



ADVANCING THE ALLEGHENIES

Engaging communities to foster regional economic opportunity



**Southern Alleghenies
Region Comprehensive
Economic Development
Strategy (CEDS)
2025-2029**



SAP&DC
SOUTHERN ALLEGHENIES PLANNING
& DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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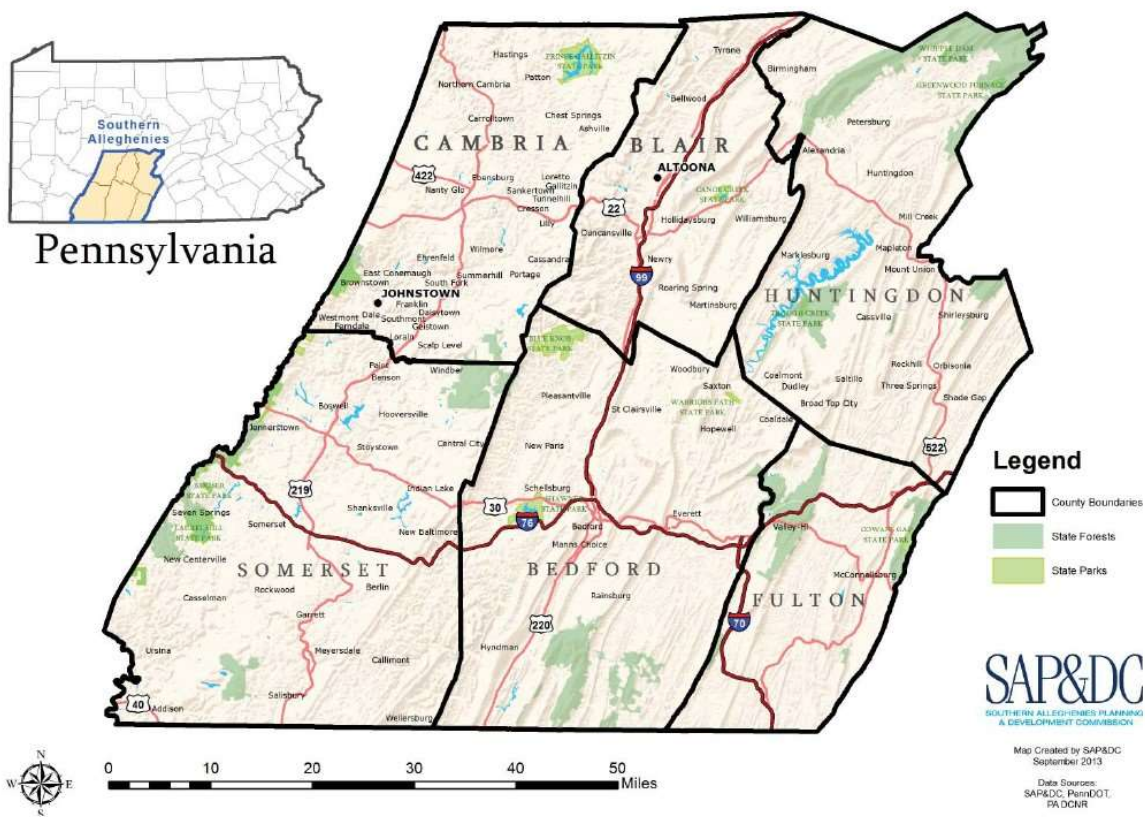
TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	5
WHAT IS A CEDS	5
WHY DO WE NEED A CEDS	6
PREPARING THE CEDS	6
EQUITY	7
DEMOGRAPHICS.....	9
POPULATION TRENDS	9
POPULATION BY AGE	16
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	17
SUMMARY OF DEMOGRAPHICS.....	18
HOUSING.....	19
REGIONAL HOUSING COMPARED TO THE NATION	20
COUNTY HOUSING PROFILES	21
SUMMARY OF HOUSING	24
INFRASTRUCTURE	25
BROADBAND SERVICES	25
HIGHWAY NETWORK	27
AIRPORTS.....	27
PUBLIC TRANSIT.....	28
ECONOMIC TRENDS.....	29
WORKFORCE & EMPLOYMENT	29
COMMUTING	31
GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT	32
WAGES	35
INCOME & HEALTH INSURANCE.....	35
STRUCTURE OF REGIONAL ECONOMY	36
STRUCTURE OF COUNTY ECONOMIES	40
AGRICULTURE	43
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION OF ECONOMIC TRENDS.....	44
PENNSYLVANIA TEN-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN	47
POPULATION PROJECTION.....	49
RESILIENCE.....	53
THE SWOT ANALYSIS AND SURVEY	57
GOALS & OBJECTIVES	69
GOAL 1.....	69
GOAL 2	72
GOAL 3	74
GOAL 4	75
GOAL 5	78
GOAL 6.....	79
GOAL 7.....	79
IMPLEMENTATION & ACTION PLAN	83
GOAL 1.....	83
GOAL 2	93
GOAL 3	97
GOAL 4	99
GOAL 5	105
GOAL 6	107
GOAL 7.....	109

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS A CEDS?

A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (or CEDS) is defined by the United States Economic Development Agency (or EDA) as a strategy-driven regional planning effort that promotes and coordinates economic development. It involves background studies, a SWOT analysis, and the drafting of prioritized strategies, goals, objectives, and measurable outcomes for regional economic development, resiliency, and equity. It involves outreach to and participation from county governments, local governments, economic development organizations, labor unions, institutions of higher education, workforce developers, community organizations, non-profits, utilities, and businesses. This CEDS is for Pennsylvania's six-county Southern Alleghenies Economic Development District (EDD), which includes Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Fulton, Huntingdon, and Somerset Counties (see below). This region is served by the Southern Alleghenies Planning and Development Commission, or SAP&DC. SAP&DC is required to have an up-to-date CEDS to receive financial assistance from EDA, or to apply to EDA for funding to advance local economic development projects.



WHY DO WE NEED A CEDS?

As an Economic Development District (EDD) federally designated by the Economic Development Administration (EDA), the Southern Alleghenies Planning and Development Commission (SAP&DC) is required to support an active CEDS process. While its most critical function is to provide a framework or “roadmap” for guiding investments within the region, the CEDS also serves as a required vehicle through which the EDA evaluates grant requests. Without an EDA-approved CEDS, applicants in the region are ineligible to receive grant assistance through EDA. In just the past few years, this funding has been critical to important projects such as the Quemahoning Pipeline Project and Juniata College’s Sill Business Incubator (SBI). The Federal government has required EDDs to support an active CEDS process since 1965, making the CEDS one of the oldest regional planning frameworks in the United States.

PREPARING THE CEDS

The CEDS document is the result of conducting research and gathering input from people who live and work in the six-county region, which we will refer to as “the Southern Alleghenies” or the “Southern Alleghenies Region.” A SWOT analysis and survey was completed. Informal stakeholder interviews were conducted on a rolling basis, and a CEDS Committee meeting was held with members participating from each of the six counties to discuss the results of the SWOT analysis and develop the goals and strategies for the 2025-2029 CEDS Plan.

The CEDS Committee convened by SAP&DC is comprised of the following public and private sector representatives:

2024 CEDS Committee Members:

- **Natalie Toma**, Penn Highlands Community College, Blair Center Director, representative of higher education
- **Marty Malone**, ACTS – Altoona Office, Blair County, private sector representative
- **Kellie Shaffer**, Bedford County Chamber of Commerce, Bedford County, private sector representative
- **Blake Fleegle**, Westwood Plaza Theatre, Cambria County, private sector representative
- **Diana McClure**, Keller Engineers, Blair County, private sector representative
- **Beth Futrick**, Cherry Hill Farm/Blair County Conservation District, Blair County, agriculture
- **Rick Truscello**, Resident, Cambria County, private sector representative
- **Larry Myers**, Schneider Electric, Bedford County, private sector representative
- **Jennifer Sklodowski**, Director, Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Board (SAWDB), Cambria County, workforce
- **Matthew Price**, Huntingdon County Convention and Visitors Bureau, Huntingdon County, tourism
- **Stephen McKnight**, Altoona Blair County Development Corporation, Blair

County, economic development

- **Paul Johnston**, Fulton Industrial Development Association, Fulton County, economic development
- **Karen Gnagey**, Aon Investment Consulting, Somerset County, private sector

Advancing the Alleghenies, the Southern Alleghenies Region Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), 2025-2029 was written by Lee C. Slusser, AICP (Director, Planning and Community Development Division, SAP&DC) with help from Matthew Bauerlin (Regional Planner, Planning and Community Development Division, SAP&DC). The drafting and public outreach processes took well over one year, beginning in November 2023. It was adopted by vote of the Board of Directors of the Southern Alleghenies Planning and Development Commission on December 4, 2024, after a forty-five day public comment period.

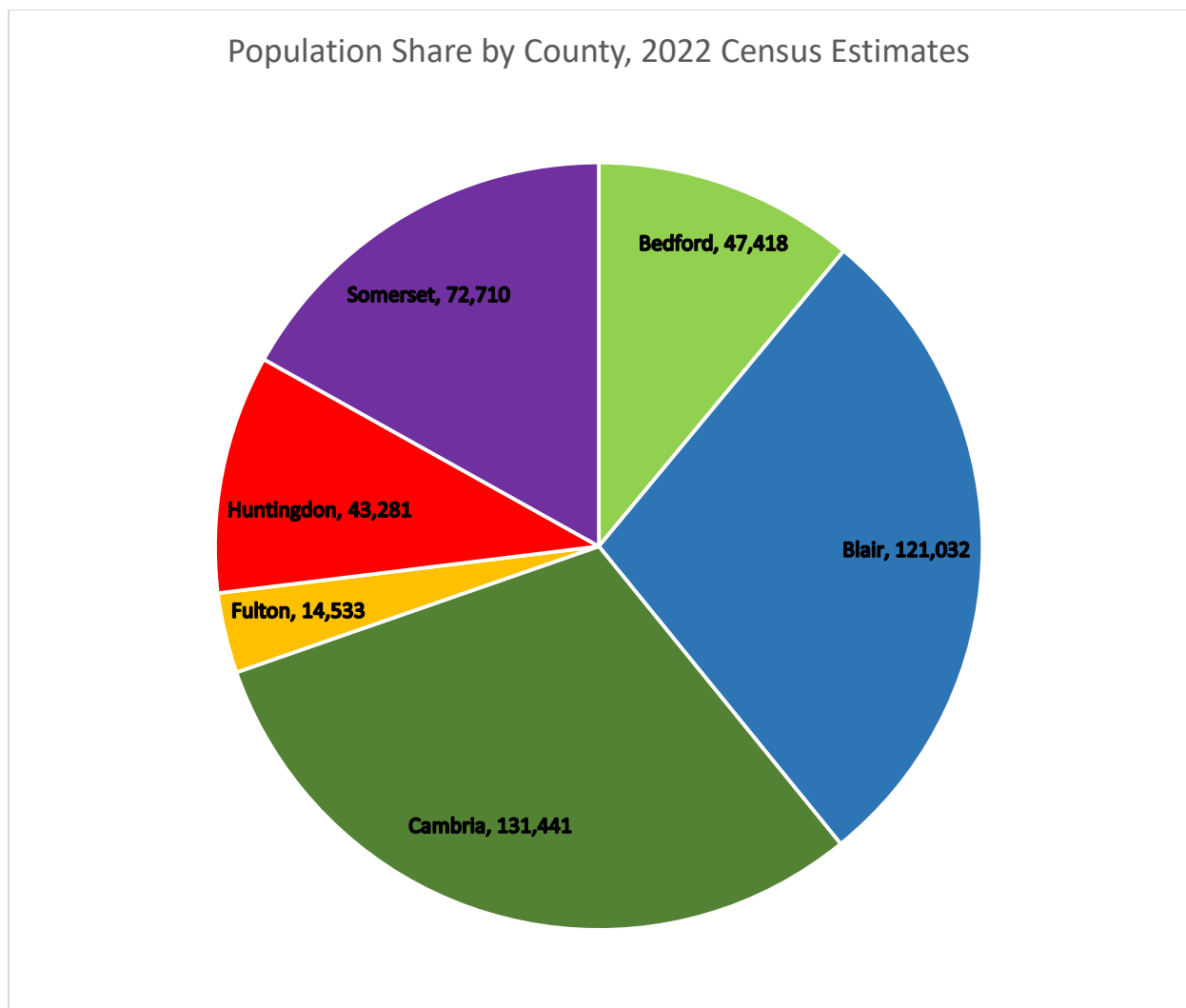
EQUITY

As required by the Economic Development Administration (EDA), this CEDS will focus on improving equity in the economic development of the Southern Alleghenies Region. Our background research, public outreach, goal setting, and prioritization efforts will focus on identifying, involving, and positively impacting communities who have traditionally been left behind by some economic development policies due to factors such as race, gender, socio-economic status, and geography – resulting in geographic inequalities and impeded growth. This CEDS will be developed with transparency and measuring impacts on disadvantaged communities in mind.

DEMOGRAPHICS

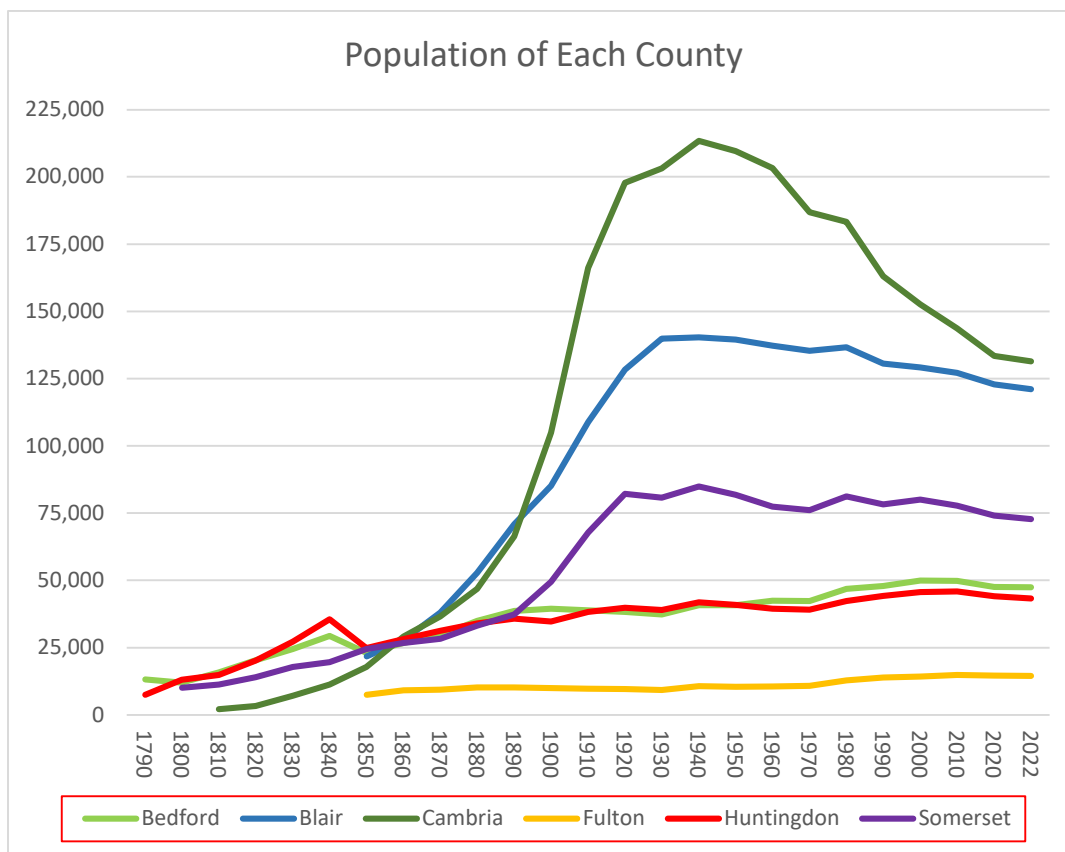
POPULATION TRENDS

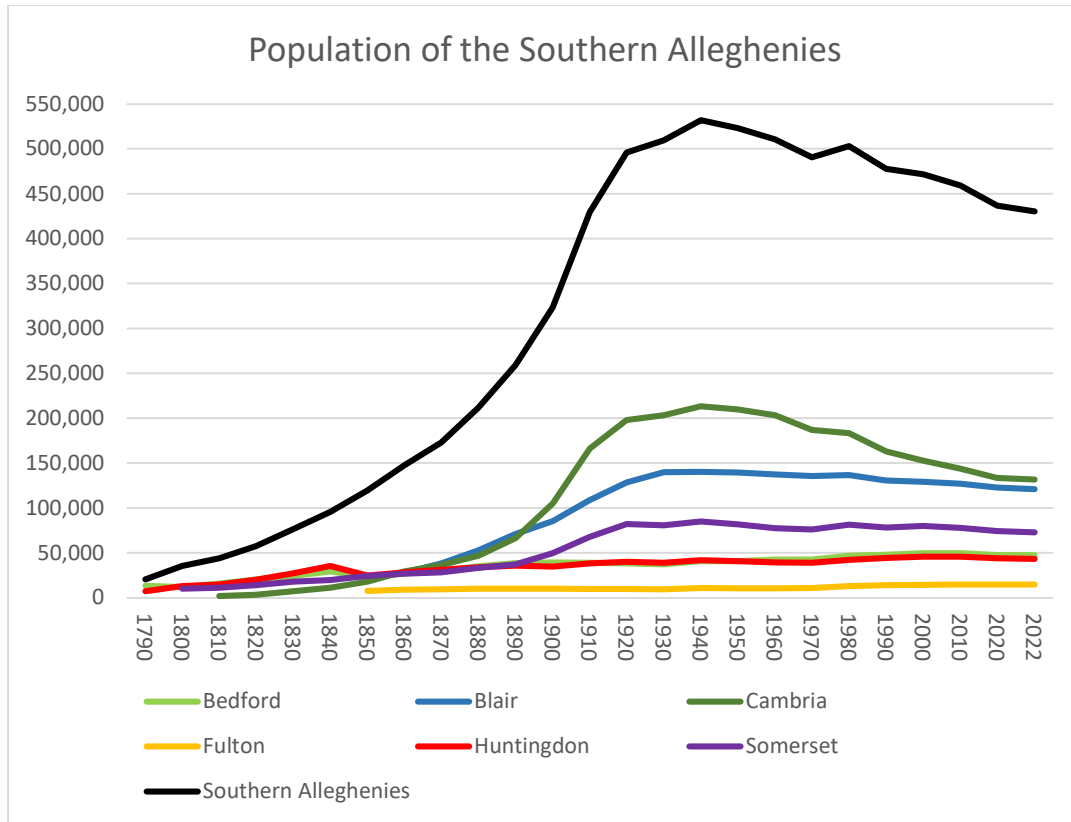
The Southern Alleghenies Economic Development District (EDD) and Region are comprised of six counties in south-central Pennsylvania: Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Fulton, Huntingdon, and Somerset. Although Johnstown and Altoona are cities and urbanized metropolitan statistical areas, most of the Southern Alleghenies 3,400 square miles are rural, forested, and mountainous. By the United States Census Bureau's 2022 estimates, the Southern Alleghenies had 430,415 residents distributed among the six counties as follows.



By Census 2020, the Southern Alleghenies had 436,648 residents. This was a loss of 5% from its Census 2010 population of 459,030 and a loss of 7% from its Census 2000 population of 471,588. In 1980, the Southern Alleghenies constituted 4.2% of Pennsylvania's total population. By the 2022 estimates, the Southern Alleghenies constituted only 3.3% of Pennsylvania's total population.

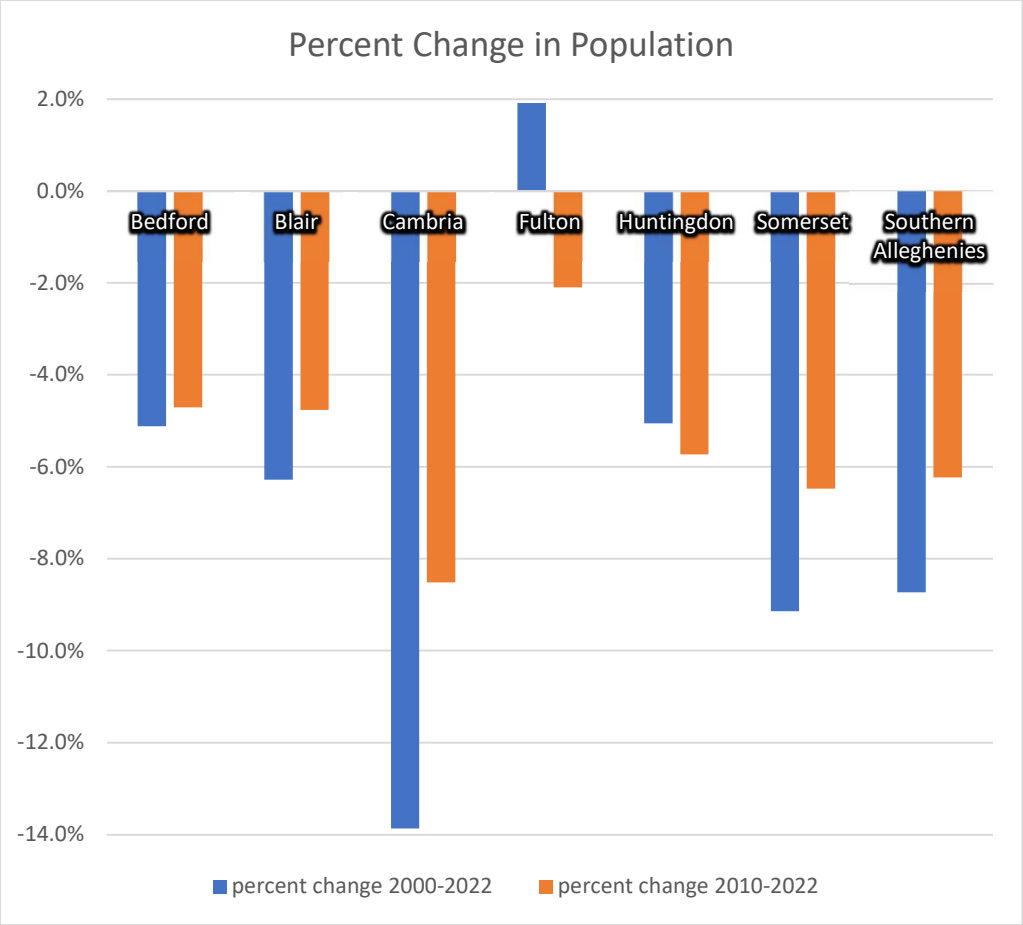
The most populated counties are Cambria with 133,441 residents and Blair with 121,032 residents, while the least populated county is Fulton with 14,533 residents (Census estimates for 2022). Being the most demographically populous and historically dynamic county of the six, Cambria has long dominated the overall Region's population change. The graphs below show every U.S. Census taken for the six counties, only two of which had been created before the first Census in 1790.



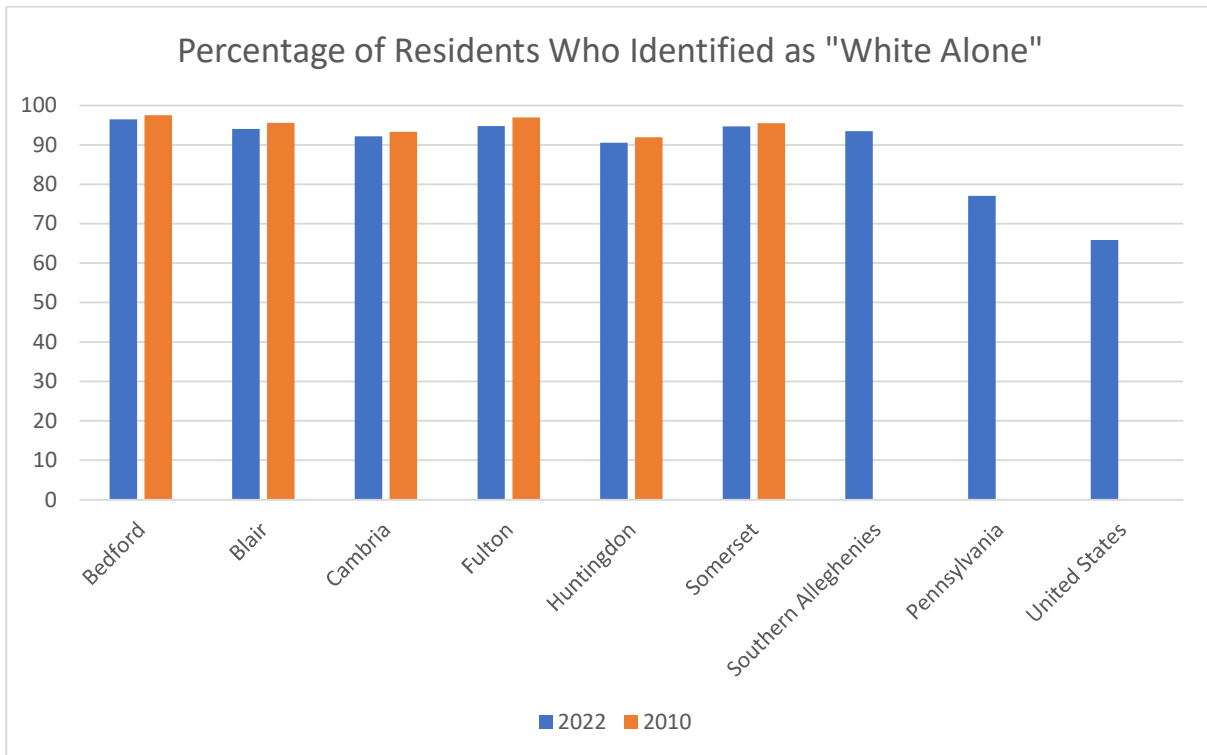


Although Fulton County gained 1.9% in population from 2000-2022, the other five counties all lost population – ranging from Bedford and Huntingdon County’s 5.1% loss to Cambria County’s 13.9% loss. All six counties lost population from 2010-2022, ranging from Fulton County’s 2.1% loss to Cambria County’s 8.5% loss.

