



GRADD

Green River Area Development District

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2024 UPDATE



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Groundbreaking at Rhythm River Distillery in Downtown Henderson.

SOURCE: WSON

PUBLIC & PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

ConnectGRADD Inc.
 Daviess County Extension Office
 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 Extension Office
 Hancock County Industrial Foundation
 Henderson Community College
 Henderson County Extension Office
 Henderson Economic Development
 Kentucky Career Center
 Kentucky State Data Center
 Madisonville Community College
 McLean County Extension Office
 Murray State Small Business Development Center
 Ohio County Extension Office
 Ohio County Economic Development Alliance
 Owensboro Community & Technical College
 Union County Extension Office
 Union County First
 Webster County Community & Economic Development
 Webster County Economic Development Council
 Webster County Extension Office
 Webster County Industrial Development Authority
 West Kentucky Regional Industry Development Authority

CEDS COLLABORATORS

Mike Baker

Hancock County Industrial Foundation

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

City of Sebree Clerk (Webster)

Brad Davis

Greater Owensboro Economic Development Corporation (Davies)

Jim Davis

Independence Bank (Henderson)

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

Miranda Robertson

Independence Bank (Webster)

Marty Shephard

Business Owner (Ohio)

Tina Snyder

Hancock County Chamber

Rachel Yarbrough

Retired - Webster County Schools

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 Davies 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, and 17 apprentices enrolled currently.
- 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. As of September 2024, 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 its 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 pays \$31.25/hour.
- Churchill Downs Inc. is building Owensboro Racing & Gaming in Owensboro, Kentucky. Set to open in the first quarter of 2025, the venue is expected to add 150 jobs.

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 many 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, like Canaan Ridge Park in Webster County, 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.

Substantial progress has been achieved toward these goals through the dedicated collaboration of GRADD and its partners, who have worked tirelessly to develop and enhance the region's workforce, improve broadband and cellular access, increase availability of affordable housing, attract new industries, modernize infrastructure, and elevate residents' quality of life.

SUMMARY BACKGROUND

WORKFORCE

A September 2021 report by the Kentucky Chamber Foundation, *20 Years in the Making: Kentucky's Workforce Crisis*¹ 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. GRADD is also leading efforts, in conjunction with the career center, on expungement of records for formerly incarcerated individuals. GRADD and the Career Center work with second chance employers to connect formerly incarcerated individuals to open jobs. As of September 2024, GRADD is still looking for ways to increase efforts to prepare incarcerated individuals to participate in the workforce.

Along with focusing on currently incarcerated individuals GRADD's workforce department serves as a connector of resources at homeless shelters and recovery centers. This delivers educational programs and support services aimed at enhancing the job readiness and employability of individuals experiencing homelessness and those in recovery from substance abuse and those reentering the workforce after incarceration. This role is crucial in helping our clients build the skills necessary to secure and maintain employment, fostering pathways to self-sufficiency.

In response to the economic impact caused by the Century Aluminum

closure, the U.S. Department of Labor awarded \$1,798,844 of the Skills to Succeed Grant to the Green River Workforce Development Board to support employment and workforce training services for dislocated workers. 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
- \$1,798,844 expended for training

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



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

SUMMARY BACKGROUND

WORKFORCE

(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 and has served 153 individuals to date. 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.

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:

- 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.

The GRADD region faces a critical shortage of accessible childcare, impacting workforce participation, especially among women. According to the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, all GRADD counties,

except Union, qualify as child care deserts, meaning there are more than three children per licensed childcare slot¹. The region's female workforce participation rate is 53.8%, below the 58.7% overall rate². A U.S. Chamber of Commerce survey found 58% of American parents struggle to find childcare, with 26% unable to afford it, leading to high rates of workforce withdrawal, especially among women³. The high cost of childcare often negates financial benefits, discouraging parents from returning to work. Expanding affordable childcare would boost workforce participation and drive economic growth in the region.

Notably, the Green River Workforce Development Board received \$790,476 to establish the Putting Young Kentuckians to Work Program. This program will have funding for two years and GRADD has hired an additional staff member to help coordinate this program. This program assists 16-24 year-olds who are unemployed or need help obtaining employment that allows them to be self-sufficient. Through the program individuals will be able to obtain short-term training, work experience, on-the-job training, and other services as needed to secure full-time employment that provides a livable wage. This program will allow for positive economic impact due to employers being able to receive trained employees and also this program will help place young Kentuckians in an improved income status.

GRADD and the Kentucky Career Center work together to ensure that the regions workforce is operating at maximum efficiency. During the Fiscal Year of 2024, GRADD assisted in 22 hiring events with more than 1,200 attendees. 402 jobseekers were matched with employment. Additionally, 257 people received tuition assistance for training programs in growing sectors. 76 jobseekers placed in work based learning opportunities with 36 different companies. 68 students graduated from training programs with an associate degree, certificate, or credential. GRADD and the Kentucky Career Center will seek out potential employees and ensure they have proper customized training and help employers and employees when layoffs occur.

