

An aerial photograph of a town in South Central Missouri, showing a mix of residential houses, commercial buildings, and industrial sites. The town is surrounded by dense green and autumn-colored trees. A large road interchange is visible in the lower half of the image. In the top left corner, there is a white rectangular box containing the logo and text for SCO CEDS.

# SCO CEDS

Advancing South Central Missouri

Date: December 2019

Source of Copies: South Central Ozark

Council of Governments

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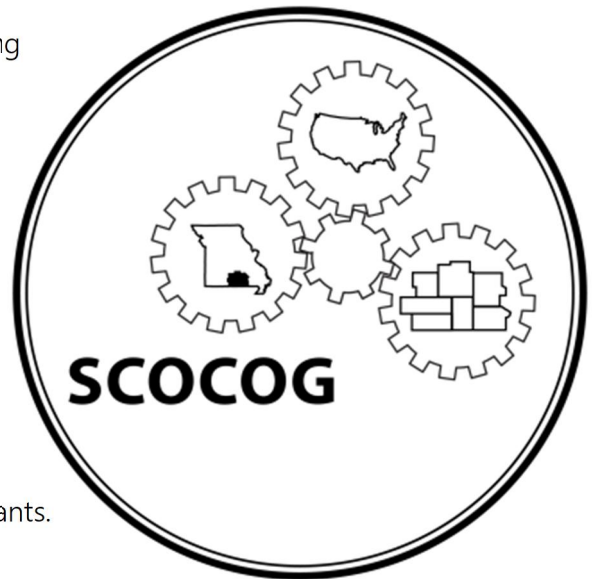
Job Title: 2019 South Central Ozarks COG

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy



EDA Project: Economic Development Administration #ED18DEN3020016

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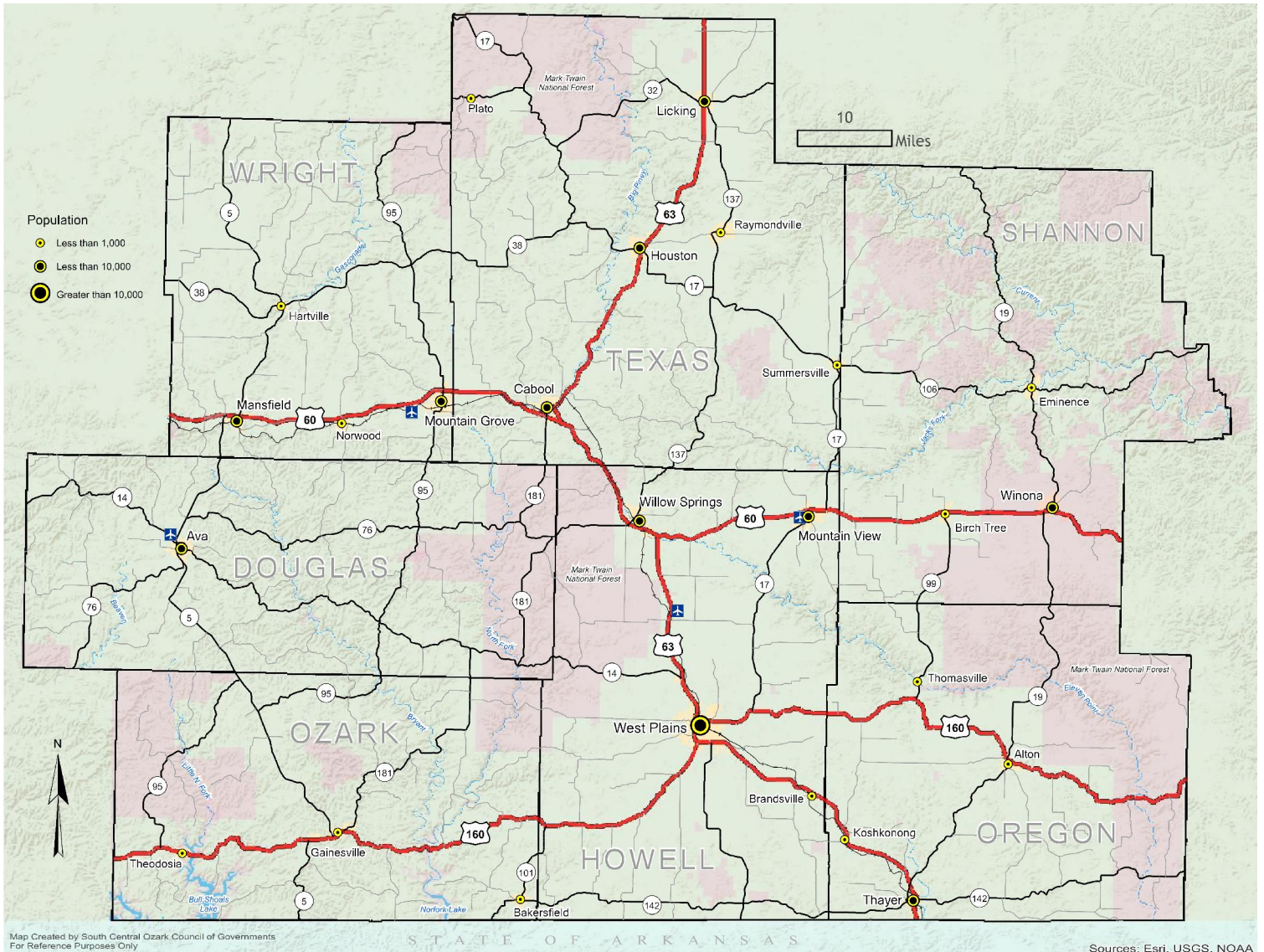
**2019**

## **South Central Ozark Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy**

Prepared by: the South Central Ozark Council of Governments  
4407 County Road 2340 Pomona, MO 65789

## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The South Central Ozark Council of Governments (SCOCOG) is a quasi-governmental regional planning agency serving the citizens and local governments of Douglas, Howell, Oregon, Ozark, Shannon, Texas and Wright Counties in southern Missouri. SCOCOG is the Economic Development District (EDD) designated by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) responsible for developing and maintaining the regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).



It is our goal at the South Central Ozark Council of Governments to promote our region as an attractive and desirable place to live, work, and visit. We strive to develop a diverse and stable local economy, grounded in innovative economic development strategies, tourism, and entrepreneurship—providing high quality jobs while capitalizing on a competitive cost of doing business. We aim to be guided by strong regional partnerships, interested in developing a robust stock of physical infrastructure and marketable industrial sites and facilities, and in cultivating a skilled, trained, and educated workforce.

A CEDS is the result of a local planning process designed to guide the economic growth of an area. The CEDS process can help create jobs, foster more stable and diversified economies, and improve living conditions. It provides a mechanism for coordinating the efforts of individuals, organizations, local governments, and private industries concerned with economic development. Furthermore, a CEDS is required to qualify for EDA assistance under its public works, economic adjustment, and other planning programs.

The 2019 CEDS is the result of a continuing planning process developed through broad based and diverse community participation. The organization of this document is designed to ensure its utility and relevance to the subjects it addresses. The major components of the CEDS are as follows:

- An analysis of economic and community development problems and opportunities;
- A background and history of the region's economic development situation;
- Goals and objectives for the area;
- A plan of action, including suggested projects; and
- Performance measures.

Local, state and federal funds are becoming increasingly difficult to obtain and citizens are demanding greater accountability for the funds being allocated at all levels of government. As a result, strategic planning becomes even more critical. Through strategic planning, development within the region will be more cost effective and result in the most efficient utilization of the available funding. Thus, communities must take care to plan to determine their needs and to prioritize them to ensure immediate needs are met and goals for the future are obtained.



The Office of the South Central Ozark Council of Governments—Pomona, Missouri

## II. OUTREACH and CEDS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy encourages a coordinated planning process that allows individual communities, and regional agencies to work together to guide the economic future of a region in a manner that is appropriate to the character and resources of the region. A series of community meetings were held around the region throughout 2019 to determine local development priorities and interests. In addition to direct community outreach, a CEDS Advisory Committee consisting of a diverse cross-section of public officials & private business representatives was formed to lead plan development and strategic oversight.

2019 CEDS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Dennis Lancaster	Missouri State University—WP
David Bossemeyer	WPEDC Economic Developer
Greg Donley	Ozark County Commissioner
Darrell Hampsten	Small Business Development Center
Heather Fisher	Ozarks Small Business Incubator
Janice Lorrain	Community Development Activist
Josh Cotter	South Central Career Center
Levi McDaris	Banker
Myles Smith	Howell-Oregon Electric Cooperative
Tony Floyd	Intercounty Electric Cooperative
Randall Combs	Banker/Transit Business Owner
Rob Harrington	Houston Economic Development
Ron Scheets	Cabool City Administrator
Sam Currier	Banker
Jim Anderson	Mayor, City of Eminence
Vanae Emerick	South Central Workforce Investment Board
Matt Owens	Penmac Staffing—Workforce
Heather Kamps	Financial Advisor
Jessica Nease	West Plains City Council

SOCIAL and ECONOMIC  
**INDICATORS**



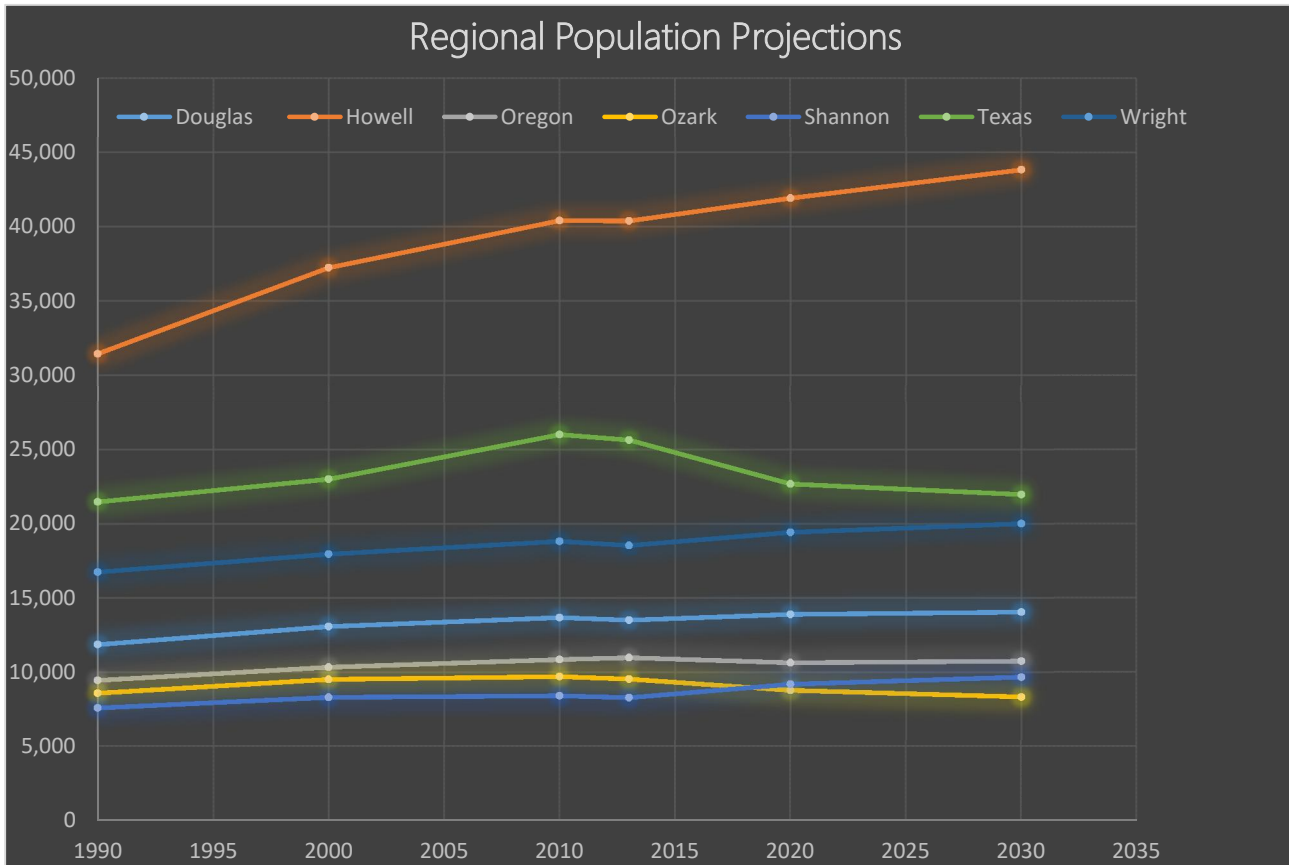
### III. DEMOGRAPHIC, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INDICATORS

#### 1. DEMOGRAPHICS

The South Central Ozark Council of Governments service area is comprised of seven mostly rural southern Missouri counties: Douglas, Howell, Oregon, Ozark, Shannon, Texas and Wright. The region contains the state’s three largest counties in terms of size: Texas 1,179 sq. mi., Shannon 1,004 sq. mi., and Howell 928 sq. mi. The region includes 23 incorporated communities, all with a population of less than 14,000 residents.

#### POPULATION

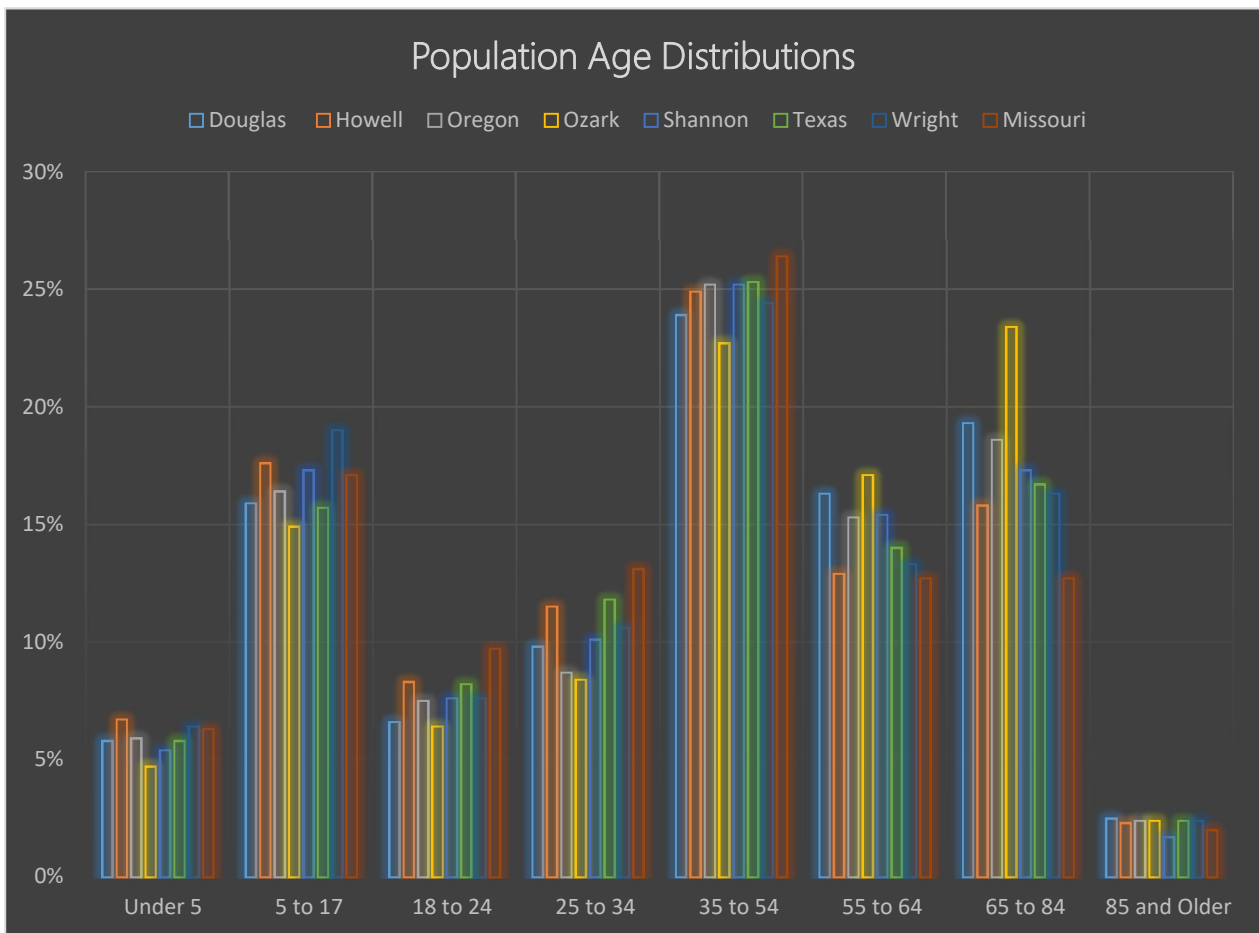
Unlike, most remote rural regions the last 30 years of census data shows that the south central Missouri region has experienced population growth—but at a slower rate than at state and national levels. Howell, the region’s most populous county is also the fastest growing county. Current census population projections through 2030 show a similar anticipated population growth rate in all but two counties: Ozark and Texas.