	Bedford	Blair	Cambria	Fulton	Huntingdon	Somerset	Southern Alleghenies
2000	49,976	129,144	152,598	14,261	45,586	80,023	471,588
2010	49,762	127,089	143,679	14,845	45,913	77,742	459,030
2020	47,577	122,822	133,472	14,556	44,092	74,129	436,648
2022	47,418	121,032	131,441	14,533	43,281	72,710	430,415



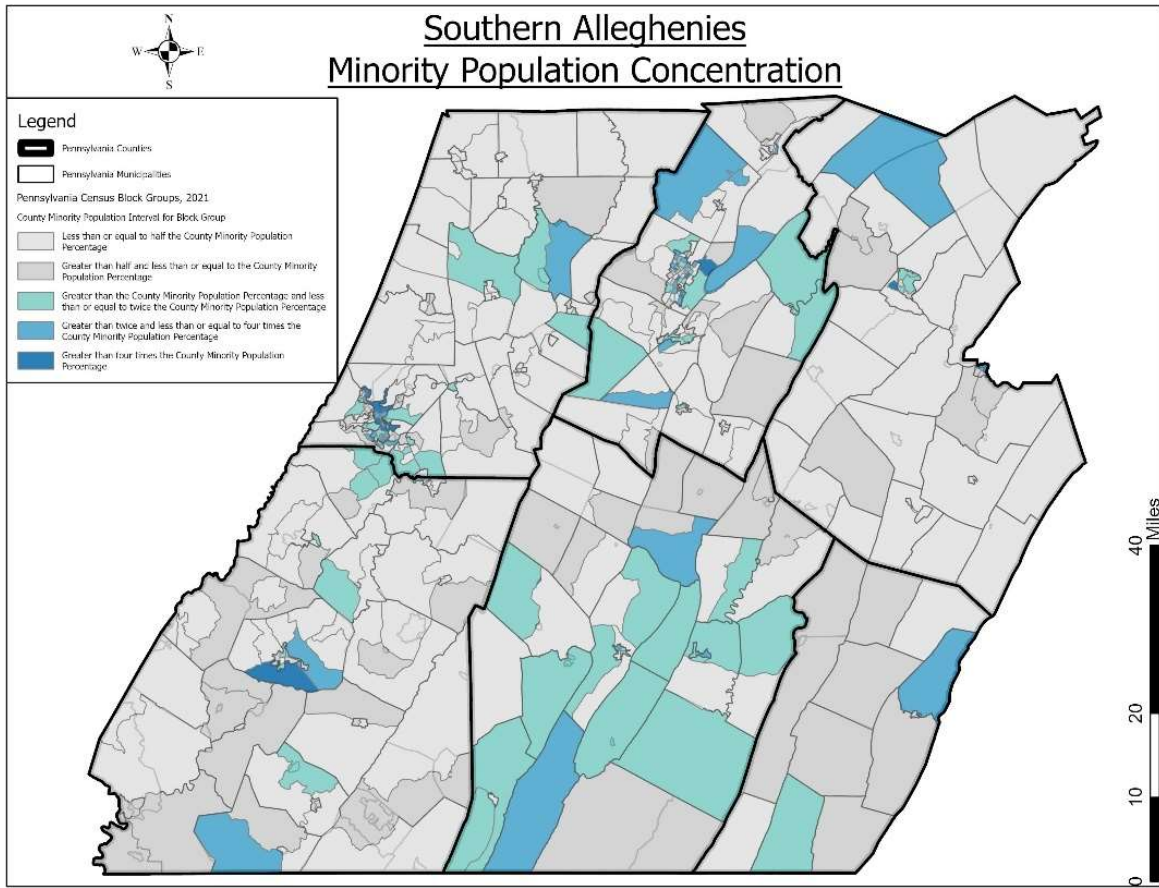
Racially, the Southern Alleghenies Region is not diverse relative to the state or nation. According to the Census Bureau's 2022 estimates, 93.5% of the Region's residents identified as "white alone" – compared to 77.1% of Pennsylvanians and 65.9% of Americans. However, the percentage of those identified as "white alone" decreased in every county from Census 2010, showing that diversity is slowly growing.



The following table presents a more comprehensive view of the racial makeup of the Southern Alleghenies population.

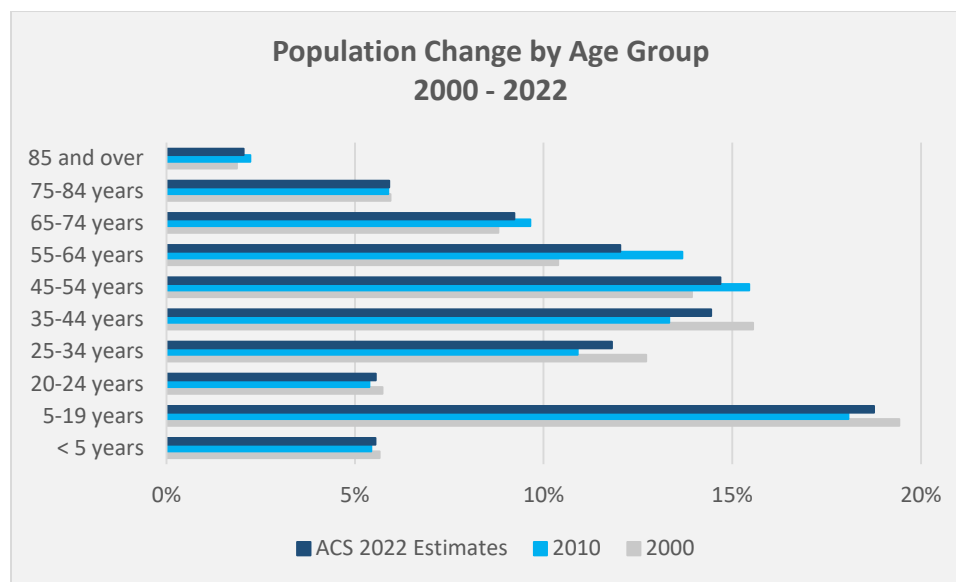
Southern Alleghenies Population by Race and Hispanic Origin, 2022				
	Region	Pct. of Total	U.S.	Pct. of Total
Total	435,986	100%	331,097,593	100%
American Ind. or Alaskan Native Alone	386	0.10%	2,786,431	0.80%
Asian Alone	2,161	0.50%	19,112,979	5.80%
Black Alone	11,274	2.60%	41,288,572	12.50%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pac. Isl. Alone	45	0.00%	624,863	0.20%
White Alone	407,716	93.50%	218,123,424	65.90%
Two or More Race Groups	12,438	2.90%	29,142,780	8.80%
Hispanic or Latino				
Total Hispanic or Latino	7,051	1.60%	61,755,866	18.70%
Mexican	2,304	0.50%	37,145,956	11.20%
Cuban	439	0.10%	2,405,080	0.70%
Puerto Rican	2,292	0.50%	5,902,402	1.80%
Other	2,016	0.50%	16,302,428	4.90%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, latest 5-Year Estimates				

Using Census data gathered for the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) environmental justice requirements, concentrations of minority population are distributed around the Southern Alleghenies Region as shown below. Many of these concentrations lie in the cities and boroughs.



POPULATION BY AGE

The population of the Southern Alleghenies Region is older than that of Pennsylvania, which has one of the oldest state populations in the United States. Pennsylvania's median age is 40.8 years, whereas the median ages of the Southern Alleghenies counties are as follows: Bedford 47.3, Blair 42.9, Cambria 45.6, Fulton 45.7, Huntingdon 43.6, and Somerset 46.7 (Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, Center for Workforce Information and Analysis, January 2024). The chart below shows the population of the Southern Alleghenies broken down by age group in 2010, 2020, and 2022 according to the Census. The population older than 45 years of age has grown substantially during this period. Although the population between 20 and 64 years of age has remained about steady at 58%, the overall population is declining.



According to the Census Bureau and the National Economic Resilience Data Explorer (NERDE) (prepared by the Argonne National Laboratory for EDA), the percentage of the population in the working years (between 16 and 64) in each county is as follows: Bedford 57.7%, Blair 58.9%, Cambria 58.1%, Fulton 58.6%, Huntingdon 61.4%, and Somerset 59.6%. The percentages of the population older than 65 years ranges from Huntingdon County's 20.5% to Bedford County's 22.6%. According to Stats America (produced for EDA by the Kelley School of Business at Indiana University), 22.2% of the Southern Alleghenies Region population is over 65 years of age, compared to only 16.5% of the American population. The percentage of the Southern Alleghenies Region population in the working years is 58%, compared to 61% of the American population. The percentage of the Southern Alleghenies Region younger than 18 years of age is 19%, compared to 22% of the American population.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Educational attainment measures a region's workforce talent and can lead to technological innovation. As technology and knowledge-based industries become more central to the national and global economies, the high skill level of the labor force is one of the key drivers of economic growth. At the individual level, one's education levels are closely linked to higher wages and employment rates.

The Southern Alleghenies Region is well positioned in terms of higher learning institutions, boasting a list that includes the following four-year colleges and universities:

- The University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, Cambria County
- The Pennsylvania State University, Altoona Campus, Blair County (University Park, the main campus of Penn State in Centre County, lies as close as 3.8 miles to the nearest point in Huntingdon County. Parts of University Park's research fields are even closer.)
- Juniata College, Huntingdon County
- Saint Francis University, Cambria County
- Mount Aloysius College, Cambria County

In addition, several technical and community colleges offer two-year, associate degree programs. Among some of these schools are the South Hills School of Business and Technology, the Hiram G. Andrews Center, Pennsylvania Highlands Community College, and Allegany College of Maryland.

Unfortunately, the Southern Alleghenies Region's population still lags behind the rest of the nation in percentages of those with a bachelor's, graduate, or professional degree – which is shown in the table below. Each category in this table is the “most advanced” level of education that the group has achieved.

2022 Educational Attainment, Southern Alleghenies vs. the U.S.				
	Region	Pct. of Total	U.S.	Pct. of Total
Total Population 25 and Older	315,933	100%	226,600,992	100%
Less Than 9th Grade	7,780	2.50%	10,742,781	4.70%
9th to 12th, No Diploma	18,483	5.90%	13,856,917	6.10%
High School Graduate (incl. equiv.)	147,053	46.50%	59,741,825	26.40%
Some College, No Degree	47,282	15.00%	44,692,390	19.70%
Associate Degree	30,489	9.70%	19,815,732	8.70%
Bachelor's Degree	42,909	13.60%	47,391,673	20.90%
Graduate or Professional Degree	21,937	6.90%	30,359,674	13.40%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, latest 5-Year Estimates				

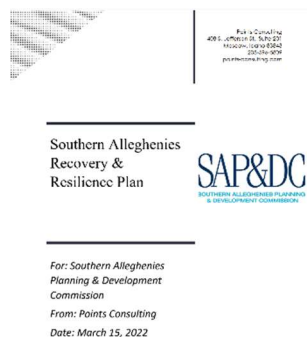
The percentage of the population with a bachelor's degree being the highest level of education attained varies substantially between the counties: Blair 17.9%, Cambria 16.9%, Huntingdon 12.8%, Somerset 12.1%, Bedford 10.7%, and Fulton 10.5%. There is less variety in the percentage of the population with a graduate or professional degree being the highest level of education attained: Blair 8.2%, Cambria 8.2%, Fulton 7%, Bedford 6.7%, Somerset 6.5%, and Huntingdon 6.2%. Still, Blair and Cambria Counties have the highest percentages of college graduates. For the region as a whole, however, the percentage of the population with a bachelor's degree being the highest level of education attained has grown by 3% since 2017, whereas the percentage of the population with a graduate or professional degree being the highest level of education attained has grown by 0.9%. Thus, the Region's college education levels are growing.

The percentage of the region's population with a high school degree being the highest level of education achieved is over 20% higher than that percentage for the United States. This is largely, *although not entirely*, explained by the relatively lower percentages of college graduates. It appears that a lower percentage of the regional population does not finish high school than the national population. Vocational-technical or trade school educational levels are not measured by the Census. This is unfortunate, as these schools are especially important to the Southern Alleghenies Region and its large manufacturing sector.

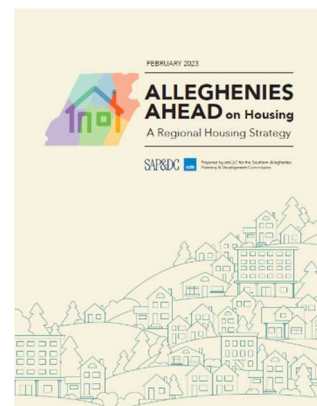
SUMMARY OF DEMOGRAPHICS

The population of the Southern Alleghenies Region stands at 430,415 according to 2022 Census estimates, and it has declined over 7% since 2000. Although diversity is growing, the region is substantially less diverse than Pennsylvania or the United States. The Southern Alleghenies Region population is also older than the Pennsylvanian or American population, with only 58% in the working ages as opposed to 61% in the U.S. Although educational levels are improving, the percentage of the Southern Alleghenies Region population whose highest educational attainment is a bachelor's degree (13.6%) or a graduate degree (6.9%) stand well below the comparable statistics for the United States (20.9% and 13.4% respectively).

HOUSING



The *Southern Alleghenies Recovery & Resilience Plan* – completed by SAP&DC on March 15, 2022, using EDA CARES funding and the services of Points Consulting of Moscow, Idaho – developed strategies to improve the Region’s ability to anticipate and survive future downturns in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. After extensive study, research, and public outreach, the



Recovery and Resilience Plan recommended that the Region focus on addressing the following four areas of concern: workforce retention and attraction, quality of place, attracting remote workers, and housing development and blight reduction. All four of these areas of concern pointed to the Region’s aging population and shrinking workforce as the greatest threat to future economic prosperity. The Recovery and Resilience Plan particularly noted the Region’s aging and dated housing stock as a barrier to attracting new residents, and thus, new businesses. So, the Recovery and Resilience plan recommended that a follow up study be prepared to exclusively focus on developing new housing and reducing blight.

Following this recommendation, SAP&DC completed *Alleghenies Ahead on Housing* in February 2023 with the services of czb consulting of Bath, Maine. This plan was also funded by EDA CARES. It thoroughly researched and conducted public outreach regarding the housing stock, housing markets, incomes, and blight of each local housing market, each county, and the Region as a whole. It identified the challenges that the existing housing stock presents to attracting new residents and businesses, as well as to lower income households who have difficulty finding decent homes. *Alleghenies Ahead on Housing* proposed several strategies for incentivizing the development and rehabilitation of new and more modern forms of housing for all household budgets, culminating in the description of thirteen tools that our Region, counties, municipalities, and economic developers should use.

Both *The Southern Alleghenies Recovery & Resilience Plan* and *Alleghenies Ahead on Housing* are currently being implemented through regional and county task forces. Because these two extensive plans examine both the area’s resilience and its housing in far greater detail than this CEDS could ever match, these two documents should be considered part of this CEDS included by this reference. Nevertheless, this CEDS will briefly present the existing state of the regional housing market.

REGIONAL HOUSING COMPARED TO THE NATION

Stats America, a product of the Economic Development Administration (EDA) and the Kelley School of Business, presents the following comparison of the Southern Alleghenies Region's housing stock compared to that of the United States as a whole.

Southern Alleghenies Regional Housing Profile				
Housing units, 2022	Value	Pct. of Total	U.S. Units	Pct. of Total
Total Housing Units	209,749	100%	140,943,613	100%
Owner Occupied	134,670	64.20%	81,497,760	57.80%
Renter Occupied	41,882	20.00%	44,238,593	31.40%
Vacant For Seasonal or Recreational Use	33,197	15.80%	15,207,260	10.80%
1-Unit (Attached or Detached)	140,704	67.10%	86,521,623	61.40%
2 - 9 Units	13,618	6.50%	15,146,007	10.70%
10 - 19 Units	2,551	1.20%	5,309,917	3.80%
20 or more Units	5,589	2.70%	12,072,104	8.60%
Built prior to 1940	60,856	29.00%	16,976,512	12.00%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, latest 5-Year Estimates				

The percentages of the regional housing stock that are owner occupied, vacant or seasonal, single-household detached, or built prior to 1940 are each significantly higher than for the United States as a whole. Housing in the Southern Alleghenies Region is predominantly older, with older housing styles (e.g., single-family houses instead of townhomes or apartment buildings) that often require maintenance (hence vacancy and blight). This explains the call in *Alleghenies Ahead on Housing* for housing rehabilitation and new housing units in new housing styles that many of today's professionals seek.

COUNTY HOUSING PROFILES

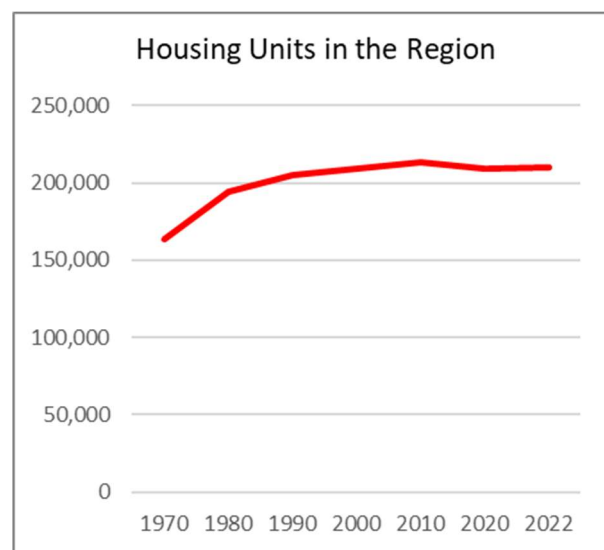
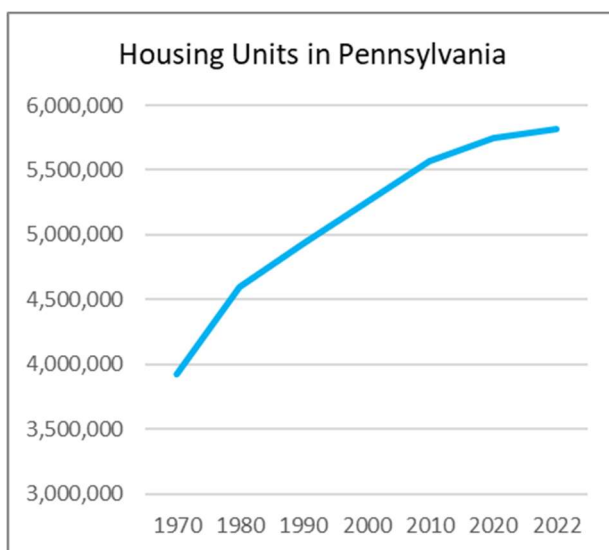
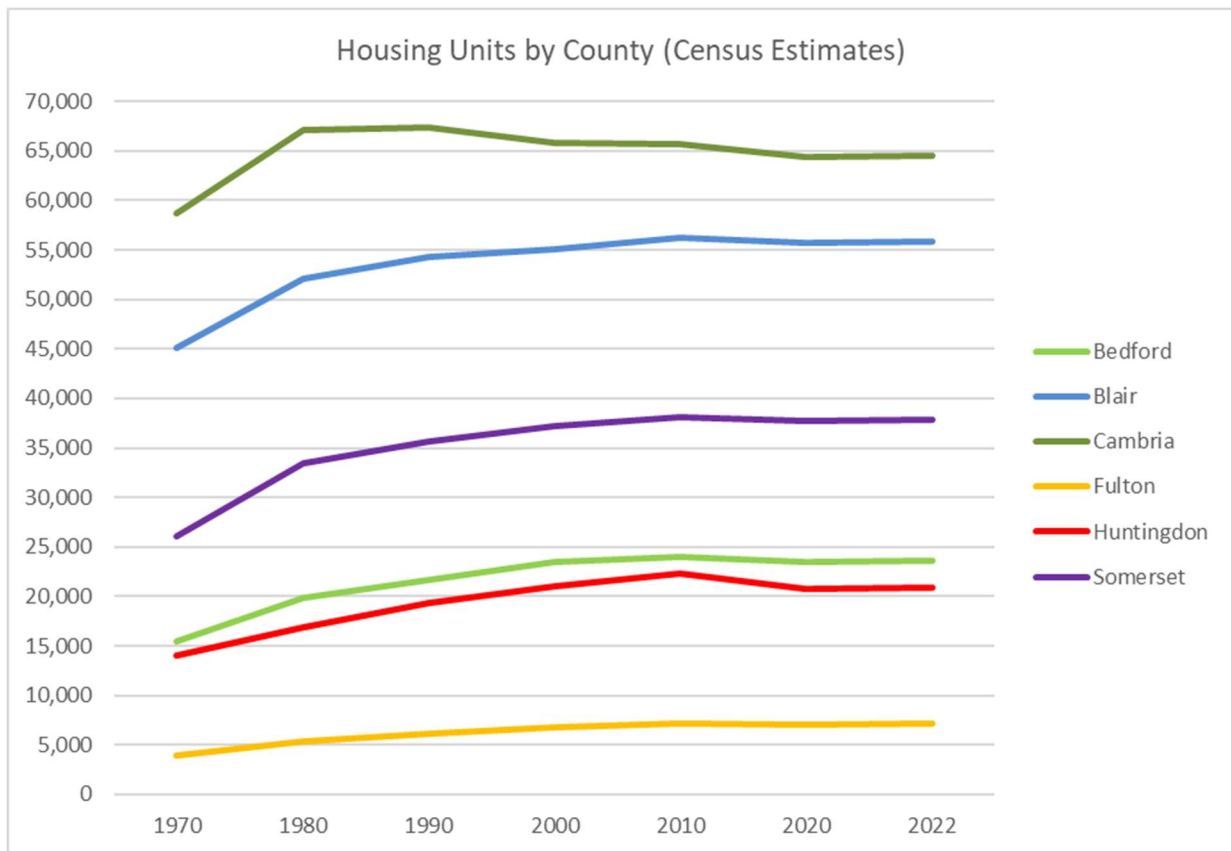
The following table, also from Stats America, breaks some of this data down to the county level, separates vacant units from seasonal units (unlike above), adds data about households (the consumers of housing), and adds building permit data.