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 2024¹. The GRADD region is primarily rural, and some 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 notable strides with its Digital Equity Plan, aimed at enhancing broadband access statewide. The Kentucky Office of Broadband secured \$874,236 from the State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program to tackle issues related to digital access, skills, and affordability. In April 2024, the Department of Commerce approved Kentucky's Digital Equity Plan, detailing actions to foster digital inclusion and close the digital divide across the state. The published plan will guide efforts to implement digital equity initiatives, supporting activities to improve broadband access, digital literacy, and internet affordability, particularly for underserved populations in rural and urban areas.

Kentucky secured approximately \$1.1 billion in BEAD funding, it's largest broadband investment yet. Pre-applications began in August 2024, with full applications anticipated by November and final subgrantee selection planned for June 2025. BEAD's objectives for the GRADD region include strengthening broadband infrastructure to connect underserved areas. In July 2024, the Kentucky Office of Broadband Development completed the BEAD program's test challenge phase, allowing individuals and businesses to submit internet speed test challenges in areas that claimed to offer high-speed internet. GRADD participated by validating and submitting these challenges.

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



Construction of communications tower in McLean County. SOURCE: GRADD 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 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. 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 utilizes the Justice40 initiative to ensure at least forty percent of federal investments 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.

The GRADD counties, once vital to Kentucky's coal production, have experienced economic challenges with the coal industry's decline, leading



Owensboro Human Relations Commission leading GRADD staff through their 2023 DEI Training. SOURCE: GRADD

to job reductions and lower 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 affected by the coal industry's decline, the IWG has successfully secured funding to support economic diversification, renewable energy initiatives, environmental remediation, and infrastructure improvements.

Several communities have led reentry efforts for formerly incarcerated individuals. One of the largest examples is the Reentry Success program, a collaborative partnership between multiple institutions in Daviess County that allow inmates to take online classes on information technology, problemsolving, personal development, job skills and other areas to help them be more successful upon release. As of April of 2023, there have been 20 participants that have graduated from the program with opportunities to make connections with local employers to help increase their success rate once released.



Reentry Success Program at Daviess County Detention Center
SOURCE: Owensboro Times

SUMMARY BACKGROUND

INDUSTRY

Industries within the Green River Area Development District have recently faced major setbacks, with four significant closures impacting the local economy and workforce. Century Aluminum in Hawesville suspended operations in August 2022, resulting in layoffs for 628 smelter employees, and remains closed after two years. In March 2024, Daicel Safety Systems Americas Inc. in Beaver Dam permanently shut down, leading to 290 job losses. Daramic LLC closed its manufacturing facility on September 6th, affecting 158 employees, and Hickory Springs Manufacturing ceased operations permanently, resulting in an additional 40 layoffs.

While the coal industry has declined across much of the U.S., including Kentucky, Union County has consistently seen growth in both coal employment and production. As Kentucky's leading coal producer since 2012, Union County produced 2.5 million tons of coal in the second quarter of 2023, nearly matching the 2.6 million tons produced by all Eastern Kentucky coal counties combined. Union County's sole coal producer, River View Coal, began its expansion into Henderson County in July 2023. This \$35 million investment will create a new 30,000-square-foot facility, set for completion by December 2024, and bring 260 well-paying jobs to the area.

The coal industry has also spurred additional 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 supported this project by lending \$250,000 from its Revolving Loan Fund for new equipment to facilitate MSS's growth.

Western Kentucky Distilling Co., which opened in Ohio County in 2023, employs 25 people with plans to grow to 35 over the next 15 years, offering an average wage of \$31.25 per hour, including benefits. The project was supported by a \$700,000 Community Development Block Grant that funded water and sewer line extensions and an access road to the site. Meanwhile, Rhythm River Distilling began construction on its \$5 million Downtown Henderson distillery in September 2024, expected to open in early 2025. The facility will create at least 12 full-time jobs and serve as a tourism attraction, offering tours, modern amenities, and scenic views of the Ohio River.

Mizkan America is expanding its operations with the installation of a new waterline through EOA infrastructure, supporting the growth of their plant and creating 44 new jobs. This expansion highlights how local resources and economic incentives can stimulate business growth and strengthen the

regional economy.

Swedish Match is investing \$232 million to expand its Owensboro facility, creating 450 well-paying jobs upon completion. The expansion will transition the facility to a 24/7 operational schedule, moving away from its current 24-hour, five-day structure. This project is expected to generate an annual economic impact of \$277 million and create an additional 410 indirect jobs in the region.

In 2023, Pratt Industries inaugurated a new \$500 million paper mill and box manufacturing facility in Henderson. This substantial investment has generated over 320 jobs, positioning it as one of the most significant economic developments in the region in more than 25 years. The facility not only improves local employment but also strengthens the region's industrial base, supporting sustainable growth and economic resilience in Henderson and surrounding communities.

Churchill Downs Inc. is investing \$100 million to develop Owensboro Racing & Gaming in Owensboro, Kentucky. Scheduled to open in early 2025, the venue is projected to create 150 permanent jobs and over 200 construction jobs, contributing an estimated \$125 million annually to the regional economy.

