

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2020



U.S. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

This document was created as outlined and required by the terms the Partnership Planning Grant Agreement between EDA Chicago and Buckeye Hills Regional Council.

SUMMARY BACKGROUND

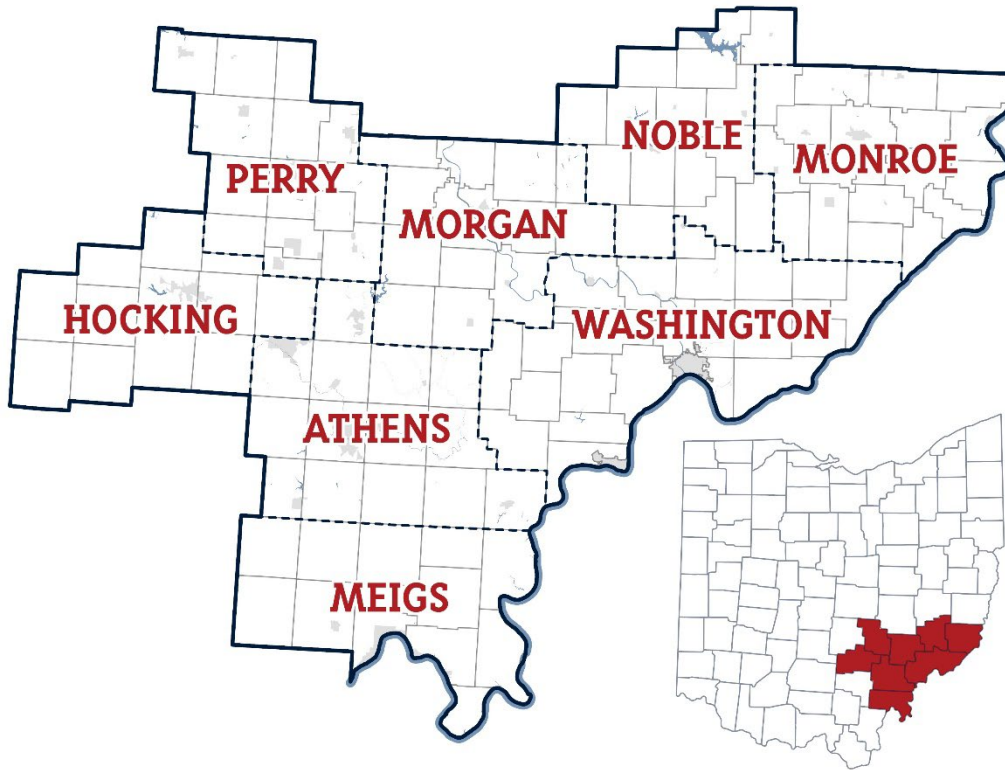
CEDS 2020

June 2020



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REGIONAL OVERVIEW



The Buckeye Hills Regional Council is a council of governments established in 1968 providing technical assistance services to an eight-county region in southeastern Ohio. The region is a 3,600 square mile area made up of eight counties, 120 townships, and 57 municipalities. The story of the region is strong in agriculture, history, local art, culture, and tourism. Approximately 260,000 residents call the Buckeye Hills region home.

Below we will capture the **ten** key metrics critical for understanding where the Buckeye Hills region is in comparison to the larger regional, state, and nation economy.

This is only a snapshot of the data available to describe and analyze the Buckeye Hills region. For a more comprehensive list of statistics and indicators tracked by BHRC, please check out our [Data Compendium](#), a document with a number of vital statistics and descriptions included. Or you can check out the Data Center at <http://www.buckeyehills.org/data-center>. Much more information is available upon request by contacting, [Sam Miller](#) – Development Director, [Jason Pyles](#) – GIS Coordinator, or [Jada Riley](#) – Development Specialist.

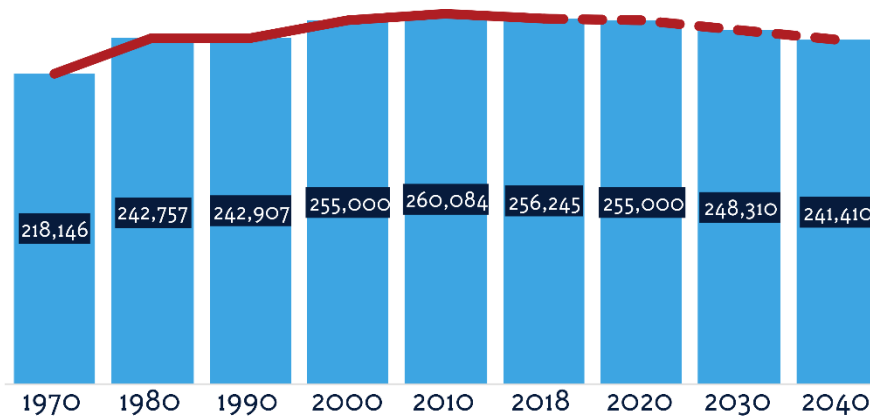
NOTE: The data in this document was assembled and compiled prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and is not reflective of impacts resulting from the global health emergency.

POPULATION

Population in the Buckeye Hills region has been largely unchanged for the past 20 years. Population had been increasing between 1970 and 2000. The increase in these years was due to natural causes (more births than deaths) and international migration. International migration has increased, but deaths now outpace births, and significant negative domestic migration (domestic in-migration minus out-migration) has taken place. Deaths now outpace births in the region, indicating the aging of the regional population.

Baby boomers (age 50 to 70) and Generation Z (19 and younger) are the two largest generational components of the populace. The population is also 95% Caucasian and 5% minority.

Total Population and Projections



Source: US Census Bureau, Table PEPANNRES and Ohio Development Services Agency, County Indicators 2019

LABOR FORCE

As of 2017, the labor force in the Buckeye Hills region comprised 110,063 individuals. This corresponds to a labor force participation rate of 65.1% with an unemployment rate of 6.4%. During this time the

	2010	2018
Labor Force	117,900	109,600
Unemployed	14,200	6,400
Unemployment Rate	12.0%	5.8%
Labor Force Participation Rate*	67.7%	65.3%

*Labor Force Participation Rate is a calculated value.

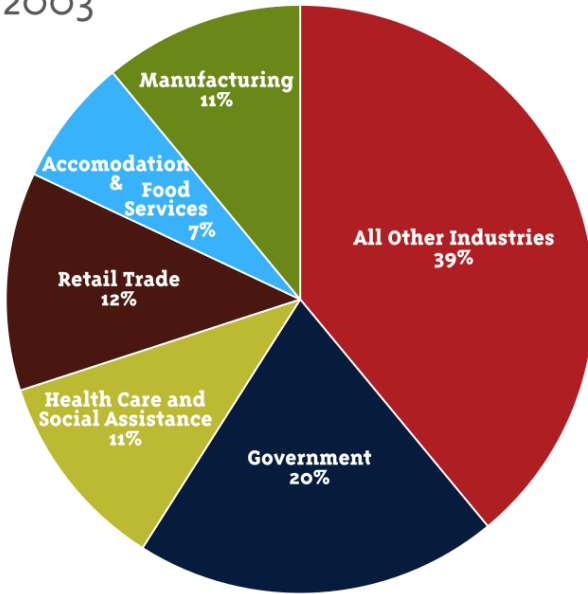
Source: Ohio Labor Market Information, Civilian Labor Force Estimates

corresponding Ohio and U.S. unemployment rates were 5% and 4.4% respectively. The U.S. labor participation rate for 2017 was approximately 63%. The Buckeye Hills region has traditionally experienced higher unemployment rates than both state and national averages.

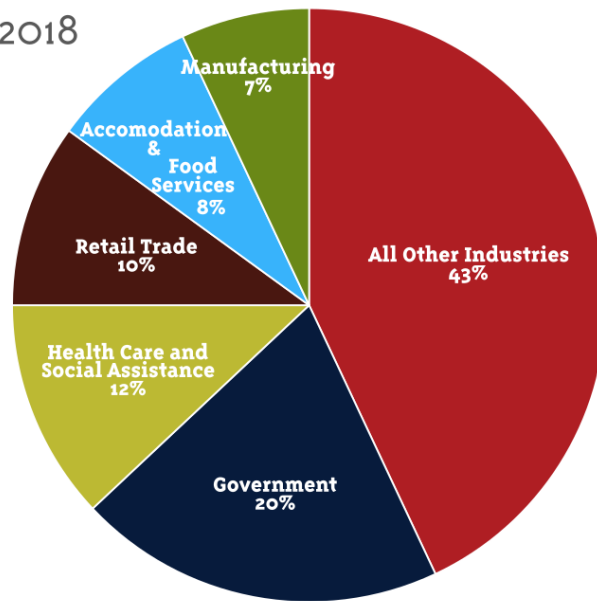
TOP EMPLOYMENT SECTORS

The top five sectors of employment in the region by percent are **government**, **health care/social assistance**, **retail trade**, **accommodation** and **food services**, and **manufacturing**. The government sector is by far the largest employer, employing over 21,000 workers, nearly double the next largest category.