	Bedford County	Blair County	Cambria County	Fulton County	Huntingdon County	Somerset County
Total Population 2022	47,418	121,032	131,441	14,533	43,281	72,710
Households 2022	19,571	50,587	55,541	6,126	15,771	28,956
Family Households	12,778	31,567	33,602	4,112	10,661	19,326
Married with Children	3,097	7,891	7,015	1,084	2,558	4,925
Married without Children	7,399	15,501	17,902	2,201	6,006	10,854
Single Parents	1,103	4,417	4,676	477	1,056	1,820
Other	1,179	3,758	4,009	350	1,041	1,727
Non-Family Households	6,793	19,020	21,939	2,014	5,110	9,630
Living Alone	5,800	15,823	19,220	1,766	4,463	8,124
Average Household Size	2.4	2.3	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.4
Housing Units in 2022						
Total Housing Units (ACS estimate)	23,547	55,808	64,522	7,119	20,957	37,796
Occupied	19,571	50,587	55,541	6,126	15,771	28,956
Owner Occupied	15,435	36,671	42,088	4,720	12,383	23,373
Renter Occupied	4,136	13,916	13,453	1,406	3,388	5,583
Vacant	3,976	5,221	8,981	993	5,186	8,840
For Seasonal or Recreational Use	1,832	416	753	515	3,141	5,239
Residential Building Permits in 2022						
Total Permits Filed	75	123	94	28	87	93
Single Family	75	71	94	28	87	93
Two Family	0	0	0	0	0	0
Three and Four Family	0	0	0	0	0	0
Five Families and More	0	52	0	0	0	0

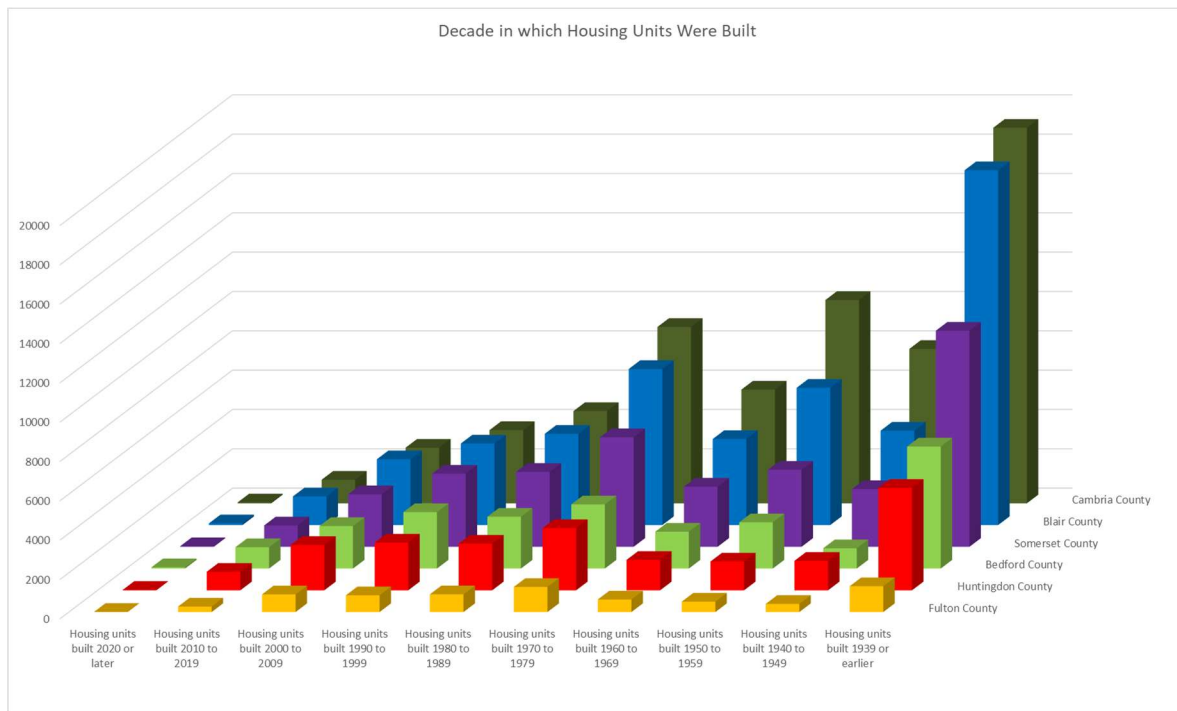
Of note in this table is the dearth of residential building permits in 2022 for multiple household housing, like apartment buildings or townhomes, outside of Blair County. Many outside professionals who might move to the Southern Alleghenies Region prefer townhomes, condominiums, or mid-rise apartment buildings that are rare in the Region and are rarely being built. Another concern is the raw vacancy rates displayed above (vacant/total housing units), which range from 9% in Blair County to 17% in Bedford County, 23% in Somerset County, and 25% in Huntingdon County. In 2000, the regional vacancy rate was 11.4%, and in 2017 it was 15.6%.

The following graphs show the change in the overall number of housing units over time according to the U.S. Census. This is first shown by county. Totals are then shown for Pennsylvania and the Southern Alleghenies Region as a whole. From 1970 to 2022, the number of housing units in each geography grew as follows: Pennsylvania 48%, the Southern Alleghenies Region 29%, Bedford County 52%, Blair County 24%, Cambria County 10%, Fulton County 83%, Huntingdon County 50%, and Somerset County 45%. From 2010 to 2022, however, this growth in housing units slowed or frequently even regressed: Pennsylvania 4%, Southern Alleghenies Region -2%, Bedford County -2%,

Blair County -1%, Cambria County -2%, Fulton County 0%, Huntingdon County -6%, and Somerset County -1%. Cambria County lost 1,335 housing units (or -2%) from 2000 to 2022 as well. The Southern Alleghenies Region has fallen behind the rest of Pennsylvania in total housing growth, particularly since 2010. This is noteworthy because as household sizes decrease, more housing units are needed to house the same level of population.



The graph below shows the number of housing units in each county in 2020 divided by the timeframe (by decade) in which each housing unit was built (US Census Bureau). Although there was a noticeable amount of housing built in the 1950s and 1970s, in every county, the timeframe in which the greatest portion of the 2020 housing stock was built was prior to 1939.



The graph above also reveals a strong drop-off in new housing production after the 1970s, and especially since 2000.

County Housing in 2020	Median Year Housing Units Built	Percent Owner Occupied
Bedford County	1971	78.9%
Blair County	1957	72.5%
Cambria County	1955	75.8%
Fulton County	1975	77.0%
Huntingdon County	1972	78.5%
Somerset County	1963	80.7%

The table to the left shows the median year in which each county's 2020 housing stock was built as well as the percent of that housing that was owner-occupied (U.S. Census Bureau). Although all six counties have an aged housing stock, the median year built in Blair (1957) and Cambria (1955) is substantially older than the median year built in the other four counties. The percentage of housing that is owner-occupied is relatively consistent across all six counties.

SUMMARY OF HOUSING

The Southern Alleghenies Recovery & Resilience Plan and *Alleghenies Ahead on Housing*, both funded by EDA CARES, each noted the Region's aging and dated housing stock as a barrier to attracting new residents and businesses -- as well as to lower income households needing a decent home. *Alleghenies Ahead on Housing* proposed several strategies, currently being implemented, for incentivizing the development and rehabilitation of new and more modern forms of housing for all household budgets. The existing housing stock of the Southern Alleghenies Region, however, is significantly older, and in older forms, than that of the United States or Pennsylvania, with higher percentages of owner-occupied, single-household units. Vacancy rates are growing at the same time as demand for new market-rate and affordable units. Housing production has dropped off noticeably since 2000, and new forms of housing – especially multiple-household housing – are not being built frequently enough, especially away from the urbanized areas.

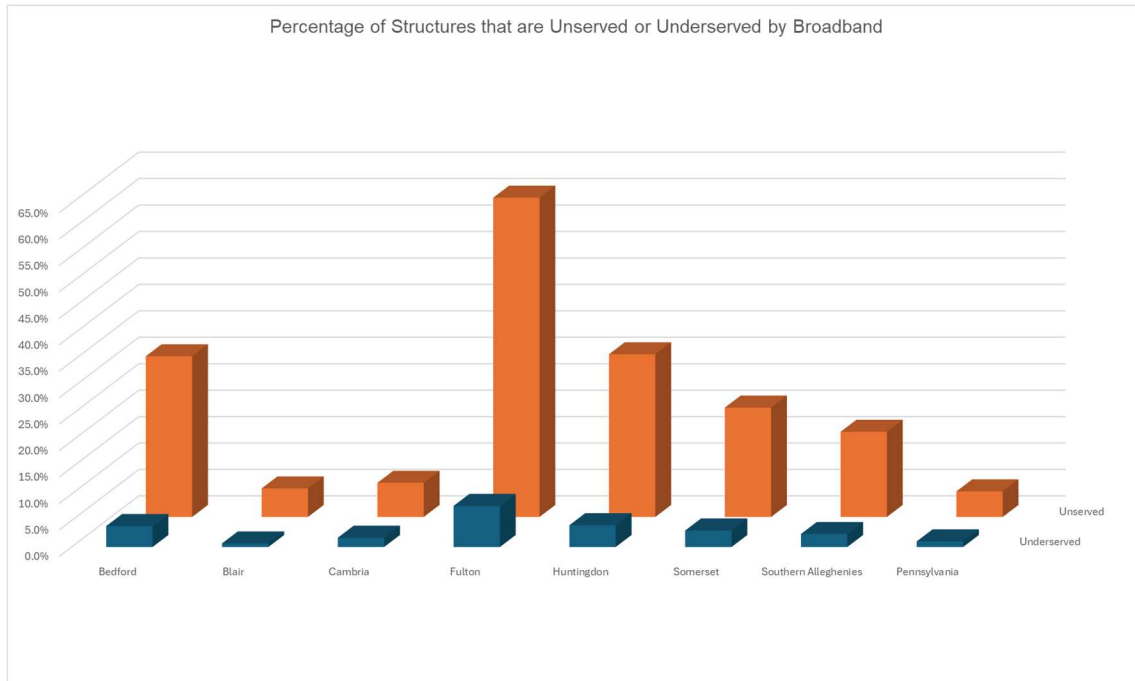
INFRASTRUCTURE

One of the major themes that emerged from the public engagement process for this project was the need to maintain and modernize infrastructure systems. In addition to making improvements to roads and public water/sewer systems, the Region's stakeholders identified high quality telecommunications systems — particularly broadband service—as a key component to recruiting employers and top talent to the Region.

BROADBAND SERVICES

According to the *Regional Fiber-Optic Network Design* completed in 2023 for Alleghenies Broadband, Inc., by the Foresite Group, 84% of the population of the Southern Alleghenies Region is served by broadband, 10% is underserved, and 6% is unserved. However, broadband statistics usually measure the number of structures that are served, underserved, or unserved rather than the number of people. The following chart and graph are taken from May 2024 Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority (PBDA) data, and clearly show that broadband access is a larger issue in the Southern Alleghenies Region – and especially in Fulton, Huntingdon, Bedford, and Somerset Counties – than in Pennsylvania as a whole.

County	Served		Underserved		Unserved		Total
Bedford	16,141	65.6%	975	4.0%	7,473	30.4%	24,589
Blair	48,517	93.9%	352	0.7%	2,786	5.4%	51,655
Cambria	57,817	91.8%	1,107	1.8%	4,066	6.5%	62,990
Fulton	2,266	31.9%	553	7.8%	4,294	60.4%	7,113
Huntingdon	14,087	65.1%	893	4.1%	6,657	30.8%	21,637
Somerset	29,676	76.2%	1,215	3.1%	8,049	20.7%	38,940
Southern Alleghenies	168,504	81.4%	5,095	2.5%	33,325	16.1%	206,924
Pennsylvania	4,562,185	94.1%	51,760	1.1%	234,271	4.8%	4,848,216



To address this critical need, SAP&DC created a Regional Broadband Task Force in 2018. The task force ultimately resulted in the creation of Alleghenies Broadband, Inc. (ABI). ABI is an independent, 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the expansion of reliable, high-speed internet to unserved and underserved communities in the Southern Alleghenies Region. SAP&DC supports ABI with the development of applications, identification of funding resources, GIS capabilities (to map and identify gaps in broadband service), and project oversight.

Since its creation, ABI has overseen the deployment of over \$25 million in federal, state, and local funding sources for broadband deployment projects, including the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), the Pennsylvania Department of Economic and Community Development (DCED), and the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC). These various projects have prioritized the deployment of internet coverage to unserved residents and businesses, particularly in rural areas. ABI and SAP&DC have taken an active role in working with local governments and internet service providers (ISPs) to ensure the successful completion of broadband projects, such as providing mapping assistance, improving communication between local government and internet providers, researching new funding opportunities, managing invoices, developing legal agreements, obtaining requests for proposals, completing broadband studies, conducting tower site surveys, and other project management duties. SAP&DC will continue to support ABI and its partners in working to expand high-speed broadband services to unserved and underserved communities in the Region.

In the future, ABI plans to partner with ISPs to submit applications to the PBDA and its Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program. The BEAD Program, funded through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), provides \$42.45 billion to states for the purpose of administering grants to eligible grantees, including municipalities, for broadband projects that improve access in unserved or underserved areas. Pennsylvania has been awarded \$1.16 billion in broadband funding. ABI will utilize the recent *Regional Fiber-Optic Network Design* completed by Foresite Group (2023) as a framework to apply for the BEAD Program.

HIGHWAY NETWORK

There are three interstate highways intersecting the Southern Alleghenies Region. Interstate 76, or the Pennsylvania Turnpike, runs east-west through the three southern counties. Interstate 70 lies on the Pennsylvania Turnpike from the western border of the Region east to Breezewood, Bedford County. At that point, Interstate 70 leaves the Turnpike and I-76 to head southeast through Bedford and Fulton Counties towards Baltimore (and Washington, DC via I-270). Finally, Interstate 99 runs north-south from Bedford through Altoona towards State College and Interstate 80 in Centre County. The communities that are close to these interstate highways enjoy superior transportation access, but a significant portion of the Region remains poorly connected. For example, Huntingdon County is not directly served by an interstate highway or even a limited-access highway.

In addition to the three interstate highways, there are other primary transportation corridors in the Region, including US 22, US 219, and US 220. US 219 – also known as the Flight 93 Memorial Highway or (to the Appalachian Regional Commission) Corridor N – runs north-south through Cambria and Somerset Counties. The limited access portion of US 219 runs from Carrolltown south through Ebensburg, suburban Johnstown, Somerset, and Meyersdale, ending just south of that community. Other highways within the Region that have regional significance include US 30, US 422, US 522, SR 56, and SR 26.

In November 2018, an 11-mile, four-lane, limited access section of US 219 (Corridor N) was completed from Somerset, PA to just south of Meyersdale. Engineering and design are currently underway to finish the remaining 5.5 miles of limited access roadway to the Maryland border, which will connect to Interstate 68 (Corridor E) in Grantsville, Allegany County, Maryland.

AIRPORTS

The Region currently lacks an international airport. The Altoona-Blair County Airport and the John Murtha Johnstown-Cambria County Airport are the only two airports in the Region with scheduled commercial airline flights. Lack of a major international airport in the Region means local companies must depend on airports outside the Region in State College, Harrisburg, Pittsburgh, Latrobe, Baltimore, or Washington.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Amtrak service to the Region is very limited, with one eastbound and one westbound train each day that stops at stations in Huntingdon, Altoona, Tyrone, and Johnstown. Although a second Amtrak route runs through Somerset County, it doesn't have stops there. Fixed route public transit service is available in parts of Blair, Cambria, and Somerset Counties through Altoona Metro Transit (AMTRAN) and the Cambria County Transit Authority (CamTran). However, there are large areas of the Region that are not serviced by fixed route public transit. This is often noted as a major barrier to our rural residents and workforce.

Huntingdon, Bedford, and Fulton Counties are served by the Huntingdon-Bedford-Fulton Area Agency on Aging (HBFAAA), which provides CART Senior Transportation. HBFAAA offers a comprehensive social service delivery system for the older and functionally disabled populations and CART is a public transportation service available to all individuals, with a special focus on serving the aged and disabled.

The Somerset County Transportation System is operated by the Community Action Partnership for Somerset County and Tableland Services, Inc. It provides shared ride transportation service in Somerset County. This program offers service for senior citizens, disabled, medical assistance, and the general public.

ECONOMIC TRENDS

Planning for economic development – whether policies, programs, or specific investments – begins with a thorough understanding of the Southern Alleghenies Region’s existing economy and its historical and outside influences. There are several variables that can be used to study an economy, none of which create a fully comprehensive picture. Although employment is the most commonly used variable, it can easily miss increases in productivity. Basing a study of agriculture over the past century solely on its employment, for instance, would miss the massive increases in that industry’s productivity – painting a laughably inaccurate picture. So, this brief analysis of the Southern Alleghenies Region’s economy will use several variables: workforce, employment, unemployment, commuting patterns, gross domestic product, wages, income, and health insurance. This analysis will also examine the structure of the regional economy and its most important sectors. Finally, we will examine the region’s agricultural economy, which warrants its own discussion but is often difficult to measure with traditional variables.

THE WORKFORCE AND EMPLOYMENT

The *2021-2024 Local Area Plan*, which was prepared by the Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Board (SAWDB) contains a thorough analysis of and plan for developing the regional workforce. Pages 15-17 of this plan provide a summary of current regional workforce trends and issues.

The civilian labor force across the six county Southern Alleghenies region has continued a downward trend since 2007, declining from 197,400 in June 2021 to 195,600 in August 2022, according to the *Center for Workforce Information and Analysis (CWIA) August 2022 Southern Alleghenies WDA Profile* report. It is critical to note that the Southern Alleghenies region decline has slowed considerably, from 28,600 less in November 2020 compared to just 1,000 from June 2021 to June 2022. Pennsylvania experienced a growing civilian labor force, rising an additional 20,000, during that same period. Still, other key economic conditions continue to plague the region, notably a declining demand for less skilled workers, an aging workforce, and a significant number of discouraged workers... Based on the *CWIA August 2022 Southern Alleghenies WDA Profile*, with an estimated population 16 years of age and older, the regional labor force stands at 195,600, down nearly 3,000 from October of 2020. The region loses nearly 18,000 workers net to other workforce regions every day and five of the six counties experience an overall net loss of workers daily. The overall population continues to age, based on the U.S. Census Bureau median age of 45.37 in 2020, with 24% more people aged 55-64 at 66,233 compared to the 35,295 aged 15-24. The population density of younger individuals in the region continues to be a concern. The population of the 55–64-year-old age group exceeds that of the 15-24 year old group by more than 31,000, potentially leading to a labor shortage as older workers retire. Data provided by CWIA shows that the region’s location quotient for those 65 and older stands at 1.34, meaning that that age cohort is 34% larger in the Southern Alleghenies than the same age group in the United States as a whole.

To summarize, SAWDB's *2021-2024 Local Area Plan* listed an aging and shrinking workforce (shrinking at an admittedly declining rate), a declining demand for less skilled workers, high numbers of discouraged workers, and residents commuting to jobs outside of the Region as major issues. Difficulties drawing enough outsiders and young people into the Region was also cited as a concern.

A civilian labor force participation rate (LFPR) is an estimate of an economy's active workforce. The formula is the number of people ages 16 and older who are employed or actively seeking employment, divided by the total non-institutionalized, civilian working-age population. From 2020 to 2023, the LFPR of Bedford County rose from 61% to 61.4%, the LFPR of Fulton County dropped from 63% to 60%, the LFPR of Blair County dropped from 60% to 58.3%, the LFPR of Somerset County dropped from 53% to 51%, the LFPR of Huntingdon County dropped from 53% to 50.9%, the LFPR of Cambria County dropped from 51% to 49.5%, and the LFPR of the United States as a whole dropped from 63.3% to 62.5% (NERDE). The general decline in LFPR across the Southern Alleghenies Region and the United States is consistent with an aging workforce and some of the issues addressed by the SAWDB above.

The table below shows the labor force, number of workers employed, number of unemployed, and the unemployment rate for each of the six counties, the Southern Alleghenies Region as a whole, and Pennsylvania at two points in time: December 2018 and December 2023. This five-year period was chosen because it spans across the major disruption of the COVID 19 epidemic.

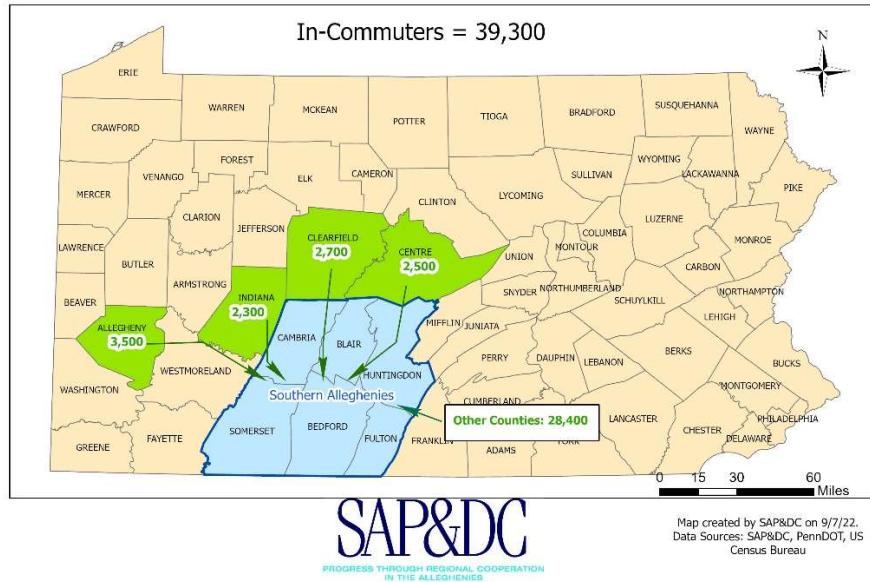
Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS)				
Area	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
Pennsylvania December 2018	6,502,000	6,245,000	258,000	4.0%
Bedford December 2018	23,600	22,500	1,100	4.7%
Blair December 2018	59,800	57,400	2,400	4.0%
Cambria December 2018	59,600	56,700	2,900	4.9%
Fulton December 2018	7,100	6,800	300	4.1%
Huntingdon December 2018	19,900	18,800	1,100	5.6%
Somerset December 2018	33,300	31,400	1,800	5.5%
Southern Alleghenies December 2018	203,200	193,600	9,600	4.7%
Pennsylvania December 2023	6,493,000	6,303,000	190,000	2.9%
Bedford December 2023	24,100	23,200	800	3.5%
Blair December 2023	58,800	57,100	1,700	2.8%
Cambria December 2023	54,700	52,700	2,000	3.6%
Fulton December 2023	7,100	6,900	200	2.9%
Huntingdon December 2023	18,700	17,900	800	4.1%
Somerset December 2023	31,400	30,100	1,200	3.8%
Southern Alleghenies December 2023	194,600	187,900	6,600	3.4%
Source: PA Dept of Labor and Industry				

Over these five years, the unemployment rates in each county, the Region, and the state all dropped at a fairly uniform rate: between 1.1% in Pennsylvania and 1.7% in Somerset County (down 1.3% in the Southern Alleghenies Region as a whole, which outperformed the Commonwealth in this metric). The size of the labor force dropped in most of these jurisdictions: down 0.1% in Pennsylvania, 1.7% in Blair, 8.2% in Cambria, 6.0% in Huntingdon, 5.7% in Somerset, and 4.2% in the Southern Alleghenies Region. This is consistent with an aging population and a shrinking workforce. However, Bedford County's labor force grew by 2.1% and Fulton County's stayed the same. The number of workers employed in each jurisdiction, however, grew in Pennsylvania (0.9%), Bedford County (3.1%), and Fulton County (1.5%). The number of workers employed in the Southern Alleghenies Region declined (-2.9%), as did the number of workers employed in Blair County (-0.5%), Cambria County (-7.1%), Huntingdon County (-4.8%), and Somerset County (-4.1%). Overall, the labor force and the number of workers employed in the Region declined, which is not good news. As was previously noted, however, employment is only one measurement of economic activity. As we shall see, it can miss increases in productivity, and thus, wealth.

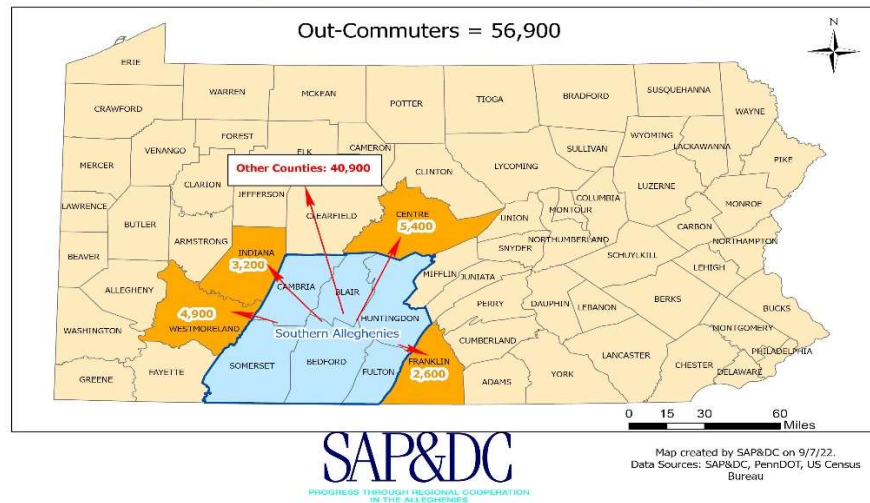
COMMUTING

Commuting is an important measure of how a Region imports and exports labor. Appendix D of the Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Board's *2021-2024 Local Area Plan* notes that in 2020, only 75% of the jobs in the Region were held by the region's residents. The other 25% of the Region's jobs were filled by individuals who commuted into the Southern Alleghenies Region for employment but lived elsewhere. Conversely, roughly 56,900 residents left the Region for employment. Only in Blair County did the in-commuters outnumber the out-commuters. Roughly 56% of those coming into Blair County for employment resided elsewhere in the Southern Alleghenies Region. Blair was also the only county where the number of jobs exceeded the available labor force. This was a reflection of Blair County's relatively strong local economy, with 35% of all jobs in the Region. By comparison, 56% of the resident labor force in Somerset County left the county for employment, and there were roughly 7,700 more workers than jobs. In the case of Huntingdon, where there were 4,000 more workers than jobs, 62% of the resident labor force left the county for employment. The maps below illustrate the Region's commuting patterns.