Webster County received \$2.1 million to invest in land for economic development, which will be used to acquire approximately 40 acres in Providence and extend 2,200 feet of waterline and 2,000 feet of sewer line. This development aims to attract investors in the manufacturing sector, enhancing the area's appeal for new business ventures. In neighboring Daviess County, the Greater Owensboro Economic Development Corporation (GOEDC) has proposed a 184-acre industrial park, potentially advancing regional economic opportunities.

The Owensboro Riverport Authority received \$1.3 million in the 2024-2025 fiscal year for constructing a waterline loop, aimed at strengthening essential infrastructure to support riverport operations. This project is part of a broader Kentucky initiative to modernize and improve riverport facilities.

In 2024, McLean County's Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) issued its first small business loan of \$50,000 to the owners of Calhoun Pharmacy to establish a local pharmacy in Calhoun. Since 2022, GRADD's RLF provided \$1,892,243 in funding to small businesses, creating or retaining 177 jobs.

HIGHLIGHTING RESILIENCE

HENDERSON IRT MISSION

In June 2024, the Green River Area Development District (GRADD), alongside the Delta Regional Authority and the City of Henderson, brought the Department of Defense's (DoD) Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) mission to South Middle School in Henderson, Kentucky. This first-ever IRT mission in the GRADD region, led by the Air National Guard and supported by the Air Force, Army Reserve, Army National Guard, and Remote Area Medical, was a monumental event in the community, addressing local healthcare needs and leaving a lasting impact on both the region and the service members involved.

Over ten days, the IRT mission provided a wide range of healthcare services, from optometry to general health exams, dental care, veterinary services, and public health education. In total, the mission served 1,642 patients and conducted 34,161 procedures. These included critical dental treatments, health assessments, and the fabrication of 917 eyeglasses for community members, many of whom had limited access to these services. The economic value of these healthcare services was estimated at \$1,000,000—a testament to the mission's role in alleviating healthcare barriers for residents in the region.

The impact of the IRT mission on the local community extended beyond healthcare. The mission created an atmosphere of support, camaraderie, and trust between the community and the military. Many residents expressed deep appreciation, especially those for whom the cost of healthcare might have otherwise been prohibitive. Through this initiative, the IRT not only met critical needs but also brought hope and relief, reinforcing the value of accessible healthcare and community partnerships. For those receiving care, it was more than a one-time opportunity—it was a reinforcement of the power of collaboration to meet pressing needs.

For the 171 service members deployed, the mission was an intensive training exercise. They logged a cumulative 18,158 hours of training, gaining hands-on experience across a range of functions. This included not only medical services but also administration, logistics, food service, communication, and emergency management. The structure of the mission allowed service members to perform real-time assessments, respond to immediate healthcare needs, and work within a simulated deployment environment while connecting with the local community in a meaningful way. This mission-essential, cross-

training readiness exercise was invaluable for honing skills that are directly transferable to their duties, whether in domestic emergencies or overseas missions. Through their work in Henderson, they solidified their readiness to respond to diverse situations, contributing to the larger goals of the DoD while enriching their own capabilities. Furthermore, the successful execution



Governor Beshear with Henderson IRT mission leaders at South Middle School. of the IRT mission in Henderson underscored the importance of interagency collaboration. GRADD, the Delta Regional Authority, the City of Henderson, and various military branches came together to make this mission possible, illustrating the effectiveness of unified efforts in meeting public health needs. Such collaborations can inspire future missions and expand the potential of similar initiatives across other regions.

For the Henderson community, the IRT mission was a powerful reminder of the value of accessible healthcare and the impact that strategic partnerships can have. For the service members, it was a formative experience that went beyond training, allowing them to make a meaningful difference in the lives of people in the community they served. This inaugural mission in the GRADD region has set a precedent, demonstrating how military readiness training can simultaneously deliver life-changing services to communities.

SUMMARY BACKGROUND

INFRASTRUCTURE

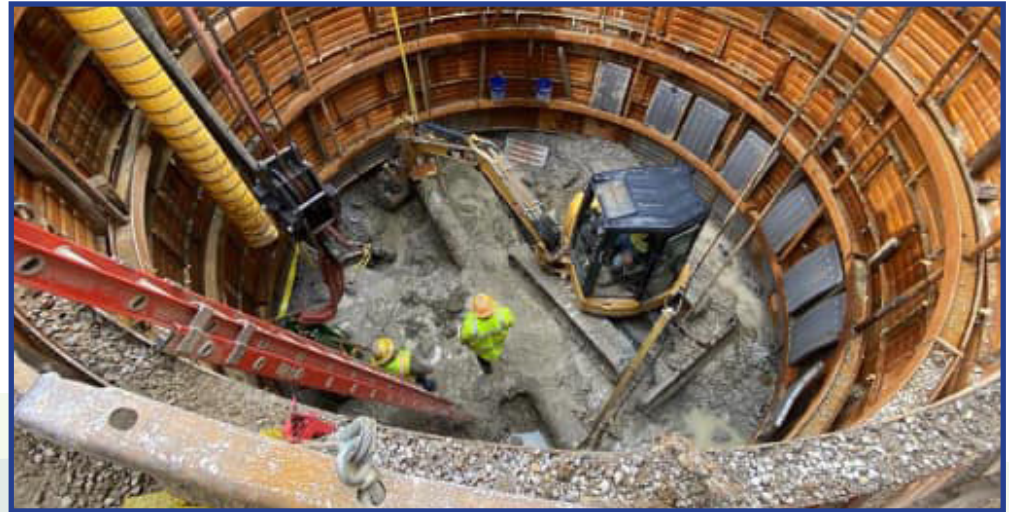
GRADD has made enhancing water and sewer infrastructure a top priority, as the costs associated with these large-scale projects to replace aging infrastructure present a significant barrier to local governments and rate payers. The Kentucky Infrastructure Authority (KIA) plays a vital role in supporting 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.