## AGE

Upon examination of the 2015 census estimates, the SCOCOG region shows only slight differences from both the state and national breakdowns between age groups. The population of the SCOCOG region is following state and national trends of an aging population. Reviewing the median age of the counties that make up the SCOCOG footprint—44.8—clearly shows that every county in the region has a higher median age than either the state (38.4) or national (37.8) median. Howell County has the lowest median age in the region 40.2 and Ozark County, 51.1, is the highest.

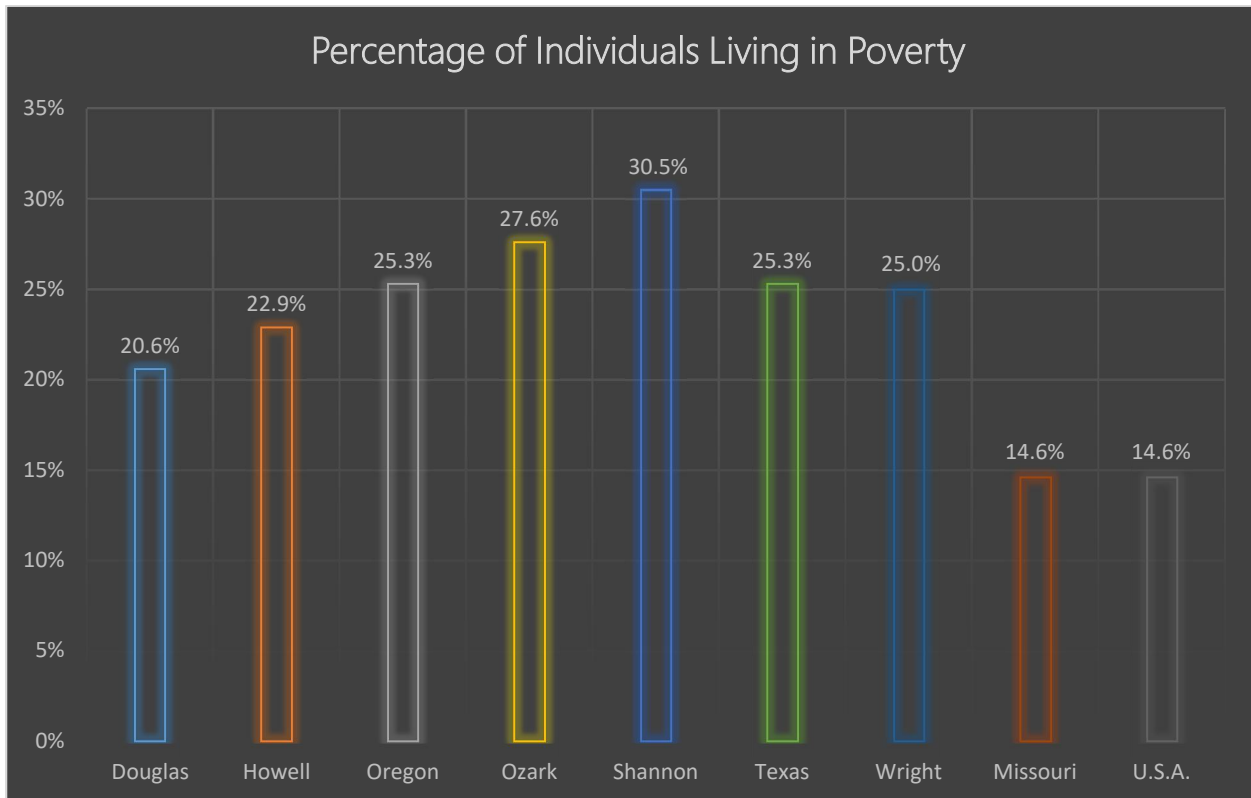


The population residing within the south central region of Missouri shows an unusually high rate of persons age 19-64 with a disability—20.5 percent. This is substantially higher than the state percentage, 12.8%, and the national figure, 10.4%. This is clearly reflected in extremely high rates of transfer payments as the primary source of personal income and low labor force participation rates.

## 2. SOCIAL INDICATORS

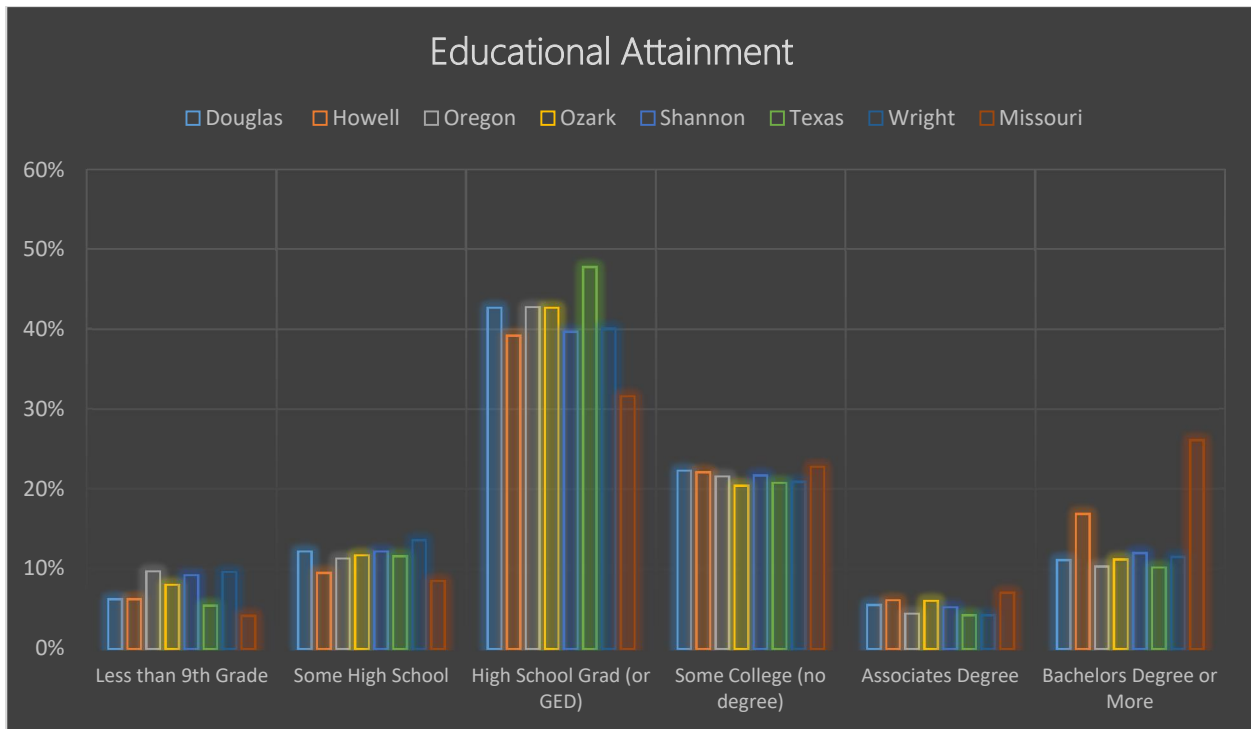
### POVERTY RATE

The SCOCOG region had made some progress in decreasing poverty from 1990 to 2010, however, the region has been slow to recover from the global economic recession beginning around 2008, and 2015 poverty rates in the region, state, and nation have essentially returned to the rates seen in 1990. All SCOCOG region counties continue to have a higher percentage of people living in poverty than at state and federal levels. For all individuals, poverty rates in each county range from 20 percent in Douglas County to nearly 30.5 percent in Shannon County. More than one in four of all individuals in the region is living in poverty—nearly twice the national rate. Even more problematic, the rate for children living in poverty, regionally, averages to 38 percent. Nearly three out of every five children in south central Missouri are living in poverty compared to one out of five children nationally.

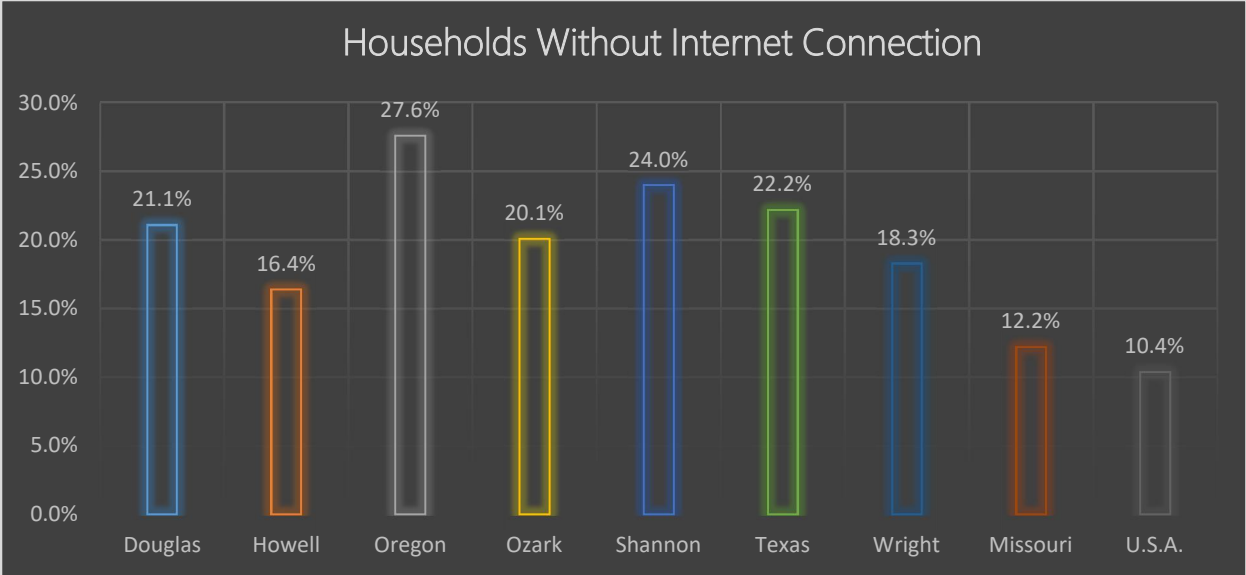


## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Educational attainment data for the seven county region shows high dropout rates and staggeringly low rates of individuals with college degrees. At the national level, the vast majority of the population, 85.2% have finished high school and nearly a quarter, 22% have obtained college degrees. This indicator does not bode well for local economic and workforce development. Schools in the region must to continue to implement strategies to facilitate better academic performance and the communities of South Central Missouri should to work to improve quality of life measures to retain and attract educated citizens.

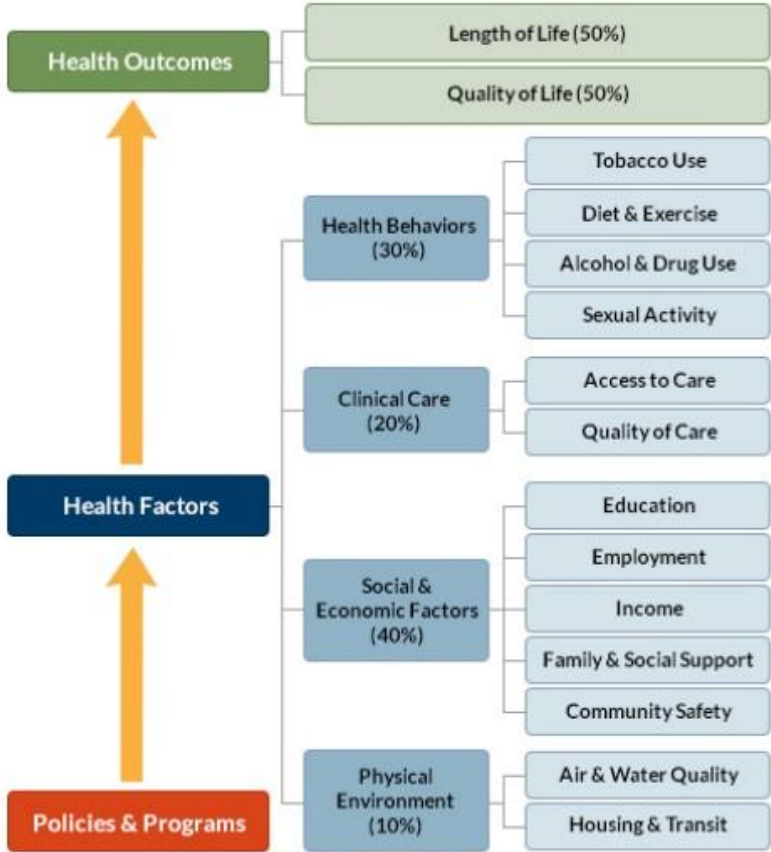


As years go by, it is becoming increasingly recognized that internet access is a critical tool in acquiring a suitable education. In the south central region, internet connectivity continues to be a struggle, driven primarily by the area's rugged topography and sparse settlement patterns. The graph below provides a measure showing that 21.4 percent of the region's households have no internet connectivity—more than doubling the national rate of 10.4 percent.



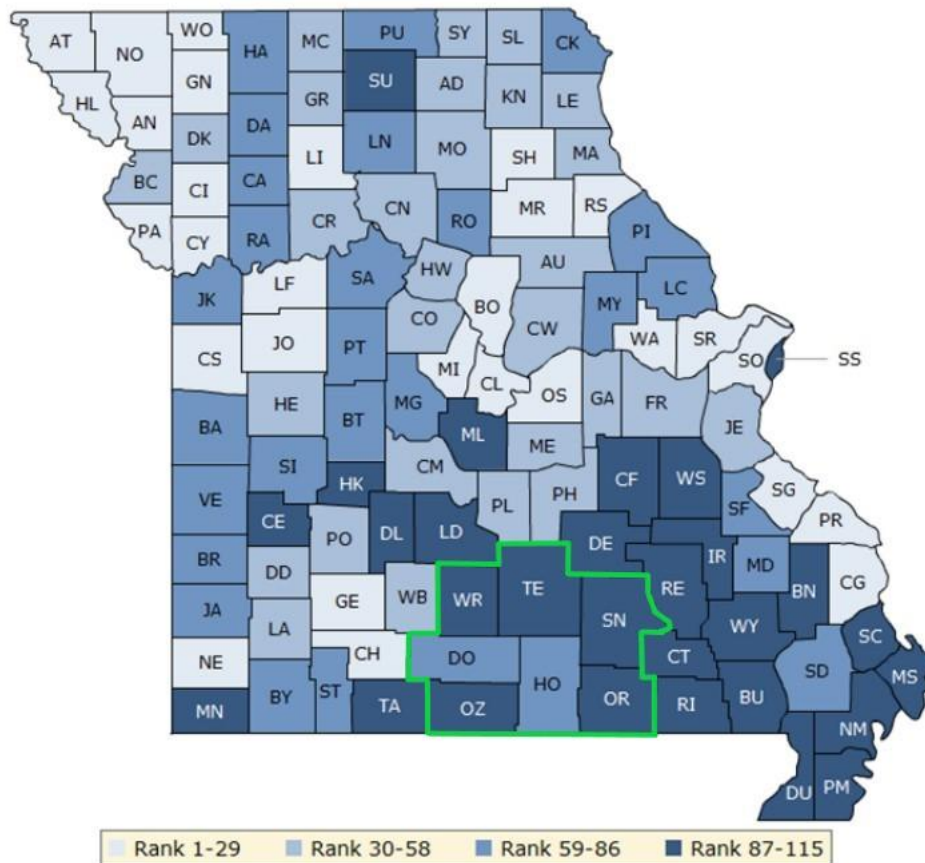
*HEALTH AND WELL BEING*

A variety of factors impact good health. These factors include but are not limited to: access to healthy foods, rates of smoking and drug abuse, obesity rates, teen birth rates, access to health care, and access to recreational opportunities. Every community varies in its ability to promote opportunities that can shape its citizens health and well-being, yet some areas lag far behind in how well and how long people live. This variation in health outcomes is what is known as a "health gap". Once a community identifies what is negatively impacting its health outcomes, policies can be implanted to help guide improvements in overall community health.



Source: University of Wisconsin, Population Health Institute

The below map created by the University of Wisconsin’s Population Health Institute utilizes the community health measures provided in the flow chart on the previous page to provide a summary rank for each Missouri county. These rankings are based on weighted scores for health behaviors, clinical care, social and economic factors, and the physical environment. Lighter shades indicate better performance in the respective rankings.