Southern Alleghenies In-Commuting Patterns



Southern Alleghenies Out-Commuting Patterns

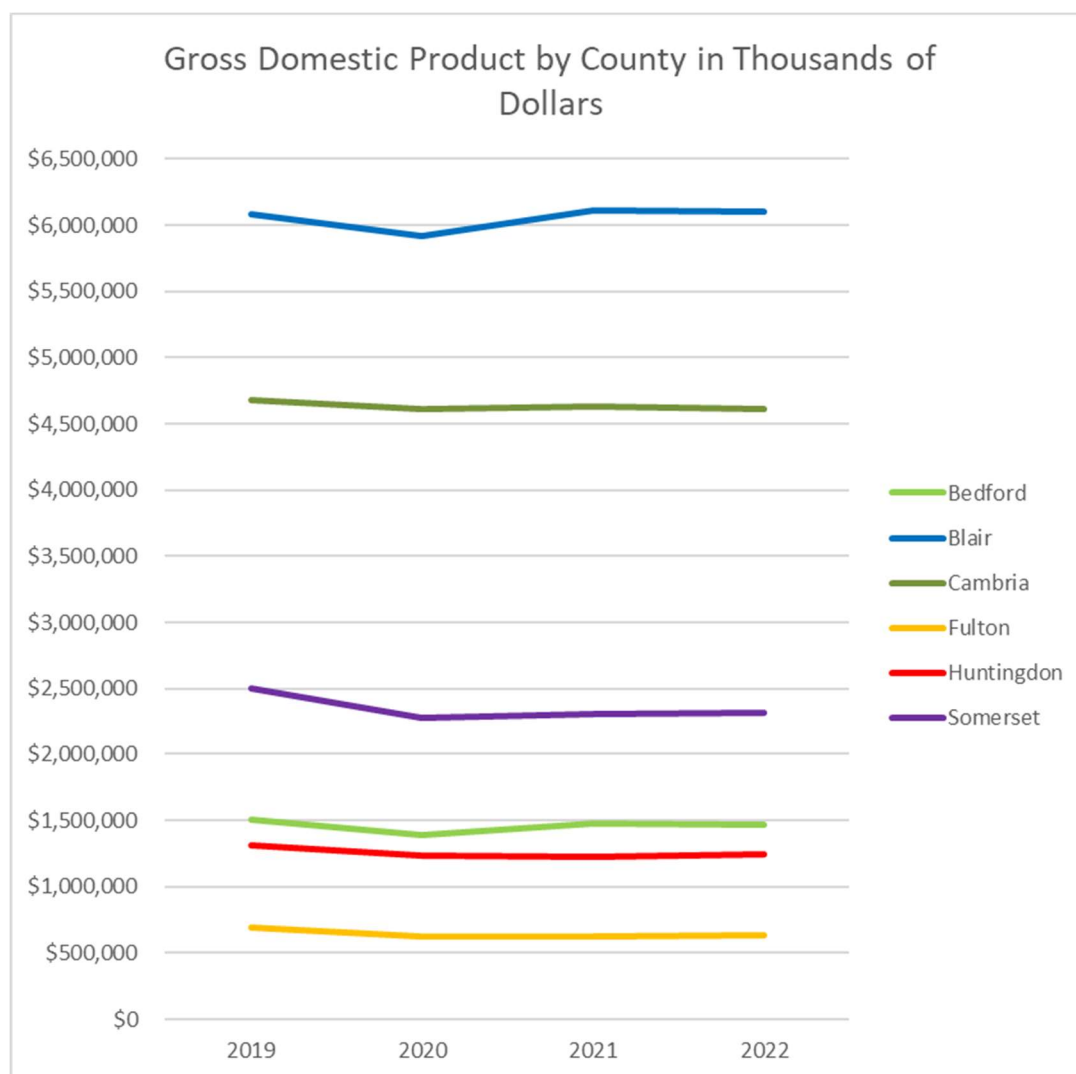


GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT

Gross domestic product, or GDP, is a monetary measure of the value of all final goods and services produced in a specific period. Like employment, gross domestic product is a variable for measuring and analyzing an economy. Unlike employment, however, gross domestic product catches increases in productivity even if employment decreases. The following data was taken from the United States Bureau of Economic Analysis (<https://www.bea.gov/data/gdp/gdp-county-metro-and-other-areas>).

Table 1. Real Gross Domestic Product, by County, 2019–2022

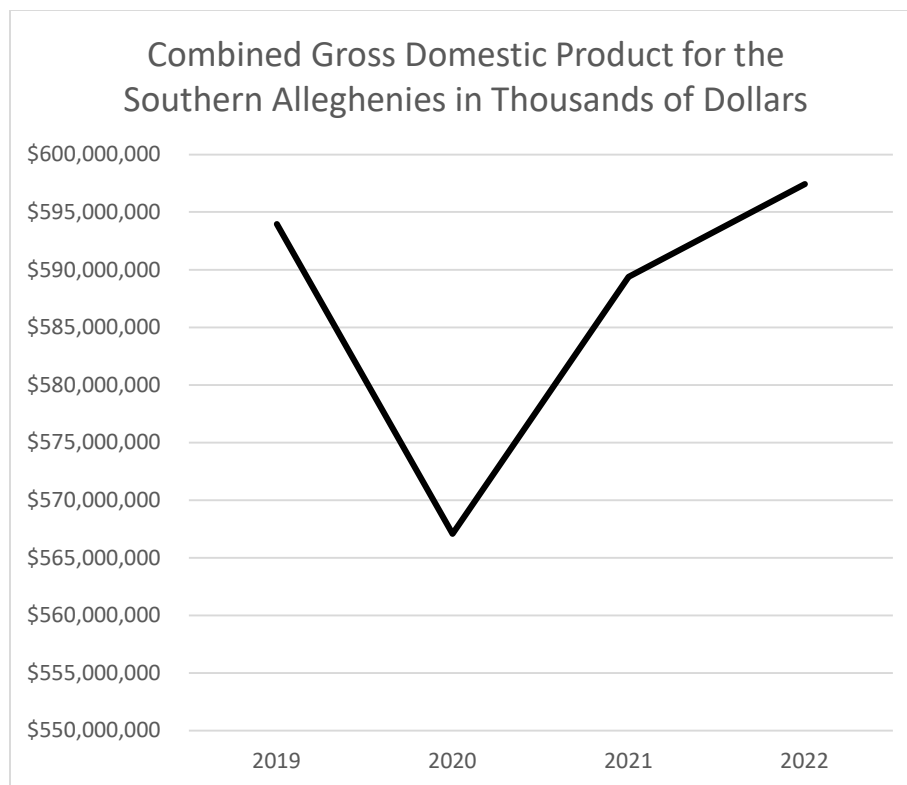
	Real gross domestic product					Percent change from preceding period				
	Thousands of chained (2017) dollars				Rank in state	Percent change			Rank in state	
	2019	2020	2021	2022		2022	2020	2021		2022
United States	\$20,573,580,103	\$20,106,509,888	\$21,271,676,784	\$21,668,520,913	--	-2.3	5.8	1.9	--	
Pennsylvania	\$772,529,454	\$736,470,575	\$764,601,590	\$772,335,937	--	-4.7	3.8	1.0	--	
Bedford	\$1,502,168	\$1,385,100	\$1,471,536	\$1,470,008	53	-7.8	6.2	-0.1	37	
Blair	\$6,080,921	\$5,915,856	\$6,114,417	\$6,106,454	25	-2.7	3.4	-0.1	38	
Cambria	\$4,682,004	\$4,615,588	\$4,626,528	\$4,606,726	28	-1.4	0.2	-0.4	44	
Fulton	\$693,692	\$620,958	\$622,819	\$631,003	64	-10.5	0.3	1.3	18	
Huntingdon	\$1,307,671	\$1,232,196	\$1,223,457	\$1,240,399	58	-5.8	-0.7	1.4	16	
Somerset	\$2,498,557	\$2,278,978	\$2,308,396	\$2,322,556	41	-8.8	1.3	0.6	27	
SAP&DC	\$593,948,385	\$567,071,202	\$589,373,910	\$597,431,375						



The graph above of gross domestic products for each of the six counties reveals two interesting points about Blair County. First, despite its not having the largest population in the Southern Alleghenies Region, Blair County has the largest economy as measured by productivity. Second and more importantly, despite its shrinking workforce, Blair County's GDP grew from 2019 to 2022 across the pandemic. As we have already seen, this

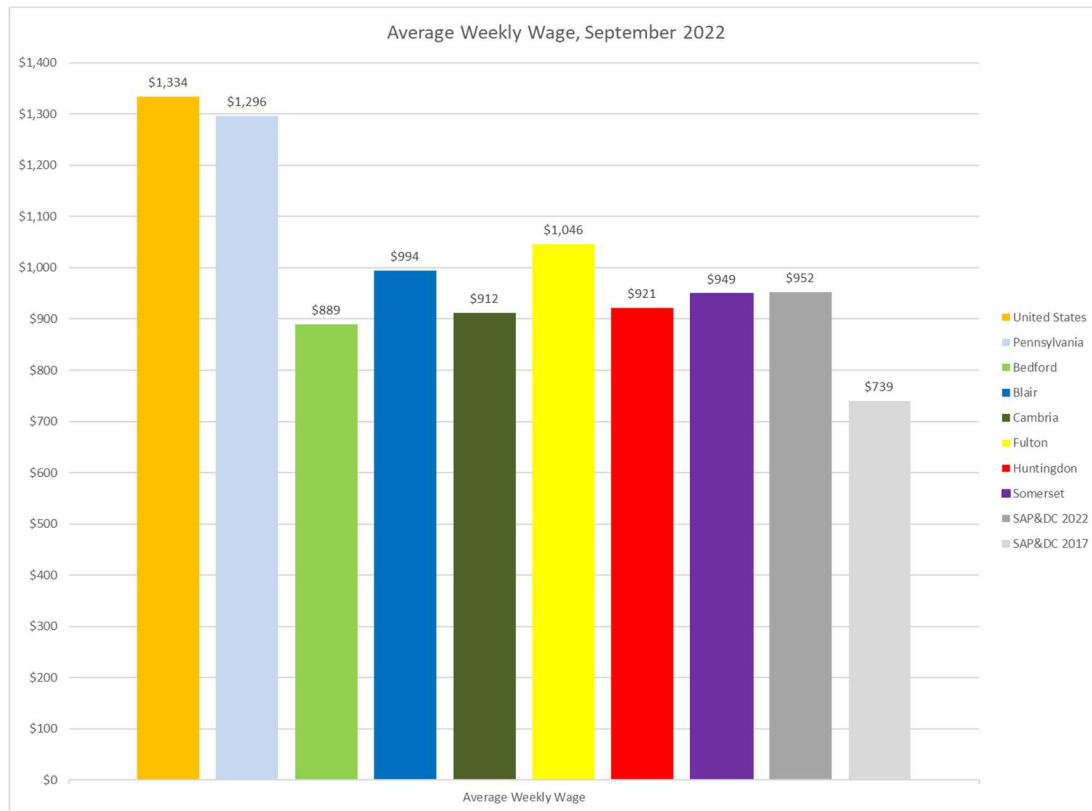
was made possible partially by Blair County importing labor from its neighbors. But this was also made possible by increases in productivity due to automation. At the first monthly breakfast gathering of the Blair County Alliance for Business and Economic Growth, Brad Burger, the president/CEO of Goodwill of the Southern Alleghenies Region, noted this growth in Blair County's GDP and championed the increasing use of automation to increase productivity in the face of a shrinking workforce (*Altoona Mirror*, January 12, 2024). Burger mentioned that because of the shrinking workforce, exclusively using employment to measure local economic success could be self-defeating. Using GDP instead would more accurately measure economic growth for the Southern Alleghenies Region, just as it has for agriculture over the past century. Mr. Burger's presentation is why GDP has been included in this Southern Alleghenies Region CEDS for the first time, and why we propose using it as the main variable for measuring the Region's economic success.

Turning now from the counties to the Region, the graph below sums each of the six county's GDP into a regional GDP. From 2019 to 2022, the GDP of the Southern Alleghenies Region grew from \$593,948,385,000 to \$597,431,375,000. Just like in Blair County, the entire region's GDP and productivity grew across the pandemic despite employment and population losses. This is good news, brought by looking at the regional economy through gross domestic product instead of employment.



WAGES

The following data was taken from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics ([County Employment and Wages in Pennsylvania — Third Quarter 2022 : Mid-Atlantic Information Office : U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics \(bls.gov\)](#)), and shows average weekly wages in the third quarter of 2022, which was the most up-to-date statistic available as of this writing.



In the third quarter of 2022, the average weekly wage of the Southern Alleghenies Region (\$952) continued to lag well behind that of the United States (\$1,334) and Pennsylvania (\$1,296). However, the Southern Alleghenies Region's average weekly wage grew strongly since its 2017 figure of \$739, as reported in the last CEDS. Within the Southern Alleghenies Region, Fulton County had the highest average weekly wage at \$1046. Fulton was followed in decreasing order by Blair (\$994), Somerset (\$949), Huntingdon (\$921), Cambria (\$912), and Bedford (\$889). Page 17 of the Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Board's (SAWDB) *2021-2024 Local Area Plan* reported that the average annual wage for all industries rose by \$3,560 from 2019 to 2022. Thus, wages are rising.

INCOME AND HEALTH INSURANCE

According to the January 2024 reports from the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry (Center for Workforce Information and Analysis) and the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), the 2022 per capita income for the Commonwealth and each county in the Southern Alleghenies Region is as follows in descending order: Pennsylvania \$64,506,

Blair \$55,101, Bedford \$49,468, Fulton \$48,013, Cambria \$47,971, Somerset \$47,622, and Huntingdon \$45,049. The National Economic Resilience Data Explorer, or NERDE (Argonne National Laboratory and EDA), reports that 55.2% of the Southern Alleghenies Region is classified as rural, the weighted average per capita income (Census) is \$29,121, the weighted average per capita income (BEA) is \$50,394, and 94.5% of the Region’s residents are covered by health insurance.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE REGIONAL ECONOMY

The National Economic Resilience Data Explorer (NERDE) (Argonne National Laboratory and the Economic Development Administration), citing the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, states that the top five industries in the Southern Alleghenies Region by GDP (two-and-three-digit NAICS codes) are government and government enterprises (\$395,116,000), real estate rental and leasing (\$337,965,000), health care and social assistance (\$321,894,000), retail trade (\$244,022,000), and durable goods manufacturing (\$212,059,000). By employment, the top five industries in the Southern Alleghenies Region (two-and-three-digit NAICS codes) are health care and social assistance (4,789 jobs), government and government enterprises (4,556 jobs), retail trade (4,343 jobs), accommodation and food services (2,471 jobs), and other services (except government and government enterprises) (2,212 jobs). Not surprisingly, government and government enterprises, health care and social assistance, and retail trade appear on both of those top five lists. The table below shows the percentage change in each top industry’s GDP from 2019 through 2022.

Top Industry GDP Change					
Attribute	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Construction		6.51%			8.87%
Durable goods manufacturing		1.99%	-9.90%	3.81%	45.78%
Finance and insurance		3.34%	-6.62%	6.50%	3.90%
Government and government enterprises		1.70%	0.16%	2.45%	4.79%
Health care and social assistance		0.51%	1.78%	2.51%	0.50%
Information			2.37%	9.00%	
Nondurable goods manufacturing		4.18%	-6.77%	2.19%	12.69%
Real estate and rental and leasing		3.68%	-2.90%	5.80%	2.85%
Retail trade		7.18%	4.58%	13.89%	5.66%
Transportation and warehousing		-0.21%	-5.28%	12.95%	13.36%
Wholesale trade		2.96%	1.81%	-0.05%	5.03%

The growth in the region’s durable goods manufacturing, nondurable goods manufacturing, transportation and warehousing, and construction sectors are particularly noteworthy in the table above.

The tables below were taken from NERDE, and show especially high industry location quotients in the Southern Alleghenies Region. A location quotient is the share of local economic activity (annual wages in the left table, and average employment in the right table) held by a particular industry divided by the share of national economic activity held by that same industry. Any industry with a location quotient greater than one is assumed to have a concentration in the local economy.

Location Quotient			Location Quotient		
Values are indicative of the average sectoral location quotient across the EDD.			Values are indicative of the average sectoral location quotient across the EDD.		
Please select an Attribute to populate the view:			Please select an Attribute to populate the view:		
Annual Wages			Average Employment		
Industry/NAICS Code	Value		Industry/NAICS Code	Value	
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction (21)	5.035		Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction (21)	4.650	
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (11)	2.940		Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (11)	2.500	
Transportation and warehousing (48-49)	2.557		Manufacturing (31-33)	1.976	
Manufacturing (31-33)	1.970		Transportation and warehousing (48-49)	1.913	
Educational services (61)	1.930		Educational services (61)	1.720	
Health care and social assistance (62)	1.843		Health care and social assistance (62)	1.450	
Utilities (22)	1.517		Construction (23)	1.395	
Construction (23)	1.510		Utilities (22)	1.310	
Retail trade (44-45)	1.370		Accommodation and food services (72)	1.200	
Accommodation and food services (72)	1.315		Retail trade (44-45)	1.192	
Management of companies and enterprises (55)	1.260		Other services, except public administration (81)	1.158	
Other services, except public administration (81)	1.245		Management of companies and enterprises (55)	1.120	
			Wholesale trade (42)	1.120	

Based on these tables, mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction; agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting; transportation and warehousing; manufacturing; educational services; health care and social assistance; utilities; construction; retail trade; accommodation and food services; management of companies and enterprises; other services except public administration; and wholesale trade are especially concentrated in the Southern Alleghenies Region relative to the United States as a whole. These industries thus deserve special attention. Furthermore, the area might have a competitive advantage for these industries that explains their dominance here and that can be built upon.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the most common resident occupations (as defined by the Census) in the Southern Alleghenies Region in 2022 were management, professional, and related (32.9%); service (18.1%); sales and office (20.1%); farming, fishing, and forestry (0.8%); construction, extraction, and maintenance (10.4%); and production, transportation, and material moving (17.8%). The percentage of residents working in management, professional, and related in the Southern Alleghenies Region was 8.1% lower than it was in the United States as a whole. Meanwhile, the percentage of

residents working in production, transportation, and material moving in the Region was 4.7% higher than it was in the United States as a whole.

On pages 17-18 of its *2021-2024 Local Area Plan (WIOA Appendix D Regional Plan)*, the Southern Alleghenies Workforce Develop Board (SAWDB) notes the industry clusters on which it is focusing its efforts. Because this plan was developed with heavy research and employer input, it is a valuable resource for identifying the fastest growing and most critical industries in the Southern Alleghenies Region.

The SAWDB will target Manufacturing, Construction, Business Services, Healthcare, and Transportation because of the high numbers of individuals employed, high wages, or a combination of these factors. The regional High Priority Occupation (HPO) List supports this strategy with numerous occupations covering all the targeted clusters. The pandemic placed healthcare employment in the spotlight, as worker shortages placed both healthcare workers and residents in a life-threatening situation... The pandemic also accelerated the demand for transportation expertise.

Existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors include:

- Healthcare continues as the top existing in-demand industry, employing 21.4% of the labor force. In the region, 33,889 healthcare workers have an average earning of \$50,008. Center for Workforce Information and Analysis projects a 9.9% growth from 2020-2030.
- Accommodation & Food Services ranks fourth with 8.4% of the labor force.
- Business Services Industry Cluster is a broad category that covers many services provided to businesses in the region. Here we show both Professional and Technical Services coupled with Administrative and Waste Services. Combined, they contribute 6.4% of the workforce, commanding \$47,213 in average annual earnings.
- Retail trade remained steady, and while the sector has significant employment numbers, wages and career opportunities exclude it from Board focus.

Existing and emerging in-demand industry sector(s) occupations include:

Healthcare positions including phlebotomists, registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, and nursing assistants are in high demand across the region, numbering in the thousands. Additional health related occupations include medical and clinical technologist/technicians, radiologic technologists, and both physical and occupational therapy assistants. The region has a significant concentration of healthcare-related employers as demonstrated by its location quotient of 1.16. Given that the industry projects continued growth, its high concentration is not concerning.

Manufacturing occupations comprise a variety of jobs in the regional workforce with CNC machine tool operators, machinists, structural metal fabricators, maintenance and repair technicians, and welders, cutters, solderers and brazers being the top jobs. There is a significant concentration of manufacturers in the region, as illustrated by the industry's location quotient of 1.20. For the region's economy to remain strong, it will be essential that the manufacturers remain competitive. A significant downturn in the manufacturing sector will have an even larger negative impact in this region given the industry's high concentration.

Transportation and Warehousing related occupations have been a critical need in the region for several years, led primarily by both heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers, light truck drivers, while laborers and freight, stock and material movers are also in demand. The region's highway system, coupled with the location of its business parks, supports the continued growth of this sector, with its location quotient of 1.07.

Through its research and outreach, SAWDB's planning effort has prioritized workforce development for the healthcare, accommodation and food services, business services, manufacturing, construction, transportation, and warehousing sectors of the regional economy. Although retail trade employs high numbers in the Southern Alleghenies Region, the SAWDB did not prioritize it because of its limited wages and career opportunities.

On page six, the *2021-2024 Local Area Plan* (WIOA Appendix D Regional Plan) specifies the skill sets on which SAWDB is focusing. This too is critical to understanding the regional economy.

Based on data provided by the Center for Workforce Information and Analysis, and substantiated by employer input, below are the current and relevant skills that cluster employers in the region seek in current employees:

- **Advanced Manufacturing** – The advanced manufacturing cluster has long been a solid part of the local economy that requires constantly changing technology to remain competitive. Manufacturing positions from supervisors and inspectors to skilled craftsmen, production workers and maintenance mechanics are strong in the following skill areas:
 - Making Decisions and Solving Problems
 - Active listening with Supervisors, Peers, or Subordinates
 - Inspecting Equipment, Structures, or Material
 - Mechanical aptitude
 - Oral expression and oral, written, and reading comprehension
 - Performing General Physical Activities
- **Building and Construction** – Technicians such as drafters and skilled craftsmen like carpenters, masons, plumbers, and electricians have a wide range of skills including:
 - Ability to listen to the wants and needs of the customer and translate that to a product that can be forwarded to a craftsman for actual development.
 - Mathematical skills to provide the proper instructions to the field resulting in fewer mistakes and less need for modification of plans.
 - Handling and Moving Objects
 - Organizing, Planning, and Prioritizing Work
 - Choice and implementation of the correct material and accepted construction practice.
- **Business Services** – The workforce involved in the business services cluster tends to be more educated and their skills more complex. The financial managers, accountants, information management professionals, and customer service representatives have skills that are technical, personal, and analytical in nature. Included in those categories are:
 - Complex problem solving
 - Interacting with Computers
 - Reading comprehension
 - Performing for or Working Directly with the Public
 - Communicating with Persons Outside Organization
 - Evaluating Information to Determine Compliance with Standards
- **Healthcare** – As the largest cluster in the region, healthcare encompasses a wide variety

of occupations that range from individuals providing direct patient care to the administration required in a highly-regulated industry. Those employees possess very diversified skill sets such as:

- Assisting and Caring for Others
 - Accurately translating written orders into action
 - Documenting/Recording Information
 - Oral expression and comprehension
 - Inductive reasoning, judgment and decision-making
 - Processing information
 - Monitoring processes, materials, or surroundings
 - Establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships
 - Updating and using relevant knowledge
- **Logistics and Transportation** – Employees in the logistics and transportation cluster include those involved in the actual movement of cargo to those involved in processing and accounting for inventory and managing the flow of cargo to final destination. Workers in the cluster have skills such as:
 - Vision, spatial orientation, and reaction time to safely operate equipment
 - Material Handling
 - Operating equipment safely
 - Evaluating Information to Determine Compliance with Standards
 - Thinking Creatively
 - Identifying Objects, Actions, and Events
 - Communicating with Persons Outside Organization

THE STRUCTURE OF THE COUNTY ECONOMIES

This CEDS focuses on regional strategies for economic development that encompass all six counties. Nevertheless, there are differences between the county economies. In this section of the CEDS, we will summarize the key statistics for each county. This data was taken from the January 2024 county profiles published by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, Center for Workforce Information and Analysis.