Significant infrastructure projects have recently taken center stage in the GRADD region, including the following projects:

- The City of Morganfield and Union County Fiscal Court recently completed a \$6.3 million Job Corps Sewer System Rehabilitation, updating 67,000 feet of 80-year-old sewer lines. As the next phase, Morganfield received a \$1.3 million KIA loan for planning and designing upgrades to its similarly aged wastewater treatment plant.
- 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



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

to complete the \$4.67 million 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.

SUMMARY BACKGROUND

TRANSPORTATION

Quality transportation remains critical for economic growth. Thirty key projects 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 I-69 Ohio River Crossing (ORX) project is a transformative infrastructure initiative aimed at enhancing connectivity between Indiana and Kentucky. The project is divided into three sections:

- Section 1: Focuses on improvements in Henderson, Kentucky, with construction expected to begin in early 2022 and continue through 2025.
- Section 2: Encompasses the construction of a new, four-lane I-69 bridge over the Ohio River, with design expected to begin in 2025 and construction anticipated to begin in 2027 and continue through 2031.
- Section 3: Involves approach roadways and bridges in Indiana, with construction beginning in late September 2024 and continuing through 2026.



August 2023 groundbreaking on the Owensboro Riverport KY Highway 331 Improvement Project. SOURCE: Greater Owensboro Economic Development Corporation Facebook

In August 2023, Daviess County began a \$14.4 million upgrade to Kentucky Highway 331 to enhance access to the Owensboro Riverport. This essential project involves widening and straightening the road, making it safer and more navigable for semi-trucks and other large vehicles. This improvement is critical to support the riverport's growing traffic demands, supports the regional economy by enabling more efficient freight operations. The project is expected to be completed by the end of 2025, with significant progress already made as of November 2024. Once finished, the upgraded route will ensure safer, more accessible transportation for all users.

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. In March 2024, the project went underway and currently is expected to be completed in November 2026. KY 54 is one of Daviess County's busiest roadways, with approximately 32,000 vehicles traveling daily between Heartland Crossing Boulevard and Bold Forbes Way. To better accommodate current traffic and support ongoing development, the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet is widening the road to three lanes in each direction.

Every two years, transportation agencies submit priority road projects for state review under the SHIFT scoring process for funding. GRADD, through its Regional Transportation Committee and the Owensboro-Daviess County MPO, submitted 12 projects totaling \$144 million:

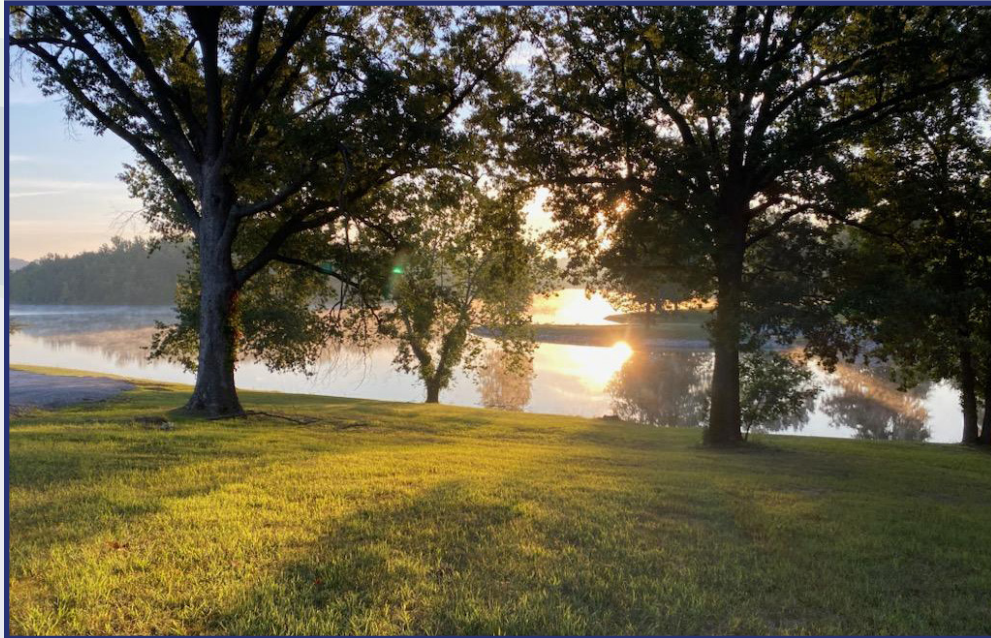
- Daviess: Widen New Hartford Road - \$17,900,000
- Daviess: Improve Fairview Drive from Settles Lane to KY 54 - \$14,000,000
- Daviess: Upgrade Fairview Dr. and Old Hartford Rd. intersection - \$2,000,000
- Daviess: Widen Todd Bridge Road - \$9,250,000
- Hancock: Improve connection of US 60 and Ohio River bridge - \$9,600,000
- Hancock: Widen US 60 from MP 2.2 to KY 1957 - \$11,150,000
- Ohio: Widen a portion of KY 54 to three lanes - \$11,490,000
- Ohio: Improve the alignment and bridge safety on KY 136 - \$9,926,000
- Union: Address safety and service concerns on US 60 - \$16,000,000
- Union: Address safety and service concerns on US 56 - \$27,537,000
- Webster: Address service concerns on KY 630 - \$13,640,000
- Webster: Reconstruct between KY 120 and railroad bridge in Slaughters to alleviate flooding - \$1,930,000