Source: University of Wisconsin, Population Health Institute

Only two of our region’s seven counties—Douglas and Howell—rank outside of the lowest-scoring Health Factors classification in the state. It is essential that communities throughout the region, with the help of the Council of Governments consider strategies that can influence positive momentum in respect to the various aspects impacting overall community health.

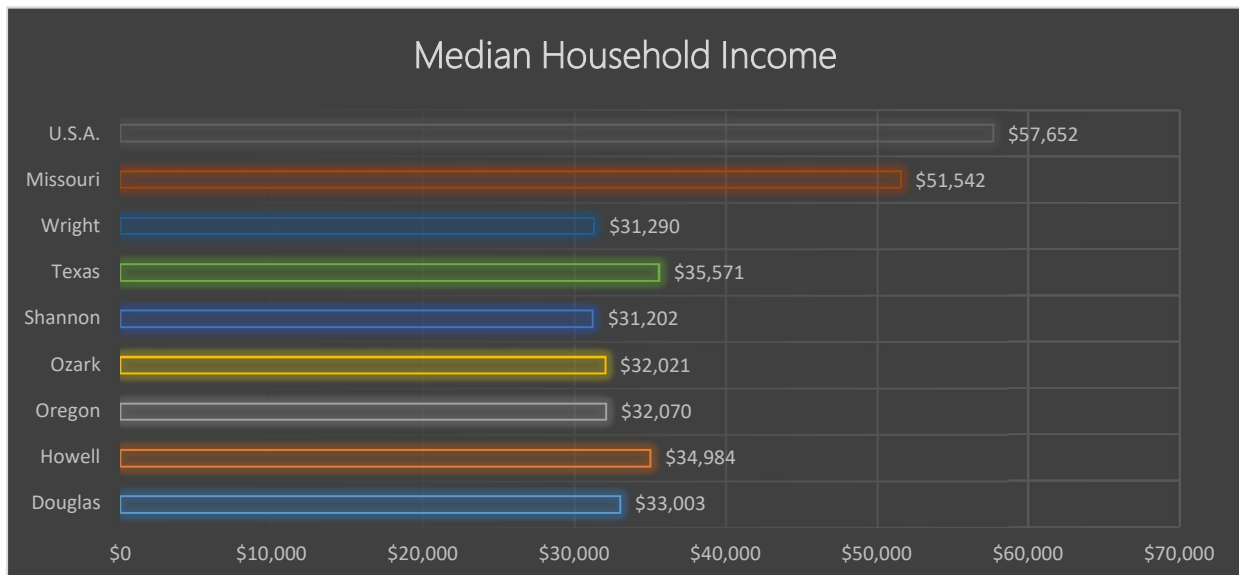
### 3. ECONOMIC INDICATORS

For anyone doing economic condition research on our piece of Missouri, it will not take long to realize that the south central region is one of the more distressed areas in the state. The region consistently lags behind the state and national average on median income, employment rates and education levels, and contains some of the poorest counties in the state.

Historically, the economy of the south-central Ozark region of Missouri has focused heavily upon natural resource extraction, agriculture, and labor-intensive light manufacturing. Due to compositional shifts in the national and global economy, these sectors have experienced more economic downturn in the past few years than many others. The economic recession that began nearly a decade ago has had lasting impacts in the region, causing the closure of many large employers and further exacerbating already higher than average unemployment. Just recently (November 2019) the Regal-Beloit Manufacturing Company announced the closure of its West Plains facility, which will eliminate over 200 well-paying jobs from the local economy.

#### *MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME*

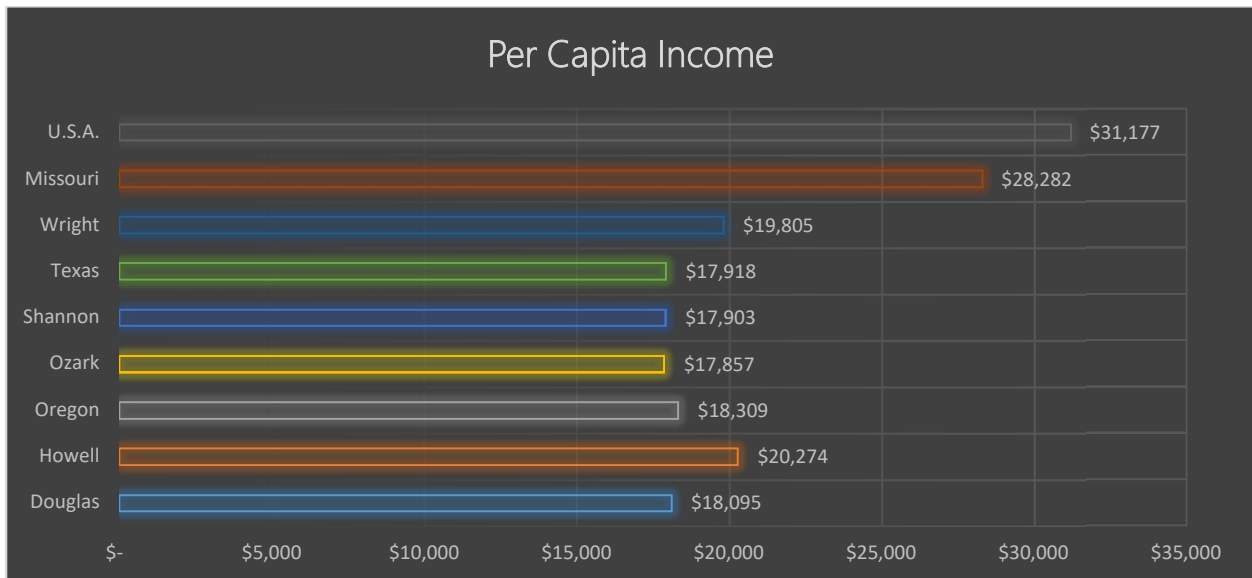
Median Household Income (MHI) is an important measure because it is a convenient and easy-to-understand measure, representing the income of a household exactly in the middle of any particular geographic income distribution. That is, half of a county's households make more than the MHI and half make less.



The median income in the State of Missouri hovers near 89 percent of the U.S. median income, whereas the south central region currently stands at 62 percent of the Missouri median income, which translates to median income in the SCOCOG region being *slightly more than half* of the national median measure.

*PER CAPITA INCOME*

Per Capita Income (PCI) is the total income received within a particular geographic unit divided by its population. This measure is often used to measure an area’s standard of living and development status.

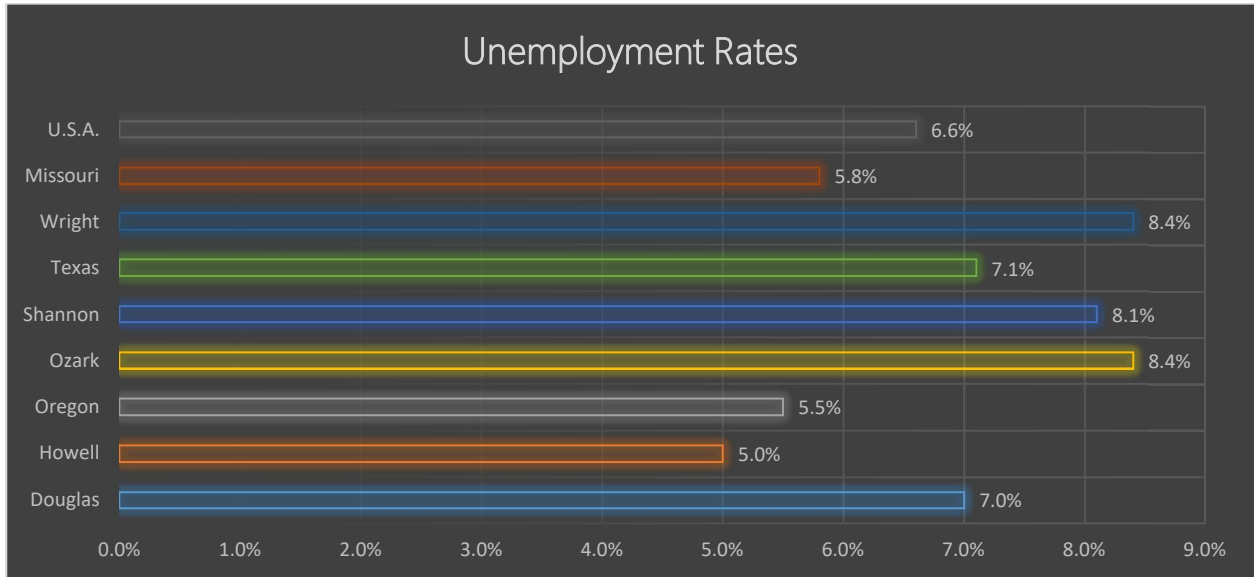


According to the 2015 American Community Survey, the PCI in the State of Missouri is 89.4 percent of the U.S. per capita income, whereas the south central region, \$32,877, currently stands at 64 percent of the Missouri median income, which translates to median income in the SCOCOG region being just 57 percent of the national figure..

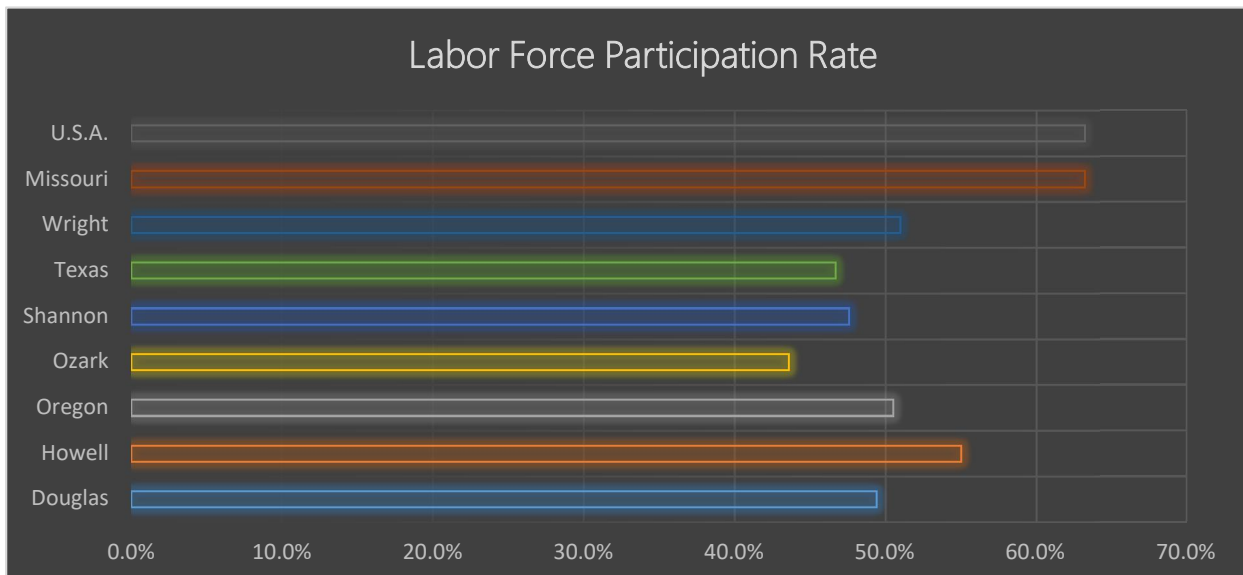
*UNEMPLOYMENT AND LABOR FORCE*

Historically, unemployment rates in the State of Missouri are lower than the national unemployment rate. The SCOCOG region has averaged an unemployment rate, 7.1%, that that is nearly 1 ½ percent higher than the state’s rate over the last decade and a half. Significant variance within unemployment

rates can be seen inside the region. Howell and Oregon Counties are 5.0% and 5.5%, respectively, whereas unemployment number range to as high as 8.4% in Ozark and Wright Counties.



The Labor Force Participation (LFP) Rate is a measure of an economy’s active workforce. It is calculated by using the sum of all workers who are employed or those actively seeking employment divided by the total noninstitutionalized, civilian working-age population. The rate is derived from populations of defined geographic units, such as cities, counties or states. The LFP is affected by a myriad of factors from economic policy, demographic shifts, and social trends, community health, and even familial or cultural traditions.

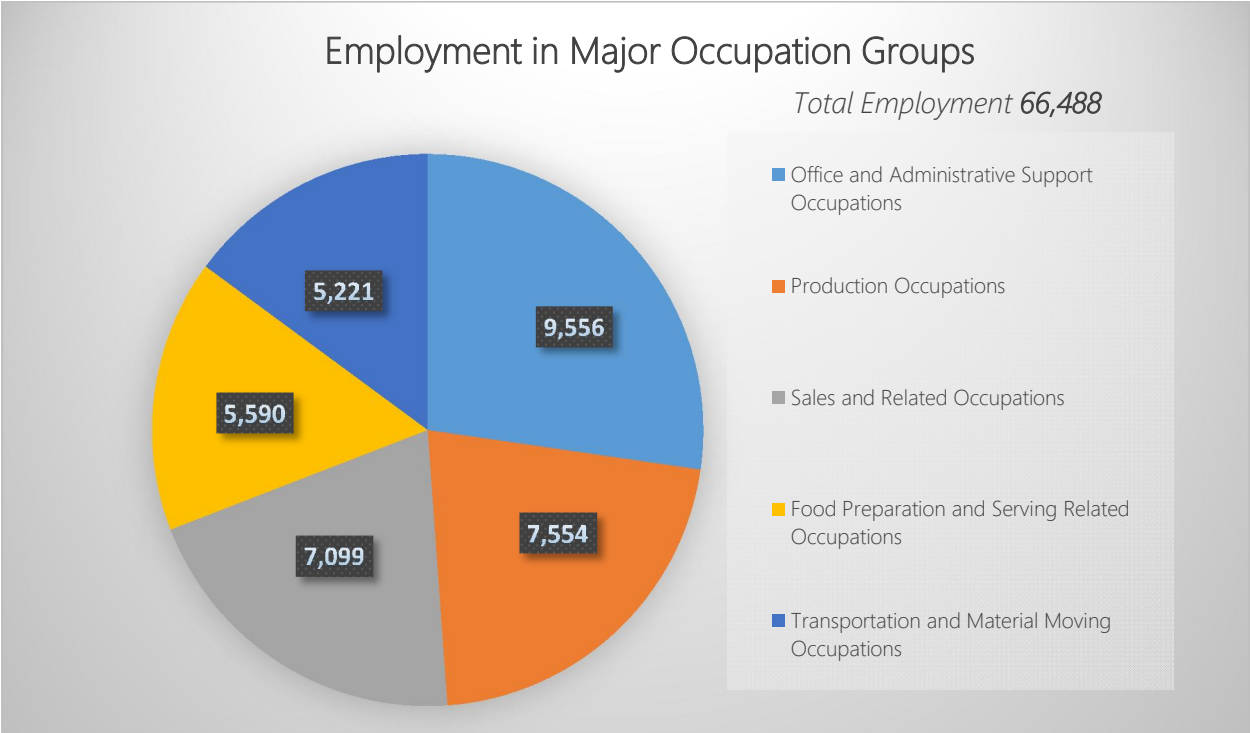




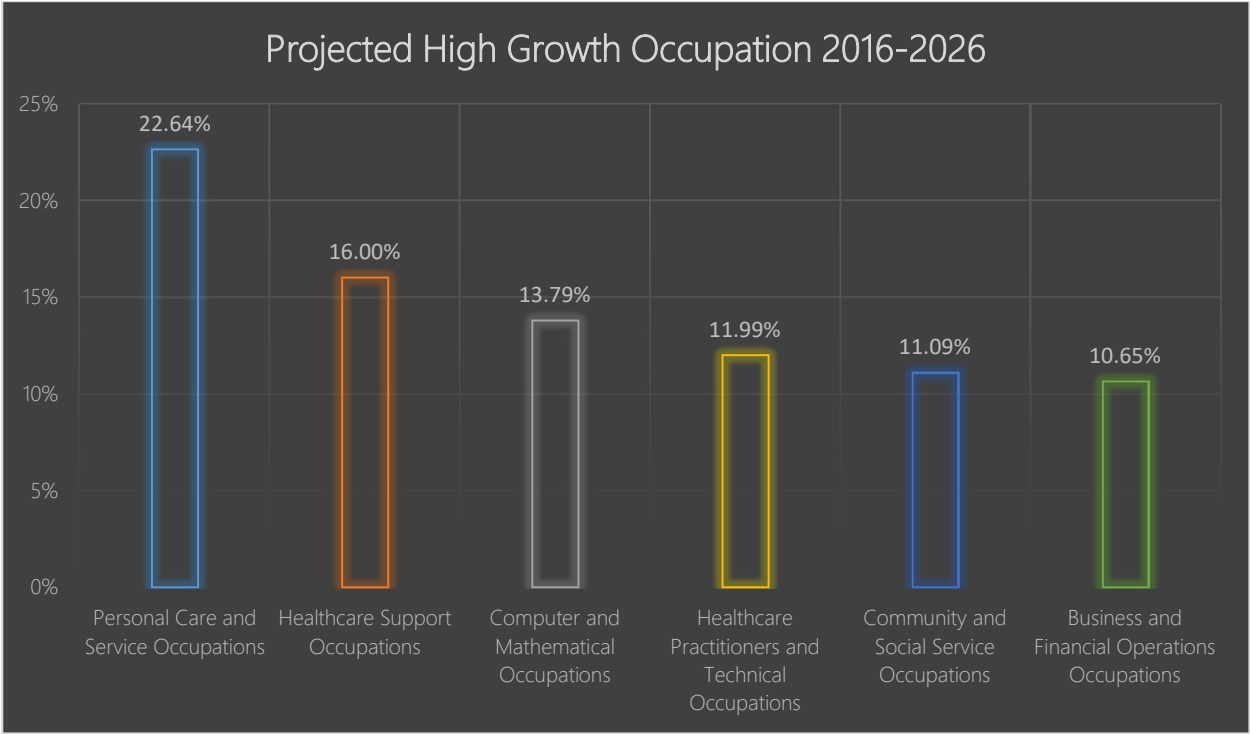
Because it accounts for people who have given up looking for work, this may make the labor force participation rate a somewhat more reliable figure than the unemployment rate, which is often criticized for under-counting true joblessness as it fails to take into account those who have unwillingly dropped out of the workforce. Some economists argue that the labor participation rate and unemployment data should be considered together to better understand an economy's real employment status.