2003

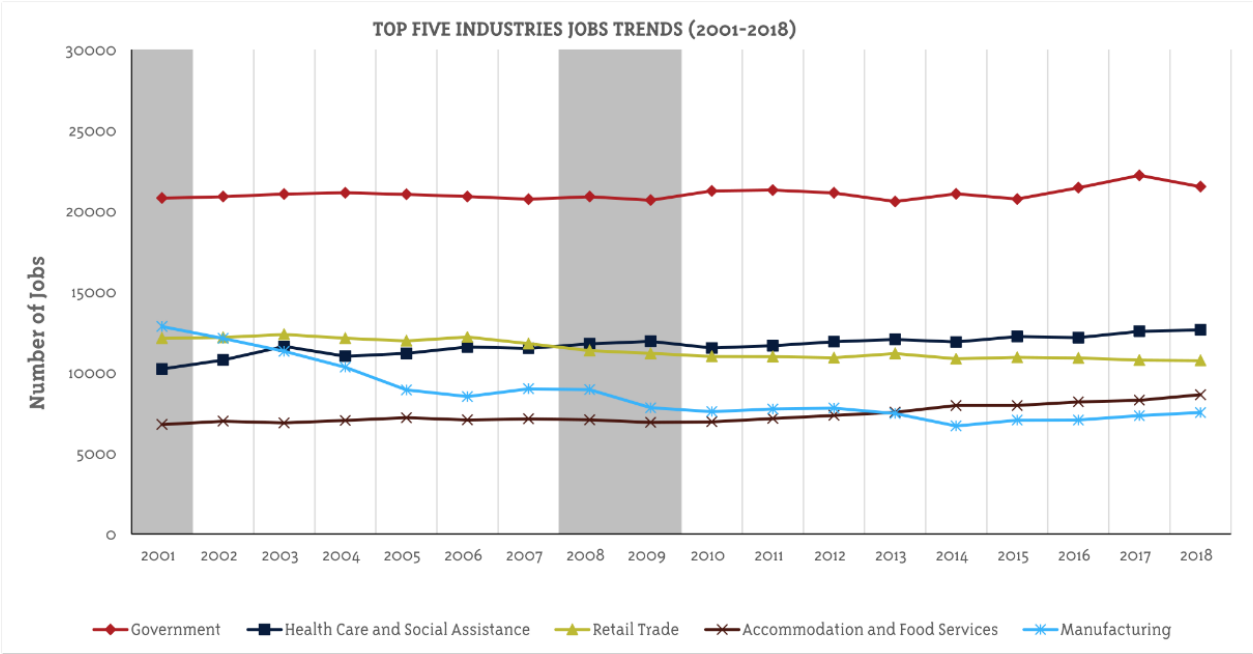


2018



Source: EMSI - 2019.3 - QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, Self-Employed, and External Proprietors

The largest changes in sectors between 2003 and 2018 for the BHRC region have come in the ‘management of companies and enterprises’ which has increased by 442% (144 to 781); and manufacturing which has decreased by 34% (11,316 to 7,523).



Source: EMSI – 2019.3 – QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, Self-Employed, and Extended Proprietors

TOP OCCUPATIONS

The top three occupations in the BHRC region are ‘office and administrative support’ (13,241 positions), ‘management occupations’ (11,642 positions), and ‘sales and related occupations’ (11,264 positions). Among all job sectors, the highest median hourly earnings for 2018 were paid in the ‘architectural and engineering operations’ (\$32.74), ‘life physical and social science occupations’ (\$29.05), and ‘legal occupations’ (\$28.80).

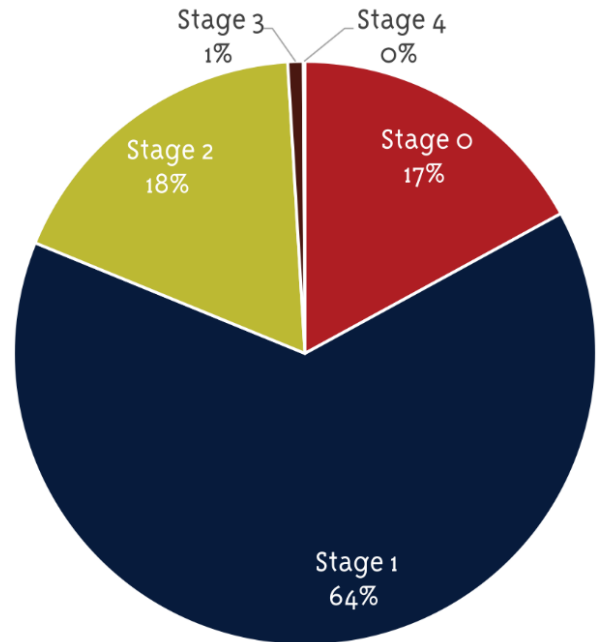
The largest increases in employment between 2003 and 2018 were experienced in ‘farming, fishing, and forestry’ (+51%), with the biggest losses in ‘production operations’ (-31%).

PRIVATE ESTABLISHMENTS

The Buckeye Hills region is home to 10,340 private establishments as of 2018. These establishments employ 104,294 individuals, or the equivalent to 94.7% of the labor force. These establishments are organized into five categories from Stage 0 (self-employed) to Stage 4 (500+ employees). Of the 10,340 establishments in the region, only 97 have 100 employees or more. The remaining 10,243 establishments have 99 employees or less.

The Stage 3 and 4 establishments employ 33,211 workers; the Stage 0-2 establishments employ 71,083 workers.

The number of Stage 4 establishments has decreased by nearly 67% between 2013 and 2018; the number of jobs in those Stage 4 establishments has decreased by a corresponding 59%. Sales in those Stage 4 establishments also decreased by nearly 59%. The number of Stage 0 (self-employed) establishments increased by 14% during this period.



AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY

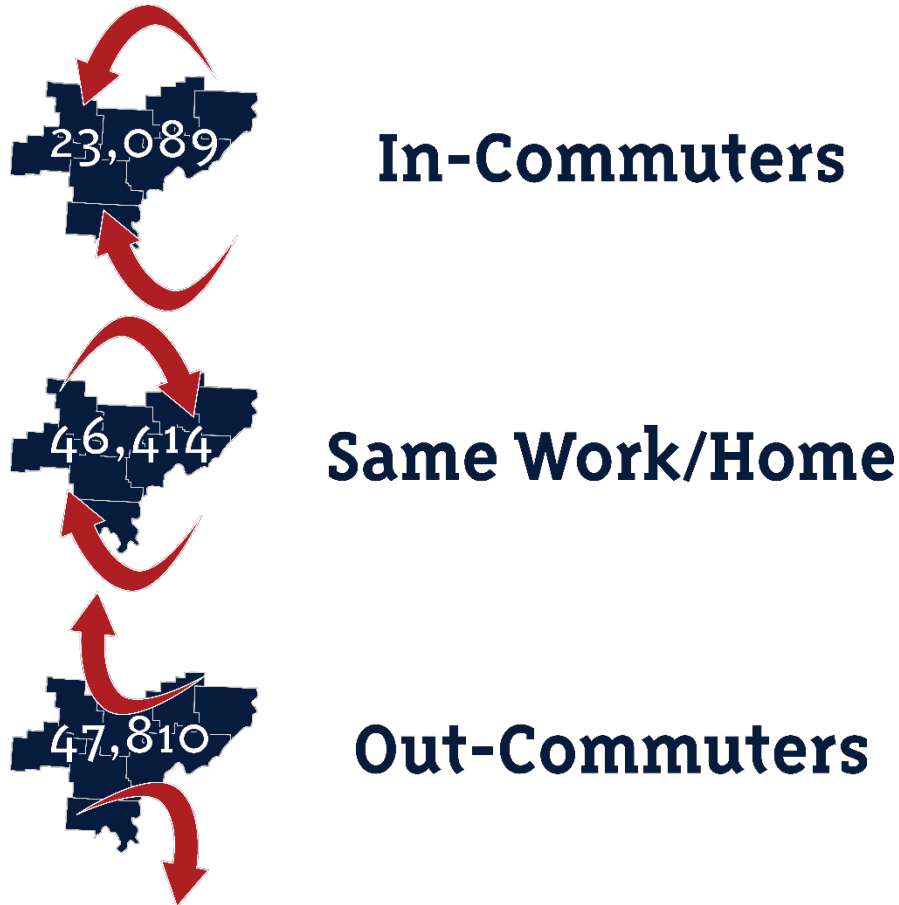
The Buckeye Hills region continues to be a center of agricultural activity. This industry is often overlooked in economic development and community development discussions.

The region is composed of over 2.3 million acres of land in total. As of 2017, over 949,000 of those acres were in farm use- approximately 41% of the region's land area. This value has increased by 1.5% since 2012. In 2017 there were 5,888 active farms operating in the region. In total these establishments produced over \$278 million in products sold. While significant, value of products sold has decreased 9% since 2012.

The top agricultural products produced in the region by acreage are soybeans, forage, corn (grain), wheat, and corn (silage).