SUMMARY BACKGROUND

QUALITY OF LIFE & HOUSING

Community services affect the quality of life of residents. 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.

In April 2024, McLean County opened the doors to their brand-new McLean County Community and Senior Citizens Center in Calhoun. Additionally, 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



Site of Canaan Ridge Park, a new park in Webster County
SOURCE: Webster County EMA Jeremy Moore

residents. The park features a boat ramp, picnic shelters, hiking trails, a lake, and a kayak launch, 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 in Hancock County has been completed, resulting in the construction of the new Dukes Fire Station.

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 2017-2019¹. 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. 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 collaborative, which it's overarching goal is to find a sustainable way to create low-cost housing. 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. GRADD is partnering with Murray State University to conduct a housing study for the region to determine the best course of action to address the housing shortage.

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 Kentucky¹. 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 sought funding through FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program to support hazard mitigation projects that reduce disaster risks. As part of this effort, the Commonwealth contracted each ADD to create a regional energy resilience report detailing the backup power needs of critical facilities.



Representative Brett Guthrie visits Owensboro Grain to discuss a Hazard Mitigation Project. Twitter/X @RepGuthrie

This project began in August 2023 with the GRADD Community Energy Resiliency Survey and concluded in mid-2024 with the final report submitted to the state. Additionally, Owensboro Grain faces a high flood risk due to rising river levels from increased storms and rainfall. 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 result in flooding. To prevent this, the city secured \$788,751 from the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program to renovate the stormwater pump station, and the project is now underway.

The Sebree Solar project at the 4 Star Industrial Park is set to generate up to 400 megawatts of renewable energy, enhancing the local power grid and providing safe, clean energy. The first phase of operations is expected to commence by the end of 2024, with the second phase slated to begin by late 2025.

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

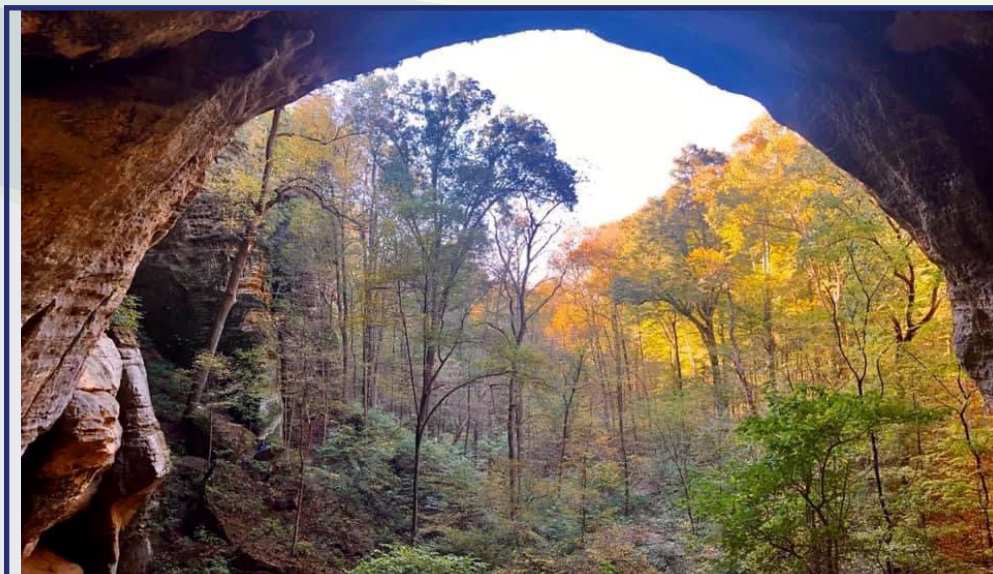
HIGHLIGHTING RESILIENCE

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 featuring 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



Jeffreys Cliffs. Source: Jeffreys Cliff Conservation & Recreation Area Facebook

"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



Brews and Balloon Festival at the Beaver Dam Amphitheater.

