**

Housing Occupancy

79.3%

20.7%

Owner

Renter

Age of Housing Units

**2020 or Later**

1%

**2000 to 2019**

20.4%

**1980 to 1999**

31.8%

**1960 to 1979**

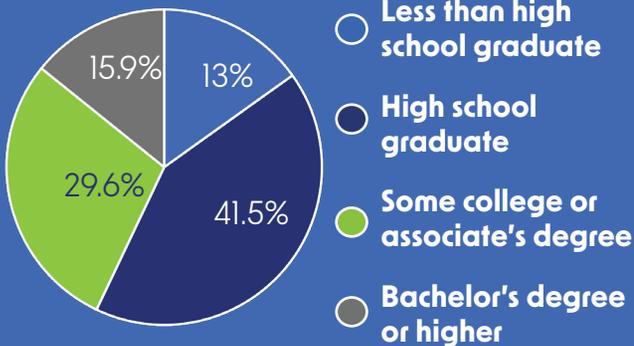
30.8%

**Prior to 1960**

16%

## EDUCATION<sup>1</sup>

Attainment for Population 25 years and older



## COUNTY PRIORITIES

- Complete broadband build-out with Kenergy/Conexon for all county residents.
- Widen Highway 60 to accommodate an increase in truck traffic.
- Completely upgrade all emergency and protective services radio communications.
- Continue to upgrade county parks, including the splash pad project at Vastwood Park, and work with the Chamber of Commerce to promote growth.
- Continue to attract businesses of all sizes and promote economic development.

# HENDERSON COUNTY STATISTICS

## POPULATION<sup>1</sup>

2022 Population      Change Since 2010

**44,770**                      **-3.2%**

Median Age

**41.0**

Median Household Income

**\$56,912**

Percent of Population Below Poverty Line

**17%**

Percent of Population with Disability

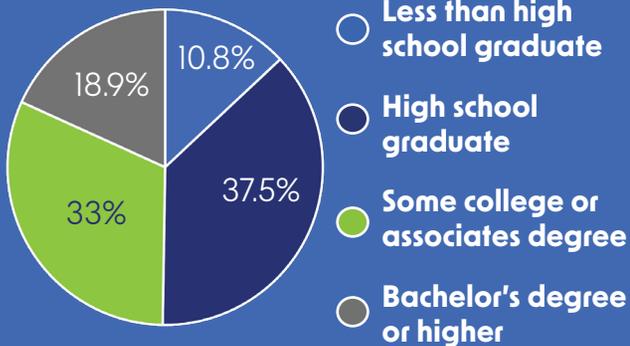
**23.3%**

Limited English Proficiency Population

**446**

## EDUCATION<sup>1</sup>

Attainment for Population 25 years and older



## WORKFORCE<sup>1</sup>

Total Labor Force

**20,412**

Labor Force Participation

**56.7%**

Annual Average  
Unemployment Rate<sup>2</sup>

**4.5%**

## LARGEST INDUSTRIES & EMPLOYMENT<sup>1</sup>

	Manufacturing	3,564 employees
	Health Care & Social Assistance	1,873 employees
	Retail Trade	1,457 employees
	Construction	1,135 employees
	Educational Services	1,484 employees

## HOUSING<sup>1</sup>

Cost Burdened Households

Paying rent

**42.5%**

With a mortgage

**24.0%**

Without a mortgage

**13.6%**

Median Home Value

**\$156,200**

Households with Broadband Internet Subscription

**86.6%**

Housing Occupancy

64.2%

Owner

35.8%

Renter

Age of Housing Units

**2020 or Later**

.2%

**2000 to 2019**

15.8%

**1980 to 1999**

26.6%

**1960 to 1979**

27.2%

**Prior to 1960**

30.7%

## COUNTY PRIORITIES

- Support efforts to build the I-69 Ohio River bridge.
- Improve internet service in underserved parts of the county.
- Support and complement the Henderson Economic Development agency's efforts in industrial recruitment/expansion and small business development.
- Promote the services and programs at Henderson Community College and Henderson County High School's Career and Technical Education program.
- Maintain and improve infrastructure to support local businesses and industries and improve the quality of life for residents.