IN/OUT MIGRATION

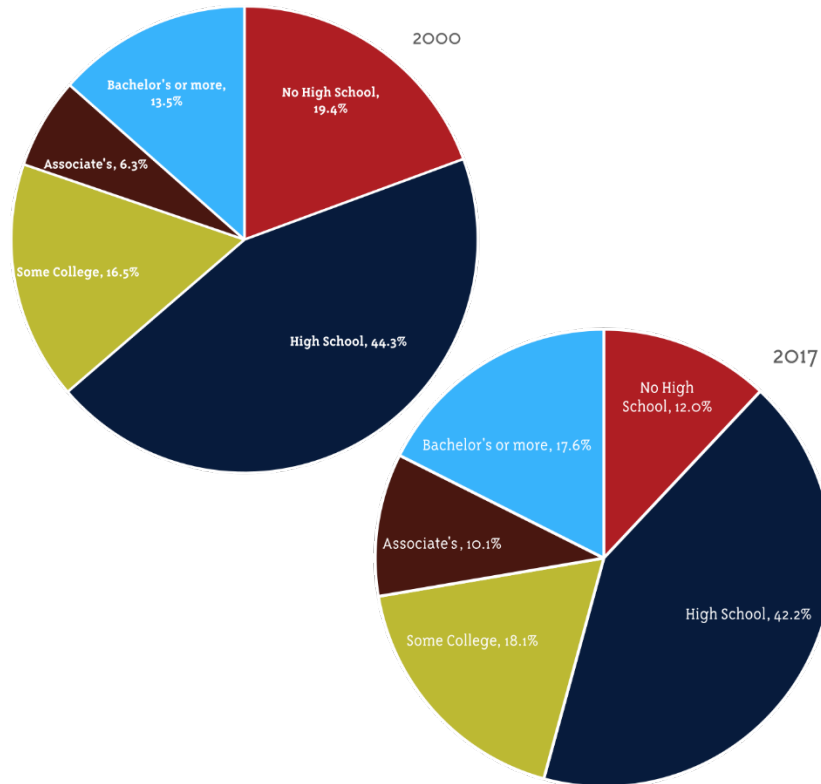
Each day, **more residents are leaving the Buckeye Hills region for work than are coming in.** As of 2017 there were over 69,000 workers living in the region. Of those workers 46,000 were both working and living in the region; 23,000 were living in the region but working outside. Of the 94,000 workers employed (but not living) in the region – nearly 48,000 live outside the eight counties. **Overall, there is a daily deficit of nearly 25,000 commuters leaving the region.** This would indicate that the region is not a job center.



Source: US Census Bureau - LEHD On The Map

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The Buckeye Hills region has remained competitive with Ohio and the greater U.S. in high school graduation rates, but has traditionally lagged behind in post-secondary achievement. As of 2017 42% of residents have high school diplomas only, and 27% have Associates degrees or Bachelor's degrees. Between 2000 and 2017, the percentage of residents with no high school diploma has decreased by over 7%. Bachelor's degrees are up over 4% during this time and Associates degrees have increased by nearly 4%.

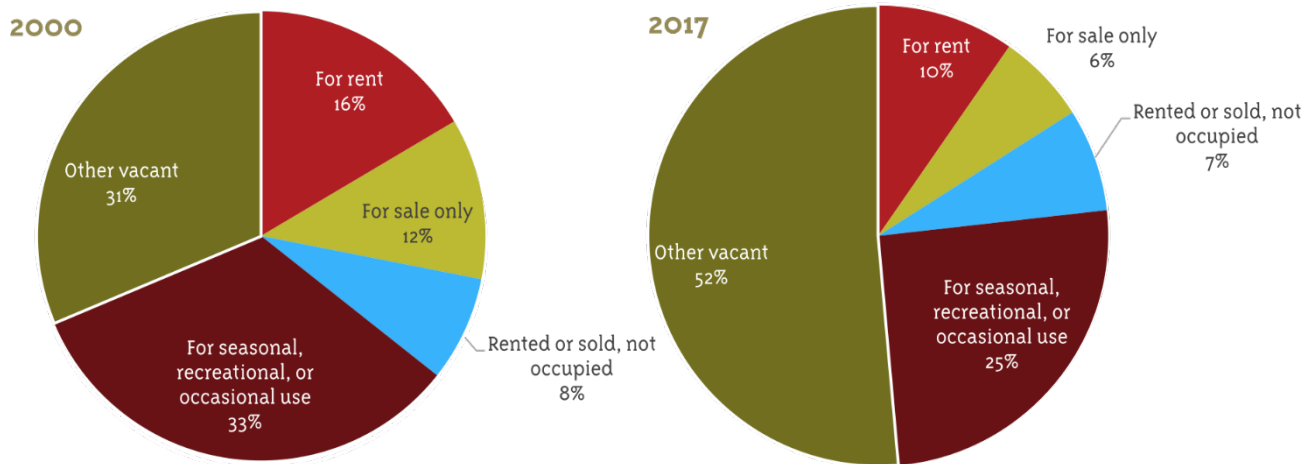


Source: US Census Bureau

HOUSING

The Buckeye Hills region contains approximately 116,000 housing units. As of 2017 85% of those housing units were occupied and 15% were vacant. During this period nearly a quarter of the housing units in the region were renter occupied. Owner occupied units while still comprising the majority of housing units, has declined approximately 4% since 2000.

The category of 'other vacant' has risen dramatically since 2000, increasing by 21%. This would include housing that is owned but not in active use, being used for storage, being prepped for sale, or similar conditions.



Source: US Census Bureau

POVERTY

The Buckeye Hills region has historically experienced high levels of poverty in the eight-county region. Between 2001 and 2017 the regional poverty rate increased from 15.3% to 19%. A high of nearly 21% was experienced in 2009. In 2017 nearly 25% of all minors in the region were in poverty.

According to data from the ACS and the state of Ohio released in February 2019, Athens County had the highest poverty rate in the state from 2013 to 2017, coming in at 30%. Overall, the Appalachian region of Ohio (32 counties) has a collective poverty rate of approximately 17%, three percent higher than the rest of the state combined.

REGIONAL ASSESSMENT

CEDS 2020

Revised 2022



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OVERVIEW

As part of the ongoing CEDS planning process, Buckeye Hills staff has worked with the CEDS committee during the winter of 2019 and the spring of 2020 to complete a regional assessment of the eight-county regional economy. The discussion was wide ranging and encompassing of items that could be impacted in this report, and many other topics. BHRC staff remains in regular contact with these members, not just during the CEDS process.

The purpose of this document is to provide the reader a general analysis of the regional economy of the Buckeye Hills region and most specifically the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that exist. This analysis will provide a foundation for understanding local conditions, and the factors that are contributing to the successes and challenges facing the district. Many of these items have been covered in previous iterations of the CEDS but remain relevant to efforts taking place today.

For further information about any items found in this section, please contact [Jada Riley](#) – Development Specialist, or [Sam Miller](#)- Development Director.

STRENGTHS

Members discussed the Buckeye Hills region having competitive advantages in the following areas:

High School Educational Attainment

Educational Assets

Strong Core of Small Business

Enhanced Regional Collaboration Levels

High School Educational Attainment – The Buckeye Hills region is home to 28 different school districts. These school districts continue to produce results above state and national averages. According to the most recent 5-year ACS estimates, the Buckeye Hills region has 42.2% of residents 25 and older possessing high school diplomas. This is approximately 10% higher than the state of Ohio average of 32.7% and over 15% higher than the national average of 26.9%. These numbers show that the Buckeye Hills region is out pacing national and state wide educational attainment and speaks to the value and capability of our local school systems. Higher educational attainment numbers provide a baseline for future regional success.

According to the 2013-2017 ACS estimates, the Buckeye Hills region also boasts an above average percentage of Associates Degrees for people 25 years and older. Through 2017, 10.1% of residents of the Buckeye Hills region 25 years or older have an Associate's Degree. This is higher than the State of Ohio percentage of 8.5%.

However, the Buckeye Hills region falls behind the state average when comparing educational attainment percentages of bachelor's and graduate degrees. According to the same ACS estimates, the Buckeye Hills region had 10.2% of the population 25 years and older with a bachelor's degree compared to the state average percentage of 17%. The data also shows that only 1% of people 25 years and older had a graduate or professional degree in the Buckeye Hills region as compared to the statewide percentage of 10.2%.

There is still work to be done regarding educational attainment in the region, but graduation rates show that the region has a strong educational foundation.

Discussed further below, there are many institutions of higher learning throughout the Buckeye Hills region that provide an opportunity to further the educational attainment success of the region.

Educational Assets – The Buckeye Hills region is home to four institutions of higher learning, as well as a branch campus. These institutions provide many benefits to the region. Critically, the institutions are high value employers who provide excellent wages and benefits to their employees in the region. According to the latest Quarterly Census Employment & Wages (QCEW) information from Stats America, this cluster employs 4,825 workers (7% of regional workforce) and accounts for \$232,368,135 in wages (approximately 9.4%).

The regions educational assets and institutions also play an important role in the region's workforce development and training programs. Current not-for-profit regional organizations such as Building Bridges to Careers (BB2C) are helping to address workforce shortages and worker retention in the region through the creation of a K-12 college and career readiness continuum. BB2C have developed multiple programs that connect students, parents, and teachers to local businesses and employers. Over 4,500 students have been impacted by the program to date.

The need for partnerships with all levels of educational institutions in the Buckeye Hills region has always been critical. However, this has accelerated as the need for trained and qualified candidates to fill jobs in new and emerging industries grows. The Buckeye Hills Regional Council will work to strengthen the existing relationships with workforce and educational partners throughout the region to give local candidates a competitive edge in hiring. These partnerships will allow the organization and its partners to work in collaboration to prepare residents for local in-demand jobs. This will include collaborating with K-12 partners, higher education entities, and workforce organizations to ensure that together we are addressing the educational needs of residents and the workforce needs of local businesses. In addition, Buckeye Hills Regional Council endeavors to further diversify the region's economy. To help attract new and emerging industries, work will continue with partners to prepare a locally qualified workforce.