#### 4. OCCUPATIONS AND CLUSTER ANALYSIS

Occupational data generated by the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC) provides insight on the region's most common occupations, as well as which occupations experience the most growth (by percentage) in the coming decade. Using the MERIC data, the chart below depicts the area's most widely available jobs: These include Office and Administrative Support, Production, Sales and Retail, Food Service and Transportation and Material Movement.



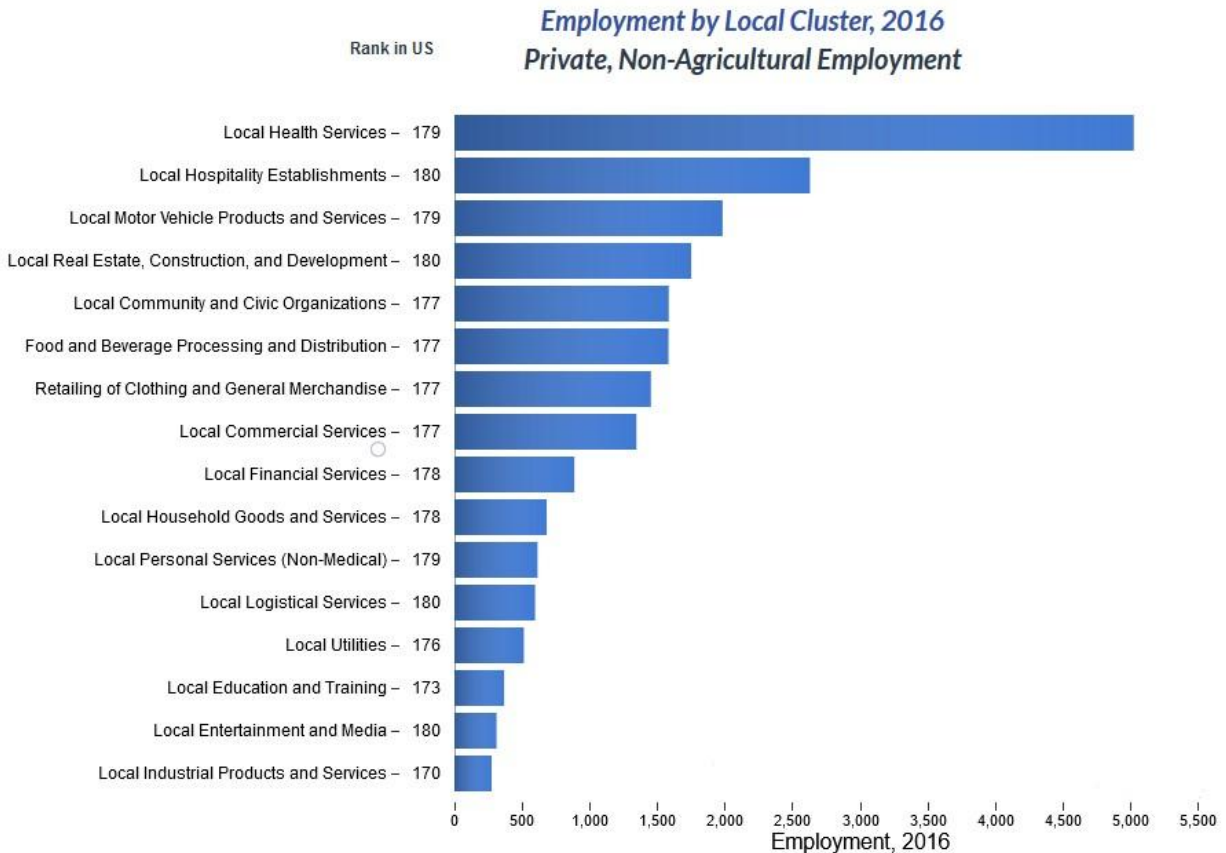
The graph below illustrates which area occupations are expected to experience the highest growth rates over the next decade. Considering the region’s aging population, it is not surprising that the healthcare sector is anticipated to grow substantially.



**CLUSTER ANALYSIS**

A cluster is a regional concentration of related industries in a particular location. Clusters are a striking feature of economies, making regions uniquely competitive for jobs and private investment. They consist of companies, suppliers, and service providers, as well as government agencies and other institutions that provide specialized training and education, information, research, and technical support.

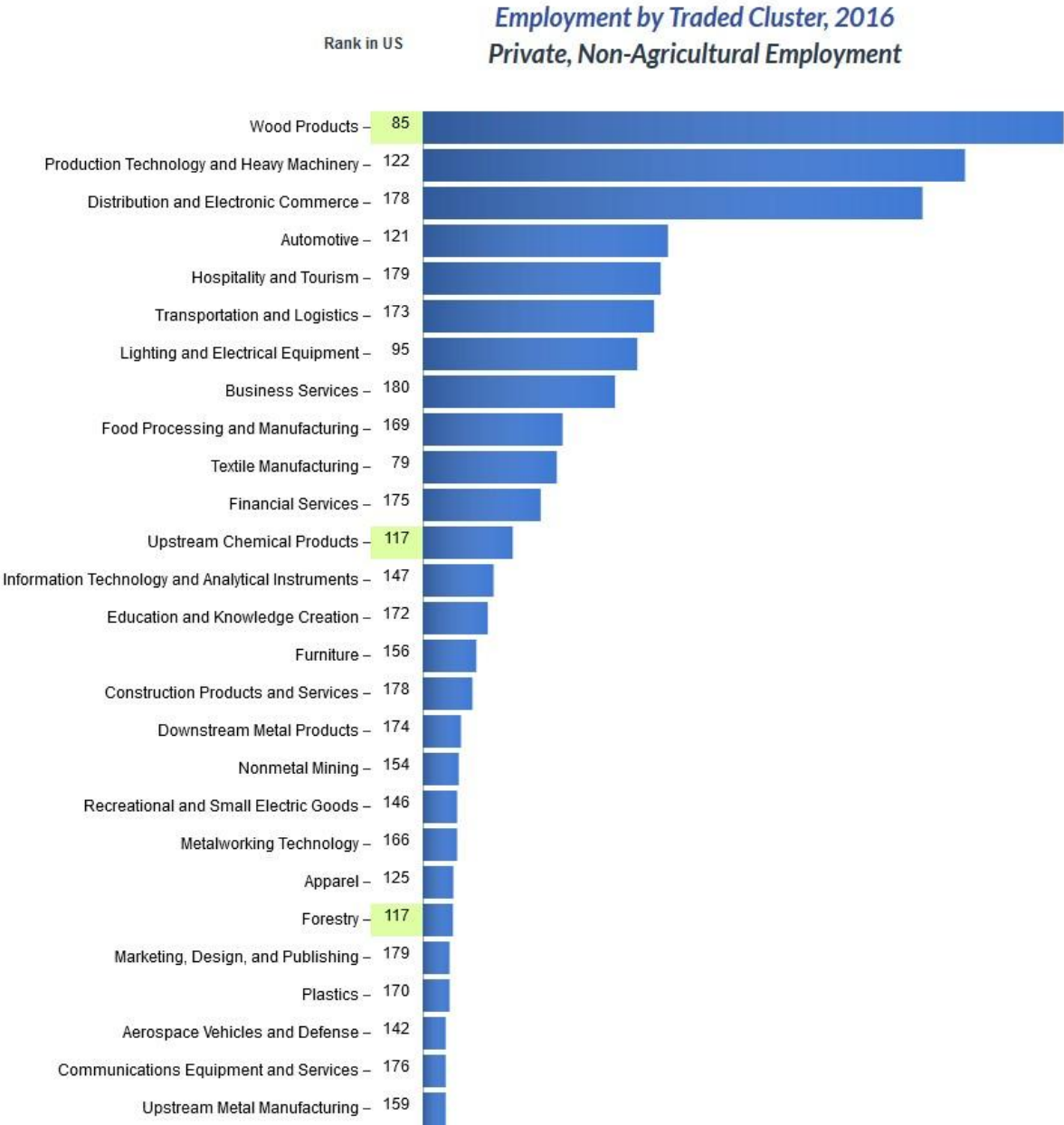
Regional economies are made up of two types of clusters, each with different patterns of geographic presence and different competitive dynamics. *Traded clusters* are groups of related industries that serve markets beyond the region in which they are located. *Local clusters*, in contrast, consist of industries that serve the local market.



The majority of a region’s employment comes from jobs in local clusters. Since local clusters are tied to the regions in which they are located, they are not directly exposed to competition from other regions. Strong local clusters within the seven counties of the south central Missouri planning area include health services, hospitality, motor vehicle products and services and real estate construction and development.

While local clusters account for most of the employment and employment growth in regional economies, traded clusters typically register higher wages, and much higher levels of innovation. Local clusters provide necessary services for the traded clusters in a region, and both are needed to support a healthy and prosperous regional economy.

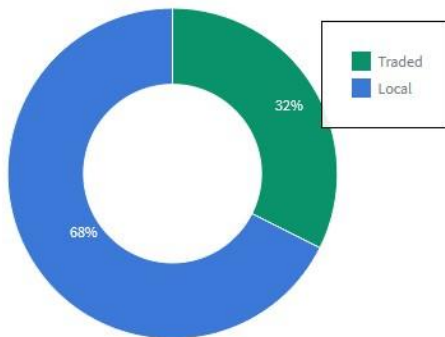
The data from U.S. Cluster Mapping shows three strong traded clusters that clearly stand above the rest: Wood products, Production Technology and Heavy Machinery and Distribution and Electronic Commerce.



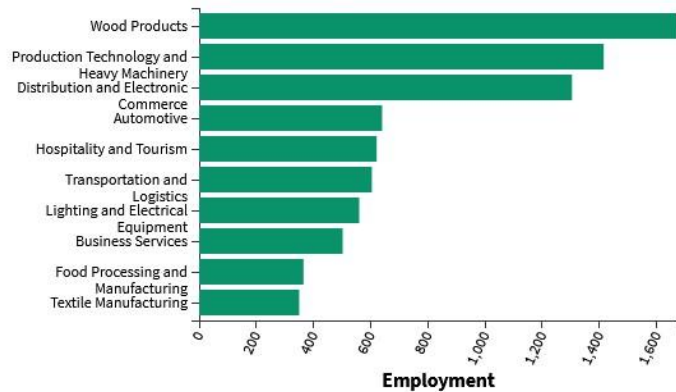
## Cluster Portfolio, 2016



Traded vs. Local Clusters



Top Clusters by Employment



The [Brookings Institute](#) offers the following thoughts on the importance and benefits of using cluster analysis in economic development strategies:

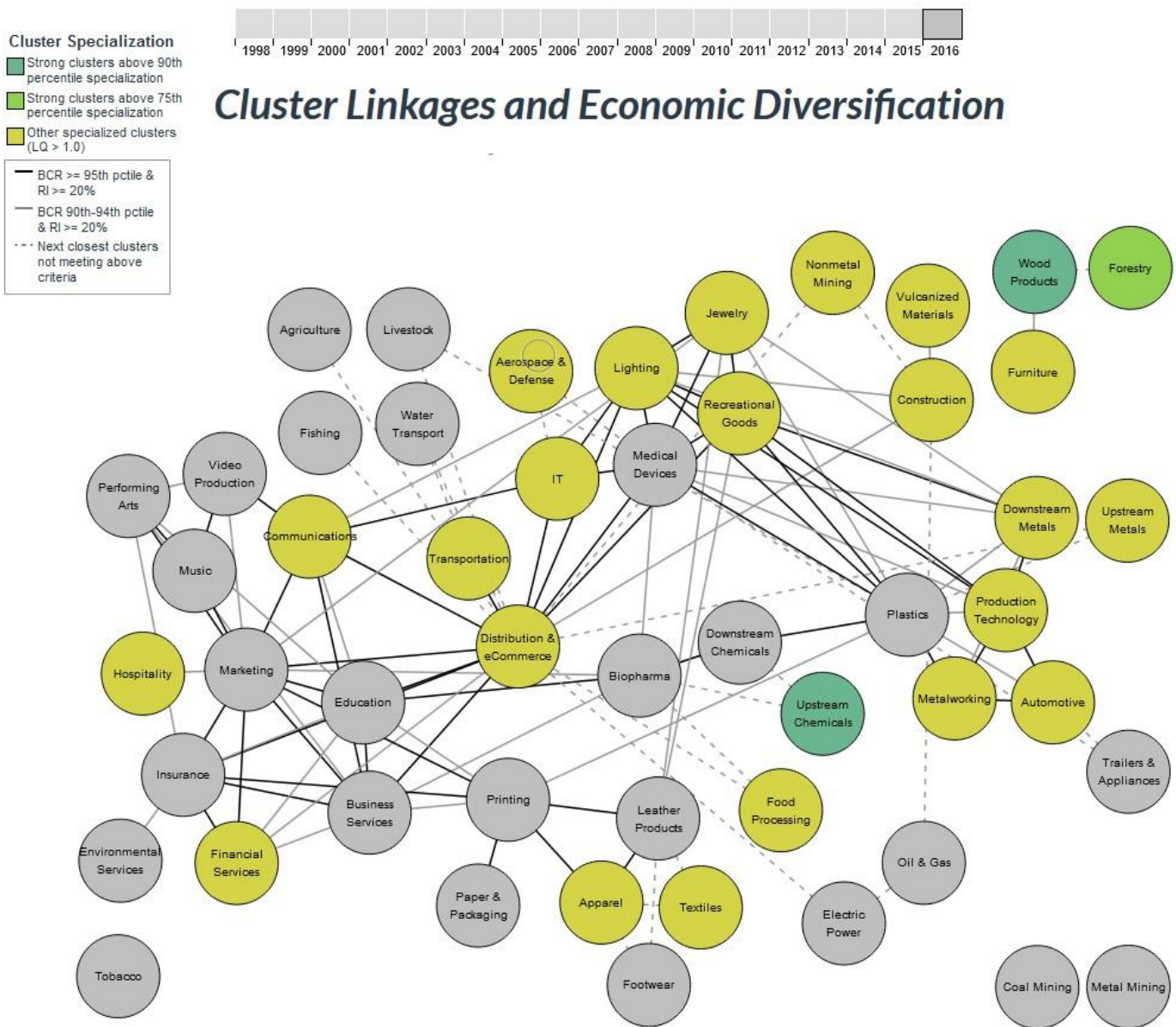
*Build on the unique strengths of their regions rather than try to be like other regions.* Different regions have different sets of economic development opportunities. Not every place can or should become another Silicon Valley.

*Go beyond analysis and engage in dialogue with cluster members.* Many policymakers and practitioners treat research on and analysis of clusters as the only elements of a cluster strategy. In fact, they are only a starting point for a cluster strategy. Identifying a cluster's competitive strengths and needs requires an ongoing dialogue with the firms and other economic actors in the cluster. Although the public sector cannot be the exclusive driver of cluster policy, it can play a central role in convening cluster members and working with private-sector cluster organizations.