Sources

1. United States Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates 2. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force Data by County, 2022 Annual Averages

# MCLEAN COUNTY STATISTICS

## POPULATION<sup>1</sup>

2022 Population **9,173**      Change Since 2010 **-3.76%**

Median Age **43.2**

Median Household Income **\$64,020**

Percent of Population Below Poverty Line **6.1%**

Percent of Population with Disability **18.6%**

Limited English Proficiency Population **79**

## WORKFORCE<sup>1</sup>

Total Labor Force **3,991**

Labor Force Participation **54.4%**

Annual Average Unemployment Rate<sup>2</sup> **4.3%**

## LARGEST INDUSTRIES & EMPLOYMENT<sup>1</sup>

	Manufacturing	382 employees
	Health Care & Social Assistance	338 employees
	Retail Trade	237 employees
	Educational Services	380 employees
	Construction	311 employees

## HOUSING<sup>1</sup>

Cost Burdened Households

Paying rent **41.6%**

With a mortgage **19.7%**

Without a mortgage **8.2%**

Median Home Value

**\$139,400**

Households with Broadband Internet Subscription

**83.7%**

Housing Occupancy

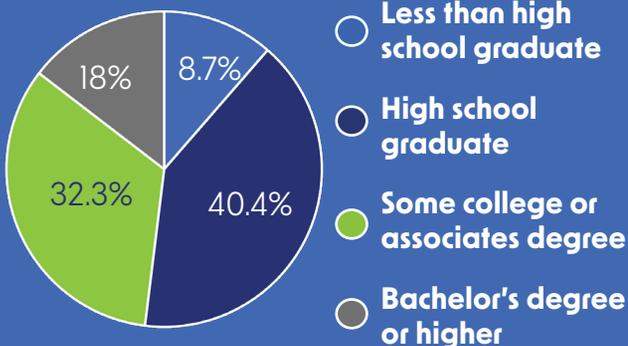


Age of Housing Units

**2020 or Later** 0%  
**2000 to 2019** 12.5%  
**1980 to 1999** 26.2%  
**1960 to 1979** 37.4%  
**Prior to 1960** 23.1%

## EDUCATION<sup>1</sup>

Attainment for Population 25 years and older



## COUNTY PRIORITIES

- Complete the reconstruction of the county senior center.
- Seek funding to improve recreational opportunities for residents, especially at Myer Creek Park.
- Encourage new small businesses to open in vacant storefront lots.
- Promote economic development initiatives and site development.
- Analyze county-wide water system to evaluate issues and the need for replacements and improvements.

# OHIO COUNTY STATISTICS

## POPULATION<sup>1</sup>

2022 Population **23,782**      Change Since 2010 **-0.25%**

Median Age **41**

Median Household Income **\$52,474**

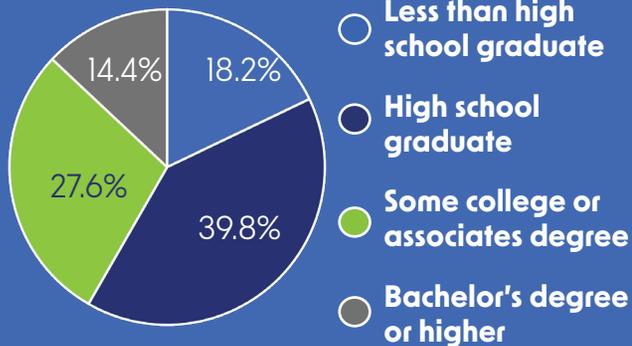
Percent of Population Below Poverty Line **14%**

Percent of Population with Disability **18.3%**

Limited English Proficiency Population **353**

## EDUCATION<sup>1</sup>

Attainment for Population 25 years and older



## WORKFORCE<sup>1</sup>

Total Labor Force

**10,472**

Labor Force Participation

**55.3%**

Annual Average Unemployment Rate<sup>2</sup>

**5.5%**

## LARGEST INDUSTRIES & EMPLOYMENT<sup>1</sup>

	Manufacturing	1,811 employees
	Health Care & Social Assistance	1,026 employees
	Retail Trade	498 employees
	Educational Services	603 employees
	Construction	550 employees

## HOUSING<sup>1</sup>

Cost Burdened Households

Paying rent **28.6%**

With a mortgage

**24.5%**

Without a mortgage

**8.0%**

Median Home Value

**\$114,900**

Households with Broadband Internet Subscription

**79.3%**

Housing Occupancy

77.8%

Owner

22.2%

Renter

Age of Housing Units

**2020 or Later**

0.3%

**2000 to 2019**

22.3%

**1980 to 1999**

30.1%

**1960 to 1979**

28.0%

**Prior to 1960**

19.2%

## COUNTY PRIORITIES

- Increase availability of housing.
- Complete efforts to build a regional jail.
- Expand tourism and construct an annex at the Bill Monroe Bluegrass Museum.
- Improve roads.
- Improve parks and outdoor recreation areas, especially through creative funding mechanisms.