Strong Core of Small Business – Emerging research on business and economic development have categorized companies into 5 different stage based on employees from Stage 0 (self-employed) to Stage 4 (500+ employees). As of 2018, there were 10,340 total establishments in the Buckeye Hills region. 10,242 of these establishments were categorized as Stage 2 or lower, meaning that 99% of establishments in the region have 99 employees or less. These businesses employee just over 71,000 workers or approximately 68% of all workers in the region. According to research provided from Purdue University, businesses in these stages have seen job growth from 8.5% to 14.4% from 2013 to 2018.

Comparatively, Stage 3 and Stage 4 businesses (100+ employees) make up only 1% of the regions total establishments and comprises approximately 32% of the regional workforce with just over 33,000 workers. From 2013-2018, Stage 4 businesses (500+ employees) have seen their employment decrease by over 59%.

The Buckeye Hills regional economy is largely supported by small and mid-size business that provide economic resiliency and diversity. Because of this, some market fluctuations have not severely impacted the regional economy as employment numbers across the top five industries have remained relatively static.

Enhanced Regional Collaboration– Buckeye Hills continues to have a strong working relationship with local officials and governments across the eight counties and their 120 townships and 57 municipalities. Collaboration among regional stakeholders is a key component to progress in the region as well. The accessibility of local officials and representatives from local agencies is one of the key strengths of the Buckeye Hills region. This accessibility leads to greater interaction with constituents and residents, as well as providing opportunities for collaboration with colleagues on projects and initiatives that may benefit not only a local area, but the region as a whole.

WEAKNESSES

The Buckeye Hills region faces significant challenges to future success as identified in the following areas:

Building and Site Inventory

Workforce

Investment Priorities

Broadband Connectivity

Lack of Childcare Providers

Building and Site Inventory – The Buckeye Hills region suffers from having a noncompetitive building and site inventory, coupled with limited utility presence to remain highly competitive in outside attraction of major industrial and large-scale development projects. From 2015-2018, the average building search was for buildings 10,000 sf to 100,000 sf with a ceiling height of at least 26 feet. Rail was preferable in most of these site searches. In the Buckeye Hills region, there was only one building that met that criteria. This puts the region at a major disadvantage when trying to attract outside investment and industry per traditional standards.

With regards to land sites, the Buckeye Hills region fairs somewhat better as available land is not an issue. However, only a handful of sites are shovel ready and have the utility infrastructure available to satisfy site selection inquiries. As of now, the region remains mostly uncompetitive in state wide lead distribution and site searches.

As an example, in 2017-2018 Buckeye Hills received 83 statewide leads for site searches from our economic development partners in the state of Ohio. Of those 83 leads, Noble County was eligible to submit sites for consideration in 80 of the instances. However, because of the lack of readily available sites in the county, Noble County only met the criteria to submit a site in 6 of the leads. The lack of site ready infrastructure, lack of rail access, structure restraints such as clear height and ceiling height, as well as aging buildings were the major challenges the county faced.

Workforce – Workforce issues remain a top concern among committee members. There is chronic underemployment and many businesses have no long-term workforce plans. Many committee members are concerned with the growth of low wage jobs and sectors that are not providing a livable wage for residents. According to ACS 2005-2010 data and ACS 2013-2017 data, the Buckeye Hills regional labor force participation rate dropped 2.7% from 67.8% in 2010 to 65.1% in 2017. Committee members agree that there needs to be higher emphasis on “second-chance” employment. It is critical to many in the region.

Investment Priorities – Much of the programming from federal funding sources is heavily focused on large scale, industrial, high employment, high wage, high private investment projects which places the Buckeye Hills region at a great disadvantage. Because of this, many local leaders have put a heavy emphasis on large scale manufacturing and industrial projects that have come with varying degrees of success. But when examining the region as a whole, it may be time to readjust the strategy.

As discussed above, the region is almost entirely comprised of businesses of under 99 employees and site assets are few and far between. In order to position the Buckeye Hills region to attract and retain economic opportunity, a change in investment priorities is needed. While still focusing on large scale projects, some attention can be shifted to the assets already in the region and how to best utilize them. The region does have assets, and shifting some focus on improving the resources already here may be beneficial to economic growth and development.

Broadband Connectivity - Lack of broadband connectivity continues to be a high priority concern for the region. With recent trends showing increased importance of telehealth, e-commerce, and conducting business from home, the lack of a reliable connection will continue to cripple the region economically and provide southeast Ohio with another competitive disadvantage. Major obstacles to

providing to broadband connectivity include the regions terrain and expanse, as well as service coverage manipulation which distorts the true number of homes that have access to broadband service. For much more on the broadband challenges facing the region, please visit <http://buckeyehills.org/broadband>.

Lack of Childcare Providers - The childcare supply has always been a critical barrier to workforce growth in Appalachian Ohio. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused it to rise to the level of a crisis. According to the Corporation for Ohio Appalachian Development (COAD)'s Child Care Deserts Report, long-term childcare deserts, meaning three or more children under the age of 5 years exist for every one available slot in an ODJFS licensed childcare program existed within every county in the Buckeye Hills region well before the COVID-19 pandemic.



This situation has worsened rapidly in the last two years across many of our communities. According to COAD's report, counties across Appalachian Ohio witnessed a loss of 24.4% in licensed family childcare providers in only one year. This left Morgan and Monroe counties in the Buckeye Hills region with no licensed family childcare homes.

In our rural communities, childcare providers are the workforce behind the workforce. Family childcare providers licensed by the Ohio Department of Job & Family services are the only viable option for many workers. These providers have more flexible scheduling options than center-based care providers, are more accessible to the rural workforce than center-

based options because these larger providers are more often located in areas where the population is greater, and in most cases, family childcare providers are the only option for weekend workers and the second and third shift workforce. Looking at the Federal Reserve Economic Data shows that for the 34.7% percent of households that are identified as single-parent homes, childcare is an absolute prerequisite to employment. One out of every three parents is 100% dependent on the availability of childcare to be able to work outside the home or go to school.

As the economy has reopened and businesses have recalled employees back to in-person work, many potential workers will be faced with the challenge of finding care for their children. If unsuccessful in this search, they will be unable to fully participate in the workforce. While this challenge has faced both men and women, recent data shows that there were 1.4 million more mothers not actively working for pay in January compared to pre-pandemic levels. This is a much larger number than the number of men who have not reentered the workforce. Being unable to reenter the workforce exacerbates many of the myriad of challenges that people in this region face, including poverty, low educational attainment, and varying levels of unemployment, underemployment, and economic distress. The following table provides a picture of these challenges:

County	ARC Distressed Level	Unemployment Rate	% Households in Poverty	% Adults without College Degrees	% Single Parent Households
Athens	Distressed	4.50%	30.60%	70.40%	37.98%
Hocking	Transitional	4.30%	13.60%	85.90%	37.80%
Meigs	Distressed	6.10%	22.40%	87.00%	33.18%
Monroe	Distressed	6.50%	16.60%	88.60%	34.92%
Morgan	At-Risk	5.70%	19.10%	87.00%	37.54%
Noble	Distressed	6.30%	15.40%	89.40%	25.48%
Perry	At-Risk	5.50%	19.40%	88.30%	37.50%
Washington	Transitional	5.10%	15.10%	81.30%	37.44%

Data Sources: Appalachian Regional Commission, U.S. Census Bureau, Ohio Department of Development Office of Research, and Federal Reserve Economic Data

OPPORTUNITIES

The Buckeye Hills region has the following opportunities before it, as considered by the CEDS committee.

Regional Asset Based Development

Chemical Sector

Maritime Capacity

Advocate for the Region

Outdoor Recreation and Tourism

Regional Asset Based Development – The economy of the Buckeye Hills region has historically been dominated by large external investments in to local communities. While this has been critically important, it is still important to recognize the contributions made to our local communities from small and mid-size investment. It is imperative to focus some development efforts on areas where the region has a competitive advantage. Buckeye Hills is committed to assisting in the improvement of local conditions through an increased emphasis on supporting sustainable development with higher level local control.

For example, the Buckeye Hills region has significant local history assets and is a center for a variety of outdoor recreation and tourism activities. These are some of the less traditional regional assets that must be utilized within specific community and public efforts. Regional asset-based community development will help the region to maximize the assets that provide a competitive advantage. Maximizing these advantages will lead to a more resilient and sustainable regional economy. This approach also places more development under local control, which is key to long term sustainability. This is an ongoing process and continual planning and assessment is central to these efforts.

According to the [WealthWorks](#), expanding local ownership and control of assets is a significant wealth-building opportunity. As stakeholders work together to explore and act on market opportunities, partners begin considering how to develop strategies, investments and connections so that more of the wealth produced becomes owned or controlled within the community, and ultimately within the region. Ownership and control strategies range from clear legal mechanisms of ownership—for assets like land or buildings or patents—to more abstract strategies that build intellectual and social capital. As mentioned before, by consistently thinking “ownership and control of wealth,” economic and community developers get creative and stretch beyond their typical approaches. Getting wealth to remain in the region benefits the people and investments continue to flow, accrue and generate future benefits.

Focusing on assets that the region has control of (history, arts, culture, nature, tourism, food, recreation, downtown developments) gives the Buckeye Hills region a unique opportunity for community development going forward.