*Develop different strategies for different clusters.* Clusters vary from industry to industry and from place to place and operate in many different dimensions. Different clusters have different needs. There is no one set of policies that will make all clusters successful. For example, a technology cluster may require help with research or capital, while a metals industry cluster may require assistance with job training or technology deployment.

Foster an environment that helps new clusters emerge rather than creating a specific cluster from scratch. It is difficult for public policy to create new clusters deliberately. Instead, policymakers and practitioners should promote and maintain the economic conditions that enable new clusters to emerge. Such an environment might, for example, support knowledge creation, entrepreneurship, new firm formation, and the availability of capital. Cluster policy is not about “picking winners” or excluding industries.

The below graphic from Harvard Business School provides a visualization of south central Missouri clusters (in yellow and green) and how they are related to other economic clusters.



## IV. ECONOMIC S.W.O.T. ANALYSIS

Successful rural economic developers are increasingly using an approach known as *CED*, or Community Economic Development. *CED* is a team-oriented process that blends social and economic development to foster the economic, social, ecological and cultural well-being of communities.

This alternative to conventional economic development seeks to address the root problems facing communities by capitalizing on regional assets and implementing community development programs—thereby improving an area’s livability resulting in population growth, increased tourism spending, larger investments and ultimately enhanced economic development.

This CEDS utilizes this comprehensive approach to economic development by analyzing various segments of community development that blend together to affect the economic vitality of south central Missouri.



## RESULTS of CEDS COMMITTEE REGIONAL S.W.O.T. ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p>Low cost of living index</p> <p>Above-average high school graduation rates</p> <p>Proximity to outstanding natural resources</p> <p>Low crime rates</p> <p>Low cost of land for residential and commercial growth</p> <p>Growth of healthcare industry to serve aging population</p> <p>Strong volunteer community</p> <p>Regional airport</p> <p>Strong faith-based community</p>	<p>Low population density</p> <p>Small tax bases</p> <p>Lack of available or affordable high speed internet</p> <p>Inadequate housing stock for low-to-moderate income families</p> <p>Limited rail connectivity</p> <p>Locals resistant to change</p> <p>Limited food options</p> <p>Limited ability/willingness to coordinate efforts and resources</p> <p>Access to reliable demographic, social and economic data</p>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p>Downtown Revitalization</p> <p>Expanded Mass Transit</p> <p>Regional branding or marketing campaigns</p> <p>“Buy-Local” campaigns</p> <p>Aging workforce may lead to an improved job market over time</p> <p>Expansion of leading industry clusters</p> <p>Expansion of internet connectivity</p> <p>Growth of healthcare industry to serve aging population</p> <p>Augment strategic planning in the region</p> <p>Improved access to capital</p> <p>Small business and entrepreneurial technical assistance</p>	<p>Aging and failing infrastructure</p> <p>Low college graduation rates</p> <p>Long commutes</p> <p>Overall health of population (obesity)</p> <p>Region not nationally known/recognized in positive way</p> <p>Teacher recruitment</p> <p>Physician recruitment/retention</p> <p>Lack of participation in local government</p> <p>Dependency on debt</p> <p>Generational poverty</p>



## 1. EDUCATION and WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Educational institutions create the foundations upon which the economy can build. Within the South Central Ozark Council of Governments planning area there are numerous education facilities that are working to provide current and potential employers with a responsive workforce.

Missouri State University at West Plains offers educational programs that meet a wide range of needs. For over 50 years, the college has grown to offer a liberal arts transfer curriculum at the freshman and sophomore levels and selected occupational programs, as well as extended learning opportunities through online courses and campuses in Mountain Grove and in Dalian, China, the latter of which is made possible through Missouri State University's existing branch campus at LNU.



Lybyer Enhanced Technology Center - Missouri State University-West Plains

Distinct strengths of the college are its education (teachers) program, computer and information technology program, and nursing program. The latter is highlighted by a recent partnership formed with the Ozark Medical Center, the region's largest hospital and largest employer, to utilize MSU-WPs nursing program to assist OMC in workforce development.

MSU-WP also provides advanced technical training through the Greater Ozarks Center for Advanced Technology (GOCAT), an exciting partnership between the University, the City of West Plains and the West Plains R-7 School District's South Central Career Center.



Greater Ozarks Center for Advanced Technology - West Plains

Courses offered at GOCAT within the degree and certificate programs include electronics and electricity, machining, computer aided design/computer aided manufacturing (CAD/CAM), Programmable Logic Controllers (PLC's), controllers, robotics, hydraulics, welding and more. Graduates will be ready to pursue entry-level careers in various industries and occupations such as electrician technician; installation, maintenance and repair worker; welder; electronics technician; robotics programmer; millwright and many other opportunities.

The center has a wide variety of programs and courses to improve productivity in business and industry. The Workplace Employability Skills certificate provides the opportunity for students to develop interpersonal skills, problem-solving, ethical decision making and communication skills. Additional programs in leadership, computer applications and customer service are just a sampling of other training the center can provide.

Economic Development officials in Texas County have made significant advances in the development of their own technical training center. The Piney River Technical Institute, located in downtown Houston, is progressing through a two-phased development. Phase one consisted of providing

accommodations for the Drury University (Springfield) Nursing Program which contributes to area workforce development and provides local healthcare providers with desperately needed staffing. Phase two will be focused on advanced manufacturing training to support local firms with a steady supply of skilled local workers who have undergone customized training. Grant funding is being sought by the City of Houston to assist with the construction of phase two at Piney River Tech.



### *MISSOURI CERTIFIED WORK READY COMMUNITIES*

The Work Ready Community initiative in Missouri is an effort to align workforce and education to meet the economic needs of the state and local communities. It is guided by key community leaders (elected officials, economic development, business leaders, chambers of commerce, educators and workforce development, in each county).

The vision for Work Ready Communities is to attract, retain, and develop a workforce with education and fundamental



skills- Workplace Documents, Applied Math and Graphic Literacy – to succeed in the 21st Century. Having certified Work Ready Communities in the state will result in strengthening existing businesses,

attracting new businesses, growing jobs and developing a strong talent pipeline for the state’s future growth nationally and globally.

Within the SCOCOG region, six of the seven counties have successfully completed the Work Ready Certification Process. Only Wright County remains as ACT uncertified—however local officials are working toward the designation, and as of the last reported update the county stands at 86% completion.

<b>OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN EDUCATION and WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT</b>
Creation and expansion of technical training centers
Utilize existing A+ programs at high schools around the region
Market and Utilize the “Fast Track” tuition program
Seek out forms of tuition assistance
Support the establishment and expansion of daycare centers
Promote registered apprenticeships
Promote the importance of improved ‘soft skills’ within our workforce
Better market what assistance programs are currently available
Destigmatize factory work

## 2. SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

[According to the Small Business Administration](#), small companies create 1.5 million jobs annually and account for 64% of new jobs created in the United States. Small businesses drive the economy's engine, the argument goes, and do more than any other business segment to spur jobs and growth.

The proliferation of small, local owned businesses is a proven strategy in rural economic development. Business ownership is an opportunity for wealth generation and tax-base growth that can be supported in many ways through modest public investments.

Within the region, a variety of assistance programs are available for small business owners and prospective entrepreneurs.

There are a variety of loan programs available within the region to assist small business development. These funds can be leveraged for business startup and expansion. All are RLFs and none would be considered venture capital. These RLFs are managed by different entities, including South Central Ozarks Council of Governments, electric co-ops and the Ozarks Small Business Incubator.

The South Central Ozarks Council of Governments (SCOCOG) manages two revolving loan funds. The first is the Economic Development Administration Revolving Loan Fund, which is governed by the EDA. The cities of Cabool, Gainesville, Thayer, West Plains and Mountain Grove contributed to the initial capitalization of this fund. The seven county presiding commissioners and each city, listed above, has a representative that sits on the board. As of August 2019, the available loan pool was \$235,029. Loans can be made up to a maximum of \$100,000 at 5% interest for 7 years. One full-time job must be created for every \$10,000 borrowed. Funds can be used for acquisition and rehabilitation of an existing building, construction of a new building, infrastructure improvement, site preparation, land acquisition, machinery/equipment, working capital, and educational training. Loan collateral includes real estate and business equipment and inventory. Minimum credit score is 600; minimum loan to value 85% and minimum DSCR 1.20.

The second fund managed by SCOCOG is the Microenterprise-Revolving Loan Fund. This revolving loan fund was initially funded by a Community Development Block Grant. Those funds have since revolved through and SCOCOG is in complete control of this fund without any governmental oversight. There is approximately \$127,700 in this loan pool. Maximum loan amount is \$100,000. Eligible uses, interest rate and terms are identical to the EDA Revolving Loan Fund as is the credit score and special qualifiers. Information about both revolving loan funds can be found on SCOCOG's website at [www.scocog.org](http://www.scocog.org).

Howell Oregon Electric Cooperative (HOEC) serves the counties of Howell and Oregon, and parts of Shannon, Douglas, Texas and Ozark counties. HOEC also manages a revolving loan fund. The maximum amount available if all outstanding loans are paid back is \$840,000. There is no maximum

loan amount, but loans generally do not exceed \$200,000. There is no minimum credit score. Loans must be secured by an irrevocable letter of credit provided by a bank. Terms can be extended up to 10 years and not beyond. Interest rates are fixed at 1 percent below prime. Loans cannot be used for refinancing of existing debt. Job creation is not required, but is desired; however, funds are not tied to specific number of jobs created. Currently, there is only one outstanding loan. Howell Oregon Electric Co-op does not have a formal loan application process and there is no information about the loan program on their website

Intercounty Electric Cooperative serves the counties of Texas, Shannon and some of Wright. Business owners in these counties may be eligible for a loan through Intercounty Electric Cooperative Association Revolving Loan Fund. Eligible projects for loans can include any community or economic development project that benefits the local communities, such as new or expanding businesses, non-profit groups, and city or county governments. Eligible uses of funds include land purchases, machinery and equipment, fixed assets and buildings. The maximum loan amount is \$300,000 and the minimum is \$5,000. Term of loan is not to exceed 10 years. Interest rate is 1%. Loans must be collateralized or an irrevocable letter of credit provided. Twenty percent of all RLF projects must come from another source. Projects are decided based of the probability of success, benefit to the rural area, number of jobs created or retained, and diversification of the economy, quality job creation, and impact on the overall community. Information regarding this revolving loan fund can be found on Intercounty's website at [www.ieca.coop/revolving-loan-fund](http://www.ieca.coop/revolving-loan-fund) No information on the size of the loan pool could be found.

The Ozarks Small Business Incubator manages two revolving loan funds that service the entire seven county south central region of Missouri. One loan fund covers the entire region and another is set aside just for Oregon County and Mammoth Spring, AR. The only difference in the later loan is that one job must be created for every \$10,000 borrowed. Currently there is \$170,000 available in the OzSBI loan fund. The total loan pool is approximately \$336,000. The Oregon County/Mammoth Spring RLF is funded as loans are made. For both loans, the maximum loan amount is \$25,000 and the minimum is \$2,500. Maximum term is 10 years and interest is 1% over prime. For-profit businesses may apply for a direct loan, seed capital or gap financing. Eligible uses include purchase of equipment, furniture, fixtures, inventory and supplies, working capital, training, and real

estate. Loans are only available to provide up to a maximum of 80% of the total project cost. Information regarding OzSBI's loan fund is available at [www.ozsbi.com/money](http://www.ozsbi.com/money).

Wright County Industrial Development Authority also has a loan program. Funds are generated from tipping fees at the landfill in Hartville. The IDA helps new and existing businesses relocate to Wright County or grow and expand within the County by offering loans to assist with financing. There is no information on their website, [www.wrightcountymo.com](http://www.wrightcountymo.com), regarding the loan program. Instead you are directed to call the Wright County IDA for an application.

### *Ozarks Small Business Incubator (OzSBI)*

Located in downtown West Plains, the OzSBI serves the entire seven county South Central Ozarks region, providing business support services that accelerates the successful development of new and growing companies. It is a multitenant building that provides entrepreneurs with shared resources, such as clerical support and office equipment, managerial and technical assistance, and access to financial resources.

The OzSBI was built through a public-private partnership. The Incubator has received \$2 million dollars of state and federal grants to transform an historic brick building on Washington Avenue in downtown West Plains into the region's leading center for entrepreneurship.

Small business incubator programs are proven to graduate strong, self-supporting firms into their communities. These firms purchase, build or rent space, and create new jobs. They also create secondary jobs, improve the tax base, and contribute to a climate conducive to entrepreneurs.



Ozarks Small Business Incubator – West Plains

Incubators reduce the risks of small business failures by nurturing firms in their start-up years. According to the National Business Incubation Association (NBIA), 87% of firms that graduate from incubators are still in business after five years versus 20% for non-incubator firms. All OzSBI clients are provided access to business support services through Missouri State University-West Plains Small Business and Technology Development Center.

The OzSBI helps grow successful businesses by providing clients the following benefits:

- Reducing start-up costs by providing flexible leases, furnished offices with telephones and broadband access, and shared business equipment—eliminating the need to purchase them upfront
- Developing a sound business plan—the OzSBI will challenge the entrepreneur to examine their business model, to justify their assumptions and work with the client to develop and execute a viable business plan.
- Finding capital and securing funding—the OzSBI team will assist the client in telling their business' story, identify funding resources, and develop a focused approach to raising capital, including access to OzSBI's microloan fund.
- Developing business skills to succeed—providing clients "core" business training and offer ongoing "focused" workshops, business mentors and coaches, and opportunities to network with successful entrepreneurs. (Ozarks Small Business Incubator)

#### *Small Business & Technology Development Center (SBTDC)*

Operating as an office of Missouri State University-West Plains, the SBTDC assists current small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs by providing free, confidential, one-on-one business counseling sessions to its clients. During these counseling sessions, SBTDC staff places an emphasis on what small businesses need to survive and thrive. As an additional service, the Center provides business training seminars that focus on creating an attractive business concept, building a strong organization, developing lasting client relations, and maintaining profitable operations.(MSU-SBTDC) Since 2001, the Center has served over 700 clients producing more than 700 new jobs and retaining nearly 600 jobs and receiving over \$18 million in loans and investments.



<b>OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT</b>
Partner, Support and promote existing small businesses assistance organizations
Promote existing technical assistance
Target microloan programs to high growth potential entities
Creation of an Industrial Incubator
Assist small businesses with finding capital
Promote business transition (succession plans)
Facilitate communication between small business owners

**3. TOURISM**

Identified by the CEDS Advisory Committee as a top priority, promoting our area as an ecotourism and cultural tourism destination is a key component for economic development in our region. Building on local assets is a proven development strategy, and our region is blessed with outstanding natural resources and a unique cultural heritage.

South Central Missouri is home to many beautiful rivers and streams that provide recreation opportunities and should be marketed as such throughout the state and the central United States. These rivers and streams offer superb canoeing and kayaking, exceptional fishing, and stunning scenery winding through dense forests and towering limestone and dolomite bluffs.

Norfolk Lake and Bull Shoals Lake are located in southern Ozark County. These two reservoirs are recognized as two of the cleanest and most pristine water bodies in the central United States and provide outstanding recreation opportunities in the form of boating, fishing, and water sports. Located on the shores of Bull Shoals, the Village of Theodosia holds great potential for development as a tourist destination.



Cross Country Trail Rides - Shannon County

Home to thousands of acres of national forests, the South Central region offers camping, hiking, and trail riding opportunities through some of the most remote and rugged country found outside of the Western United States. In Shannon County, the City of Eminence hosts some of the largest trail rides in the country. With horses and saddles in tow, as many as 10,000

visitors will descend on the community during a trail riding event. The riders traverse numerous trails through the Mark Twain National Forest along the Current and Jacks Fork Rivers taking in all of the beauty our forests have to offer.

The Ozarks are well known for its vibrant fall colors. Foliage viewing is a growing sector of ecotourism that brings thousands of visitors into our seven county area annually. Our most significant destination for fall foliage viewers is the Glade Top Trail in western Ozark County. Offering 47 miles of improved roadway and numerous scenic look outs, the trail offers beautiful vistas for tourists and photographers

On a regional level, additional scenic lookouts should be planned and constructed at strategic locations along rural highways in the seven county region (perhaps serving a dual-purpose as bicycling respites) to provide additional destinations for visitors seeking to view fall colors.