Source: Messenger-Inquirer

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

- 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

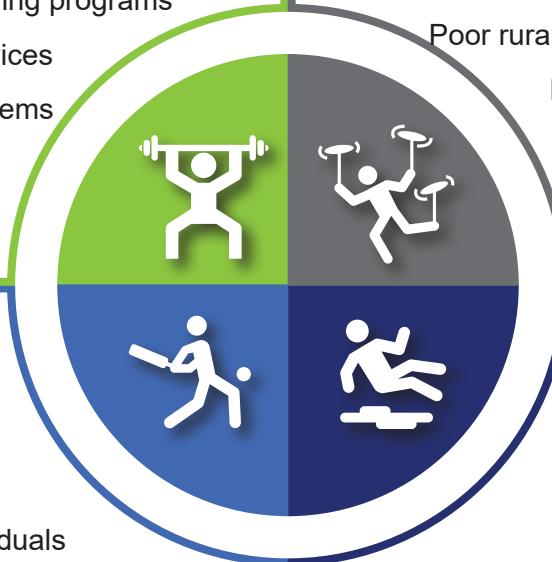
- Lack of decent affordable housing, especially single family homes and apartments
- Lack of comprehensive health care, especially in rural areas
- Poor rural accessibility to public transportation and sidewalks
- Lack of rural broadband and cell coverage
- Lack of childcare options and affordability
- 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

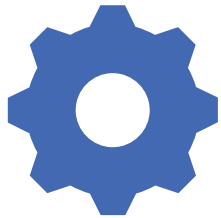
THREATS

- 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



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

Grow and cultivate the region's workforce.



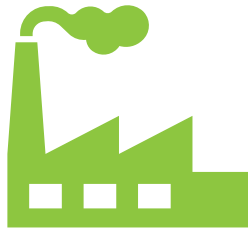
GOAL 2

Strengthen broadband and cell availability.



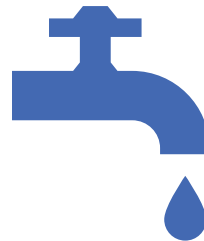
GOAL 3

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

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 associates 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 to revamp its technical school, including ADA compliance updates, welding exhaust renovations, and emergency system upgrades.
- **Webster County Area Technical Center-** over \$326,000 from the States' Economic Development Assistance Program to purchase training equipment for manufacturing, healthcare, industrial, and CAD career tracks.
- **Putting Young Kentuckians to Work Program-** the Green River Workforce Development Board received \$790,476 to establish the Putting Young Kentuckians to Work 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 (BEAD)** - \$1.1 Billion dollars secured by the State to provide Kentuckians with affordable and reliable internet access in both rural and urban areas. This is Kentucky's largest investment in broadband so far and is still in the pre-application stage.
- **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.
- **Digital Equity Plan**- In March 2024 the state released their Digital Equity Plan through the State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program This Plan serves to set forth measurable objectives that will impact and interact with the Commonwealth's economic and workforce development goals, plans, and outcomes; education outcomes, health outcomes; civic and social engagement; and delivery of essential services.

GOAL 3: Expand access to adequate 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. As of October 2024, construction is underway for this project.

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.
- **Housing Collaborative-** GRADD has joined a housing collaborative focused on finding solutions to the regional housing shortage, with an emphasis on increasing the availability of affordable homes.
- **HUD Affordable Housing Grant-** the City of Owensboro is applying for a grant which would enable them to build more affordable housing in the area.

GOAL 4: Attract new 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.
- **GRADD's Revolving Loan Fund (RLF)** - Since 2022, GRADD's RLF provided \$1,892,243 in funding to small businesses, creating or retaining 177 jobs.

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.
- **Churchill Downs Inc.-** Making a \$100 million investment into "Owensboro Racing and Gaming" which is expected to add 150 jobs. This venue is set to open in the first quarter of 2025.

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.

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.
- The community of Poole in Webster County was awarded \$111,034 to purchase new gear to help keep their firefighters protected.
- **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.

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	2024	2025 Goal
Percentage of owner-occupied housing units¹	72.0%	68.9%	68.2%	70%
Cost-burdened households* - Renters¹	42.7%	39.1%	45.6%	38%
Cost-burdened households* - Homeowners with a mortgage¹	26.1%	23.6%	20.2%	22%
Percentage of housing constructed after 2014¹	**	2.5%	**	10%
Poverty rate¹	16.8%	16.8%	16.2%	15.8%
High school graduation rate²	82.4%	89.1%	89.1%	92.0%
Associate degree holders in population 25 years and over¹	11,393	14,512	14,867	16,000
Employment in manufacturing sector 16 years and over¹	19,317	18,189	19,698	19,000
Labor force participation rate¹	59.5%	58.7%	59.7%	60%
Total number of people in the civilian labor force¹	99,762	100,276	102,897	102,000
Percentage of women in the civilian labor force¹	65.9%	53.8%	59.3%	55%
Number of shovel-ready sites⁴	**	14	**	16
Number of build-ready sites⁴	**	3	**	5
Percent of households with access to 25 Mbps broadband¹	†	†	†	≥90% 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