To build upon this unique development opportunity, a solid foundation of our communities’ downtown districts must be laid. Downtown revitalization involves identifying immediate ways to encourage visitors to the region to enter existing downtown assets to rejuvenate the local economy as well as strategically developing branding and placemaking plans for long-term growth. By first taking inventory of existing downtown assets including peoples, buildings, heritage, and institutions, development strategies tailored to each community can then be implemented. Many of the cities and villages in the Buckeye Hills region have historic and unique building inventories that need improvements to be saved. Best practices for downtown revitalization and placemaking typically include: façade improvements, wayfinding and interpretive signage; streetscapes and lighting; public art and garden spaces; historic and recreational tourism; and downtown branding. Partnering with local stakeholders, tourist organizations – such as Main Street affiliates – and others, Buckeye Hills Regional Council has the unique opportunity to achieve economic resilience while maintaining cultural heritage.

Chemical Sector – The Buckeye Hills region is home to a historically strong chemical sector. Members of the CEDS committee feel that this sector will continue to thrive in the region. According to the QCEW numbers on Stats America, the chemical and chemical based product cluster has 59 different establishments and employees 2,869 workers with location quotients of 1.68 and 2.91. These are generally well-paying jobs with excellent wages and benefits packages. According to QCEW, regional wages total over \$193 million. The location quotient for wages checks in at 4.07, showing the importance this cluster plays to the regional wealth. Continued growth is anticipated from this industry with the expected ground breaking of an ethane cracker plant just north of the BHRC region in Belmont County, Ohio.



Maritime Capacity – The entire eastern border of the Buckeye Hills region is marked by the Ohio River. This is a largely untapped opportunity for regional development. Maritime capacity for cargo and goods movement is significant and was reflected by the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) in a recently released study on the Ohio Rivers economic impact in Ohio. According to this study, in 2018, 41.2 million tons of cargo were handled by the ports and marine terminals located within the boundaries of the state of Ohio (Mile Markers 40-491). Over 101,000 jobs in Ohio are in some way connected to cargo movement via the marine terminals located on the Ohio River. Of the 101,000 jobs, nearly 11,000 jobs are directly generated by the marine cargo and barge activity at the river marine terminals in the state of Ohio. As the result of the local and regional purchases by those 11,000 individuals holding the direct jobs, an additional 10,542 induced jobs are supported in the state economy.



In 2018, marine cargo activity at the Ohio River marine terminals located in the state of Ohio generated a total of \$26.5 billion of total economic value in the state of Ohio. Of the \$26.5 billion total economic value, \$5.2 billion is the direct business revenue received by the firms directly dependent upon the marine terminals and providing maritime services and inland transportation services to the cargo handled at the marine terminals and the barges calling the terminals, as well as fleeting, cleaning and barge repair and maintenance services. An additional \$1.3 billion represents the re-spending of the direct income, which is used for in-state purchases of goods and services by those directly employed. The remaining \$20 billion represents the value of the output to the state of Ohio that is

created due to the cargo moving via the public and privately-owned marine terminals. This includes the value added at each stage of producing an export cargo, as well as the value added at each stage of production for the firms using imported raw materials and intermediate products that flow via the marine terminals and are consumed within the state. It is important to emphasize that these three components of total economic value are additive, and do not represent any double counting of monetary impacts.

In contrast, direct income, local purchases by firms and taxes generated are all paid from the direct and related user revenue. Marine activity at the terminals supported \$6.5 billion of total personal wage and salary income and local consumption expenditures for Ohio residents. This includes \$2.6 billion of direct, indirect, induced and local consumption expenditures, while the remaining \$3.9 billion was received as income by the employees of the related port users. A total of \$255.2 million of direct, induced and indirect state and local tax revenue were generated by maritime activity at the Ohio River marine terminals located in Ohio. In addition, \$382.2 million of state and local taxes were created due to the economic activity of the related users of the cargo moving via the Ohio River marine terminals.

It is imperative for the Buckeye Hills region to continue to expand the opportunities provided by the Ohio River. It gives the region a competitive advantage and continued economic development plans should be cognizant of its potential impacts.

For the first time, the Mid-Ohio Valley statistical port was included in the Army Corps of Engineers 2020 (released in 2022) report on coastal and inland waterways. The port was identified as the 17th most productive port in the US, and the most productive inland port. While these statistics are measuring the amount of cargo moving through a port, and not necessarily being off- or on-loaded at that port, they do represent an opportunity for investment and capitalization in this corridor. The area of Buckeye Hills region bordering the Ohio River makes up more than half the length of this corridor and includes 4 of the region's counties.



Advocate for the Region – Buckeye Hills recognizes the importance of regional collaboration and realizes that one of the many challenges faced by communities in the region is the sense of disconnection from the rest of the state, and at times the nation. In response to this, Buckeye Hills has embraced the role of advocate and champion of policies, programs, and projects that are needed by rural communities in Appalachian Ohio. Buckeye Hills takes this role seriously and has developed relationships that provide direct lines of communications to partner organizations at the state and federal level in order to ensure that the needs of rural communities are included in the continued programming and support provided to the region.

This also provides an opportunity for Buckeye Hills to play an ongoing coordinating role in relevant activities throughout the region. This includes assistance with FEMA project administration for frequent and wide spread slips, or as the torch-bearer on regional topics like broadband. Having a single unified voice for communities in Appalachian Ohio is crucial for ensuring that needs are adequately addressed where possible with public resources.

Outdoor Recreation and Tourism – Throughout the eight Buckeye Hills counties there are many opportunities to diversify the region's economy through a strong collaboration that builds on a historic investment in some of Southeastern Ohio's greatest natural assets. Individuals from across the state and country come to the Buckeye Hills region to visit and explore the seven state forests, eight state parks and the only national forest in Ohio: Wayne National Forest. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, there was an influx of visitors to the region and as a result a moment has arrived to develop and connect recreation tourism opportunities that contribute to the ecological, social, and economic growth of the region as a whole.

Leveraging these natural assets encourages greater spending from visitors that leads to increased sales taxes, property values, number of jobs, and earnings. The region has already seen the beginning

of this around assets such as the Baileys Trail System and the Hocking Hills State Park as they continue to stimulate the regional economy, helping the area pivot to a sustainable economy. Investing in development around these natural assets makes communities more attractive to newcomers while also raising the quality of life for locals. These activities can rejuvenate and revitalize communities by bringing people together and cultivating a sense of place.

Seizing this opportunity does more than stimulate local economies, it also brings health benefits to communities that do not necessarily have that imbedded in their culture. This leads to a higher quality of life for residents and paves the way for a more ready workforce. Furthermore, influential companies looking to expand or relocate cite access to outdoor recreation opportunities when considering their locations. Investments in outdoor recreation and tourism gives communities in the Buckeye Hills region a competitive edge to large scale companies.



Investment in these assets is catalytic and creates conditions to sustainably transform the regional economy. The 2021 data from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) show that the outdoor recreation economy accounted for 1.8 percent (\$374.3 billion) of current-dollar gross domestic product (GDP) for the nation in 2020. At the state level, outdoor recreation value added as a share of state GDP ranged from 4.3 percent in Montana to 1.2 percent in New York and Connecticut. Ohio's share is 1.6 percent indicating an opportunity for growth. Additionally, the outdoor recreation economy's 2021 top three different industry contributors are retail trade, manufacturing, and arts entertainment recreation accommodation & food

service, industries already prevalent and strong in the region.

Buckeye Hills eight-county region has an abundance of natural space and world-class outdoor recreation opportunities as well as authentic dining, shopping, and entertainment. The region is home to seven state forests, eight state parks, and the only national forest in Ohio: Wayne National Forest. The Outdoor Recreation Tourism & Economic Diversification Opportunity is first based on the region's outdoor recreation tourism potential and second the opportunity for the region to transition to a desirable, thriving outdoor recreation-rich location for living, working, and playing to compete in the global economy. Through increased investments in planned, strategic, world-class outdoor recreation assets and other infrastructure the region can sustainably diversify the economy. In many cases there is a real urgency to act quickly to preserve and bolster the region's counties' delicate economies, which are vulnerable due to their dependence on a single large-scale employer.

While Southeast Ohio has an opportunity to realize economic growth from outdoor recreation, it will require investment and development in sustainable outdoor recreation-related assets. To properly capitalize on this opportunity, these efforts should:

1. Include and occur alongside improvements to existing rural infrastructure, such as: utilities and sidewalks or downtown redevelopment efforts.
2. Include programming of recreation assets with events and other opportunities to promote health and shared stewardship.
3. Include remediation of environmental hazards alongside development.
4. Include development of active transportation multi-modal connections between recreation assets to rural population centers.
5. Include analysis of development potential for business and manufacturing appropriate facilities near trailheads.
6. Engage communities and youth in the planning, development, and volunteer maintenance of recreation assets.
7. Ensure assets are an authentic point of community pride.
8. Be built sustainably.
9. Include marketing strategies appropriate for a region.

Implementation of these strategic outdoor recreation asset investments alongside investments in site development, downtowns, water, sewer, and broadband will provide a significantly higher quality of life. It will equip this rural region with the tools needed to attract and retain talent and diversify economies. Once necessary utilities and infrastructure are in place, the opportunity for growth will expand to include recreation product development and manufacturing, as modeled in western North Carolina. The Southeast Ohio outdoor recreation economy could experience similar growth, which aligns with other ongoing efforts in the region and this plan.

THREATS

According to the perspective of partners and stakeholders, the Buckeye Hills region faces the following threats to sustained or future success.