A collection of antique Ozarkian Fishing Gigs

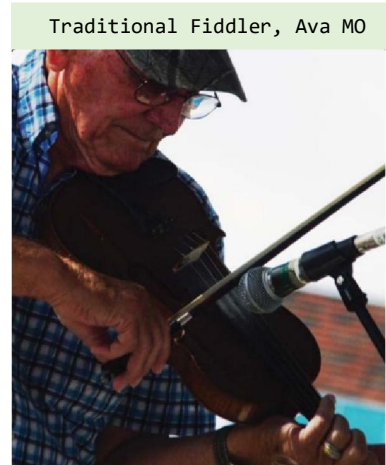
The seven county possesses a wealth of cultural resources. These include historic sites, landmarks, and landscapes such as historic grist mills scattered throughout the area—including picturesque Alley Spring Mill which recently appeared on the U.S. Quarter Dollar, a unique civil war site in Hartville, and the storied Irish Wilderness in Oregon County.



Ozark Quilting Folk Art

Events and gatherings that reflect our regional culture range from *Hootin' and Hollerin'* in Gainesville

and the *Old Time Music & Ozark Heritage Festival* in West Plains to church picnics and impromptu jam sessions. The work of traditional artists, craftspeople, and farmers encompasses quilts, music, furniture, and molasses.



Traditional Fiddler, Ava MO

The establishment of a regional cultural interpretive center would be a transformational project in the effort to realize the tremendous potential for cultural and heritage tourism in the SCOCOG region.

### OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN TOURISM

"Brand" the area to make it identifiable

Revive regional tourism group – O.H.R.

Market unique experiences

Create and distribute tourism promo videos

Target more 'tourism-oriented' small business assistance

Coordinate activities in a thoughtful way – offer trip packages (via chambers)

#### 4 TRANSPORTATION

Transportation infrastructure is one of the most important issues in ensuring a strong regional economy. The ability for manufacturers to efficiently ship their products and receive the raw materials necessary for production, as well the ability of retailers to receive goods, is of the utmost importance. Good transportation infrastructure facilitates commuting of citizens to work and school. Finally, offering beautiful scenic routes is essential to spurring tourism in the seven-county area.

The SCOCOG region enjoys a robust transportation network. Wright, Texas Howell and Shannon counties benefit from access to four-lane US Highway 60, one of the state’s busiest transportation routes. Other major transportation routes include U.S. 63, US Highway 160, MO Route 5, 17 and 19, among others. The region has several general aviation airports: Ava, Cabool, Gainesville, Houston, Mountain View, Thayer, West Plains and Willow Springs, with the largest being the West Plains Regional Airport. The region is served by three primary public transit providers: Ready Transportation Inc., OATS Inc., and Southern Missouri Transportation Service. The Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad traverses Oregon, Howell, Texas and Wright Counties, from the southeast to the northern west, passing through communities such as Thayer, West Plains, Willow Springs, Cabool, Mtn Grove, Norwood and Mansfield.



West Plains Regional Airport Terminal

Transportation mode deficiencies in the region include rail—most railroad spurs in the region have been abandoned many years ago, and navigable waterways—none of the area creeks or rivers are large enough to support navigable transportation routes. The single most impactful transportation project which could transform economic development is the four-laning of US Highway 63 from Oregon County, through Howell and Texas Counties. This project would provide a four lane corridor from the south central Ozarks region north to Interstate 44, one of the heaviest traveled roadways in the country.

## OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN TRANSPORTATION

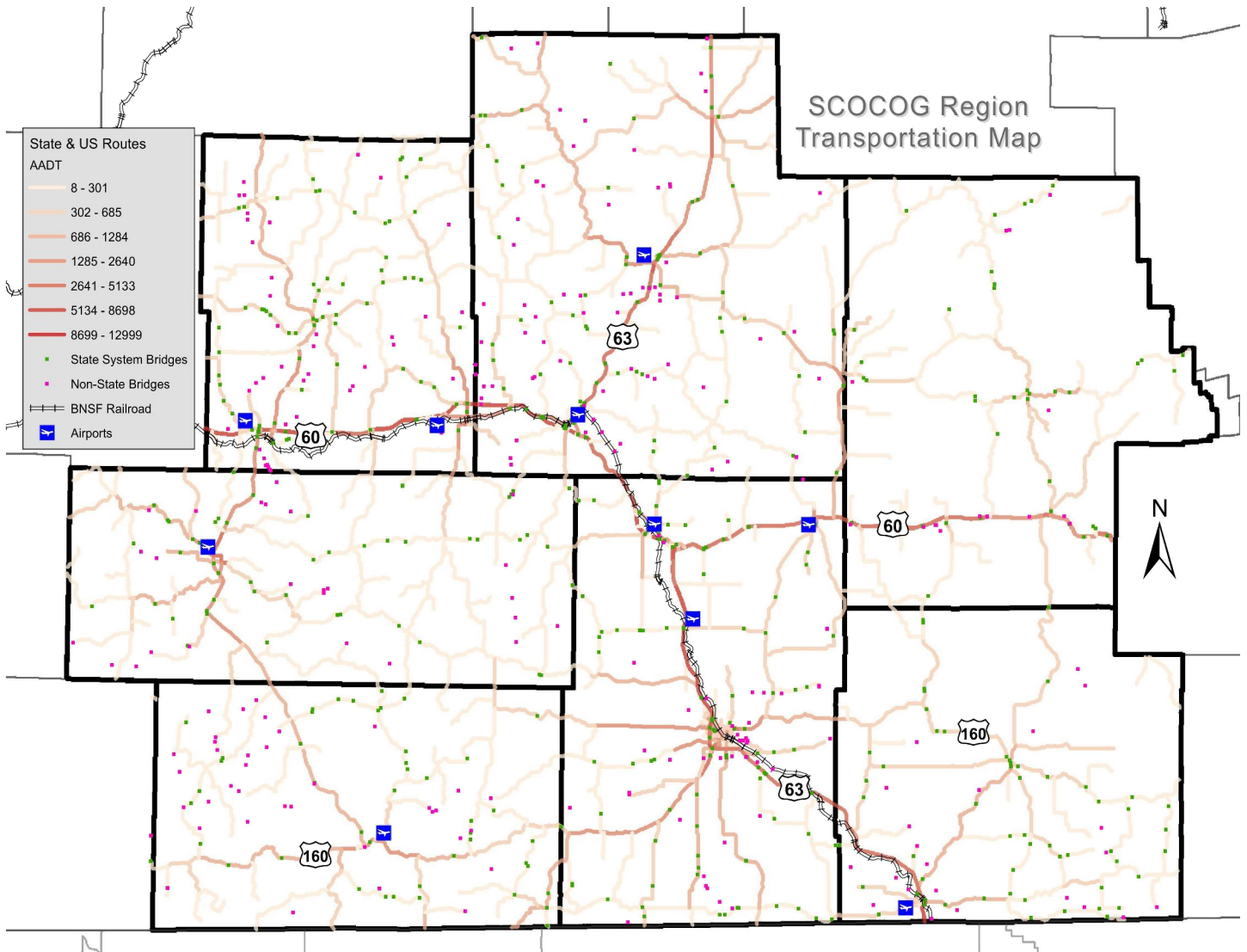
Advocate for the expansion of US 63 to four-lanes from Rolla to the Arkansas state line

Study location and impact of new railroad spurs

Strategic airport expansions

Improve access into and through our region's industrial parks

SCOCOG is designated as a "Transportation Planning Partner" by the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) and is charged with the responsibility of identifying local and regional transportation needs, prioritizing transportation needs, educating the public and general transportation stakeholders about the transportation planning and investment process, and coordinating transportation improvements with local, regional, and state development activities.



## 5. INFRASTRUCTURE

Water and wastewater infrastructure is crucial to not only providing better quality of life for the citizenry of the SCOCOG region, but also in making the area conducive to business and industrial expansion. Providing access to public water and wastewater treatment infrastructure, as well as having the excess capacity to serve the needs of business and industry is an urgent priority for the SCOCOG region.

The South Central Ozark Council of Governments maintains a database of infrastructure project needs among our member communities and counties. This list is continuously updated as projects are funded and completed, and as SCOCOG Planners carry out regular community planning meetings throughout the region. In 2016, SCOCOG implemented a monthly outreach program titled “Community Connect” where planners would engage with one community per month to further our understanding of local needs and priorities. This engagement framework has proven to be very successful and will continue during the five-year planning window of this CEDS update.



<b>OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN INFRASTRUCTURE</b>
Create a strategic 'information distribution' plan for funding assistance availability
Encourage policies that will increase the generation of local revenue
Develop infrastructure in industrial parks to make them more marketable
Work to improve all community's ability to better assess the condition of their infrastructure

Rehabilitation and replacement of aging infrastructure is increasingly necessary to continue providing service to the region’s population. Further, increased excess capacity is vital for economic development activity to occur at the region’s development sites. Several area projects are currently under construction or have been recently funded, these include: Gainesville Wastewater Treatment Facility replacement, Thayer Water Tower & Distribution Line construction, Thayer Sewer Line construction and the Mountain View Wastewater Collection Line improvement project.

*Industrial Parks*

Local industry provides employment for a substantial percentage of the area workforce. Communities in the SCOCOG area realize the importance of industry to the area. To help encourage industry to locate in the area, industrial parks that have building sites and infrastructure capacity available for industrial needs have been developed. There are eight shovel-ready site industrial parks in the South Central Ozark Council of Governments area:

Twin Cities Industrial Park – Cabool/Mtn. Grove	Heritage Business Park – Howell County
Airport Industrial Park – Mtn. Grove	Northeast Industrial Park – Houston
I.D.C. Industrial Park - Ava	I.D.C. Industrial Park - Thayer
South Interchange Industrial Park – Willow Springs	Community Business Park - Winona
I.D.C. Industrial Park – West Plains	Enterprise Park – Mountain View

**6. TECHNOLOGY**

Technological innovation is one of the most important aspects of being competitive in the 21st century economy. Technology is linking the world in ways that were once only dreamed about. However, with this increase in information production and sharing comes the realization that the boundaries of the economy are no longer local, or even regional. The only way to become and remain competitive in this global market is to harness to increased productivity, efficiency, and other benefits of information technology.

A 2016 [study by the Hudson Institute](#) “The Economic Impact of Rural Broadband” estimates the direct and indirect economic effects of the rural telecommunications, or broadband, industry on Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It then examines the economic impact of rural broadband on other industries. Rural broadband services are a necessary input in an economy where the ability to complete a transaction electronically has become indispensable. The economic impact would be greater if broadband was more widespread and as available in rural areas as it is in urban areas. Another economic impact is economic activity foregone because telecommunications capability in some rural areas is below that in urban areas.

Major findings of the study include:

- Rural broadband companies contributed \$24.1 billion to the economies of the states in which they operated in 2015. Of this, \$17.2 billion was through their own operations and \$6.9 billion was through the follow-on impact of their operations. The total represents the amount added to the Gross Domestic Product by this set of firms.
- While the industry produces a range of telecommunications services in rural areas, the economic activity accrues both to the rural areas served and to urban areas as well.
  - More of this benefit goes to urban than rural areas. Only \$8.2 billion, or 34 percent of the \$24.1 billion final economic demand generated by rural telecom companies accrues to rural areas; the other 66 percent or \$15.9 billion accrues to the benefit of urban areas.
- The rural broadband industry supported 69,595 jobs in 2015, both through its own employment and the employment that its purchases of goods and services generated.
  - Jobs supported by economic activity created by rural broadband companies are shared between rural and urban areas. Forty-six percent are in rural areas; 54 percent are in urban areas. A combination of higher wages in the broadband industry and the specialized nature of the inputs used by the industry, inputs that are more likely to be found in urban than rural areas, drives this result.



- Rural broadband supported over \$100 billion in e-commerce in 2015.
  - The largest share was in manufacturing, where a majority of transactions now involve electronic data exchange over broadband networks.
  - Nearly \$10 billion involved retail sales; if broadband had the same reach in rural areas as it does in urban areas, sales would have been at least \$1 billion higher.

The topography of the SCOCOG region presents special challenges; the many hills of the Ozarks make it difficult to provide broadband throughout the entire region. Several counties in the region have large tracts of National Forest resulting in sections of the county with sparse population, and it is difficult and sometimes cost prohibitive to extend broadband to remote areas where there are few residences. Given these obstacles it is critical that outside assistance in funding broadband expansion project be aggressively sought out.

In response to the critical need for expanded broadband, the State of Missouri’s Department of Economic Development has recently established the Governor’s Broadband Grant program. The focus of this grant program is to provide state resources that help providers, communities, counties, and regions invest in building broadband infrastructure in unserved and underserved areas of the state. In the 2019 legislative session, \$5 million was appropriated for the inaugural round of grant funding. The Department of Economic Development will hold one competitive grant round in 2020.

<b>OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN TECHNOLOGY</b>
Need for faster broadband speeds – Promote awareness of availability
Take advantage of the Governor’s Broadband Grant program
Promote tele-health capabilities
Encourage tele-education or distance learning programs
Study the effectiveness of wireless internet providers in rugged regions

## 7. AGRICULTURE and NATURAL RESOURCES

Agriculture in the Ozarks began with subsistence farming. Every family that settled in the area grew what they needed to survive. But, as research expanded agricultural production leading to exports from the region, the focus of agriculture changed too.

There was a time when the Ozarks boasted the largest apple orchard in the Midwest. Southern Missouri was also the tomato canning capital of the world, with farmers throughout the region providing the tomatoes. Strawberry production in the area was nearly as large.

There was a time when the Ozarks was known for its mule breeding. These mules supplied the United States military with needed livestock. During the 1960s and 1970s, the West Plains area boasted that they were the “Feeder Pig Capital of the World.”

Numerous productive dairy farms eventually led to growth in ag-business. Springfield, Missouri—40 miles from the SCOCOG region’s western border—was the hub for Hiland Dairy, Mid-Am (now Dairy Farmers of America), Kraft and others that depended on local dairy production to supply production and power the local economy.



As local family-owned dairies began to close, beef cattle operations and fescue production emerged and dominated agriculture in the Ozarks. Howell County is 3<sup>rd</sup> highest ranked county in the state for beef cow inventory. Texas County ranks 10<sup>th</sup> and Wright County 22<sup>nd</sup> and Douglas County 31<sup>st</sup>. A newer trend seen in the region—many of our counties rank among state leaders in Sheep, goat and wool production.

*NATURAL RESOURCES*

There are a number of significant considerations when looking at the region’s reliance upon its natural resources. The protection of water resources for safe consumption and the sustainment of the region’s tourism industry, the implementation of forest management practices to ensure healthy forests for future recreationists and the critically important forest products economic cluster.



It is expected that SCOCOG will not only be a regional leader in the completion of environmental assessments, but also continue to work with agencies such as the Missouri Department of Conservation, the Department of Natural Resources, the Nature Conservancy and the National Resource Conservation Service to ensure measures are in place to protect vital natural resources.

<b>OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES</b>
DNR to support agriculture through technical assistance and funding programs
Emphasize / promote forest by-products
Construction of Medical marijuana facilities
Promote the importance of riparian area protection
Spur local markets for small farmers through community markets or large food hub facility
Promote small farmer educational and technical assistance workshops

A large group of people is gathered in a conference room, engaged in various conversations. The room has a drop ceiling with circular lights and a patterned carpet. The people are dressed in casual to business-casual attire. The overall atmosphere appears to be a professional meeting or networking event.

PLAN

**INTEGRATION**

## 1. INTEGRATION WITH THE STATE'S ECONOMIC PRIORITIES

The strategic economic development plan for the State of Missouri Department Economic Development: *Best in the Midwest*, developed in 2019 was designed to provide direction to the Department and its staff in guiding the state's economic development efforts with an emphasis on community engagement.

With the intent to ensure a thriving and successful Missouri for the next generation, the initiative focuses expansively on helping Missouri workers access better training and skills in order to find employment and



helping the more than 160,000 Missouri businesses flourish. The DED will conduct an economic analysis to identify the state's opportunities for growth and job creation, study best practices in economic development from across the country and deliver recommendations on how the State can implement the new strategy.

The Best in the Midwest strategy is built around four guiding themes:

1. Laser Focus: Everything the agency does will point toward building stronger communities, infrastructure and a workforce that will support growth and job creation.
2. Customer Centric: Build an incredible team that cares deeply about the people and businesses we serve. Our organization needs to be designed in a way that better supports our customers.
3. Regionally Targeted: The needs across the state's 10 economic regions are different, and the best way for to meet those unique needs is to be present alongside local partners
4. Data Driven: The department cannot afford to wait another 10 years to rethink strategy. There must be a weather eye on the horizon, and action based on the trends that are emerging in the economy.