Bedford County

- Number employed: 23,600
- Top five employers: Wal-Mart Associates Inc., Recreational Equipment Inc., New Enterprise Stone & Lime Company, state government, and Omni Bedford Springs Resort
- Top five industries in location quotient: agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting (5.35), transportation and warehousing (2.52), construction (1.77), manufacturing (1.62), and accommodation and food services (1.32)
- Top five industries in percent of county employment: manufacturing (15.6%), transportation and warehousing (14.8%), retail trade (12.5%), health care and social assistance (12.4%), and accommodation and food services (10%)
- Top five industries in annual wages: management of companies and enterprises (\$74,232), finance and insurance (\$69,726), construction (\$60,829), manufacturing (\$58,456), and real estate and rental and leasing (\$58,267)

Blair County

- Number employed: 56,900
- Top five employers: UPMC Altoona, Sheetz, state government, federal government, and the Altoona Area School District
- Top five industries in location quotient: retail trade (1.39), manufacturing (1.28), health care and social assistance (1.27), accommodation and food services (1.11), and agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting (1.06)
- Top five industries in percent of county employment: health care and social assistance (23%), retail trade (14.3%), manufacturing (12.3%), accommodation and food services (8.4%), transportation and warehousing (6.3%), and educational services (6.3%)
- Top five industries in annual wages: management of companies and enterprises (\$119,445), finance and insurance (\$70,634), transportation and warehousing (\$69,638), professional and technical services (\$64,097), and wholesale trade (\$59,216)

Cambria County

- Number employed: 52,600
- Top five employers: DLP Partner Conemaugh LLC, state government, federal government, Wal-Mart Associates Inc., and Cambria County
- Top five industries in location quotient: utilities (1.48), other services except public administration (1.34), public administration (1.28), retail trade (1.28), and health care and social assistance (1.24)
- Top five industries in percent of county employment: health care and social assistance (22.6%), retail trade (13.1%), educational services (9.4%), manufacturing (8.6%), and accommodation and food services (8%)
- Top five industries in annual wages: management of companies and enterprises (\$89,725), utilities (\$75,452), mining, quarrying, and oil and gas (\$69,674), professional and technical services (\$66,897), and finance and insurance (\$64,161).

Fulton County

- Number employed: 6,900
- Top five employers: JLG Industries Inc., Fulton County Medical Center, JLG Equipment Services Inc., Mellott Company, and state government
- Top five industries in location quotient: agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting (11.03), manufacturing (3.82), construction (1.91), public administration (1.12), and retail trade (0.79)
- Top five industries in percent of county employment: manufacturing (36.8%), total suppressed local industries (11.6%), health care and social assistance (11.2%), construction (8.7%), and retail trade (8.1%)
- Top five industries in annual wages: manufacturing (\$65,236), construction (\$62,533), wholesale trade (\$56,970), health care and social assistance (\$55,584), and finance and insurance (\$49,419)

Huntingdon County

- Number employed: 18,100
- Top five employers: state government, Juniata College, JC Blair Memorial Hospital, ACCO USA Inc., and Wal-Mart Associates Inc.
- Top five industries in location quotient: agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting (4.45), public administration (3.56), utilities (1.7), mining, quarrying, and oil and gas (1.61), and educational services (1.34)
- Top five industries in percent of county employment: health care and social assistance (17.8%), public administration (13.9%), retail trade (12.8%), educational services (10.8%), and manufacturing (9.4%)
- Top five industries in annual wages: management of companies and enterprises (\$84,130), mining, quarrying, and oil and gas (\$82,798), finance and insurance (\$71,115), public administration (\$67,514), and manufacturing (\$58,660)

Somerset County

- Number employed: 30,500
- Top five employers: state government, VR US Holdings, UPMC Somerset, CSS Medical Center at Windber, and Somerset County
- Top five industries in location quotient: mining, quarrying, and oil and gas (8.64), public administration (2.28), agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting (1.44), accommodation and food services (1.44), and utilities (1.27)
- Top five industries in percent of county employment: health care and social assistance (17.3%), manufacturing (11.6%), accommodation and food services (10.9%), retail trade (10.8%), and public administration (8.9%)
- Top five industries in annual wages: mining, quarrying, and oil and gas (\$82,529), management of companies and enterprises (\$81,566), utilities (\$67,865), finance and insurance (\$63,706), and public administration (\$62,626)

AGRICULTURE

The following statistics were gathered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service and published as the *2022 Census of Agriculture* ([2022 Census by State - Pennsylvania](#) | [2022 Census of Agriculture](#) | [USDA/NASS](#)).

2022 USDA Census of Agriculture								
	Bedford	Blair	Cambria	Fulton	Huntingdon	Somerset	Southern Alleghenies	Pennsylvania
Number of farms	1,106	456	451	501	671	998	4,183	49,053
Percent change: 2017-2022	-5%	-8%	-19%	-8%	-6%	-13%		-8%
Total acres in farms	214,993	95,605	78,843	93,715	128,105	197,565	808,826	7,058,325
Percent change: 2017-2022	-3%	21%	-1%	-7%	7%	-10%		-3%
Average farm size in acres	194	210	175	187	191	198	192.5	144
Total market value of ag products sold	\$143,776,000	\$197,176,000	\$61,568,000	\$90,564,000	\$151,708,000	\$150,893,000	\$795,685,000	\$10,282,392,000
State rank among PA's 67 counties in total market value of ag products sold	19	14	37	30	17	18		20th among states
Top product in sales	Livestock, poultry and products is the highest sales category in each jurisdiction							
Unusually high rankings among PA counties	3rd largest producer of aquaculture	5th largest milk producer	22nd largest producer of vegetables, mellons, potatoes, and sweet potatoes	11th largest producer of hogs and pigs	7th largest milk producer	3rd in sheep, goats, wool, mohair, and milk. Also 3rd in other crops and hay		
Number of producers	2,028	901	767	834	1,295	1,956	7,781	90,032

Although agriculture is sometimes overlooked, it is a critical, regionally concentrated, and growing (when measured by sales) industry in the Southern Alleghenies Region. In 2017 the total market value of agricultural products sold in the Southern Alleghenies Region was \$535,917,000. By 2022, this figure had risen to \$795,685,000. In 2017, Somerset County had the highest agricultural sales at \$115,449,000 with Bedford a close second at \$115,273,000. In 2022, Blair County took the lead with \$197,176,000 in total market value of sales (up from \$107,178,000 in 2017) with Huntingdon County in second at \$151,708,000. Amongst Pennsylvania's 67 counties, the counties ranked between 14th (Blair) and 37th (Cambria) in total market value of agricultural products sold. Except for Cambria, all of our counties were in the top half of counties for agricultural sales and Blair County was in the top quarter. Together, the Southern Alleghenies Region accounted for nearly 8% of the Commonwealth's total ag sales, up from 7% in 2017. So our concentration in agricultural production is growing just as our sales are.

The top product category in sales in Pennsylvania and in each of our counties was "livestock, poultry, and products." There were some notable standouts, however. In 2022, Blair County was the 5th largest milk producing county in Pennsylvania and Huntingdon was 7th. Bedford County was the 3rd largest seller of aquaculture products, Fulton County was the 11th largest seller of hogs and pigs, and Somerset County was the 3rd largest seller of both the "sheep, goats, wool, mohair, and milk" category and the "other crops and hay" category.

In 2022, 808,826 acres of land was in farms in the Southern Alleghenies Region, ranging from 78,843 acres in Cambria County to 214,993 acres in Bedford County. The Southern Alleghenies Region accounted for over 11% of Pennsylvania's total farmland. From 2017 to 2022, the amount of acreage farmed declined in Pennsylvania and most of our counties. However, the amount of land in farms grew by 7% in Huntingdon County and grew by a whopping 21% in Blair County. The average farm size in the Southern Alleghenies Region in 2022 was 192.5 acres, larger than the state average of 144 acres.

Agriculture is not growing in the number of individual farms, however. The number of farms dropped in all jurisdictions from 2017 to 2022: -19% in Cambria, -13% in Somerset, -8% in Blair, -8% in Fulton, -8% in Pennsylvania, -6% in Huntingdon, and -5% in Bedford. Still, Bedford County had the most farms in 2022 with 1,106 while Cambria and Blair had the least at 451 and 456 farms respectively.

Agriculture is also not growing when measured by the number of agricultural producers, which is not quite the same as those employed in agriculture. The number of agricultural producers in the Southern Alleghenies Region in 2022 was 7,781, down from 7,942 in 2017. Meanwhile, Pennsylvania's agricultural producers dipped from 90,461 to 90,032. The number of producers in each county ranged from 2,028 in Bedford County to 767 in Cambria County.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION OF ECONOMIC TRENDS

The Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Board (SAWDB) lists the following concerns with the Region's workforce: aging and declining demographics, a declining demand for less skilled workers, high numbers of discouraged workers, residents commuting to jobs outside of the Region, and difficulties drawing enough outsiders and young people into the Region. Unemployment rates in the Southern Alleghenies Region have been falling faster than they have for the state. The size of the labor force and the number of workers employed in the Region declined, which is consistent with an aging population and a shrinking workforce. However, the gross domestic product of the Southern Alleghenies Region grew from 2019 to 2022, showing an increase in productivity despite shrinking employment. Nevertheless, to maximize economic potential, top priorities must be optimizing our existing workforce with the skills needed by our industries, drawing in new talent, and investing in automation as well as the skills needed to support it.

Only 75% of the jobs in the Region were held by the Region's residents, with the remainder being held by people who lived outside of the Southern Alleghenies Region. Roughly 56,900 residents left the Region for employment outside of its borders. Wages and incomes in the Region lag behind the state and nation, but they are catching up.

By gross domestic product and employment, the top industries in the Southern Alleghenies Region (two-and-three-digit NAICS codes) are government and government

enterprises, real estate rental and leasing, health care and social assistance, retail trade, durable goods manufacturing, accommodation and food services, and other services (except government and government enterprises). There has been especially strong growth in the Region's durable goods manufacturing, nondurable goods manufacturing, transportation and warehousing, and construction sectors. The highest location quotient industries in the Southern Alleghenies Region are mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction; agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting; transportation and warehousing; manufacturing; educational services; health care and social assistance; utilities; construction; retail trade; accommodation and food services; management of companies and enterprises; other services except public administration; and wholesale trade. Through its research, outreach, analysis, and planning, the SAWDB has decided to prioritize workforce development for the healthcare, accommodation and food services, business services, manufacturing, construction, transportation, and warehousing sectors of the regional economy. This plan should focus on all of the industries listed in this paragraph.

PENNSYLVANIA'S TEN-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

In January 2024, Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro announced – through the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (PaDCED) – the creation of *A Ten-Year Strategic Plan for Economic Development in Pennsylvania*. This is the Commonwealth's first economic development plan in nearly twenty years. This section will summarize the plan, so that it can be carefully considered in drafting the goals, objectives, strategies, and outcomes of the *Southern Alleghenies Region 2025-2029 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy*.

A Ten-Year Strategic Plan for Economic Development in Pennsylvania notes that the Commonwealth is home to 13 million people, 1.2 million businesses, and twenty-three Fortune 500 companies. It is the 4th largest state in academic research and development. However, states like New York and Ohio spend as much as sixteen times as much on economic development incentives. The plan sets the following “Goals and Strategic Initiatives” on page 2.

Invest in Our Economic Growth to Compete. We want our Commonwealth to be a place where we prioritize economic development investments, and where those investments result in real opportunities for our businesses, communities, and residents.

- Boost state investment in site development, preparedness, and marketing
- Expand support for small businesses with a focus on historically disadvantaged businesses and workers
- Streamline programs and increase funding for Pennsylvania's economic development toolkit
- Invest in tourism and recreational asset development to drive economic growth

Make Government Work at the Speed of Business. We want our Commonwealth to be a place where all companies find an attractive business environment to innovate and thrive.

- Cut through red tape and foster collaboration across state agencies
- Reform state permitting processes with a focus on customer experience
- Reinvent and invest in the PA Department of Community and Economic Development

Open Doors of Opportunity for All Pennsylvanians. We want our Commonwealth to be a place where every Pennsylvanian can secure a family-sustaining job and a meaningful career.

- Keep Pennsylvanians in Pennsylvania through internships, apprenticeships, and experiential learning opportunities
- Double down on workforce training and pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship programs
- Realign Pennsylvania's higher education system to meet our workforce needs
- Provide second chances and grow our workforce

Innovate to Win. We want our Commonwealth to be a place where innovators become entrepreneurs and new discoveries enable our people and companies to succeed.

- Accelerate investments in priority industry sectors & entrepreneurial ecosystems through a newly established Pennsylvania Innovation Fund

- Launch Pennsylvania Problem Solvers startup competitions to find entrepreneurial solutions to our pressing challenges
- Establish industry & higher education innovation councils to provide government with real world counsel from business and thought leaders
- Start Buy Pennsylvania Initiative to align supply chain network and boost in-state collaboration

Build Vibrant and Resilient Regions. We want our Commonwealth to be a place where every community flourishes and provides for the needs of all their residents and businesses.

- Launch the Pennsylvania Regional Challenge to incentivize regional growth
- Support communities by investing in downtowns and main streets
- Compete for federal funding to improve infrastructure and support businesses and workers
- Expand availability of housing

A Ten-Year Strategic Plan for Economic Development in Pennsylvania studied the Commonwealth’s economy to identify five “high-growth, high-value sectors where we have both a deep competitive advantage and where we expect significant potential for growth in the next ten years – especially in higher-wage, family sustaining jobs.” The plan then directs investments towards these five sectors.

- **Agriculture** (noting specializations in dairy, forestry, food/beverage manufacturing, and livestock/poultry production/processing)
- **Energy** (noting specializations in natural gas and pipeline transportation)
- **Life Sciences** (noting specializations in medical equipment manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, and biomanufacturing)
- **Manufacturing**
- **Robotics and Technology**

As we saw above, “health care and social assistance” is the third biggest industry in the Southern Alleghenies Region by GDP and the largest by employment. “Durable goods manufacturing” is the fifth largest industry in the Southern Alleghenies Region by GDP. “Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction” (energy), “agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting” (agriculture), “manufacturing,” “health care and social assistance” (life sciences), and “utilities” (energy) have some of the highest location quotients of any sectors in the Southern Alleghenies Region economy and are thus strong here. Admittedly, the state plan may prioritize different energy sources than mining, and it may define “life sciences” as more of a research and manufacturing function than “health care and social assistance.” But still, some of the industries prioritized by the state plan are thriving in the Southern Alleghenies Region and should be a focus of this plan.

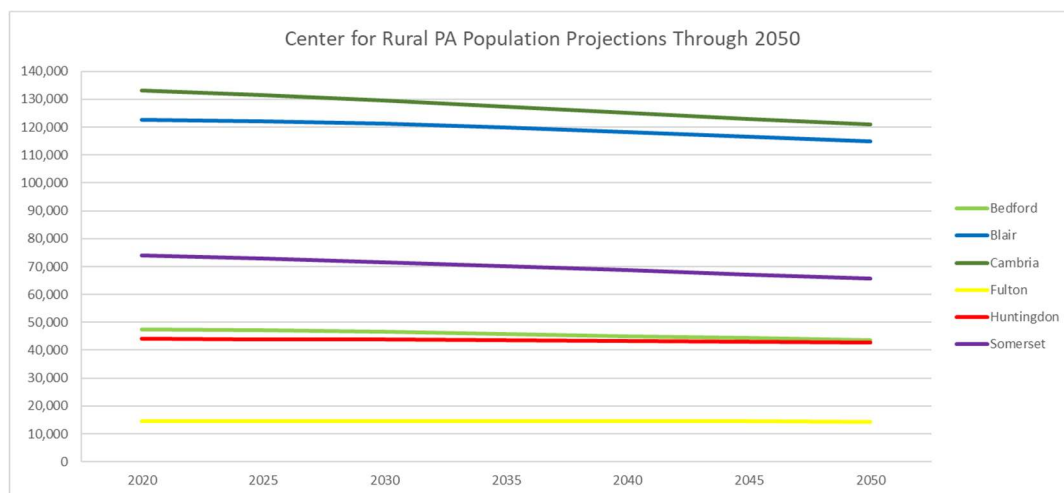
This plan and the Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Board’s *Local Area Plan* use similar methodologies to identify growth sectors for strategic investments. So *A Ten-Year Strategic Plan for Economic Development in Pennsylvania* is particularly useful for our effort. Note that the SAWDB *Local Area Plan* prioritized manufacturing and healthcare like the state plan does (life sciences), although the SAWDB also prioritized construction, business services, transportation, and warehousing.

POPULATION PROJECTION

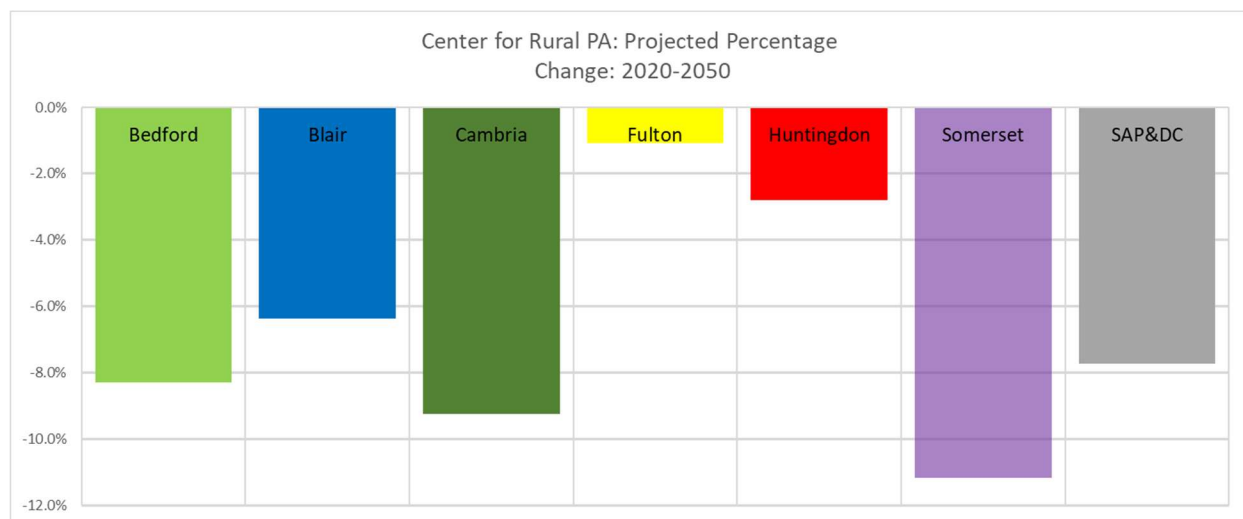
In 2020, the Center for Rural Pennsylvania and Penn State Harrisburg's Institute of State and Regional Affairs prepared population projections for the Commonwealth and its 67 counties for the years 2020 through 2050. These projections, which can be viewed here (<https://www.rural.pa.gov/data/population-projections>), use a standard cohort component method with 5-year male and female cohorts, so that the age structure of the population can also be projected. The results of this projection for the Southern Alleghenies Region and its counties lie in the table below.

Center for Rural Pennsylvania Population Projection for the Southern Alleghenies Region								Percent Change: 2020-2050
	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050	
Bedford	47,569	47,083	46,534	45,862	45,091	44,296	43,624	-8.3%
Blair	122,651	122,152	121,272	119,964	118,339	116,538	114,846	-6.4%
Cambria	133,199	131,409	129,572	127,461	125,140	122,851	120,889	-9.2%
Fulton	14,572	14,548	14,535	14,524	14,504	14,455	14,416	-1.1%
Huntingdon	44,047	43,938	43,781	43,555	43,301	43,042	42,809	-2.8%
Somerset	74,016	72,772	71,573	70,187	68,632	67,079	65,754	-11.2%
SAP&DC	436,054	431,902	427,267	421,553	415,007	408,261	402,338	-7.7%

The Center for Rural Pennsylvania's projection shows the Southern Alleghenies Region losing 7.7% of its population between 2020 and 2050. During this same period, Pennsylvania's total population is projected to slowly grow from 12,994,440 residents to 13,195,897 residents (1.55% growth).



By this projection, Cambria County remains the region's most populous county in 2050, but only by roughly 6,000 residents. All six counties are projected to lose population from 2020 through 2050. Somerset County would lose the highest percentage of its population (11.2%), followed by Cambria (9.2%), Bedford (8.3%), Blair (6.4%), Huntingdon (2.8%), and Fulton (1.1%). This is graphed below.



These rates of population change are based on each county's unique age structure, birth rates, mortality rates, and migration patterns. Because the cohort component method was used, the age structure of the population can be projected as well. In 2020, working age residents aged 20-64 years constituted 57.9% of Pennsylvania's population and 55.9% of the Southern Alleghenies Region's population. By the projection in 2050, working age residents will constitute 55.5% of Pennsylvania's population and 53.4% of the Southern Alleghenies Region's population. In 2020, seniors aged 65 years and up constituted 18.8% of Pennsylvania's population and 22.3% of the Southern Alleghenies Region's population. By the projection in 2050, seniors will constitute 23.1% of Pennsylvania's population and 24.7% of the Southern Alleghenies Region's population. So through 2050, both Pennsylvania and the Southern Alleghenies Region are forecast to continue to age, but the Southern Alleghenies Region will continue to be older than its state as a whole.

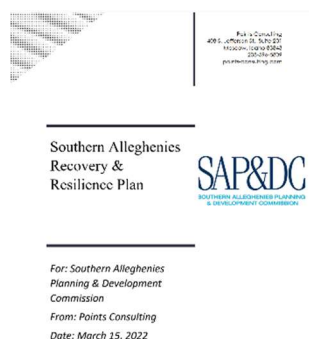
Continuing to look at the working age population (aged 20-64 years) in the Center for Rural Pennsylvania's population projection, this critical cohort is forecast to shrink by 3.8% in Bedford County, 3% in Blair County, 2.2% in Cambria County, 2.1% in Fulton County, and 3.7% in Somerset County. However, this group will actually grow by 0.2% in Huntingdon County. For seniors aged 65 years and up, this group is forecast to grow by 2.6% in Bedford County, 4.3% in Blair County, 1.6% in Cambria County, 1.3% in Fulton County, and 2.4% in Somerset County. Again, however, Huntingdon County stands alone with a population of seniors that will actually shrink by 0.5%.

The Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Board's *2021-2024 Local Area Plan (WIOA Appendix D Regional Plan)* cites a second population projection performed by Economic Modeling Specialist International. This projection forecasts a similar future, with a slowly shrinking and aging population across the Southern Alleghenies Region. However, such population projections assume that birth, mortality, and migration rates will stay relatively steady throughout the projection period. An influx of immigrants from

other parts of the United States or world would greatly change these numbers and improve the Southern Alleghenies Region's future. This is why many local economic development agencies have begun working to recruit new residents as well as new businesses. This is also why the SAWDB's efforts to maximize the potential of our limited workforce are so critical.

RESILIENCE

Building resilience into a regional economy means anticipating, preparing for, and effectively responding to climactic or economic trends or disturbances. This plan will address both climactic and economic resilience in the Southern Alleghenies Region, proposing mitigation strategies and adaptation techniques. Economic resilience aims to better prepare the region to anticipate, withstand, and bounce back from shocks such as economic downturns, downturns in a locally important industry, disasters, or the exit of a major employer. This plan will consider both steady-state initiatives (efforts that improve the region's ability to withstand or avoid a shock, such as planning, economic diversification, business retention, or business continuity) and responsive initiatives (efforts to better respond to an event). This plan will focus on establishing information networks, pre-disaster mitigation planning, and measuring resilience.



SAP&DC has already prepared a significant resilience plan, funded by EDA CARES. The *Southern Alleghenies Recovery & Resilience Plan* – completed by SAP&DC on March 15, 2022, with Points Consulting of Moscow, Idaho – developed strategies to improve the Region's ability to anticipate and survive future downturns in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. After extensive study, research, and public outreach, the Recovery and Resilience Plan recommended that the Region focus on addressing the following four areas of concern: workforce retention and attraction, quality of place, attracting remote

workers, and housing development and blight reduction. All four of these areas of concern pointed to the Region's aging population and shrinking workforce as the greatest threat to future economic prosperity. Although the *Southern Alleghenies Recovery & Resilience Plan* mostly addresses economic – and not climactic – resilience, it does so with far more resources than this effort has and goes into far more depth than this effort ever could. Therefore, the *Southern Alleghenies Recovery & Resilience Plan* should be considered part of this CEDS included by this reference. Our economic resilience efforts will largely be described in the *Southern Alleghenies Recovery & Resilience Plan*, leaving climactic resilience for this document.