Unmet Infrastructure Needs

Limited Utility Availability

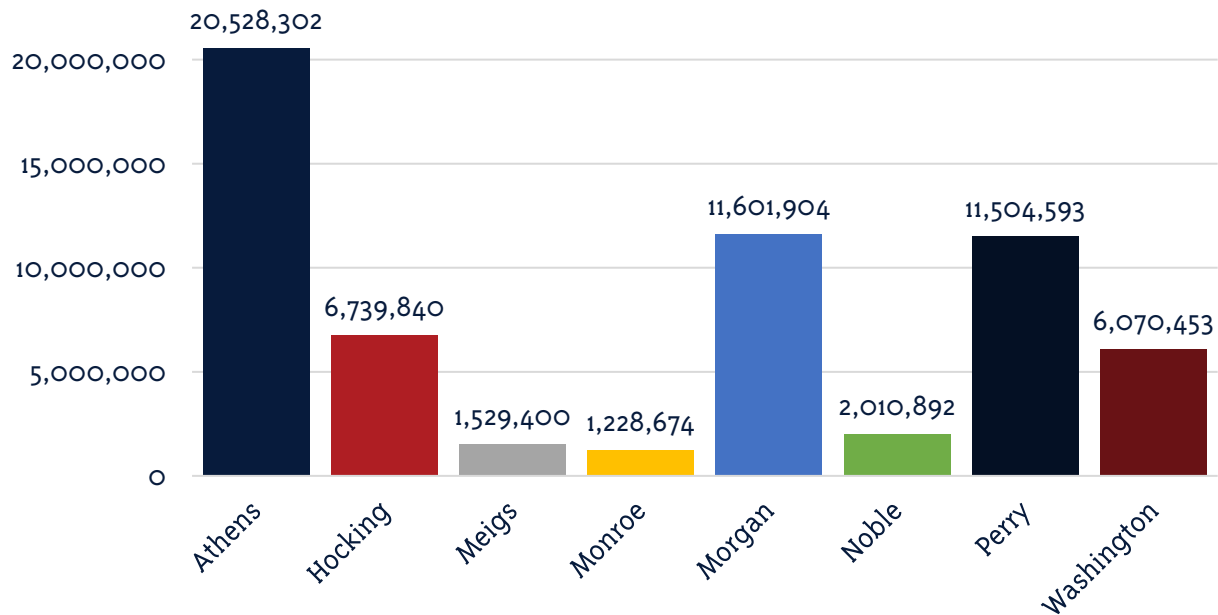
Low Wage Job Growth

COVID-19 Pandemic

Unmet Infrastructure Needs – Buckeye Hills recently completed work on documenting unfunded infrastructure work in the region to emphasize this persistent need. Information has been collected from unfunded Round 34 Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC) projects and Appalachian (ARC) 2019 unfunded projects. There were 13 unfunded OPWC projects totaling \$28,190,470 and 27 unfunded ARC projects totaling \$33,023,588. This gives the region a total of 40 unfunded projects at a total project cost of \$61,214,058. These projects cover a bevy of project types including drinking water, wastewater, surface transportation (roads and bridges), stormwater, broadband, and more. Clearly this is not an

all-inclusive or exhaustive listing when it comes to unfunded infrastructure in the region, but it does help to illustrate the tremendous need that the Buckeye Hills region has. It is difficult to attract and

Unfunded Infrastructure



retain economic opportunity and prosper as a region when infrastructure needs cannot be met. This problem will continue to play a role in site selection failure and limited economic expansion.

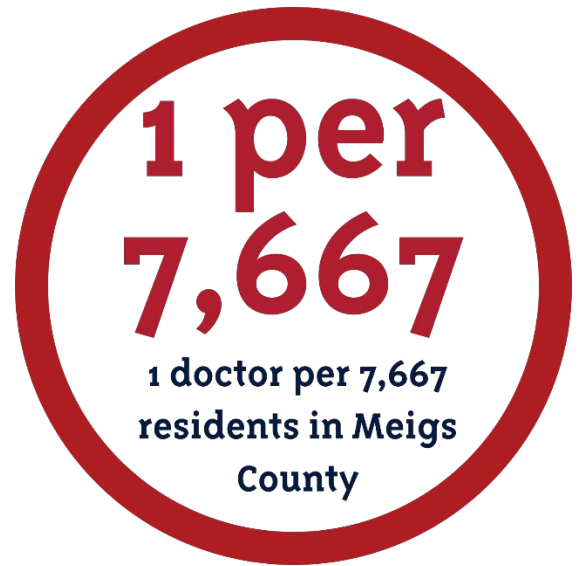
Limited Utility Availability – Despite being located on one of the largest natural gas supplies in the world, local gas supply is limited in many communities for commercial development. In Washington County this has been especially pressing as there have been blanket denials of gas service based on available capacity and distribution system challenges. This has caused challenges in receiving approvals for new construction and business expansion projects in a number of cases. New distribution piping and possibly pumping stations will be needed on a large scale to remedy this issue. Action on this is unlikely without legislative intervention or the commitment of new high usage customers moving to the region.

Lack of broadband is an equally significant threat. Research completed by BHRC indicates that current data understates the number of unserved households by several orders of a magnitude. The Buckeye Hills region is made up of a significant ‘rural expanse’ which contains low population density and challenging terrain making it difficult to deploy broadband to all households. Census tract level data manipulation also shows more coverage in the region than there is in actuality. De minimus deployments where one home in a census tract is installed will typically cause an entire census tract to be reported as served on FCC 477 data. Without intercession, many of the regions rural residents will be without broadband for the foreseeable future. This affects not only communication, but commerce, education, development, and in extreme cases life and safety concerns.

Low Wage Job Growth – Significant economic growth over the recent years has taken place in the service and retail industries which, in general, are not strong wealth generating industries for residents. According to data from QCEW, as of 2018 accommodation and food service and retail trade make up approximately 18% of the jobs in the Buckeye Hills region. According to US Cluster Mapping, these jobs typically have an expected wage of \$25,000 to \$30,000 annually. The CEDS committee felt additional effort must be given to developing local wealth strategies and approaches to growing sustainable living wage employment in the region.

Medically Underserved Areas and Potential Health Concerns

– The currently on going COVID-19 pandemic is devastating many local businesses and rural communities in the Buckeye Hills region. As discussed earlier, nearly all businesses in the region are small to mid-size businesses without significant cash reserves to sustain long term shutdowns. Some damage caused by this circumstance will be permanent, as many small businesses were forced to close their doors. Buckeye Hills is currently working with partners on identifying the best ways to assist local businesses and communities with public resources. As this is a developing situation, this section will be updated in the future.



The Covid-19 Pandemic has also highlighted the continued lack of primary care physicians many communities in our region have been dealing with for decades. As of 2018, Meigs, Morgan, and Noble counties each had 5 or fewer physicians. According to data from the Ohio Office of Research, Noble County only had 2 physicians. This creates a ratio of 1 doctor for each 7,300 people in the county. The situation in Meigs County is worse with only 3 physicians in a county of over 23,0000 approximating 1 doctor per 7,667 residents. A similar story can be told for a majority of the counties in the Buckeye Hills region.

Also of concern, is the lack of medical access to many of the region's residents. According to the most recent data provided by Definitive Healthcare, five of the region's eight counties have no licensed, staffed, or ICU beds. Over 100,000 residents of the Buckeye Hills region are without access to these important medical services in their counties. While there are approximately 400 staffed hospital beds in the region, they are all located in three counties (Athens, Hocking, and Washington). In total, 370 of the 400 beds are split between Athens and Washington county. In the entire eight county Buckeye Hills region there are currently only 30 ICU beds with the vast majority of those also being split between Athens and Washington County. The lack of access and availability to local emergency healthcare services added to the unreliability of regional broadband service for things such as telehealth, pose major threats to the regions aging population. These quality of life issues are also significant barriers to successful and sustained economic development endeavors in the region.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION/ ACTION PLAN

CEDS 2020

Revised 2022



This document was created as outlined and required by the terms the Partnership Planning Grant Agreement between EDA Chicago and Buckeye Hills Regional Council.

The Buckeye Hills region and the communities which constitute the membership have a history of cooperation and coordination to achieve mutual goals of community and economic development. These partnerships are growing in importance as the regional economy continues to grow and change. Below are five general goal areas of concern identified during the CEDS planning process, along with identified objectives intended to make advances in the specified area. The goal areas are significant factors in advancing the regional economy and the selected objectives for each goal area describe how the region will work together through measurable outcomes and committed resources to achieve the five prioritized goals.

Prioritized Regional Goal Areas

Based on information presented in the SWOT analysis, and derived from conversation with local economic development professionals, local elected officials, private businesses, and the public at large, the following goal areas have been identified.

1. **Broadband Deployment**
2. **Infrastructure Support**
3. **Asset Utilization**
4. **Workforce**
5. **Economic Diversification**

Strategies and actions pertaining to each of these goal areas are listed below.

Broadband Deployment - Amid conversations held during the CEDS process, it became clear that the lack of reliable and accessible broadband service in the region is a high priority concern. The terrain and expanse of the region make it difficult to get broadband to all households. Census tract manipulation also plays a part in distorting accessibility throughout the eight counties. Unfortunately, many of the regions rural residents will be without reliable broadband. Not only does this affect basic and essential communication, but also commerce, education, and economic development around the Buckeye Hills region. Based on these concerns, the broadband goal for the region is below.

Work to continue broadband development and expansion to ensure the Buckeye Hills region can remain competitive and succeed in the 21st century.

- Objective: Buckeye Hills staff will help to identify three (3) priority areas where deployment projects could be developed or explored.
- Objective: Buckeye Hills will continue to communicate challenges to legislative and agency officials who are empowered to create change.
- Objective: Buckeye Hills will continue to communicate with local providers to understand and overcome challenges to rural broadband development.
- Objective: Buckeye hills will work to increase 25/3 service, or greater, twenty (20) percent in the Buckeye Hills region by 2025.