The South Central Ozark Council of Governments CEDS integrates many of the state's guiding principles for economic development through a number of goals, objectives, and strategies built around the concepts of public engagement, data driven strategies and regionally-minded thinking.

## 2. OTHER PLANS AND STRATEGIES

All seven counties of the SCOCOG region are within the footprint of the Delta Regional Authority (DRA). In 2016 the DRA updated its strategic plan. [The Regional Development Plan 3](#) (RDIII) builds and expands upon RDP II, the strategic plan which has guided the agency's priorities and actions since 2008. RDP III will now guide the region's economic growth over a five year planning horizon. In collaboration with stakeholders and community leaders across the region, through a series of facilitated listening sessions and virtual webinars, the plan identifies three agency goals that DRA will work toward with the guiding principles of collaboration, leadership, and innovation:

**GOAL 1. IMPROVED WORKFORCE COMPETITIVENESS:** Advance the productivity and economic competitiveness of the Delta workforce.

- Build on the momentum of the Reimagining the Delta Workforce initiative to create a strong pipeline of skilled workers that will support and attract current and future employers in the Delta region.
- Improve the workforce readiness of the region's K-12 students and adult population by increasing the number of internships, apprenticeships, work co-op programs, and other initiatives, with a focus on soft skills and employability.
- Create awareness of opportunities in Delta communities to attract talent from outside of the region.
- Continue initiatives to improve the health and wellness of the Delta workforce to elevate the productivity and competitiveness of the region's employers.
- Pursue strategic initiatives to better leverage and connect the Delta region's higher education institutions for workforce development and economic development.

**GOAL 2. STRENGTHENED INFRASTRUCTURE:** Strengthen the Delta's physical, digital, and capital connections to the global economy.

- Build and strengthen the region's basic infrastructure (water, wastewater, electricity, and gas) to stimulate job growth and capital investment.
- Make strategic investments in the region's transportation infrastructure (e.g. highways, railroads, ports, waterways, and airports) to support the growth of key industries.
- Expand and improve access to affordable digital infrastructure (e.g. broadband internet, cellular, and satellite access) across the region, especially in areas where it is currently deficient.
- Support state and local economic development organizations and local development districts in their efforts to put in place deal-ready sites for business recruitment and expansion projects.
- Improve capital access throughout the Delta, especially in non-urban areas where it is lacking most.

**GOAL 3. INCREASED COMMUNITY CAPACITY:** Facilitate local capacity building within Delta communities, organizations, businesses, and individuals.

- Develop new strategic initiatives and continue existing programs that build capacity among local leaders in Delta communities.
- Emphasize programs and investments to advance entrepreneurship and high-growth business development in Delta communities, ensuring the unique innovation assets found within the region's urban areas are leveraged to benefit the entire region, including rural areas.
- Continue to work with the White House Rural Council to support and expand initiatives that further the DRA's and the Administration's shared priorities.
- Enrich the quality of place of Delta communities through creative place-making.
- Encourage initiatives centered on social innovation, social entrepreneurship, and social equity to address critical challenges facing Delta communities while also providing opportunities to attract and retain talent.

#### *South Central Ozark Regional Transportation Plan*

Transportation is vital in rural areas. Access to basic needs such as food and housing, and to public services, requires a well-functioning network of integrated transportation systems. Transportation contributes to rural economic development by providing a link to jobs, offering businesses access to customers and enhancing the movement of commercial products. The Regional Transportation Plan for the South Central Ozarks area serves as a "blueprint" for transportation in the seven-county region. It is a guide for developing a transportation system that is accessible, safe, and contributes to a higher quality of life for the region's citizens. The regional transportation system in the South Central Ozarks impacts those who live, work, visit, or simply pass through our region.

An effective transportation system contributes to a strong economy, a healthy environment, an equitable society, and a high quality of living. SCOCOG participates in building consensus about how to best maintain and enhance the region's transportation system for the future. SCOCOG partners with local elected officials and state and regional transportation agencies to seek input from local stakeholders, including the public, business community, and special interest groups to develop a comprehensive understanding of transportation concerns.

### 3. DISASTER MITIGATION & ECONOMIC RESILIENCY

#### *DISASTER MITIGATION*

When Mother Nature chooses to display her remarkable capacity for destruction, there is little we can do but pick up the pieces afterward. In the south central Missouri region, natural disasters—flooding, tornadoes, winter storms, and the occasional drought—routinely threaten and interrupt the lives of the region’s citizens. When such a natural disaster strikes, the area relies on a variety of emergency funding sources for clean-up and recovery. These include both federal and non-federal funds that must be secured quickly and administered efficiently. An efficient response in the aftermath of disaster is only half of the complete community effort to protect itself against threats; proper education and preparation, coupled with effective hazard mitigation plans, constitute the other half. The staff of the South Central Ozark Council of Governments is continuously looking to implement permanent improvements to infrastructure, upgrades for emergency response systems, and increase the knowledge about how best to prepare for and anticipate the most common natural disasters in the SCOCOG area. Such progress is in hopes of creating communities that are aware and prepared.



2017 Flash Flooding, West Plains

A key component of disaster resiliency is Hazard Mitigation Planning. In the SCOCOG region, we have developed [Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plans](#) for each county to provide communities a road map for prevention—preventing loss of life, preventing property damages, preventing damage to critical infrastructures, and preventing economic loss. Hazard mitigation is a proactive measure that all local, regional, state, and even national entities should adopt. An additional benefit for the participating jurisdictions in our region for having a current Hazard Mitigation Plan is maintaining eligibility for implementation grants through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).



2017 Flash Flooding, West Plains



## ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

It is becoming increasingly apparent that regional economic prosperity is linked to an area's ability to prevent, withstand, and quickly recover from major disruptions (i.e., 'shocks') to its economic base. Many definitions of economic resilience limit its focus on the ability to quickly recover from a disruption. However, in the context of economic development, economic resilience becomes inclusive of three primary attributes: the ability to recover quickly from a shock, the ability to withstand a shock, and the ability to avoid the shock altogether. Establishing economic resilience in a local or regional economy requires the ability to anticipate risk, evaluate how that risk can impact key economic assets, and build a responsive capacity. Often, the shocks/disruptions to the economic base of an area or region are manifested in three ways:

- Downturns or other significant events in the national or international economy which impact demand for locally produced goods and consumer spending;
- Downturns in particular industries that constitute a critical component of the region's economic activity; and/or
- Other external shocks (a natural or man-made disaster, closure of a military base, exit of a major employer, the impacts of climate change, etc.).

At the regional or community level, economic development practitioners are instrumental in building the capacity for economic resilience. Economic development professionals and organizations often become the focal point for post-incident coordination, information dissemination, responding to external inquiries, and the lead grant administrator for federally-funded recovery initiatives.

In building economic resilience, it is critical that economic development organizations consider their role in the pre- and post-incident environment to include *steady-state* and *responsive* initiatives.

Steady-state initiatives tend to be long-term efforts that seek to bolster the community or region's ability to withstand or avoid a shock. Responsive initiatives can include establishing capabilities for the economic development organization to be responsive to the region's recovery needs following an incident. <https://www.eda.gov/ceds/content/economic-resilience.htm>

The South Central Ozark CEDS Advisory Committee has identified a number steady-state and responsive resilience initiatives within the ensuing action plan:



ACTION

**PLAN**

## IV. ACTION PLAN

**Vision:** Contribute to the advancement of the various factors that impact our region’s quality of life *and* place—in a calculated effort—to ensure the South Central Missouri Region is an attractive and desirable place to live, work, and visit.

### GOAL 1: Develop a Diverse and Stable Local Economy

**OBJECTIVE 1:** Attract and retain business and industry to achieve regional economic growth and stability.

#### STRATEGIES:

- Promote regionally government programs, both state and federal, that stimulate economic growth and development.
- Support the expansion of broadband technology and infrastructure throughout the region.
- Identify gaps industrial site infrastructure and work with local governments and utility providers to extend infrastructure to fill the gaps.
- Support initiatives for existing industries and small businesses through the use of revolving loan funds, state incentive programs, and federal loan and guarantee programs.
- Undertaking efforts to broaden the industrial base with diversification initiatives, such as targeting the development of emerging clusters or industries that (a) build on the region’s unique assets and competitive strengths; and (b) provide stability during downturns that disproportionately impact any single cluster or industry.

The *Vision, Goals, Objectives, and Strategies* contained in this Action Plan were identified and developed during the rewrite of the South Central Ozark Council of Governments Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. SCOCOG will continue to utilize the goals, objectives, and strategies to prioritize programs and projects for the region.

The Economic Development Goals have been prioritized in order of importance by the Comprehensive Economic Development Advisory Committee. This guidance will provide a framework for the Council of Governments as we development our work plan over this CEDS Update Planning Horizon.

The South Central Ozark Council of Governments Board of Directors strives to develop and implement strategies that are achievable with the resources that already exist in the region. Additionally, the region as a whole continually monitors the progress of goal attainment and explores methods to expand the availability of resources.

- Support the creation of business incubators to support entrepreneurs.
- Engage in comprehensive planning efforts that involve extensive involvement from the community to define and implement a collective vision for resilience that includes the integration and/or alignment of other planning efforts (e.g., hazard mitigation plans) and funding sources.

**PARTNER ENTITIES:** South Central Ozark Council of Governments, State and Federal Partners, Local Economic Development Practitioners, Private Industry Representatives, OzSBI

**OBJECTIVE 2:** Support activities and developments that will increase tourism employment and expenditures

**STRATEGIES:**

- Promote tourism-related businesses including those associated with outdoor recreation, geo-tourism and cultural tourism.
- Promote the expansions of local sports parks and recreation facilities.
- Support the restart of the Ozark Heritage Region tourism marketing organization
- Support activities and developments that will increase tourism employment and expenditures

**PARTNER ENTITIES:** South Central Ozark Council of Governments; Missouri Department of Tourism; Federal Partners: USDA-Rural Development and the Dept. of the Interior; Local Chambers of Commerce, Local Governments, Private Sector; Missouri Department of Conservation



## GOAL 2: Develop Robust and Sustainable Physical Infrastructure

**OBJECTIVE:** Attract state and federal investments to partner with locally generated funds to make improvements to public infrastructure in terms of capacity, efficiency and disaster resiliency.

### STRATEGIES:

- Promote government programs, both state and federal, that provide investment into public infrastructure systems
- Assist in preparation of regional transportation improvement programs, which emphasize prioritization of major improvements, establishment of better maintenance procedures, and upgrading of unimproved roads and bridges.
- Advocate for increase funding for disaster mitigation and resiliency projects. Develop and deliver projects that improve disaster resilience of public infrastructure
- Provide member counties and communities assistance by writing appropriate grants.
- Promote further development of *access infrastructure* needed to enhance recreation opportunities and support our tourism industry throughout the region.
- Encourage investment in the improvement of existing industrial parks and support the development of new, high quality industrial and business parks.
- Endorse the expansion rail service facilities and freight terminal facilities in the region.

**PARTNER ENTITIES:** South Central Ozark Council of Governments; Local Governments and Public Works Officials, Missouri Rural Water Association, Missouri Department of Transportation, Department of Economic Development – CDBG Program, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, State Revolving Loan Fund, USDA-Rural Development

### GOAL 3: Build Strong Regional Partnerships

**OBJECTIVE:** Foster understanding and close working relationships with area agencies involved in community and economic development work.

**STRATEGIES:**

- Support industrial development organizations, local chambers of commerce, financial institutions and the Ozark Heritage Region group so they may attract new industries and expand existing industries
- Support efforts to increase economic opportunity and market access through cooperative marketing of the region's assets.
- Assist local schools in obtaining funding for structural and technology upgrades in an effort to modernize their campuses.
- Participate in the facilitation of the local COAD (Community Organizations Active in Disaster) to further pre-disaster recovery planning in an effort to bolster economic resilience.
- Encourage the establishment of local and regional organizations to develop alternative modes of transportation and operate public transit services.
- Support the development of elderly care facilities in the region.
- Support the development of projects for agencies in the region that work to provide assistance, care or respite to vulnerable populations in the region.

**PARTNER ENTITIES:** South Central Ozark Council of Governments, Ozark Action – Community Action Agency, South Central Workforce Investment Board, South Central Career Center, Civic Groups and Organizations, Local Industrial Development Corporations and Development Authorities, Ozark Heritage Region, OATS Inc., South Missouri Transportation Service, County Health Departments

## **GOAL 4: Cultivate a skilled and well-educated workforce**

**OBJECTIVE:** Increase enrollment and graduation rates at area colleges, vocational and trade schools.

### **STRATEGIES:**

- Promote government programs, both state and federal, that assist in workforce development
- Promote the efforts of the WIB to ensure a skilled workforce comprised of local residents is available for employment opportunities.
- Support the expansion of vocational education and training programs consistent with existing and anticipated job opportunities in the region.
- Promote a resilient workforce that can better shift between jobs or industries when their core employment is threatened through job-driven skills strategies and support organizations.
- Enhance distance learning capabilities throughout the region.
- Encourage the availability of affordable daycare facilities throughout the region to assist those who need childcare in order to work.

**PARTNER ENTITIES:** South Central Ozark Council of Governments, South Central Workforce Investment Board, South Central Career Center, Piney River Technical Institute, Greater Ozark Center for Advanced Training (GOCAT), Missouri State University-West Plains, Area Public Schools; Area High Speed Internet Providers, Private Sector Childcare



PERFORMANCE  
**MEASURES**

OZARKS  
SMALL  
BUSINESS  
INCUBATOR

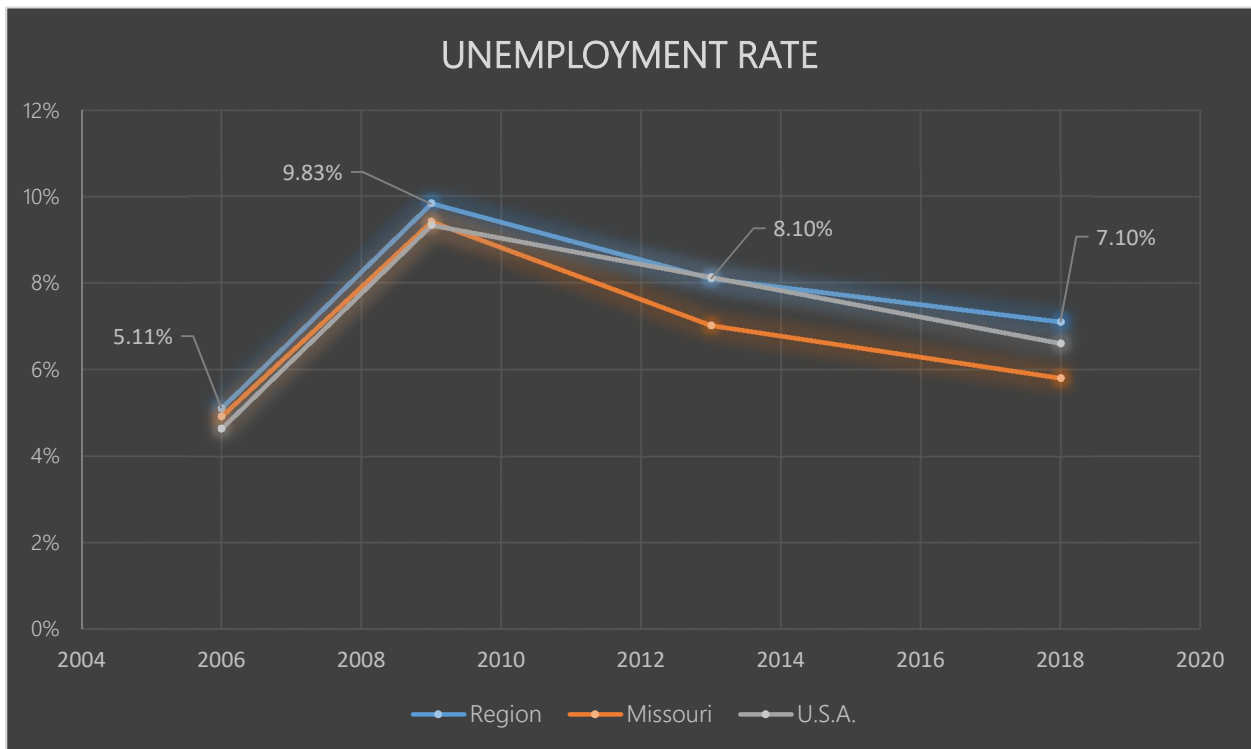


## V. PERFORMANCE MEASURES

This strategic plan will be reviewed annually and an update will be published with changes being addressed. This annual review will be accompanied by a CEDS performance evaluation. Project implementation and completion is one example of the region meeting the economic development goals and objectives, another is tracking the status of specific economic and social data trends. Below are the indicators that will be used to evaluate the progress and success of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy within its five-year planning horizon.