With economic resilience somewhat aside, we will begin by establishing a baseline for the existing resilience of the Southern Alleghenies. On its "Risk and Resilience" page, the National Economic Resilience Data Explorer (NERDE) (Argonne National Laboratory and the Economic Development Administration) calculates an "Overall National Risk Index Rating," and it rates the overall national risk of every county in the Southern Alleghenies Region as being either "Low" (Cambria and Blair) or "Very Low." The Southern Alleghenies Region is shown to have a "Social Vulnerability" score of 0.36, a "Social Vulnerability – National Percentile" of 0.42, and a "Social Vulnerability – State Percentile" of 0.50. For household internet access, the average tract percentile across the

Region is 0.24 and the average tract score across the region is 27.72. For the innovation index, the average innovation index value for the Region is 84.2 while the median innovation index value across the country is 84.3. NERDE states that there is not a high concentration of coal sector jobs in the Southern Alleghenies Region, although this seems like an error. There are no nuclear power plants, persistent poverty counties, or tribal adjacencies in the Southern Alleghenies Region. The average number of opportunity zones for each county in the Region is 3.67. On average, NERDE reports that each of the six counties has experienced 6.33 disasters over the past ten years.

On its COVID-19 page, NERDE reports that the Government Revenue Vulnerability Index for Pennsylvania is 1.009, Bedford County is 0.996, Blair County is 0.998, Cambria County is 0.983, Fulton County is 0.936, Huntingdon County is 0.979, and Somerset County is 0.978. The County Economic Impact Index for each county is listed as follows: Bedford 0.993, Blair 0.997, Cambria 0.966, Fulton 0.874, Huntingdon 0.958, and Somerset 0.958. The state weekly unemployment claims for the Region remain flat from October 2023 back through February 2022.

In Pennsylvania, resilience planning – especially climactic resilience planning – is based on each county’s required hazard mitigation plan. The adopted hazard mitigation plans of each of our six counties are summarized below, noting their identified threats, goals, and objectives.

Bedford County: Hazard Mitigation Plan, Bedford County, PA: This plan notes that in 2013, FEMA identified four categories of hazard mitigation: (1) local plans and regulation, (2) structure and infrastructure projects, (3) natural systems protection, and (4) education and awareness programs (page 19). It identified the following hazards as presenting the highest risks to Bedford County: floods, flash floods, and ice jams; utility interruption; invasive species; hazard materials releases; winter storms; wildfires; and subsidence/sinkholes. It listed the most threatening invasive pests and pathogens: the emerald ash borer, spotted lanternfly, Eurasian wood wasp, Asian long-horned beetle, hemlock woolly adelgid, gypsy moth, *Phytophthora ramorum*, mile-a-minute weed, oriental bittersweet, Japanese angelica, and wavy leaf basket grass. The plan lists the following goals and objectives: (1) the prevention of injury and damage, (2) the protection of citizens and property, (3) the protection and restoration of natural resources, (4) public education regarding potential impacts and strategies, and (5) the improvement of emergency services and capabilities.

Blair County: BRAVE Report (Blair Resilience: Addressing Vulnerability and Exposure): Amongst other subjects, this hazard mitigation plan discusses threats to biodiversity. Due to the warming climate, the plan addresses an increased potential for the West Nile Virus, droughts, wildfires, invasive species, and species extinction. It notes that climate change could make winter storms more intense, if less frequent. The plan sets five goals: (1) public education regarding potential hazards, (2) the prevention of injury and property damage, (3) the reduction of flood damage, (4) the enhancement of emergency services, and (5) the protection of natural areas, such as wetlands, that

contribute to hazard mitigation. The plan is in the final stages of an update as of October 2024.

Cambria County: The Cambria County Hazard Mitigation Plan: This 2022 plan lists the following potential hazards.

Natural Hazards	Human-Caused Hazards
Drought	Building/structural collapse
Extreme temperature	Civil disturbance
Flooding	Blighted properties
Flash flooding	Dam failure
Ice jam flooding	Disorientation
Hailstorm	Drowning
Hurricanes and tropical storms	Inadequate emergency services
Invasive species	Hazardous materials
Landslides	Levee failures
Lightning strikes	The opioid epidemic
Pandemics and infectious disease	Terrorism/cyberterrorism
Radon	Transportation accidents
Subsidence/sinkholes	Urban fire and explosion
Tornados/windstorms	Utility interruption
Wildfire	

Hazards are classified by municipality based on hazard risk: high, moderate, and low. The plan sets the following goals and objectives: (1) hazard mitigation education, (2) coordination towards implementation, (3) mitigating hazards, (4) reducing the potential for injury or damage due to flooding, and (5) participation in FEMA's High-Hazard Potential Dam Program (HHPD). The plan also stresses the promotion of disaster-resistant future development, the improvement of emergency service capabilities, and the protection of critical infrastructure.

Fulton County: The Fulton County Hazard Mitigation Plan: This 2020 plan lists the following hazards as being the most threatening based on their risk factor analysis: dam failure, earthquake, tornados/windstorms, subsidence/sinkholes, radon exposure, wildfires, hailstorms, and landslides. It sets the following goals: (1) the protection of people, property, and the environment; (2) the prevention of community impact; (3) the enhancement of awareness among local, county, state, and federal emergency management personnel; and (4) ensuring that stakeholder groups have the necessary information.

Huntingdon County: The Huntingdon County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan: This detailed 2020 plan lists the following high risk factor threats to the county: invasive species; pandemics/infectious diseases; hazardous materials releases; floods, flash floods, and ice jam floods; tornados and windstorms; and winter storms. The following moderate risk factor threats are listed: hurricanes, tropical storms, and nor'easters; terrorism; utility interruption; transportation accidents; extreme temperatures; hailstorms; civil disturbances; dam failures; and wildfires. The following

low risk factor threats are listed: drought, subsidence/sinkholes, and landslides. The plan lists six goals: (1) strengthening County and municipal capabilities to reduce the impact of flooding, (2) increasing intergovernmental cooperation by developing public/private partnerships, (3) enhancing planning and emergency response efforts, (4) strengthening the County's data management, (5) increasing public awareness, and (6) addressing High Hazard Potential Dams (HHPD).

Somerset County: The Somerset County Hazard Mitigation Plan: As of this writing, this plan is currently being updated and is expected to be completed early next year. Thus, this summary addresses the existing *2020 Somerset County Hazard Mitigation Plan*. The extensive 2020 plan profiles 20 different hazards in depth, but noted the following as presenting the highest risk to Somerset County. These are listed in order of decreasing risk factor: (high risk) the opioid epidemic, invasive species, the capacity of existing emergency services, flash flooding, transportation environmental hazards, tornados, fixed facility environmental hazards, terrorism, levee/dam failures, utility interruptions, flooding, winter storms, pandemics and infectious disease, wildfires, windstorms, drought, transportation accidents, (moderate risk) subsidence/sinkholes, radon exposure, ice jam flooding, hurricanes and tropical storms, hailstorms, (low risk) landslides, and earthquakes. Each hazard's risk is noted for each municipality. The plan's identified goals were as follows:

- Reduce potential injury/death and damage to existing community assets due to floods, flash floods, and ice jams.
- Reduce potential injury/death and damage to existing community assets due to all hazards.
- Promote disaster-resistant future development.
- Promote hazard mitigation as a public value in recognition of its importance to the health, safety, and welfare of the population.
- Improve response and recovery capabilities.
- Protect critical infrastructure. (pages xiii-xiv)

To summarize these six county hazard mitigation plans, the most commonly listed hazards are flooding, invasive species, pandemics/infectious diseases, hazardous materials releases (transportation related and stationary), the opioid epidemic, windstorms, winter storms, utility interruptions, dam failures, wildfires, subsidence/sinkholes, droughts, landslides, and the capacities of existing emergency response organizations. Of these, flooding, invasive species, storms, dam failures, wildfires, droughts, and landslides will most clearly be made more common by Pennsylvania's warming climate. The most listed goals in these plans are preventing injury and property damage, reducing flood damage, public education, improving emergency services and response capabilities, addressing High-Hazard Potential Dams (HHPDs), protecting critical infrastructure, and building disaster-resistant future development. Our CEDS planning effort will focus on these threats and goals, especially protecting critical infrastructure and building disaster-resistant future development.

THE SWOT ANALYSIS AND SURVEY

A SWOT analysis (for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) is a simple participation tool used to create a synthesized written description of the current state of an organization, or in this case, the Southern Alleghenies Region. This written description is then used as a base for setting goals and objectives. EDA requires that a SWOT analysis be part of a CEDS. In the context of a SWOT analysis, terms are defined as follows.

- **Strengths:** These are seen from an internal perspective, and should be items that we can directly influence. Strengths are to be built upon, and are used to highlight competitive advantages.
- **Weaknesses:** Sometimes called “areas for improvement,” these are also seen from an internal perspective, and should be items that we can directly influence. Weaknesses are to be shored up and turn into operational goals and initiatives.
- **Opportunities:** These are seen from an external perspective, and should be items that we can influence but not directly impact. Opportunities are to be invested in. They are opportunities for growth, used to set growth goals.
- **Threats:** These are also seen from an external perspective, and should be items that we can influence but not directly impact. Threats are to be monitored.

The Southern Alleghenies Region began the process of preparing this CEDS by holding a meeting of its CEDS committee on May 20, 2024. At that meeting, SAP&DC staff presented the background studies and completed a SWOT analysis for today’s Southern Alleghenies Region. The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats identified through this process are listed below, and were prioritized with a simple nominal group technique.

Strengths	Opportunities
1. outdoor recreation opportunities 2. reliable highway infrastructure 3. proximity to major markets 4. low cost of living 5. a strong work ethic 6. James E. Van Zandt Veterans Administration Medical Center 7. Strong agricultural sector 8. Abundant natural resources 9. Downtown revitalization efforts 10. Cultural assets, historic architecture, and mountains	1. incentivizing market rate housing production and rehabilitation 2. growing outdoor recreation, winter recreation, trails, tourism, and agritourism 3. growing childcare options 4. attracting/supporting new businesses and encouraging existing business expansions 5. increasing broadband access 6. regional branding
Weaknesses	Threats
1. housing (lack of new, newer forms, affordable, and market-rate) 2. lack of childcare 3. local appreciation of economic progress 4. inconsistent access to broadband services 5. lack of investment in regional branding 6. lack of diversity 7. drugs 8. local government leadership/cooperation	1. aging and declining workforce and demographics 2. lack of local funding/tax base 3. lack of cultural and ethnic diversity 4. brain drain 5. changing regulations and taxation 6. economic downturns in industries

This SWOT analysis was then augmented by an online survey that presented themes taken from the SWOT analysis and asked its respondents to prioritize them. The availability of the survey was publicized through SAP&DC's website, newsletters, and social media feeds as well as through our local economic development corporations, chambers of commerce, and planning commissions. The survey is shown below.

PUBLIC SURVEY FOR THE 2025-2029 CEDS

Please help the Southern Alleghenies Planning and Development Commission prioritize economic development goals and objectives for Pennsylvania's Cambria, Blair, Huntingdon, Somerset, Bedford and Fulton Counties for 2025-2029 by answering the following four questions. Your answers will drive the development of *Advancing the Alleghenies: the Southern Alleghenies Region Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy* (CEDS), which will guide regional economic development resources.

Question 1: What do you feel are the top strengths of your community that could positively affect the regional economy? Please select up to 5 choices from the list below.

1. Outdoor recreation opportunities
2. Reliable highway infrastructure
3. Proximity to major markets
4. Low cost of living
5. A strong work ethic
6. Agriculture
7. Abundant natural resources
8. Downtown revitalization efforts
9. Cultural assets
10. Historic architecture
11. The mountainous landscape
12. A growing local economy
13. Institutions of higher education
14. Strong k-12 and vocational schools
15. Safe area to work and live
16. Other (enter open ended answer)

Question 2: What do you feel are the top areas that need improved in your community to promote regional economic growth? Please select up to 10 choices from the list below.

1. Roads and highways
2. Pedestrian infrastructure, such as trails or sidewalks
3. Broadband access
4. Water/sewer infrastructure
5. Stormwater infrastructure and flood controls
6. Public transportation
7. Emergency services (fire, police, ambulance)
8. Strengthening and securing the energy grid
9. Housing (incentivizing production and rehabilitation)
10. Fighting blight and demolishing blighted structures
11. Downtown revitalization
12. Commercial and office space vacancy

13. Regulations and taxation
14. Collaboration and planning between local governments
15. Business attraction, retention, expansion, and support initiatives
16. Building the recreation/tourism sector, including outdoor recreation and agritourism
17. Regional branding and marketing
18. Promoting nightlife, live music, the arts, and cultural events
19. Fairly spreading economic development resources across all communities
20. Diversifying the local economy
21. Attracting more family sustaining jobs
22. Improving the local tax base
23. Preserving and promoting agriculture
24. Aging and declining population and work force
25. Work force development/job training
26. Childcare for working parents
27. Drug abuse affecting the ability of people to work
28. Barriers to work force reentry from incarceration/drug abuse
29. Improving medical services
30. Environmental sustainability and resource conservation
31. Addressing climate change
32. Cultural and ethnic diversity
33. Coordination of local volunteers
34. Other (enter an open-ended answer)

Question 3: In which county do you live?

Question 4: In which municipality do you live?

The CEDS 2025-2029 Public Survey collected **245 responses** from the six-county region, geographically distributed as follows:

- 54.7% (respondents, or “R”=134) from Somerset County
- 14.3% (R=35) from Cambria County
- 13.1% (R=32) from Huntingdon County
- 11.0% (R=27) from Blair County
- 5.3% (R=13) from Bedford County
- 1.6% (R=4) from Fulton County

Responses for each county were highly varied by municipality with 88 distinct locations represented across the Southern Alleghenies Region. Meyersdale Borough in Somerset County was overrepresented in our survey with over 60 respondents – the City of Johnstown came in a distant second with only nine respondents. However, this overrepresentation did not significantly change the priorities produced by the survey as Meyersdale’s priorities largely reflected those of the six-county region.

What follows is a review of the survey results with a brief discussion of each of the survey questions. The results for each question are then provided for each of the region’s six counties.

Question 1 :

When asked to identify strengths in their community that positively impacted the local economy, respondents emphasized the benefits provided by the Region's physical geography. Outdoor recreation opportunities, a mountainous landscape, and the Region's agricultural heritage polled highly across all six counties. Other commonly identified benefits include the low cost of living within the Region as well as its perceived safety as a place to work and live. Respondents in Blair and Cambria Counties emphasized their counties' reliable highway infrastructure as a minor strength while Somerset residents indicated the strength of their k-12 and vocational schools.

The results for question one aggregated from the entire survey Region can be found in the following table.

Strength	Percentage	R
Outdoor recreation opportunities	64.9%	159
Safe area to work and live	59.6%	146
Low cost of living	52.2%	128
Mountainous landscape	41.2%	101
Agriculture	38.4%	94
Strong K-12 and vocational schools	23.3%	57
Strong work ethic	21.6%	53
Growing local economy	21.6%	53
Reliable highway infrastructure	19.6%	48
Abundant natural resources	19.6%	48
Proximity to major markets	14.3%	35
Downtown revitalization efforts	12.6%	31
Historic architecture	8.6%	21
Institutions of higher education	8.6%	21
Cultural Assets	4.9%	12

Question 2:

The second survey question asked respondents to identify up to ten areas that needed to be improved to promote regional economic growth. The results of question two display a closer distribution than the responses to question one but still identify a cluster of regionwide priorities: business recruitment and development, employment, addressing blight, road and highway improvements, and increasing broadband access. Outside of these top priorities, responses were closely distributed across a variety of infrastructural and social concerns.

Infrastructural priorities differed from county to county, but one of the most indicated areas of improvement regardless of location was the condition of roads, highways, and other surface streets – especially in the more rural counties of Somerset and Huntingdon. Water, sewer, and stormwater infrastructure all polled comparatively high in Huntingdon, Blair, and Cambria Counties.

Areas for Improvement	Percentage	R
Business attraction, retention, expansion, and support	51.2%	126
Attracting more family sustaining jobs	50.8%	125
Fighting blight and demolishing blighted structures	49.2%	121
Roads and Highways	46.3%	114
Broadband access	43.5%	107
Aging and declining population/workforces	36.6%	90
Emergency services (fire, police, ambulance)	30.5%	75
Building the recreation/tourism sector	30.1%	74
Downtown revitalization	26.8%	66
Housing (incentivizing production and rehabilitation)	26.4%	65
Drug abuse affecting the ability of people to work	24.8%	61
Water/sewer Infrastructure	22.4%	55
Public transportation	21.5%	53
Improving medical services	21.5%	53
Pedestrian infrastructure, such as trails and sidewalks	21.1%	52
Stormwater infrastructure and flood controls	20.7%	51
Childcare for working parents	19.1%	47
Preserving and promoting agriculture	17.9%	44
Workforce development/job training	17.5%	43
Improving the local tax base	16.7%	41
Collaboration and planning between local governments	15.0%	37
Promoting nightlife, live music, the arts, and cultural events	15.0%	37
Fairly spreading development resources across communities	15.0%	37
Regulations and taxation	12.6%	31
Diversifying local economy	11.0%	27
Commercialized office space vacancy	8.1%	20
Strengthening and securing the energy grid	7.7%	19
Cultural and ethnic diversity	7.7%	19
Regional branding and marketing	6.9%	17
Coordination of local volunteers	5.7%	14
Environmental sustainability and resource conservation	5.3%	13
Addressing climate change	4.1%	10
Barriers to workforce re-entry from incarceration/substance use	2.9%	7
Other (free response)	2.4%	6

Blair: The following is a summary of Blair County's results alone.

Strength	Percentage	R
Low cost of living	63%	17
Safe area to work and live	63%	17
Outdoor recreation opportunities	55.6%	15
Mountainous landscape	48.2%	13
Reliable highway infrastructure	33.3%	9

Area for Improvement	Percentage	R
Fighting blight and demolishing blighted structures	51.9%	14
Broadband access	40.7%	11
Business attraction, retention, expansion, support	40.7%	11
Attracting more family sustaining jobs	40.7%	11
Stormwater infrastructure and flood controls	33.3%	9
Housing (incentivizing production and rehabilitation)	33.3%	9
Pedestrian infrastructure, such as trails and sidewalks	33.3%	9
Improving medical services	29.6%	8
Regulations and taxation	29.6%	8
Aging and declining population/workforce	25.9%	7

Bedford: The following is a summary of Bedford County's results alone.

Strength	Percentage	R
Safe area to work and live	76.9%	10
Outdoor recreation opportunities	53.9%	7
Low cost of living	38.5%	5
Strong work ethic	38.5%	5
Agriculture	38.5%	5

Area for Improvement	Percentage	R
Broadband access	61.5%	8
Roads and highways	53.9%	7
Aging and declining population/workforce	46.2%	6
Housing (incentivizing production and rehabilitation)	38.5%	5
Emergency services (fire, police, ambulance)	30.8%	4
Fighting blight and demolishing blighted structures	30.8%	4
Business attraction, retention, expansion, and support initiatives	30.8%	4
Building the recreation/tourism sector	30.8%	4
Pedestrian infrastructure	23.1%	3
Water/sewer infrastructure	23.1%	3

Cambria: The following is a summary of Cambria County's results alone.

Strength	Percentage	R
Low cost of living	74.3%	26
Outdoor recreation opportunities	68.6%	24
Abundant natural resources	34.3%	12
Reliable highway infrastructure	31.4%	11
Safe area to work and live	31.4%	11
Mountainous landscape	28.6%	10

Area for Improvement	Percentage	R
Fighting blight and demolishing blighted structures	65.7%	23
Roads and highways	62.9%	22
Business attraction, retention, expansion, and support initiatives	57.1%	20
Attracting more family sustaining jobs	57.1%	20
Collaboration and planning between local governments	42.9%	15
Aging and declining population/workforce	40%	14
Pedestrian infrastructure	37.1%	13
Downtown revitalization	34.3%	12
Stormwater infrastructure and flood controls	31.4%	11
Housing (incentivizing production and rehabilitation)	31.4%	11

Huntingdon: The following is a summary of Huntingdon County’s results alone.

Strength	Percentage	R
Outdoor recreation opportunities	71.9%	23
Safe area to work and live	68.8%	22
Agriculture	56.3%	18
Mountainous landscape	50%	16
Low cost of living	40.6%	13

Area for Improvement	Percentage	R
Roads and highways	56.3%	18
Broadband access	56.3%	18
Business attraction, retention, expansion, and support initiatives	50%	16
Attracting more family sustaining jobs	50%	16
Water/sewer infrastructure	46.9%	15
Fighting blight and demolishing blighted structures	37.5%	12
Building the recreation/tourism sector	34.4%	11
Housing (incentivizing production and rehabilitation)	31.3%	10
Preserving and promoting agriculture	31.3%	10
Aging and declining population/workforce	31.3%	10
Childcare for working parents	31.3%	10
Improving medical services	31.3%	10

Fulton: The following is a summary of Fulton County's results alone.

Strength	Percentage	R
Agriculture	100%	4
Strong work ethic	75%	3
Safe area to work and live	75%	3
Mountainous landscape	50%	2
Outdoor recreation opportunities	25%	1
Reliable highway infrastructure	25%	1

Area for Improvement	Percentage	R
Business attraction, retention, expansion, and support initiatives	75%	3
Broadband access	50%	2
Emergency services (fire, police, ambulance)	50%	2
Housing (incentivizing production and rehabilitation)	50%	2
Preserving and promoting agriculture	50%	2
Coordination of local volunteers	50%	2
Roads and highways	25%	1
Pedestrian infrastructure	25%	1
Water/sewer infrastructure	25%	1
Fighting blight and demolishing blighted structures	25%	1
Downtown revitalization	25%	1
Collaboration and planning between local governments	25%	1
Building the recreation/tourism sector	25%	1
Diversifying local economy	25%	1
Attracting more family sustaining jobs	25%	1
Aging and declining population/workforce	25%	1
Improving medical services	25%	1
Addressing climate change	25%	1

Somerset: The following is a summary of Somerset County's results alone.

Strength	Percentage	R
Outdoor recreation opportunities	66.7%	90
Safe area to work and live	62.2%	84
Low cost of living	50.4%	68
Mountainous landscape	41.5%	56
Agriculture	40%	54
Strong K-12 and vocational schools	30.4%	41

Area for Improvement	Percentage	R
Attracting more family sustaining jobs	55.6%	75
Business attraction, retention, expansion, and support initiatives	53.3%	72
Fighting blight and demolishing blighted structures	49.6%	67
Roads and highways	44.4%	60
Broadband access	44.4%	60
Emergency Services	38.5%	52
Aging and declining population/workforce	38.5%	52
Drug abuse affecting the ability of people to work	30.4%	41
Downtown revitalization	29.6%	40
Building the recreation/tourism sector	28.9%	39

These themes were then developed into the following goals, objectives, and strategies.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

This section presents the goals and objectives for economic growth and investment within the Southern Alleghenies Region. These goals and objectives were based on the background studies, SWOT analysis, survey, CEDS Committee input, interviews, and public participation discussed previously. Under each goal is a series of objectives and strategies identified to guide implementation. Though many of the strategies offer practical solutions for local officials in their particular locale, there are also opportunities for multi-municipal and regional collaboration.

THE SEVEN GOALS FOR THE SOUTHERN ALLEGHENIES REGION

- Seek expansion of the **regional economy** through strategic, diversified growth
- Develop our **workforce** to meet the needs of our employers
- Maintain and modernize **infrastructure** to make the region more competitive for economic development
- Adapt **communities** to be more attractive as places to live and work
- Invest in areas that influence **health and well-being** while raising awareness of health opportunities for all residents
- Strive for and measure **equity** in the distribution of investments and economic development resources
- Build **resilience** into the local economy

1. GOAL 1: SEEK EXPANSION OF THE REGIONAL ECONOMY THROUGH STRATEGIC, DIVERSIFIED GROWTH: The primary goal of this CEDS is to invest in high-growth, high-value sectors where we have both a competitive advantage and where we expect significant potential for growth in the next ten years – especially in higher-wage, family sustaining jobs. These include agriculture, durable goods manufacturing, nondurable goods manufacturing, transportation, warehousing, construction, business services, healthcare, education, and energy. Additionally, we must continue to diversify our economy to provide more opportunities for our residents and resilience for our communities.
 - a. OBJECTIVE A: Strategically invest in high-growth, high-value sectors where we have both a competitive advantage and where we expect significant potential for growth in the next ten years. Continue the gradual movement of the Region to a more technology-related, diversified economy.
 - i. Strategy 1: Continue to support manufacturing businesses in international trade and government contracting.
 - ii. Strategy 2: Continually research key business and demographic trends to identify new economic development opportunities.
 - iii. Strategy 3: Support the development, inventorying and marketing of viable sites, buildings, and business parks to regional and national businesses and investors.