Infrastructure Support - All other forms of infrastructure remain a critical need around the region. Many of the regions critical infrastructure systems are aging and deteriorating, causing problems form municipalities and system owners. Currently, only a handful of development sites are shovel ready and have the needed infrastructure to satisfy site selectors. Because of this, the Buckeye Hills region remains largely uncompetitive in state wide site searches. In order for the region to capitalize on economic development opportunities, infrastructure replacement and repair must remain a priority. Based on this, the infrastructure goal for the region is listed below.

Provide residents and businesses of the Buckeye Hills region with utility infrastructure that meets current demand and offers the opportunity to meet demand in the future.



- Objective: Buckeye Hills will work to increase the number of publicly owned shovel ready sites in the region by a number of five (5).
- Objective: Buckeye hills will work with economic development partners, such as Jobs Ohio and OhioSE, to support reintroduction of speculative site and building site development in the region through the Rural Industrial Loan Program (RIPL).
- Objective: Buckeye Hills staff will increase the viability and visibility of public transportation and services through a sustained mobility management pilot program.
- Objective: Buckeye Hills staff will identify two (2) potential locations for transloading and intermodal cargo transfer on the Ohio River.

Asset Utilization - Members of the committee identified that historically, the Buckeye Hills region has largely focused on large scale, industrial, high employment, high wage, high private investment projects. Because of this, the economy has largely been dominated by large external investments in to the local communities. It was noted that this strategy has worked with varying degrees of success. While committee members still believe these investments are important, more investments need to be made on development efforts where the region has a competitive advantage.

The Buckeye Hills region has many regional assets such as history, arts, culture, nature, and tourism that give it a distinct advantage. A focus on these assets will give the region a unique opportunity for community development going forward. These are also assets that have local ownership and puts more development opportunities under local control. Maximizing these regional assets will to a more resilient and sustainable economy. Based on this, the regional asset utilization goal is listed below.

Work collaboratively with communities to enhance development opportunities surrounding unique regional assets and expand local ownership of development assets.

- Objective: Buckeye Hills staff will complete one (1) regional Wealthworks training for local community officials and one (1) intro to Wealthworks webinar per year for local stakeholders.
- Objective: Buckeye Hills will assist three (3) regional communities in obtaining Main Street affiliate status.
- Objective: Buckeye Hills will work to complete one (1) downtown revitalization project in the region.
- Objective: Buckeye Hills staff will complete one (1) community planning workshop a year with communities in the region.
- Objective: Buckeye Hills will work to expand partnerships and act as a resource between local development partners and tourism organizations (Travel Ohio) to greater serve the cultural sector of the regional economy.



Workforce - During the conversations with the CEDS committee, workforce issues were discussed as being critical to the region. Of particular concern were the issues of underemployment, wage stagnation, and the need for “second-chance” employment opportunities for many residents in recovery or out of prison. The committee felt that many workforce issues are being addressed but these challenges seemed to be somewhat “under the radar.” Based on their concerns, the workforce goal for the region is listed below.

Ensure that the Buckeye Hills regional workforce has the skills and opportunities to succeed, grow, and adapt in the current and future global economy.



- Objective: Buckeye Hills staff will direct employers and stakeholders to capitalize on State of Ohio workforce development programs including TechCred and similar skill training resources.
- Objective: Buckeye Hills staff will collect and organize social support services for recovery and transition to the workforce initiatives.
- Objective: Buckeye Hills staff will work collaboratively with higher education partners to develop in-demand curriculum and programming responsive to current industry needs.
- Objective: Buckeye Hills staff will continue to support career exploration and development efforts (Building Bridges to Careers) underway in the region.

Economic Diversification - CEDS committee members believe that it is critical that the Buckeye Hills region have a diverse economy. Many of our rural communities still depend on one or very few large employers for much of their economic success. Many of our local economies coalesce around a single product or natural resource (polymers, shale gas, metals). Because of this, recent shutdowns have crippled portions of the region while others have seen lay-offs. Even Ohio University has recently let go of staff.

Also, committee members noted a recent trend of a somewhat “undiversifying” of the local economy. This is attributed to the large growth of retail and service industry jobs. While these employment opportunities are welcomed by the residents of the region, many are low paying with not much room

for upward mobility. Based on these trends, the economic diversification goal for the region is listed below.

Sustain efforts to diversify the Buckeye Hills economy through regional asset development and lessen the economic impacts caused by external threats.

- Objective: Buckeye Hills staff will provide economic analysis technical support services to communities and stakeholders in the region using current data and analyzation techniques. (IMPLAN, Dun and Bradstreet, Cluster Analysis, and similar).
- Objective: Buckeye Hills staff will provide one (1) industry summary report per county, per year over the performance period.



Evaluation Framework

The evaluation framework is the mechanism Buckeye Hills will utilize to determine how progress toward the established goals and objectives is being made. The scorecard shown on the next page will be updated semi-annually to capture the work being done to achieve the regional objectives that have been described above. It is broken into each of the five different goal areas and progress to each objective will be tracked and monitored. Updates will also be posted as they occur.

CEDS Evaluation Framework

Action Plan Evaluation Framework

	Achieved	On-Target	Missed	In Process
Broadband				
Identify 3 Priority Areas for Deployment Projects				
Communicate Challenges to Officials				
Communicate With Local Providers				
Increase 25/3 Service 20% by 2025				
Infrastructure				
Increase Number of Sites by 5				
Support Reintroduction of Spec Sites				
Increase Viability and Visibility of Public Transportation				
Identify 2 Potential Locations for Transloading on Ohio River				
Regional Assets				
Complete 1 Regional Wealthworks Training Per Year				
Assist 3 Communities in Obtaining Main Street Affiliate Status				
Complete 1 Downtown Revitalization Project				
Complete 1 Community Planning Workshop Per Year				
Expand Partnerships with Local Partners And Tourism Orgs				
Workforce				
Direct Stakeholders to TechCred				
Collect and Organize Social Support Services for Transition				
Work with Higher Education to Develop In-Demand Curriculum				
Support Career Exploration and Development Efforts				
Diversification				
Provide Economic analysis and Technical Support Services				
Provide 1 Industry Summary Report Per county Per Year				

DISASTER RESILIENCE

CEDS 2020

June 2020



This document was created as outlined and required by the terms the Partnership Planning Grant Agreement between EDA Chicago and Buckeye Hills Regional Council.

Over the years, the Buckeye Hills region has endured physical and economic disasters. Both types of disaster have produced lasting effects on the region and communities still struggle to address the challenges these events pose. Input from regional partners suggests that the region is much more adept at addressing physical disasters as many of our communities experience them on a semi-regular basis.

PHYSICAL DISASTER RESILIENCE

The Buckeye Hills region has been historically prone to three types of natural disasters:

Flooding

Strong Seasonal Storms (Derecho)

Wildfire

The most recent Ohio Hazard Mitigation Plan of 2019 shows that, between 1964 2019, there were 52 presidential and emergency disaster declarations in the state of Ohio. Of those 52 declarations, half of them (26) affected counties in the Buckeye Hills region. All of the declarations involving counties in the Buckeye Hills region were categorized as flood related or severe storm related and/or offshoots of either category (mudslides and/or landslides).

Committee members felt that communities in the region are much more adept and prepared to deal with physical disaster, because the damage is tangible in nature and immediately comprehensible in a general sense. These disasters generally have a simple universal recovery strategy; rebuild or replace what was damaged or lost. These strategies are easily understandable and able to be related to any parties involved in the recovery effort. Committee members also felt that methods to prevent or recover from physical disasters were much clearer than non-physical disasters. All eight counties in the region employ an emergency management/ emergency services director, who specializes in organizing responses to physical disasters and coordinating required resources at a county level. According to the Ohio Emergency Management Agency all counties in the Buckeye Hills region have developed FEMA approved Local Hazard Mitigation Plans (LHMP). However, the EMA also shows that two of the counties in the region need to update their LHMPs. LHMPs are required to be updated every five years in order for counties to be eligible for FEMA Hazard Mitigation grant programs. All of these resources are aimed at providing the citizens of the region with primarily disaster recovery services and service coordination during times of duress. While many of these entities plan and practice for specific man-made scenarios (chemical spills, chemical releases, terrorist attacks) response planning for natural disasters generally includes steady state initiatives of awareness, education, and communication/information networks.

The strong storm/derecho disaster scenario will not be discussed in this section, as the nature of the threat is generally unpredictable and unavoidable. This however does not lessen the severity of impact these storms have on the region.



Flooding – The most prevalent and destructive type of physical disaster that has historically affected regional communities is flooding. The flooding that takes place is not only major flooding from major bodies of water like the Ohio or Muskingum River; but also sudden and severe flash flooding on creeks and streams across the district. Many areas in the region can be categorized as being in, or in close proximity to, areas defined as flood zones. As previously mentioned, flooding accounts for a majority of the presidential and emergency declarations declared in the Buckeye Hills region. Between 1964 and 2019, 32 of the 52 emergency declarations in the State of Ohio have been flooding related. Also, a majority (16) of the declarations affecting the Buckeye Hills region have involved flooding.