POPULATION¹

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

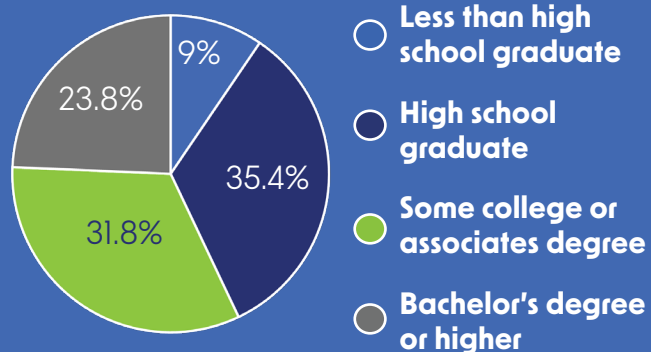
16.5%

Limited English Proficiency Population

2,029

EDUCATION¹

Attainment for Population 25 years and older



WORKFORCE¹

Total Labor Force

49,538

Labor Force Participation

61.6%

Annual Average
Unemployment Rate²

4.3%

LARGEST INDUSTRIES & EMPLOYMENT¹

	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

HOUSING¹

Cost Burdened Households

Paying rent

40.5%

With a mortgage

25.4%

Without a mortgage

9.2%

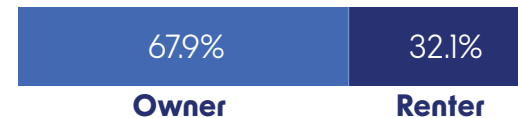
Median Home Value

\$171,100

Households with Broadband Internet Subscription

88.4%

Housing Occupancy



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

POPULATION¹

2022 Population Change Since 2010

9,058 **+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

WORKFORCE¹

Total Labor Force

6,898

Labor Force Participation

57.1%

Annual Average
Unemployment Rate²

4.4%

LARGEST INDUSTRIES & EMPLOYMENT¹

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

HOUSING¹

Cost Burdened Households

Paying rent

45.2%

With a mortgage

16.8%

Without a mortgage

5.8%

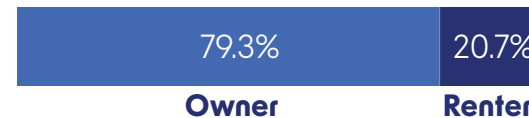
Median Home Value

\$116,800

Households with Broadband Internet Subscription

84%

Housing Occupancy



Age of Housing Units

2020 or Later

1%

2000 to 2019

20.4%

1980 to 1999

31.8%

1960 to 1979

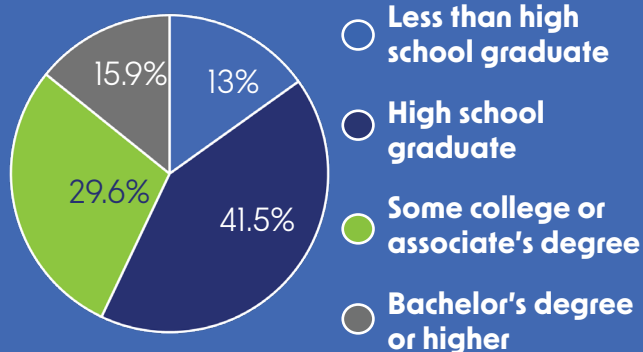
30.8%

Prior to 1960

16%

EDUCATION¹

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

POPULATION¹

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

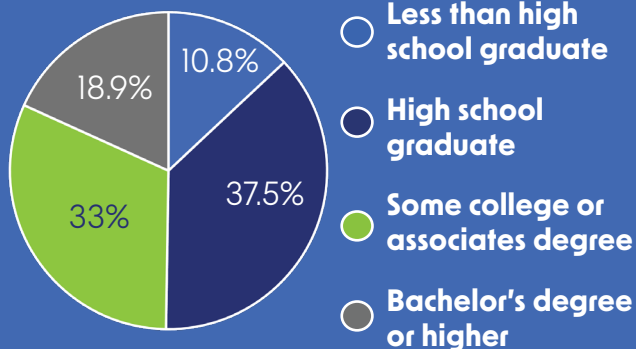
23.3%

Limited English Proficiency Population

446

EDUCATION¹

Attainment for Population 25 years and older



WORKFORCE¹

Total Labor Force

20,412

Labor Force Participation

56.7%

Annual Average
Unemployment Rate²

4.5%

LARGEST INDUSTRIES & EMPLOYMENT¹

	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

HOUSING¹

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

POPULATION¹

2022 Population Change Since 2010

9,173 **-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

WORKFORCE¹

Total Labor Force

3,991

Labor Force Participation

54.4%

Annual Average
Unemployment Rate²

4.3%

LARGEST INDUSTRIES & EMPLOYMENT¹

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

HOUSING¹

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

80.4%

Owner

19.6%

Renter