### A. UNEMPLOYMENT

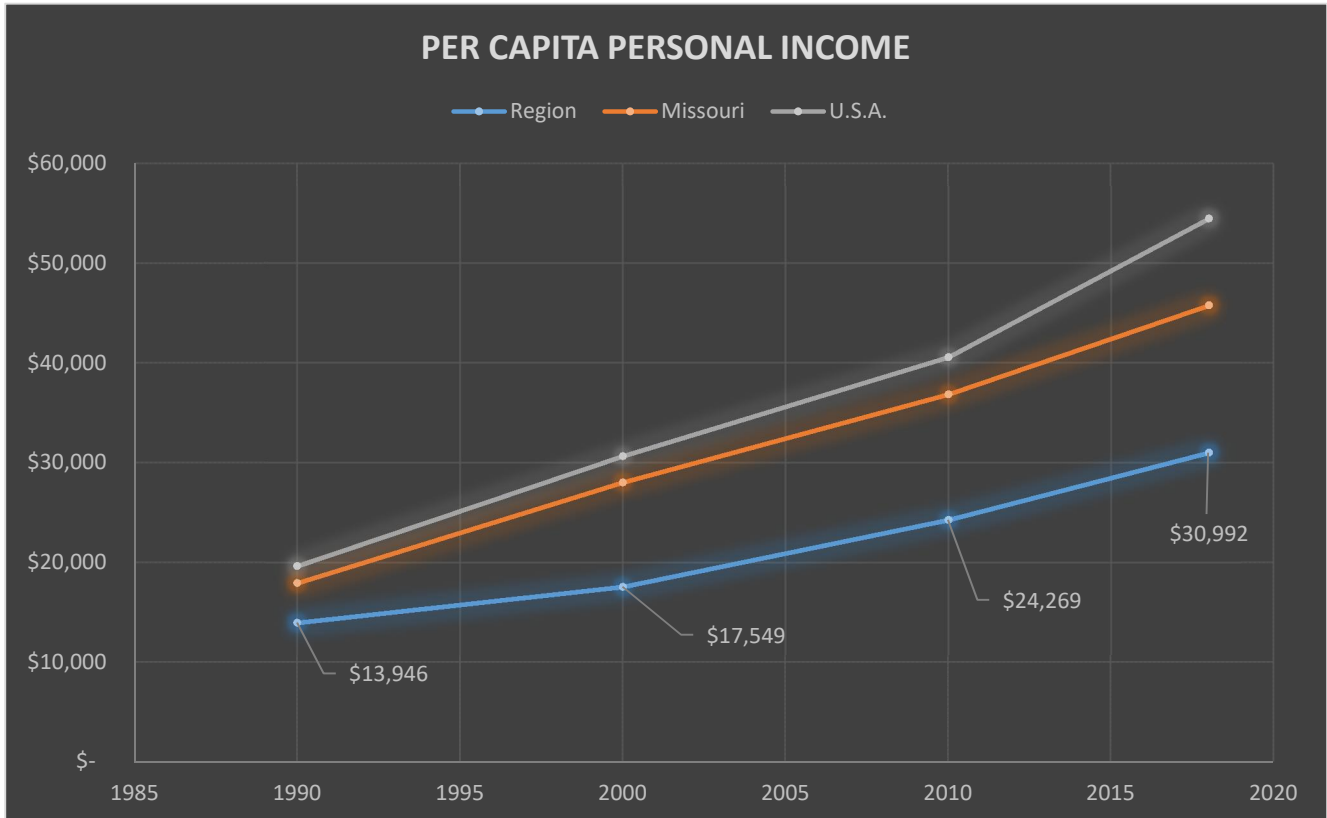
The Council of Governments must consider a variety of performance measures in evaluating trends in the local economy. Among the measures, the level of unemployment is perhaps the most prominent and universally considered. Comparisons of the regional, state and national unemployment rates can provide an assessment of a region's overall economic condition. With this in mind, the SCOCOG region seeks to mitigate unemployment and work toward a diverse and robust economy.



**GOAL:** Continue the trend of decreasing unemployment rates and attempt to close the gap between the unemployment rates of the region, state and national levels.

## B. PER CAPITA PERSONAL INCOME

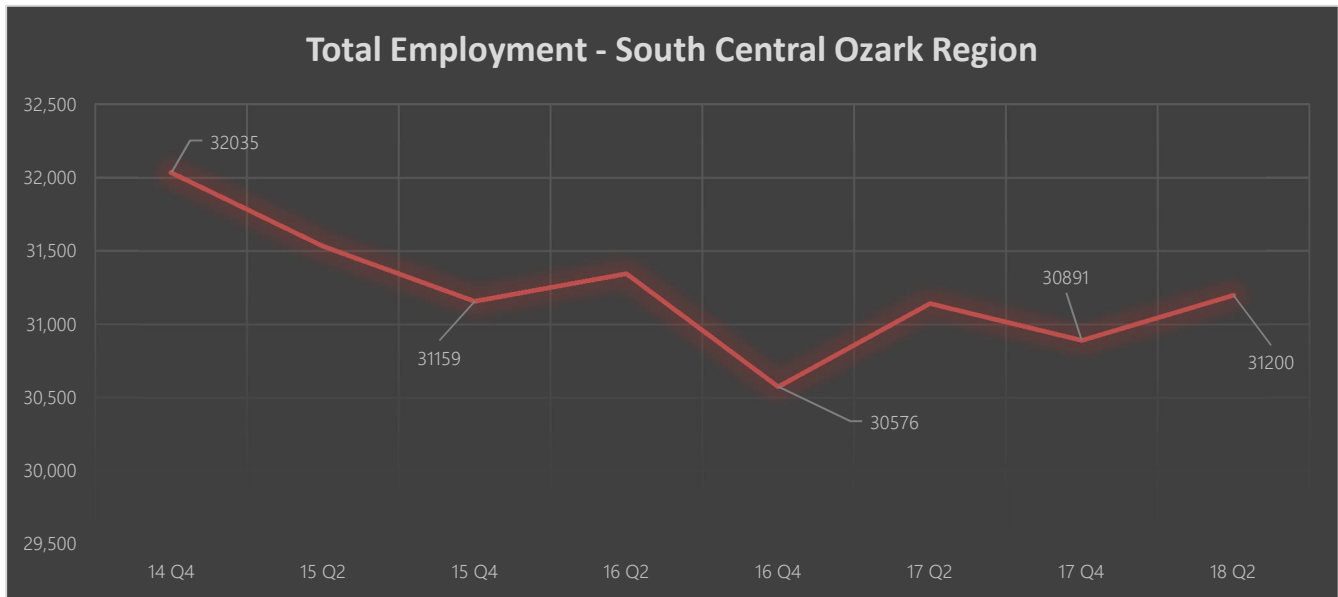
According to the 2018 census, the PCPI in the State of Missouri, \$45,744 is 84 percent of the U.S. per capita income of \$54,446. The PCPI of the SCOCOG region, \$30,992, currently stands at 68 percent of the Missouri median income, and only 57 percent of the national figure.



**GOAL:** Continue the increases in per capita income regionally and begin to close the gap with the state and national PCPI levels.

### C. JOB CREATION

Utilizing the Quarterly Workforce Indicators (QWI) through the Longitudinal Employer- Household Dynamics (LEHD) <https://lehd.ces.census.gov/data/> we can track the total employment within the seven county region. The source data for the QWI is the LEHD linked employer-employee microdata. The LEHD data is massive longitudinal database covering over 95% of U.S. private sector jobs. The latest available data is three quarters behind the production quarter.



**GOAL:** Continue positive regional net employment, which has been occurring since the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter of 2016, when the region reached a five-year low of 30,576 employees.



PLAN  
**APPENDICES**

## SCOCOG EDD Full Board of Directors

*Revised 10-2019***1. GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES (51-65%) 25 – 32 Members***Elected officials and/or employees of a general-purpose unit of state, local or Indian tribal government who have been appointed to represent the local government.*

	Name	Government	Position	Count
1	Lance Stillings	Douglas County	Presiding Commissioner	1
2	Mark Collins	Howell County	Presiding Commissioner	2
3	Patrick Ledgerwood	Oregon County	Presiding Commissioner	**
4	John Turner	Ozark County	Presiding Commissioner	3
5	Jeff Cowen	Shannon County	Presiding Commissioner	4
6	Scott Long	Texas County	Presiding Commissioner	5
7	Zachary Williams	Wright County	Presiding Commissioner	6
8	Burrely Loftin	City of Ava	Mayor	7
9	Linda Bunch	City of Brandsville	Mayor	8
10	Paul O'Brien	City of Mountain View	Mayor Pro Tem	9
11	Jack Pahlmann	City of West Plains	Mayor	10
12	Brooke Fair	City of Willow Springs	Mayor	11
13	Paul Haddock	City of Alton	Mayor	12
14	George Hunt*	City of Koshkonong	Mayor	13
15	Ken Cotham	City of Thayer	Mayor	14
16	Tony Johnson	Village of Bakersfield	Mayor	15
17	Deanna Gail Reich	City of Gainesville	Mayor	16
18	Paul Dettinger	Village of Theodosia	Chairman of the Board	17
19	David Trotter	City of Birch Tree	Mayor	18
20	Margie Cleary	City of Eminence	Mayor	19
21	Danny Cannon	City of Cabool	Mayor	20
22	Willy Walker	City of Houston	Mayor	21
23	Keith Cantrell	City of Licking	Mayor	22
24	Bob Biram*	Village of Plato	Chairman of the Board	23
25	Gene DeWitt	Village of Raymondville	Chairman of the Board	24
26	Marilyn Howell	City of Summersville	Mayor	**
27	Rob Tucker	City of Hartville	Mayor	25
28	Blake Miller	City of Mansfield	Mayor	26
29	Fred VanBibber	City of Mountain Grove	Mayor	27
30	Steven Jarrett	City of Norwood	Mayor	28
31	Gary Shane Plunk	City of Winona	Mayor	29

\* Tony Floyd appointed to represent Plato

\* George Hunt represents Oregon County on Executive Board

\*\* Denotes a non-dues paying member for FY2020 as of printing time

2. NON-GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES (35-49%) 17 – 24 Members

A. **Private Sector Representatives:** *Any senior management official or executive holding a key decision-making position, with respect to any for-profit enterprise. (At least one required)*

	Name	Company / Enterprise	Position	Count
1	Randall Combs	Alton Bank	President	30
2	Tina McQuerry	Arrowhead Campground	Owner	31
3	Gary Collins	Gary Collins Farms	Owner	32
4	John Casey	Cabool Lock & Store Storage	Owner	33
5	Mike Sherman	Mike Sherman Farms	Owner	34
6	Wes Parks	CAPS Plus Embroidery	Owner	35
7	Janice Lorrain	Lorrain Consulting	Owner	36
8	Craig Cunningham	Cunningham Construction	Owner	37
9	Michael Hoff	Community First Banking Company	President & CEO	38
10	Darlene Sorensen	MasterWorks Custom Home Design	Owner	39
11	Todd Shanks	Ozark Heritage Welcome Center	Director	40
12	Herman Kelly	Kelly's Auto Body	Owner	41
13	Dale Counts	Canoe Rental Business	Owner	42
14	Sam Currier	Warm Fork Woodlands Lumber	Secretary/Treasurer	43
15	Reid Grigsby	Norman Orr Office Supply	Owner	44
16	Lawson Curtis	Woods and Water Taxidermy	Owner	45

B. **Stakeholder Organization Representatives:** *Executive directors of chambers of commerce, or representatives of institutions of post-secondary education, workforce development groups or labor groups. (At least one required)*

	Name	Organization	Position	Count
17	Judy Shields	Ava Chamber of Commerce	Executive Director	46

3. AT-LARGE REPRESENTATIVES (0-14%) 0 – 7 Members

*Other individuals who represent the principal economic interests of the region. (No minimum required)*

	Name	Organization	Position	Count
1	Randy Pamperien	Transportation	Retired MoDOT	47
2	Josh Cotter	South Central Career Center	Assistant Director	48
3	Dick Salgado	Ava Area Chamber of Commerce	Chairman	49
4	Shelly Bland	Shannon County	Clerk	50



# SCOCOG

South Central Ozark  
Council of Governments

P.O. Box 100

mail@scocog.org

Pomona, Missouri 65789-0100

(417) 256-4226

## RESOLUTION

A CERTIFIED RESOLUTION BY THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE SOUTH CENTRAL OZARK COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS FORMALLY ADOPTING THE 2019 COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY DEVELOPED THROUGH A REGIONAL PLANNING PROCESS.

WHEREAS, the Public Work and Economic Development Act of 1965, 42 U.S.C. Sections 3132-3233, as amended, delegates the Economic Development Administration (E.D.A.) responsibility of assisting in the development of multi-county planning districts through project grants which assure effective utilization of local resources in creating full-time, permanent jobs for the unemployed and the underemployed; and

WHEREAS, the E.D.A. is authorized through planning and implementation grants to assist area planning efforts to solve problems of economic growth, unemployment, and underemployment; and

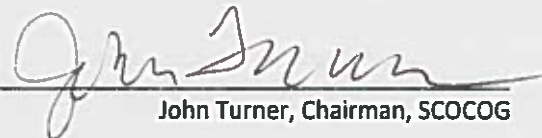
WHEREAS, enabling legislation of the E.D.A. requires the submittal of an updated Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy every five years, which includes a list of community improvement projects, and related economic development goals and strategies, to maintain economic development district designation; and

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy was made available for public review and comment for 30 days via public notice provided in the region's newspaper of widest circulation, the *West Plains Daily Quill* on December 20th, 2019, and by hard copy located at the office of the South Central Ozark Council of Governments; and

WHEREAS, this Committee finds and determines, after reviewing all pertinent information, that it is necessary and in the best interest of the South Central Ozark region that it affirms and adopts the 2019 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy to guide the planning and project implementation efforts in the seven-county region.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF DIRECTORS of the South Central Ozark Council of Governments hereby approves the COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY for the South Central Ozarks region.

APPROVED THIS 18TH DAY OF FEBRUARY, 2020

  
John Turner, Chairman, SCOCOG

ATTEST:

  
SCOCOG Executive Director

- 
- Project Administration • Community Planning & Development • Revolving Loan Fund •
  - Demographic & Census Information • Desktop Publishing • Computerized Mapping • Signs •
  - A Designated Economic Development District •
  - Your Regional Planning Commission •

### AFFIDAVIT OF PUBLICATION

State of Missouri, County of Howell, ss:

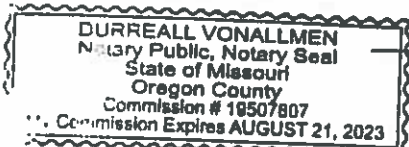
I, Martha Tarver, being duly sworn according to law, state that I represent the publisher of the West Plains Daily Quill, a daily newspaper of general circulation in the County of Howell, where located; which has been admitted to the Post Office as periodical matter in the City of West Plains, the city of publication; which newspaper has been published regularly and consecutively for a period of three years and has a list of bona fide subscribers voluntarily engaged as such who have paid or agreed to pay a stated price for a subscription for a definite period of time, and that such newspaper has complied with the provisions of Section 493.050 Revised Statutes of Missouri, 2000. The affixed notice appeared in said newspaper on the following consecutive dates:

From 12/21/2019 to 12/21/2019 both inclusive.

- 1st insertion, Vol. III, No. 252 12/21/2019
- 2nd insertion, Vol.     , No.     ,
- 3rd insertion, Vol.     , No.     ,
- 4th insertion, Vol.     , No.     ,

Martha Tarver  
 Martha Tarver

Subscribed to and sworn to before me this 12/21/2019



Durreall Vonallmen  
 Durreall VonAllmen, Notary

My commission expires August 21, 2023

Filed and Recorded \_\_\_\_\_

(Publication Fee, \$59.00)

**Public Notice**

The 2019 South Central Ozark Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is now available for public review and comment pursuant to 13 C.F.R. § 303.6. The CEDS planning document is designed to provide baseline information on demographics and economic data, development of regional economic development objectives and strategies, and identify potential projects within the region. Preparation and adoption of the CEDS maintains the region's Economic Development District (EDD) designation as well as grant eligibility for participating units of local government. The CEDS Draft can be viewed online at <https://www.scocog.org/comprehensive-economic-development-strategy.html>; hard copies are available for review at the office of the South Central Ozark Council of Governments at 4407 County 2340 in Pomoona.

Publication Date: December 21, 2019.