- iv. Strategy 4: Promote business opportunities through Keystone Opportunity Zones (KOZs) and Keystone Innovation Zones (KIZs).
- v. Strategy 5: Utilize our full economic development toolkit and those of our economic development partners in supporting the growth of strategic businesses and industries. These tools include grants, low interest loans, enterprise zones, main street programs, and tax credit programs.
- vi. Strategy 6: Identify proven economic strategies from other regions with a similar geographic, economic, or demographic makeup and adapt them for use in the Southern Alleghenies Region.
- vii. Strategy 7: Participate in regional partnerships designed to promote our regional labor shed, data, and assets to enhance the chances of attracting new outside investment into the Region.
- b. OBJECTIVE B: Create an entrepreneurial environment to support start-up enterprises and strengthen existing businesses.
 - i. Strategy 1: Support university-based entrepreneurship programs and faculty initiated efforts in new small business development and research & development. Likely partners include Penn State Altoona, its Sheetz Center for Entrepreneurial Excellence, Saint Francis University, the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, and Juniata College.
 - ii. Strategy 2: Support business incubators and shared workspace facilities.
 - iii. Strategy 3: Support entrepreneurial ecosystems built on identifying innovative, entrepreneurial individuals and connecting them with coaches/mentors who will connect them with resources and training to facilitate their success (e.g. Startup Alleghenies).
 - iv. Strategy 4: Provide assistance to small and emerging businesses to develop and deploy marketing strategies to increase their market reach.
 - v. Strategy 5: Support the Alleghenies Investment Fund: A group of private investors that invest in new and emerging business in the Region and provide mentoring assistance to those businesses.
 - vi. Strategy 6: Foster collaboration between regional businesses through workshops, focus groups, publications, and other methods of knowledge sharing.
 - vii. Strategy 7: Share business success stories in the Region to encourage entrepreneurship.
- c. OBJECTIVE C: Expand the tourism visitation potential for the Region and build recreational assets for tourists and residents alike as part of greater talent attraction.
 - i. Strategy 1: Identify resources to continue promoting the Region as “The Alleghenies.”

- ii. Strategy 2: Implement strategies recommended in *Alleghenies Outdoors: Moving the Recreation Economy Forward* – published by SAP&DC in March 2024 – to support and expand our outdoor recreation economy.
- iii. Strategy 3: Identify and implement additional, long-term funding solutions for maintaining, improving, and expanding the Region’s existing outdoor infrastructure: trails of all kinds, water access, interpretive and informational signage, and other amenities crucial to attracting and maintaining visitors to our outdoor spaces.
- iv. Strategy 4: Comprehensively update the *Southern Alleghenies Greenways Plan*.
- v. Strategy 5: Continue and grow the SAP&DC greenways mini-grants program with the support of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PaDCNR).
- vi. Strategy 6: Create and maintain a list of candidate outdoor recreation, trail, parks, recreation, and similar projects. Officially adopt the list into this plan, the regional greenways plan, and others to build coordination and maximize the chances of grant funding through consistency with adopted planning efforts.
- vii. Strategy 7: Improve the quality and quantity of SAP&DC’s outdoor recreation data – including but not limited to GIS assets, visitor usage statistics, and economic impact figures.
- viii. Strategy 8: Support efforts to stage events that drive engagement with regional tourism and outdoor recreation with locals and visitors alike. This includes bike, road, and trail races; outdoor festivals celebrating local heritage or natural features; community hikes; and other happenings that grow the outdoor economy.
- d. OBJECTIVE D: Support the growth of local agriculture-related businesses.
 - i. Strategy 1: Support the growth of farmer’s markets and community-supported agriculture (CSA).
 - ii. Strategy 2: Support the diversification of agricultural crops/products as well as agritourism.
 - iii. Strategy 3: Encourage direct-to-market sale of locally produced agricultural products, including at breweries and distilleries.
 - iv. Strategy 4: Provide local co-ops with local outlets for local products.
 - v. Strategy 5: Support agricultural training at local career and technology centers and other schools.
 - vi. Strategy 6: Invest in the Region’s expanding agricultural sector through the new *Pennsylvania Agricultural Innovation Grant Program*, grant applications, expansions of regional and local loan programs. Capital and financing expertise should be strategically targeted towards technological advances and agribusinesses throughout the production chain. Assistance with permitting issues should be provided where feasible.

- vii. Strategy 7: Strengthen county clean and green and other preservation programs for prime agricultural lands.
 - viii. Strategy 8: Support the establishment of kitchen incubators for local products
 - ix. Strategy 9: Consider and support the development of an agricultural labor placement agency to connect farmers with skilled permanent and temporary labor.
 - e. OBJECTIVE E: Work towards measuring economic growth in terms of gross domestic product, wage growth, tax base growth, and other wealth metrics instead of employment, due to our limited workforce.
 - f. OBJECTIVE F: Grow and promote economic strength by implementing cost efficiencies through energy conservation and controlling price volatility of energy commodities
 - i. Strategy 1: Utilize Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) programs to implement energy efficiency within high-growth, high-value sectors. These include agriculture, durable goods manufacturing, non-durable goods manufacturing, transportation, warehousing, construction, business services, healthcare, and education.
 - ii. Strategy 2: Control energy commodity price volatility by implementing on-site, localized, distributed energy resources such as solar arrays, wind turbines, battery storage, microgrid applications and other sustainable technologies that allow for predictable energy costs and less dependence upon regional electrical grid and energy distribution channels.
2. GOAL 2: DEVELOP OUR WORKFORCE TO MEET THE NEEDS OF OUR EMPLOYERS: The population and the workforce of the Southern Alleghenies Region has been aging and shrinking for decades and is projected to continue to do so through 2050. To maximize economic growth in these conditions, our workforce must be optimized – trained to match the needs of its employers as much as possible. Therefore, it is imperative that we support workforce development initiatives that build the talent pipeline and enhance the skills of the incumbent workforce to ensure that the Region’s employers remain competitive.
- a. OBJECTIVE A: Support and promote the Region’s public workforce system, the Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Board (SAWDB) and its network of PA CareerLink® sites as a significant resource for employer and job seeker services.
 - i. Strategy 1: Identify and engage with a diverse array of key stakeholders within the public workforce system to gather input and share updates impacting regional workforce development efforts through advisory committees, quarterly round tables, and other means of collaboration.

- b. OBJECTIVE B: Expand and educate students and job seekers about the many training options that lead to gainful employment in the Region. These can include traditional post-secondary education as well as occupational skills training through career and technology centers and apprenticeships.
 - i. Strategy 1: Conduct needs assessments and market research to determine how best to conduct and promote training programs to meet the needs of local employers and potential job seekers.
 - ii. Strategy 2: Identify and target demographics in need of career training within the Region to improve the outreach and impact of training programs.
- c. OBJECTIVE C: Support opportunities for increased communication and collaboration between the employer community and the Region's educators to help ensure that employer needs and educational offerings are aligned.
 - i. Strategy 1: Establish a collaborative framework between the Region's educators and employers that will allow both to share information with one another as well as coordinate educational and training offerings to meet current employment needs.
- d. OBJECTIVE D: Support programs that provide education, workforce preparedness training and hands-on learning for young adults with significant barriers to employment. These can include low education levels, homelessness, low income, aging out of foster care and criminal records.
 - i. Strategy 1: Conduct needs assessments to identify the range of barriers that prevent job seekers from obtaining and maintaining employment and develop specific strategies to address these areas.
 - ii. Strategy 2: Identify potential partnerships with local organizations and businesses throughout the Region to reduce barriers to employment.
- e. OBJECTIVE E: Support expansion and enhancement of work-based opportunities for job seekers, especially youth. These can range from summer work experience opportunities for in-school youth and internships for college students to transitional employment for adults with barriers to employment.
 - i. Strategy 1: Complete a needs-based analysis of local labor market trends to identify both in-demand skillsets and high-demand employment sectors.
 - ii. Strategy 2: Work to establish internships, apprenticeships, cooperative education and job-shadowing programs to connect jobseekers with employment opportunities
- f. OBJECTIVE F: Support the Region's career and technology education centers and help them to secure funding for needed expansions of programs and facilities, including a focus on 'green jobs' and emerging regional needs, with the support of local employers.
- g. OBJECTIVE G: Our workforce is not able to support enough high wage, white-collar jobs in management, professional services, finance, insurance,

- h. **OBJECTIVE H:** Work to make our communities and workplaces more welcoming to all people, including those from outside of the Southern Alleghenies Region.
 - i. Strategy 1: Support newcomers as they adapt to life in our Region.
 - ii. Strategy 2: Promote the area as welcoming.
- i. **OBJECTIVE I:** Support the expansion and affordability of childcare in the Region.
 - i. Strategy 1: Encourage the establishment of new childcare centers both in traditional forms and alternative models such as cooperatives.
 - ii. Strategy 2: Work to reform land use ordinances to ensure childcare centers can be safely located in strategic locations convenient to working families.
 - iii. Strategy 3: Encourage the provision of on-site daycare for larger employers, where feasible.

- a. OBJECTIVE A: Improve the transportation network to tie the Region together and make the Region more accessible to other markets.
 - i. Strategy 1: Complete priority projects on the Region's Transportation Improvements Program and/or the Appalachian Development Highway System – especially U.S. 219 from Meyersdale to Interstate 68 in Maryland.
 - ii. Strategy 2: Work to expand public transportation and similar services to and within the Region, including call and ride services and Amtrak.
 - iii. Strategy 3: Work to improve the quality and quantity of pedestrian infrastructure across the Region, including increased sidewalk coverage, crosswalks, and bike lanes where they will be used and are feasible.
 - iv. Strategy 4: Aggressively pursue Local Access Road applications through the Appalachian Regional Commission where such projects will impact the regional economy and employment.

- v. Strategy 5: Support and encourage the use of the Region’s critical service airports.
 - b. OBJECTIVE B: Upgrade water, sewer, and stormwater infrastructure to accommodate new and modern industrial, commercial, and residential growth.
 - i. Strategy 1: Identify and secure funding to upgrade sewer, water, and stormwater infrastructure as appropriate at developable sites and neighborhoods.
 - ii. Strategy 2: Work with communities to identify critical water, sewer, and stormwater infrastructure that needs repair and replacement, and support funding applications to complete these projects.
 - c. OBJECTIVE C: Upgrade and expand telecommunications service in the Region.
 - i. Strategy 1: Promote broadband deployment projects that expand reliable, high-speed internet and cell service to unserved and underserved communities in the Region. Priority will be given to projects that improve regional economic development, strengthen vital industries (healthcare, tourism, technology, etc.), mitigate population decline (i.e. “brain drain”), and enhance the quality of life of residents in the Region.
 - ii. Strategy 2: Support broadband infrastructure assessments to identify unserved and underserved areas and develop strategies to expand internet and cellular services to those areas.
 - d. OBJECTIVE D: Support the appropriate siting of large and small scale energy generation (e.g. solar, wind, and water power) in concert with reasonable, strategic, and educated land use, hazard mitigation, and stormwater planning.
- 4. GOAL 4: ADAPT COMMUNITIES TO BE MORE ATTRACTIVE AS PLACES TO LIVE AND WORK: Attracting and retaining talent is an economic development priority. The alternative is labor shortages and a slowdown of entrepreneurial innovation. Our employers have had difficulties recruiting potential employees to live in our Region. The objectives under this goal are intended to use collaboration and coordination to improve the appearance, functionality, and attractiveness of our communities and housing – building on each’s unique strengths.
 - a. OBJECTIVE A: Aggressively encourage the production of new housing and the rehabilitation of existing housing to improve the Region’s housing stock at all price points and in a variety of formats. This will welcome in new residents and draw in telecommuters who can afford to commute from outside the Region while providing lower-income households with decent homes.
 - i. Strategy 1: Renew efforts to implement the *Southern Alleghenies Recovery & Resilience Plan* and *Alleghenies Ahead on Housing*.

- ii. Strategy 2: *Alleghenies Ahead on Housing* proposed several strategies and 13 tools for incentivizing the development and rehabilitation of new and more modern forms of housing for all household budgets. These strategies and tools will be promoted. Many of these tools are already used within the Region, offering locally sourced experience on which to build.
 - iii. Strategy 3: Support the building of new market rate housing to draw in families and workers while decreasing the numbers of those commuting into the Southern Alleghenies Region for work. Efforts should be focused on housing types not commonly found in our communities, such as higher density urban-style living and townhomes.
 - iv. Strategy 4: Maintain the Regional Housing Taskforce as a means of guiding county and local housing efforts and sharing struggles and success stories from one community to another.
 - v. Strategy 5: Use tax-credit financing to finance new housing construction where possible.
- b. OBJECTIVE B: Address vacant, abandoned, deteriorated, or otherwise blighted properties to make the Region more attractive, improve the potential for drawing in new businesses and residents, and make our neighborhoods safer and healthier.
 - i. Strategy 1: Use resources such as the Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania's online library, *Alleghenies Ahead on Housing*, and the *Southern Alleghenies Recovery & Resilience Plan* to identify and implement proven strategies to address blight within our Region. These include tools such as property maintenance codes and other ordinances, financial assistance and subsidies, equity pools, rehabilitation programs, demolition programs, land banks, conservatorships, and development regulation updates. Most of these tools are already being used in the Southern Alleghenies Region, offering locally available experience to support implementation.
- c. OBJECTIVE C: Support innovative entrepreneurial initiatives that are designed to attract businesses, industries, and professionals to downtown areas.
 - i. Strategy 1: Support the development of additional speculative office and manufacturing spaces. Aid in marking these spaces.
 - ii. Strategy 2: Utilize social media platforms to engage, attract, and communicate with young professionals and other talent.
- d. OBJECTIVE D: Retain and recruit working-aged people to stay in and/or migrate to the Region, including those from diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds.
 - i. Strategy 1: Promote networking organizations and socialization opportunities for young professionals.

- ii. Strategy 2: Develop increased opportunities for employment for younger, working-aged persons.
 - iii. Strategy 3: Develop housing types in demand by younger and working aged professionals, particularly in and around our downtowns.
 - iv. Strategy 4: Promote entertainment options that engage younger and working aged professionals.
- e. OBJECTIVE E: Invest in communities and work to promote and enhance their assets.
 - i. Strategy 1: Support the development of multi-unit, market-rate, higher density residential projects in downtown areas for both renters and buyers, amending local ordinances to permit such development if necessary.
 - ii. Strategy 2: Reuse historic and architecturally significant structures for housing, businesses, entertainment, and cultural uses whenever feasible.
 - iii. Strategy 3: Encourage mixed-use commercial/residential development in pedestrian-oriented commercial districts.
 - iv. Strategy 4: Support cultural, arts, and historical programming in downtown areas.
 - v. Strategy 5: Revitalize or demolish/rebuild blighted properties to attract people and new business.
 - vi. Strategy 6: Support the implementation of active transportation plans and policies.
 - vii. Strategy 7: Identify and help to facilitate the improvement and creation of civic spaces that enhance safety, visual appeal, and overall quality of life for the Region's businesses and residents.
- f. OBJECTIVE F: Provide services and amenities intended to attract retired (or near retired) households.
 - i. Strategy 1: Provide more choice in housing options for retired individuals or empty nesters, especially those strategically developed near college campuses, healthcare facilities, walkable shopping districts, open space amenities, and cultural venues.
- g. OBJECTIVE G: Build local leadership capacity.
 - i. Strategy 1: Promote local government collaboration with state and federal agencies (e.g. PennDOT Connects, LTAP).
 - ii. Strategy 2: Continue to support local governments with asset mapping and geographic information system services.
 - iii. Strategy 3: Promote local government coordination between industry, business, and economic development organizations.
 - iv. Strategy 4: Enhance the quality of local planning, build regional collaboration, aid county planning commissions, and minimize costs by updating *Alleghenies Ahead* as a multi-county regional effort. Each participating county planning commission will direct the

planning effort within its county. SAP&DC will aid the effort by securing the funding, administering the involved grants, and building regional collaboration for implementation.

- v. Strategy 5: Where feasible and where it will result in improved quality, capacity, economy of scale, consistency, and efficiency, encourage the consolidation and regionalization of development reviews (e.g., subdivision and land development reviews), likely at the county level.

5. **GOAL 5: INVEST IN AREAS THAT INFLUENCE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING WHILE RAISING AWARENESS OF HEALTH OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL RESIDENTS:** Many people in the Region are affected by poor health outcomes because of obesity, lack of physical activity, nutritional deficiencies, substance abuse, use of nicotine, chronic diseases, mental health issues, and lack of available care. Improving the overall health of a community helps them live happier, longer productive lives.

- a. **OBJECTIVE A:** Provide support to the healthcare industry to establish and maintain the highest possible level of medical care by extending services to underserved populations in our Region's rural and urban areas.
 - i. Strategy 1: Support the expansion of rural health services throughout the Region, especially where needs are being unmet (e.g., maternal delivery care).
 - ii. Strategy 2: Explore the unmet health needs of the Region's population, particularly outside the core areas where health services are more readily available.
 - iii. Strategy 3: Provide rural health screening opportunities for those residents that are unable to reach clinics.
- b. **OBJECTIVE B:** Work to improve the Region's social determinants of health to help residents live healthier lives and reduce the demand on our Region's healthcare infrastructure.
 - i. Strategy 1: Identify and address systemic barriers that prevent the Region's population from accessing safe, healthy, and affordable food. (Food banks, identifying and addressing food deserts, childhood hunger programs, etc.)
 - ii. Strategy 2: Work to improve regional access to and awareness of mental health resources both locally and remotely with the use of telemedicine and the internet.
 - iii. Strategy 3: Support active lifestyles in the community through the continuation and expansion of programs like WalkWorks and Let's Move.
- c. **OBJECTIVE C:** Collaborate with employers to address employee health needs.
 - i. Strategy 1: Promote employee use of Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) generally provided with group health insurance.

- ii. Strategy 2: Establish workplace wellness committees in each county.
 - iii. Strategy 3: Provide a model for employers to undertake workplace wellness assessments.
 - d. OBJECTIVE D: Work to address substance abuse issues, on a multi-county regional basis if prudent.
 - i. Strategy 1: Identify the specific drug problems in the community and address them through research-based prevention programs.
 - ii. Strategy 2: Support programs and applications for programs that will treat individuals recovering from substance abuse, provide them with housing, and return them to the workforce where our economy needs them.
6. GOAL 6: STRIVE FOR AND MEASURE EQUITY IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF INVESTMENTS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES: Focus on improving equity in the economic development of the Southern Alleghenies Region. Our background research, public outreach, goal setting, and prioritization efforts were designed to identify, involve, and positively impact communities who have traditionally been left behind by some economic development policies due to factors such as race, gender, socio-economic status, and geography – resulting in geographic inequalities and impeded growth.
- a. OBJECTIVE A: Track concentrations of minority populations and poverty within the Region.
 - i. Strategy 1: Using U.S. Census Bureau and PennDOT Environmental Justice data, SAP&DC will track concentrations of minority populations and poverty annually.
 - ii. Strategy 2: Increase outreach to identified communities to better understand and address their specific needs through regional development.
 - b. OBJECTIVE B: Target economic development resources, when feasible and prudent, to concentrations of minority populations and poverty.
 - i. Strategy 1: SAP&DC will consider the aforementioned data in building economic development strategies and projects.
 - ii. Strategy 2: SAP&DC will track and report on investments in these communities and their impacts.
 - c. OBJECTIVE C: SAP&DC will continue to identify and track additional communities that have been left behind by economic development efforts.
7. GOAL 7: BUILD RESILIENCE INTO THE REGIONAL ECONOMY:
- a. OBJECTIVE A: The *Southern Alleghenies Recovery & Resilience Plan* – completed by SAP&DC in 2022 – developed strategies to improve the Region’s ability to anticipate and survive future downturns. The *Southern Alleghenies Recovery & Resilience Plan* recommended that the Region focus on addressing the following four areas of concern: workforce retention and attraction, quality of place, attracting remote workers, and

housing development and blight reduction. All four of these areas of concern pointed to the region's aging population and shrinking workforce as the greatest threat to future economic prosperity. Although the *Southern Alleghenies Recovery & Resilience Plan* addresses economic resilience more than climactic resilience, it does so with far more resources than this effort has and goes into far more depth than this effort could. Therefore, the *Southern Alleghenies Recovery & Resilience Plan* should be considered part of this CEDS. Our economic resilience efforts will largely be described in the *Southern Alleghenies Recovery & Resilience Plan*, leaving climactic resilience for this document.

- i. Strategy 1: Continue to implement the *Southern Alleghenies Recovery & Resilience Plan*. Note that this implementation will be completed through strategies that lie throughout several goals and objectives above.
- b. OBJECTIVE B: Establish information networks for business disaster planning.
 - i. Strategy 1: Work with our economic development corporations and chambers of commerce to build their capacity to serve as information distribution centers during an economic loss or disaster.
 - ii. Strategy 2: Build coordinating bodies of employers through our economic development corporations and chambers of commerce.
- c. OBJECTIVE C: Promote business continuity and preparedness planning efforts to help our entrepreneurs become more resilient.
 - i. Strategy 1: Work with our economic development corporations and chambers of commerce to promote and facilitate business and supply chain continuity planning in the face of economic downturns or disasters.
- d. OBJECTIVE D: In Pennsylvania, county hazard mitigation plans serve as the chief vehicle for planning for and implementing resilience and disaster response improvements. Each of our six counties, as required, maintains a comprehensive hazard mitigation plan, which focuses on subjects such as flooding, invasive species, pandemics/infectious diseases, hazardous materials releases (transportation related and stationary), the opioid epidemic, windstorms, winter storms, utility interruptions, dam failures, wildfires, subsidence/sinkholes, droughts, landslides, and the capacities of existing emergency response organizations.
 - i. Strategy 1: Support and coordinate county hazard mitigation planning efforts.
 - ii. Strategy 2: Track, review, and implement each county's hazard mitigation plan.
 - iii. Strategy 3: Support grant applications and funding to implement county disaster mitigation planning.
- e. OBJECTIVE E: Protect critical infrastructure and build disaster-resistant future development.

- i. Strategy 1: Review economic development proposals and projects for consistency with local comprehensive plans and county hazard mitigation plans.
 - ii. Strategy 2: Avoid funding development in floodplains.
- f. OBJECTIVE F: Support emergency services within the region.
 - i. Strategy 1: Secure funding for needed improvements to emergency services and facilities.
 - ii. Strategy 2: Conduct studies of emergency services systems to look for capacity, equipment, training, personnel, and fiscal solvency issues and solutions.
 - iii. Strategy 3: Support the development of local training facilities and services for emergency providers.
- g. OBJECTIVE G: Support efforts to improve the resiliency of our power grid and natural gas infrastructure.
- h. OBJECTIVE H: Measure resilience using EDA supplied metrics.

IMPLEMENTATION AND ACTION PLAN

The implementation or action plan identifies the goals, objectives, performance measures, and implementation partners necessary for guiding economic development initiatives for the next five years. The purpose of the action plan is to provide a "roadmap" for targeting future economic development investments throughout the Region, thereby launching the CEDS into action. Each of the goals and objectives within the action plan addresses one or more of the key issues facing future economic development within the Region. Thus, the action plan will be utilized to steer the selection of future economic development projects and investments as they are implemented to address critical barriers to regional economic vitality. Each goal and objective is associated with one or more performance measures in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan.