Age of Housing Units

2020 or Later

0%

2000 to 2019

12.5%

1980 to 1999

26.2%

1960 to 1979

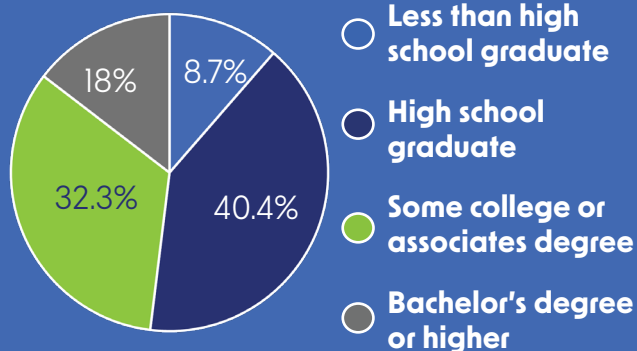
37.4%

Prior to 1960

23.1%

EDUCATION¹

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

POPULATION¹

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

Median Age
41

Median Household Income
\$52,474

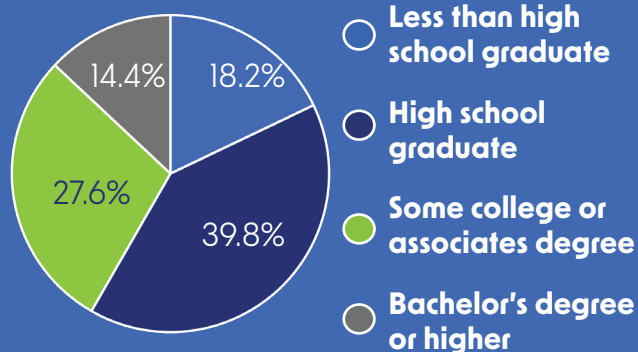
Percent of Population Below Poverty Line
14%

Percent of Population with Disability
18.3%

Limited English Proficiency Population
353

EDUCATION¹

Attainment for Population 25 years and older



WORKFORCE¹

Total Labor Force

10,472

Labor Force Participation

55.3%

Annual Average
Unemployment Rate²

5.5%

LARGEST INDUSTRIES & EMPLOYMENT¹

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

HOUSING¹

Cost Burdened Households

Paying rent

28.6%

With a mortgage

24.5%

Without a mortgage

8.0%

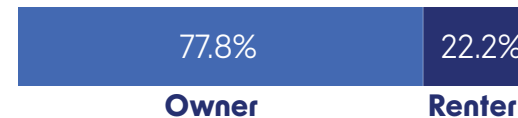
Median Home Value

\$114,900

Households with Broadband Internet Subscription

79.3%

Housing Occupancy



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

POPULATION¹

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

WORKFORCE¹

Total Labor Force

5,902






Labor Force Participation

52.5%

Annual Average
Unemployment Rate²

4.4%

LARGEST INDUSTRIES & EMPLOYMENT¹

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

HOUSING¹

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

73.1%

Owner

26.9%

Renter

Age of Housing Units

2020 or Later

0.4%

2000 to 2019

11%

1980 to 1999

26.8%

1960 to 1979

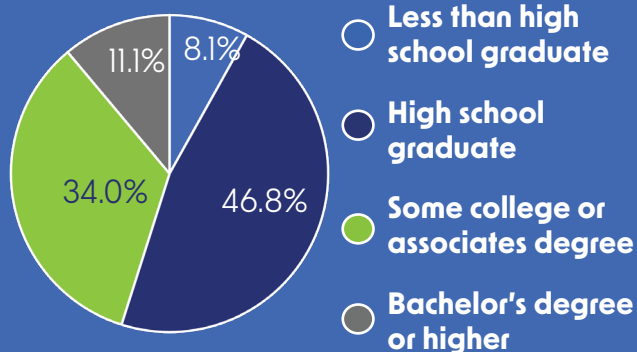
29.9%

Prior to 1960

32%

EDUCATION¹

Attainment for Population 25 years and older



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

POPULATION¹

2022 Population Change Since 2010
12,951 **-4.92%**

Median Age
39.7

Median Household Income
\$55,451

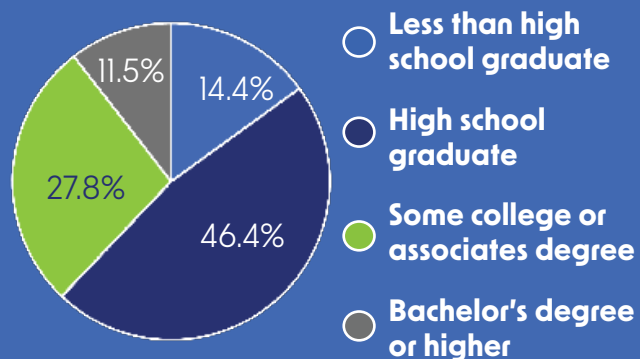
Percent of Population Below Poverty Line
16.1%

Percent of Population with Disability
29.1%

Limited English Proficiency Population
234

EDUCATION¹

Attainment for Population 25 years and older



WORKFORCE¹

Total Labor Force

5,684

Labor Force Participation

55.2%

Annual Average
Unemployment Rate²

4.5%

LARGEST INDUSTRIES & EMPLOYMENT¹

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

HOUSING¹

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



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.

NOTES