### Sources

1. United States Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates 2. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force Data by County, 2022 Annual Averages

# UNION COUNTY STATISTICS

## POPULATION<sup>1</sup>

2022 Population      Change Since 2010  
**13,495**                      **-8.56%**

Median Age  
**41.3**

Median Household Income  
**\$58,260**

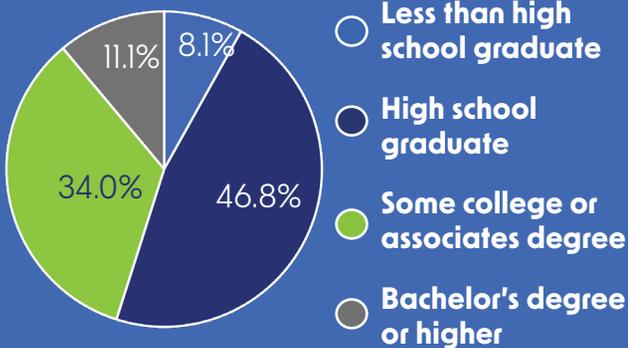
Percent of Population Below Poverty Line  
**18.8%**

Percent of Population with Disability  
**30.9%**

Limited English Proficiency Population  
**142**

## EDUCATION<sup>1</sup>

Attainment for Population 25 years and older



## WORKFORCE<sup>1</sup>

Total Labor Force  
**5,902**

Labor Force Participation  
**52.5%**

Annual Average Unemployment Rate<sup>2</sup>  
**4.4%**

## LARGEST INDUSTRIES & EMPLOYMENT<sup>1</sup>

	Manufacturing	812 employees
	Health Care & Social Assistance	591 employees
	Retail Trade	378 employees
	Construction	433 employees
	Mining, Quarrying & Oil & Gas Extraction	341 employees

## HOUSING<sup>1</sup>

Cost Burdened Households

Paying rent  
**26.6%**

With a mortgage  
**11.4%**

Without a mortgage  
**7.8%**

### Median Home Value

**\$109,100**

### Households with Broadband Internet Subscription

**85%**

### Housing Occupancy



### Age of Housing Units

**2020 or Later**  
0.4%

**2000 to 2019**  
11%

**1980 to 1999**  
26.8%

**1960 to 1979**  
29.9%

**Prior to 1960**  
32%

## COUNTY PRIORITIES

- Work with the State Highway Department to widen US HWY 60 from Henderson Community College to Morganfield.
- Acquire land and develop to build ready status for economic development.
- Acquire land for housing development to generate population growth to coincide with economic development projects.
- Construct a county Emergency Operations Center with potential for future growth.
- Extend broadband service to residents not covered by the current rural broadband project.

# WEBSTER COUNTY STATISTICS

## POPULATION<sup>1</sup>

2022 Population      Change Since 2010

**12,951**      **-4.92%**

Median Age

**39.7**

Median Household Income

**\$55,451**

Percent of Population Below Poverty Line

**16.1%**

Percent of Population with Disability

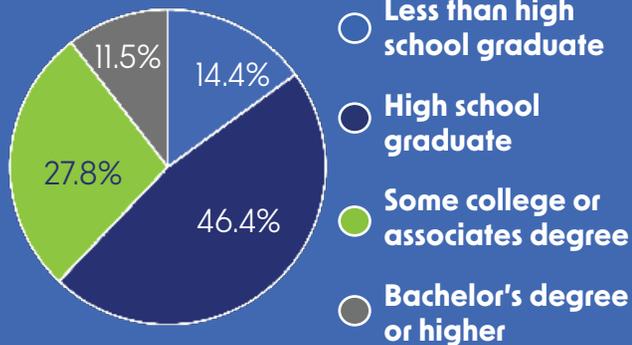
**29.1%**

Limited English Proficiency Population

**234**

## EDUCATION<sup>1</sup>

Attainment for Population 25 years and older



## WORKFORCE<sup>1</sup>

Total Labor Force

**5,684**

Labor Force Participation

**55.2%**

Annual Average  
Unemployment Rate<sup>2</sup>

**4.5%**

## LARGEST INDUSTRIES & EMPLOYMENT<sup>1</sup>

	Manufacturing	1,397 employees
	Health Care & Social Assistance	357 employees
	Retail Trade	275 employees
	Educational Services	267 employees
	Transportation & Warehousing	288 employees

## HOUSING<sup>1</sup>

Cost Burdened Households

Paying rent  
**29.3%**

With a mortgage

**27.5%**

Without a mortgage

**15.2%**

Median Home Value

**\$86,700**

Households with Broadband Internet Subscription

**79.2%**

Housing Occupancy

71.7%

28.3%

Owner

Renter

Age of Housing Units

**2020 or Later**

0%

**2000 to 2019**

18.2%

**1980 to 1999**

28%

**1960 to 1979**

22.7%

**Prior to 1960**

31.1%

## COUNTY PRIORITIES

- Advance high speed internet capabilities for the entire county.
- Seek ways to support existing business growth and development
- Development of the I-69 corridor in Webster County, including I-69 Business Park.
- Improve housing availability and options.
- Retain high school and college graduates as well as attracting new residents into the community.

Sources

1. United States Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates 2. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force Data by County, 2022 Annual Averages