Flooding is also a costly disaster to the communities it affects. According to the State of Ohio Enhanced Hazard Mitigation Plan, between 2000 and 2017 there were 859 reported flood events in the State of Ohio. Those events accounted for 34 deaths, 13 injuries, over \$1.7 billion in estimated property damage and nearly \$62 million in crop destruction. In the Buckeye Hills region, 57 state-owned and state-leased critical facilities are located in the 100-year floodplain, putting them at higher risk for damage. Many of these facilities are owned or leased by the Ohio Department of Transportation and have an estimated value of approximately \$39 million.

Wildfire - The state of Ohio is made up of three Ohio Emergency Management Regions, and the Buckeye Hills district falls completely within Region 3. According to the State of Ohio Hazard Mitigation Plan, Region 3 represents the areas of highest wildfire risk in the state. As noted, the region is primarily composed of ‘unglaciated, hilly country, that varies in land cover including abundant forested lands and grasslands.’ Social and cultural aspects of the region also contribute to a greater occurrence of wildfire as well. The entirety of the Buckeye Hills region is located within an Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Wildfire Protection Area. Between 2007 and 2017 there were 655 fire events in the Buckeye Hills region with 7 of those being large scale 100+ acre events.



The probability of future events is captured in the ODNR wildfire rating by analyzing the following factors; weather, fuels, ignitions, and suppression response. Information gathered on these topics, along with other information including population and population density is analyzed using GIS mapping tools to produce township level hazard ratings discussed here. According to these analyses, several high-risk

areas are noted in the larger region, with particular high-risk areas located in Meigs and Athens Counties. For more information about wildfires in Ohio, and to access additional materials cited here, please visit the Ohio EMA website at: https://sharpp.dps.ohio.gov/OhioSHARPP/Documents/OhioMitigationPlan/2019/Section_2.7_Wildfire_FINAL.pdf



Combined Physical Hazard Risk Assessment - In order to help quantify the risk rating of the entire region against the threat of flooding and wildfire, a basic combined hazard risk assessment has been completed by Buckeye Hills staff. The purpose of this analysis is to provide a general framework for natural disaster risk scenarios based on available data, and historic likelihood of occurrence. This analysis provides a risk rating from 0 to 5 for townships in the region based on the following criteria; ODNR wildfire threat level, existence of floodplain areas, existence of high value structures (fire stations, police stations, EMS facilities, and schools) in medium or high risk fire areas, and the existence of those high value structures in floodplain areas. Based on these criteria, 21 of Buckeye Hills 120 townships have an elevated rating of 4 or higher. This puts a significant amount of the regional population and land area at an increased risk to flooding and wildfire. Maps illustrating the natural disaster considerations used in this analysis are included at the end of this document.

ECONOMIC DISASTER RESILIENCE

The Buckeye Hills region also has a history of recovering from economic disasters. In comparison to physical or natural disasters, these are often more difficult to identify, and much more difficult to recover from. Often times one of these situations can be unfolding quietly, unbeknownst to those in the local community, as often times the circumstances mitigating these disasters are developed elsewhere. Economic disasters that have befallen the region in the past include 'bust' economic phases following periods of heavy natural resource extraction (timber, coal, oil, gas), closings or reductions of major employers, and fluctuation of commodity prices.

Based on discussions with members of the CEDS committee, and other local economic development representatives, there was a general consensus that communities in the Buckeye Hills region do not employ a formal strategy to prepare for or recover from an economic disaster. Members felt that this rural region was not unlike other rural regions of the country, where communities are dominated by large employers, and those large employers are located in close proximity to a needed operational resource. As such, unfortunately there is little in the way of responsive state solutions in place should one of those institutions fail, or access to that necessary resource become challenged. In order to improve regional economic resilience, responsive economic resilience initiatives must become a greater focus.

What the Buckeye Hills communities have engaged in are many steady state initiatives. Below are several examples.

- Communities are generally engaged in comprehensive planning efforts aimed at building capacities among active parties, and generating information related to a variety of topics. (Comprehensive economic development planning, transportation planning, hazard mitigation planning, etc.)

- Local economic development officials and local governments are actively working to attract economic development opportunities to the region, in order to diversify the regional economy. Diversification efforts are also focused on regional assets and investing in different areas such as the region's arts, history, culture, and tourism sectors respectively. Focusing on assets that have local ownership provide communities the ability to build on their unique assets and competitive strengths, while also providing some stability during downturns that disproportionately impact the region's more developed clusters (Oil & Gas, Manufacturing, Coal).

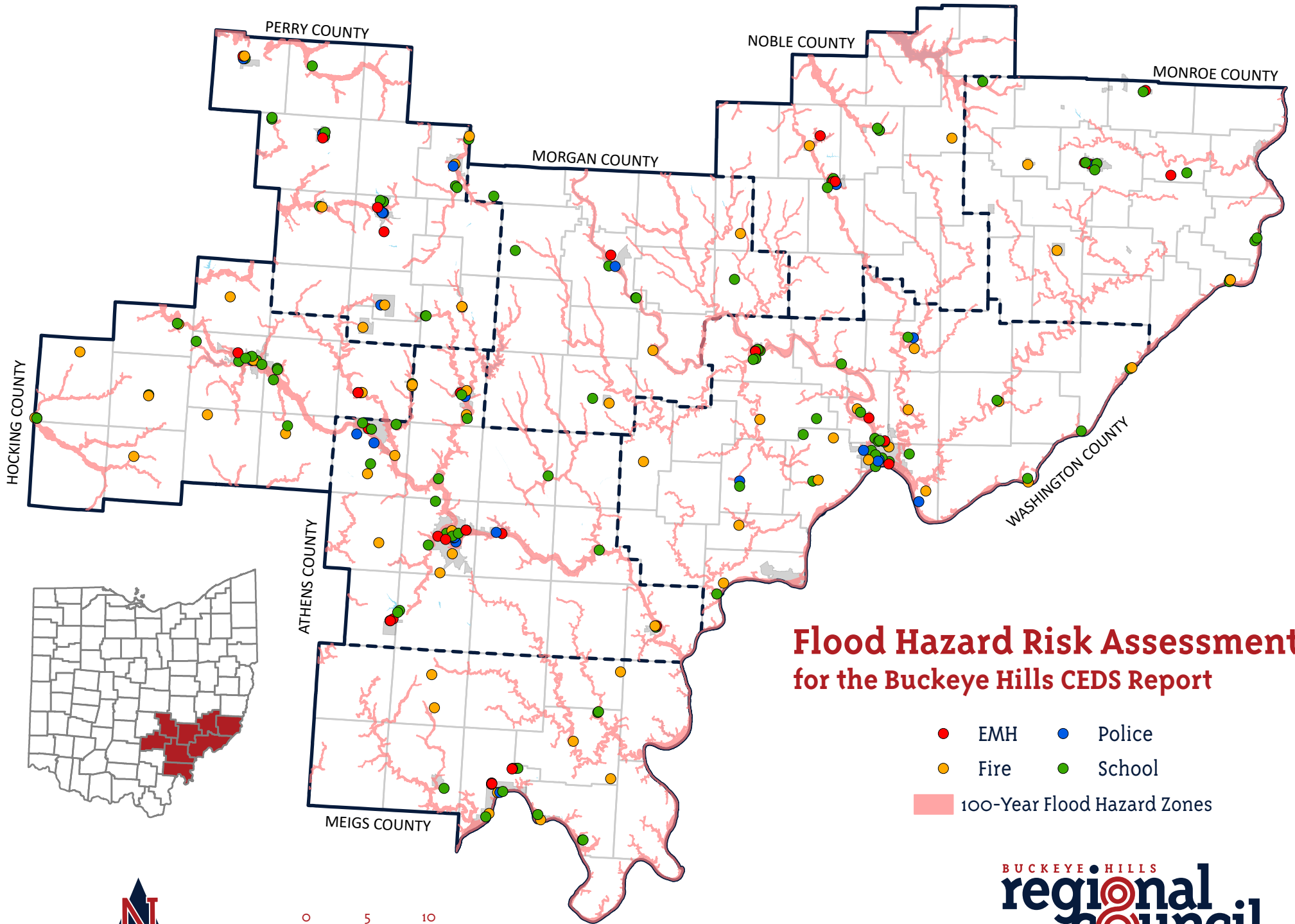
- JobsOhio and its network partners are conducting business retention and expansion activities in conjunction with local parties in the region. These activities are helping all parties better understand the needs of companies in the area, define industry clusters where the Buckeye Hills region has a competitive advantage, and secure resources to ensure local communities are able to capitalize new and expanding opportunities.

- The network of local community colleges and career centers are providing important workforce training opportunities in response to opportunities and trends in the regional economy. Regional programs such as Building Bridges to Careers also provide high school students opportunities to learn on the job and help train the younger generation on the skills needed to find productive work in the region.

- Buckeye Hills maintains and operates a geographic information system that provides readily available information regarding development sites, demographics, environmental conditions, economic data, and analysis to parties in the region on an as needed basis, free of charge.

- Communities in the Buckeye Hills region are also practicing strategies for safe and smart development that help lessen the risk of heavy or repetitive losses due to flooding or other natural disasters. Many of these strategies can be found in Local Mitigation Hazard Plans.

While this is not an exhaustive list of all disaster prevention (physical and economic) activities taking place in the region, this is meant to illustrate the spirit of cooperation present in the Buckeye Hills region. The common goal is to ensure that all communities are able to withstand physical and economic disasters and continue to thrive in the future.



Flood Hazard Risk Assessment for the Buckeye Hills CEDS Report

- EMH
- Police
- Fire
- School
- 100-Year Flood Hazard Zones