GOAL 1: SEEK EXPANSION OF THE REGIONAL ECONOMY THROUGH STRATEGIC, DIVERSIFIED JOB GROWTH

Objective	Strategy	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
OBJECTIVE A: Strategically invest in high-growth, high-value sectors and continue the gradual movement of the Region to a more technology-related, diversified economy.	<u>Strategy 1:</u> Continue to support manufacturing businesses in international trade and government contracting.	• Level of increase in job diversification identified by tracking change of economic indicators by job sector	• Workforce Development • Economic Development Partners • Private Businesses, Employers, & Investors
	<u>Strategy 2:</u> Continually research key business and demographic trends to identify new economic development opportunities.	• Amount of research • Number of CEDS amendments made in response	• Workforce Development • Economic Development Partners • Economic Development Administration (EDA) • Private Businesses, Employers, & Investors
	<u>Strategy 3:</u> Support the development, inventorying and marketing of viable sites, buildings, and business parks to regional and national businesses and investors.	• Number of inventories • Number of sites identified and marketed	• Economic Development Partners • Private Businesses, Employers, & Investors
	<u>Strategy 4:</u> Promote business opportunities through Keystone Opportunity Zones (KOZs) and Keystone Innovation Zones (KIZs).	• Official approval of the KOZ and KIZ • Number of new businesses in the KOZs and KIZs	• Economic Development Partners • Private Businesses, Employers, & Investors • PA Department of Community & Economic Development (PaDCED)

Objective	Strategy	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
	<i>Strategy 5:</i> Utilize our full economic development toolkit and those of our economic development partners in supporting the growth of strategic businesses and industries.	• Number of economic development packages assembled • Number of jobs created • Increases in gross domestic product, wages, tax base, and other wealth metrics	• Economic Development Partners • Private Businesses, Employers, & Investors • Local banks • EDA • Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) • PaDCED • Other state and federal funders • Chambers of Commerce
	<i>Strategy 6:</i> Identify proven economic strategies from other regions with a similar geographic, economic, or demographic makeup and adapt them for use in the Southern Alleghenies Region.	• Regular assessments of other regions and their CEDS. • Number of CEDS amendments made in response	• Economic Development Partners • Other Economic Development Districts (EDDs) • EDA • National Association of Development Organizations (NADO)
	<i>Strategy 7:</i> Participate in regional partnerships designed to promote our regional labor shed, data, and assets to enhance the chances of attracting new outside investment into the Region.	• Number of collaborations • Number of promotions assembled	• Workforce Development Board • Economic Development Partners • Chambers of Commerce • Counties and municipalities • Convention and Visitor Bureaus • Private Businesses, Employers, & Investors
OBJECTIVE B: Create an entrepreneurial environment to support start-up enterprises and strengthen existing businesses.	<i>Strategy 1:</i> Support university-based entrepreneurship programs and faculty initiated efforts in new small business development and research & development.	• Number of new small businesses created • Number of students involved in entrepreneurship programs • Amount of university/college small business development projects	• Local Colleges & Universities • Economic Development Partners • Chambers of Commerce • Private Businesses, Employers, & Investors

Objective	Strategy	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
	<u>Strategy 2:</u> Support business incubators and shared workspace facilities.	• Number of businesses incubators and shared workspace facilities • Number of businesses operating in such facilities	• Local Colleges & Universities • Chambers of Commerce • Private Businesses, Employers, & Investors • Economic Development Partners
	<u>Strategy 3:</u> Support entrepreneurial ecosystems built on identifying innovative, entrepreneurial individuals and connecting them with coaches/mentors who will connect them with resources and training to facilitate their success (e.g. Startup Alleghenies).	• Number of new coach/mentor relationships • Number of new businesses	• Economic Development Partners • Local Colleges & Universities • Private Businesses, Employers, & Investors • Business Incubators
	<u>Strategy 4:</u> Provide assistance to small and emerging businesses to develop and deploy marketing strategies to increase their market reach.	• Number of businesses with marketing assistance • Number of businesses with increased sales	• Economic Development Partners • Chambers of Commerce • Private Businesses, Employers, & Investors • Business Incubators

Objective	Strategy	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
	<u>Strategy 5:</u> Support the Alleghenies Investment Fund: A group of private investors that will invest in new and emerging business in the Region and provide mentoring assistance to those businesses.	• Number of businesses assisted by the Investment Fund • Number of businesses mentored	• Economic Development Partners • Private Businesses, Employers, & Investors
	<u>Strategy 6:</u> Foster collaboration between regional businesses through workshops, focus groups, publications, and other methods of knowledge sharing.	• Number of collaboration efforts	• Economic Development Partners • Chambers of Commerce • Private Businesses, Employers, & Investors
	<u>Strategy 7:</u> Share business success stories in the Region to encourage entrepreneurship.	• Number of stories shared via newsletters and social media	• Economic Development Partners • Chambers of Commerce • Private Businesses, Employers, & Investors • Private lenders
OBJECTIVE C: Expand the tourism visitation potential for the Region and build recreational assets for tourists and residents alike as part of greater talent attraction.	<u>Strategy 1:</u> Identify resources to continue promoting the Region as “The Alleghenies.”	• Net increase in tourist visits and expenditures	• Recreation Authorities • Convention & Visitor Bureaus • Chambers of Commerce • State government

Objective	Strategy	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
	<i>Strategy 2:</i> Implement strategies recommended in <i>Alleghenies Outdoors: Moving the Recreation Economy Forward</i> to support and expand our outdoor recreation economy.	• Number of recommendations implemented	• Convention & Visitors Bureaus • Economic Development Partners • Private Businesses, Employers, & Investors • Recreational authorities • Counties and Municipalities • PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources (PaDCNR)
	<i>Strategy 3:</i> Identify and implement additional, long-term funding solutions for maintaining, improving, and expanding the Region's existing outdoor infrastructure.	• Number of projects assembled for funding and/or construction	• Economic Development Partners • Convention & Visitors Bureaus • Private Businesses, Employers, & Investors • Recreational authorities • Counties and Municipalities • PaDCNR • PaDCED • PennDOT • ARC • Private foundations and other state and federal funders
	<i>Strategy 4:</i> Comprehensively update the <i>Southern Alleghenies Greenways Plan</i> .	• Completed greenways plan	• County Planning Commissions • Economic Development Partners • Convention & Visitors Bureaus • Counties and Municipalities • PaDCNR • PaDCED • PennDOT • ARC
	<i>Strategy 5:</i> Continue and grow the SAP&DC greenways mini-grants program with the support of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PaDCNR).	• Number of projects funded • Total amount of funding going towards such projects	• County Planning Commissions • Southern Alleghenies Rural Planning Organization committees (SARPO) • PaDCNR • Counties and Municipalities • Recreational Authorities

Objective	Strategy	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
	<i>Strategy 6:</i> Create and maintain a list of candidate outdoor recreation, trail, parks, recreation, and similar projects. Officially adopt the list into this plan, the regional greenways plan, and others to build coordination and maximize the chances of grant funding through consistency with adopted planning efforts.	• List created and annually updated	• PaDCNR • Counties and Municipalities • SARPO committees • County Planning Commissions • Convention & Visitors Bureaus • Recreational authorities • Private Businesses, Employers, & Investors
	<i>Strategy 7:</i> Improve the quality and quantity of SAP&DC's outdoor recreation data – including but not limited to GIS assets, visitor usage statistics, and economic impact figures.	• Amount of GIS data and support provided	• Counties and Municipalities • County Planning Commissions • PennDOT • Recreational authorities • Convention & Visitors Bureaus • Economic Development Partners • State government
	<i>Strategy 8:</i> Support efforts to stage events that drive engagement with regional tourism and outdoor recreation with locals and visitors alike.	• Number of events staged	• Convention & Visitors Bureaus • Chambers of Commerce • Counties and Municipalities • Recreational authorities • Local organizations • Private Businesses, Employers, & Investors
OBJECTIVE D: Support the growth of local agriculture-related businesses.	<i>Strategy 1:</i> Support the growth of farmer's markets and community-supported agriculture (CSA).	• Number of farmer markers and CSA's	• County Conservation Districts • Penn State Cooperative Extension • Private Businesses & Farmers • Local organizations

Objective	Strategy	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
	<i>Strategy 2:</i> Support the diversification of agricultural crops and products.	• USDA Census of Agriculture	• County Conservation Districts • Penn State Cooperative Extension • Private Businesses & Farmers
	<i>Strategy 3:</i> Encourage direct-to-market sale of locally produced agricultural products.	• Number of outlets for such products	• Penn State Cooperative Extension • Private Businesses & Farmers • County Conservation Districts
	<i>Strategy 4:</i> Provide local co-ops with local outlets for local products.	• Number of such co-ops.	• Private Businesses & Farmers • Co-ops
	<i>Strategy 5:</i> Support agricultural training at local career and technology centers and other schools.	• Number of students	• Local school districts • Career and technology centers • Penn State University • Penn State Cooperative Extension
	<i>Strategy 6:</i> Invest in the Region's expanding agricultural sector through the new <i>Pennsylvania Agricultural Innovation Grant Program</i> , grant applications, expansions of regional and local loan programs. Capital and financing expertise should be strategically targeted towards technological advances and agribusinesses throughout the production chain. Assistance with permitting issues should be provided where feasible.	• Number of loans issued • Number of grants applied for • Amount of funds obtained	• State government • Private banks • Local farmers • Economic Development Partners • County Conservation Districts • Private Businesses, Employers, & Investors
	<i>Strategy 7:</i> Strengthen county clean and green and other preservation programs for prime agricultural lands.	• Amount of land in agricultural preservation programs	• County Conservation Districts • Counties and Municipalities • Farmers
	<i>Strategy 8:</i> Support the establishment of kitchen incubators for local products.	• Number of incubators	• Private businesses & entrepreneurs • Local organizations • Local farmers

Objective	Strategy	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
	<i>Strategy 9:</i> Consider and support the development of an agricultural labor placement agency to connect farmers with skilled permanent and temporary labor	Workers placed	- Economic development partners - SAWDB - Placement agencies, including CareerLink - Local farm businesses
OBJECTIVE E: Work towards measuring economic growth in terms of gross domestic product, wage growth, tax base growth, and other wealth metrics instead of employment, due to our limited workforce.		Gross domestic product, wage growth, tax base growth, and other wealth metrics	- Economic Development Partners - EDA and other data providers
OBJECTIVE F: Grow and promote economic strength by implementing cost efficiencies through energy conservation and controlling price volatility of energy commodities.	<i>Strategy 1:</i> Utilize Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) programs to implement energy efficiency within high-growth, high-value sectors. These include agriculture, durable goods manufacturing, non-durable goods manufacturing, transportation, warehousing, construction, business services, healthcare, and education.	- The number of participating counties within the region with active C-PACE programs - The number of C-PACE projects implemented within the region - The number of annual events to promote C-PACE projects within the region	- County Commissioners - Engineering Firms - Lenders and other Funding sources - Contractors

Objective	Strategy	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
	<u>Strategy 2</u> : Control energy commodity price volatility by implementing on-site, localized, distributed energy resources such as solar arrays, wind turbines, battery storage, microgrid applications and other sustainable technologies that allow for predictable energy costs and less dependence upon regional electrical grid and energy distribution channels.	• The total kilowattage of on-site, localized, distributed generation and storage capacity installed within the region • The creation of educational programs for municipalities focused upon creating fair and favorable ordinance language that promotes new generation.	• Municipalities • Energy developers • Local organizations

GOAL 2: DEVELOP OUR WORKFORCE TO MEET THE NEEDS OF OUR EMPLOYERS

Objective	Strategy	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
OBJECTIVE A: Support and promote the region's public workforce system, the Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Board (SAWDB) and its network of PA CareerLink® sites.	<u>Strategy 1:</u> Identify and engage with a diverse array of key stakeholders within the public workforce system to gather input and share updates impacting regional workforce development efforts through advisory committees, quarterly round tables, and other means of collaboration.	• Number rereferrals made to PA CareerLink® sites • Number of stakeholders engaged. • Diversity of stakeholders • Number of collaborative efforts	• Workforce Development Board • PA CareerLink® • Economic Development Partners • Chambers of Commerce • Private Businesses, Employers, and Investors • Local School Districts, Colleges and Universities
OBJECTIVE B: Expand and educate students and job seekers to the many training options that lead to gainful employment in the region.	<u>Strategy 1:</u> Conduct needs assessments and market research to determine how best to conduct and promote training programs to meet the needs of local employers and potential job seekers.	• Number of assessments and other research products • Number of job seekers trained • Number of job openings filled	• Local School Districts, Colleges and Universities • Career & Technology Centers • Private Businesses & Employers, and Investors • Chambers of Commerce. • Economic Development Partners
	<u>Strategy 2:</u> Identify and target demographics in need of career training within the region to improve the outreach and impact of training programs.	• Amount of research • Enrollment rate of target demographics in training programs	• Workforce Development Board • Career & Technology Centers • Economic Development Partners • Private Businesses, Employers, and Investors • Local School Districts, Colleges and Universities

Objective	Strategy	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
OBJECTIVE C: Support opportunities for increased communication and collaboration between the employer community and the Region's educators to help ensure that employer needs and educational offerings are aligned.	<i>Strategy 1:</i> Establish a collaborative framework between the region's educators and employers that will allow both to share information with one another as well as coordinate educational and training offerings to meet current employment needs.	• Number of collaborations • Number of open jobs • Number of training programs	• Workforce Development Board • Private Businesses, Employers, and Investors • Local School Districts, Colleges and Universities • Career & Technology Centers
OBJECTIVE D: Support programs that provide education, workforce preparedness training and hands-on learning for young adults with significant barriers to employment.	<i>Strategy 1:</i> Conduct needs assessments to identify the range of barriers which prevent job seekers from obtaining and maintaining employment and develop specific strategies to address these areas.	• Number of assessments completed • Number of job seekers engaged by programs	• Workforce Development Board • Private Businesses, Employers, and Investors • Local School Districts, Colleges and Universities • Career & Technology Centers • PA CareerLink®
	<i>Strategy 2:</i> Identify potential partnerships with local organizations and businesses throughout the region to reduce barriers to employment.	• Number of partnerships	• Private Businesses, Employers, and Investors • Workforce Development Board
OBJECTIVE E: Support expansion and enhancement of work-based opportunities for job seekers, especially youth.	<i>Strategy 1:</i> Complete a needs-based analysis of local labor market trends to identify both in-demand skillsets and high-demand employment sectors.	• Amount of research	• Workforce Development Board • Private Businesses & Employers • PA CareerLink® • Local School Districts • Career & Technology Centers

Objective	Strategy	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
	<i>Strategy 2:</i> Work to establish internships, apprenticeships, cooperative education and job-shadowing programs to connect jobseekers with employment opportunities.	• Number of programs established • Number of jobseekers trained such programs	• Workforce Development Board • Private Businesses, Employers, and Investors • Local School Districts, Colleges and Universities • Local Organizations • Career & Technology Centers • PA CareerLink®
OBJECTIVE F: Support the Region's career and technology education centers and help them to secure funding for needed expansions of programs and facilities, including a focus on 'green jobs' and emerging regional needs		• Number of projects supported • Number of new training programs implemented	• Career & Technology Centers • EDA • ARC • Other state and federal funders
OBJECTIVE G: Our workforce is not able to support enough high wage, white-collar jobs in management, professional services, finance, insurance, legal services, and information sciences. Entry into these fields should be encouraged and recruited through local universities, who need support.		• Number of open positions in such fields	• Local universities • Local employers and businesses • Workforce Development Board • Chambers of Commerce
OBJECTIVE H: Work to make our communities and workplaces more welcoming to all people, including those from outside of the Southern Alleghenies Region.	<i>Strategy 1:</i> Support newcomers as they adapt to life in our region.	• Number of programs to welcome and acclimate newcomers to our region • Immigration rates	• Economic Development Partners • Chambers of Commerce • Private Businesses, Employers, & Investors • Convention & Visitor Bureaus

Objective	Strategy	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
	<u>Strategy 2:</u> Promote the area as welcoming.	• Number of efforts to promote the region as welcoming	• Economic Development Partners • Chambers of Commerce • Private Businesses, Employers, & Investors • Convention & Visitors Bureaus
OBJECTIVE I: Support the expansion and affordability of childcare in the region.	<u>Strategy 1:</u> Encourage the establishment of new childcare centers in both traditional forms and alternative models such as cooperatives	• Decrease in waiting times at local daycares • Expansion of daycare businesses across the region, especially in underserved areas	• Local daycare businesses • Workforce Development Board • Private Businesses, Employers, & Investors • State and federal funders
	<u>Strategy 2:</u> Work to reform land use ordinances to ensure childcare centers can be safely located in strategic locations convenient to working families	• Number of new areas serviced • Number of new childcare locations established	• Local daycare businesses • Workforce Development Board • Private Businesses, Employers, & Investors • State and federal funders
	<u>Strategy 3:</u> Encourage the provision of on-site daycare for larger employers, where feasible.	• Number of such daycares established	• Employers • Local daycare businesses • Economic development partners • Chambers of Commerce

GOAL 3: MAINTAIN AND MODERNIZE INFRASTRUCTURE TO MAKE THE REGION MORE COMPETITIVE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

Objective	Strategy	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
OBJECTIVE A: Improve the transportation network to tie the Region together and make the Region more accessible to other markets.	<u>Strategy 1:</u> Complete priority projects on the region's Transportation Improvements Program and/or the Appalachian Development Highway System.	• Number of completed projects	• Southern Alleghenies Rural Planning Organization (RPO) • Altoona and Johnstown Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) • Counties and Municipalities • PennDOT • ARC
	<u>Strategy 2:</u> Work to expand public transportation and similar services to and within the region, including call and ride services and Amtrak.	• Amount of public transit service in the region, especially in rural areas	• Southern Alleghenies RPO • Altoona and Johnstown MPOs • Counties and Municipalities • PennDOT • Amtrak • Local Transit Providers
	<u>Strategy 3:</u> Work to improve the quality and quantity of pedestrian infrastructure across the region, including increased sidewalk coverage, crosswalks, and bike lanes where they will be used and are feasible.	• Amount of sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes, and trails built	• Economic Development Partners • County Planning Commissions • Counties and Municipalities • PennDOT and other state funders • Southern Alleghenies RPO • Altoona and Johnstown MPOs • Private businesses, employers, and investors
	<u>Strategy 4:</u> Aggressively pursue Local Access Road (LAR) applications through the Appalachian Regional Commission where such projects will impact the regional economy and employment.	• Number of LAR projects • Number of jobs created by such projects	• ARC • PennDOT • Private businesses, employers, and investors • Counties and Municipalities • Economic development partners

Objective	Strategy	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
	<i>Strategy 5:</i> Support and encourage the use of the region's critical service airports.	• Use of critical service airports	• Private businesses, employers, and investors • Airport authorities • Chambers of Commerce • Economic Development Partners
OBJECTIVE B: Upgrade water/sewer infrastructure to accommodate new and modern growth.	<i>Strategy 1:</i> Identify and secure funding to upgrade sewer, water, and stormwater infrastructure as appropriate at developable sites and neighborhoods.	• Number of projects begun or completed • Amount of funding behind such projects	• Municipal Authorities • Counties and Municipalities • ARC; EDA; PA Infrastructure Investment Authority (PennVEST); USDA; PA Emergency Management Agency (PEMA); US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE); PaDCED and other state and federal funders and lenders
	<i>Strategy 2:</i> Work with communities to identify critical water, sewer, and stormwater infrastructure that needs repair and replacement, and support funding applications.	• Number of projects begun or completed • Amount of funding behind such projects	• Municipal Authorities • Counties and Municipalities • ARC, EDA, PennVEST, USDA, PEMA, USACE, PaDCED and other state and federal funders and lenders
OBJECTIVE C: Upgrade and expand telecommunications service in the region.	<i>Strategy 1:</i> Promote broadband deployment projects that expand reliable, high-speed internet and cell service to unserved and underserved communities.	• Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority (PBDA) data on percentage of structures with adequate broadband service	• Alleghenies Broadband Inc. • Counties and Municipalities • Service providers • PBDA • ARC
	<i>Strategy 2:</i> Support broadband infrastructure assessments to identify unserved and underserved areas and develop strategies.	• Number of assessments	• Alleghenies Broadband Inc. • Counties and Municipalities • Service providers • PBDA
OBJECTIVE D: Support the appropriate siting of large and small scale energy generation		• Efforts aided with planning recommendations	• Counties and Municipalities • County Planning Commissions • Energy developers

GOAL 4: ADAPT COMMUNITIES TO BE MORE ATTRACTIVE AS PLACES TO LIVE AND WORK.

Objective	Strategy	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
OBJECTIVE A: Aggressively encourage the production of new housing and the rehabilitation of existing housing to improve the region's housing stock at all price points and in a variety of formats.	<u>Strategy 1:</u> Renew efforts to implement the <i>Southern Alleghenies Recovery & Resilience Plan</i> and <i>Alleghenies Ahead on Housing</i> .	• Number of recommendations implemented • Number of housing units completed or rehabilitated • Number of types of housing units completed or rehabilitated	• Private developers • Counties and Municipalities • County Planning Commissions • Housing task forces • Economic Development Partners • Chambers of Commerce
	<u>Strategy 2:</u> Alleghenies Ahead on Housing proposed several strategies and 13 tools for incentivizing the development and rehabilitation of new and modern forms of housing for all household budgets. These tools should be implemented where helpful and feasible.	• Number of municipalities using these tools • Number of housing units completed or rehabilitated • Number of types of housing completed or rehabilitated	• Private developers • Counties and Municipalities • County Planning Commissions • Housing task forces • Economic Development Partners • Chambers of Commerce
	<u>Strategy 3:</u> Support the building of new market rate housing. Efforts should be focused on housing types in demand but not commonly found in our communities.	• Number of housing units completed or rehabilitated • Number of types of housing units completed or rehabilitated	• Private developers • Counties and Municipalities • County Planning Commissions • Housing task forces • Economic Development Partners • Chambers of Commerce
	<u>Strategy 4:</u> Maintain the Regional Housing Taskforce as a means of guiding county and local housing efforts and sharing struggles and success stories.	• Number of meetings	• Counties and Municipalities • Private developers • County Planning Commissions • Economic Development Partners • Local housing authorities and advocacy groups

Objective	Strategy	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
	<i>Strategy 5:</i> Use tax-credit financing to finance new housing construction where possible.	• Number of tax credit projects initiated	• Private developers and tax credit developers • Economic Development Partners • State government • Counties, Municipalities, and Redevelopment Authorities • County Planning Commissions
OBJECTIVE B: Address vacant, abandoned, deteriorated, or otherwise blighted properties	<i>Strategy 1:</i> Use resources such as the Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania, <i>Alleghenies Ahead on Housing</i> , and the <i>Southern Alleghenies Recovery & Resilience Plan</i> to identify and implement proven strategies for addressing blight.	• Amount and value of demolitions and successful rehabilitations	• Counties, Municipalities, and Redevelopment Authorities • Economic Development Partners • US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) • PaDCED and other branches of state government • Land banks • Private developers and businesses
OBJECTIVE C: Attract businesses, industries, and professionals to downtown areas.	<i>Strategy 1:</i> Support the development of additional speculative office and manufacturing spaces. Aid in marketing these spaces	• Increase the amount of space available where needed • Amount of space marketed	• Economic Development Partners • Downtown advocacy organizations • Counties and Municipalities • Private businesses, employers, and investors
	<i>Strategy 2:</i> Utilize social media platforms to engage, attract, and communicate with young professionals and other talent.	• Number of such efforts • Amount of talent engaged	• Economic Development Partners • Chambers of Commerce
OBJECTIVE D: Retain and recruit working-aged people to stay in and/or migrate to the Region, especially those from diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds.	<i>Strategy 1:</i> Promote networking organizations and socialization opportunities for young professionals.	• Number of such organizations operating in the region	• Economic Development Partners • Chambers of Commerce • Private Businesses, Employers, and Investors

Objective	Strategy	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
	<i>Strategy 2:</i> Develop increased opportunities for employment for younger, working-aged persons.	• Improvements in unemployment data	• Workforce Development Board • Private Businesses, Employers, and Investors • Economic Development Partners • Chambers of Commerce
	<i>Strategy 3:</i> Develop housing types in demand by younger and working aged professionals.	• Number of such housing units developed	• Private developers • Counties, Municipalities, and Redevelopment Authorities • Economic Development Partners • Housing Task Forces
	<i>Strategy 4:</i> Promote entertainment options that engage younger and working aged professionals.	• Number of such options	• Economic Development Partners • Convention & Visitor Bureaus • Chambers of Commerce • Private businesses, Employers, and Investors • Local Universities
OBJECTIVE E: Invest in communities and work to promote and enhance their assets.	<i>Strategy 1:</i> Support the development of multi-unit, market-rate, higher density residential projects in downtown areas for both renters and buyers.	• Number of such units built	• Counties and Municipalities • County Planning Commissions • Housing developers • Private Businesses, Employers, and Investors • Housing Taskforces • Economic Development Partners
	<i>Strategy 2:</i> Reuse historic and architecturally significant structures for housing, businesses, entertainment, and cultural uses whenever feasible.	• Number of structures reused or renovated for new use	• Counties, Municipalities, and Redevelopment Authorities • Private Developers • Economic Development Partners • Housing Taskforces

Objective	Strategy	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
	<u>Strategy 3:</u> Encourage mixed-use commercial/residential development in pedestrian-oriented commercial districts.	• Number of developments • Occupancy rate of new developments	• Counties and Municipalities • Private Developers • Economic Development Partners • County Planning Commissions • Housing Taskforces
	<u>Strategy 4:</u> Support cultural, arts, and historical programming in downtown areas.	• Number of programs hosted	• Convention & Visitors Bureaus • Downtown Organizations and Advocacy groups • Private Businesses
	<u>Strategy 5:</u> Revitalize or demolish/rebuild blighted properties to attract people and new business.	• Number of reused properties • Number of demolitions	• Counties and Municipalities • Private Developers • Economic Development Partners • Redevelopment Authorities • EDA, PaDCED, and other state and federal funders
	<u>Strategy 6:</u> Support the implementation of active transportation plans and policies.	• Plan initiatives initiated and completed	• Southern Alleghenies RPO • Altoona and Johnstown MPOs • PennDOT • PaDCNR • County Planning Commissions • Economic Development Partners • Counties and Municipalities • Recreational Authorities • Private Businesses, Employers, and Investors

Objective	Strategy	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
	<i>Strategy 7:</i> Identify and help to facilitate the improvement and creation of civic spaces that enhance safety, visual appeal, and overall quality of life for the region's businesses and residents.	• Number of projects initiated and completed	• Counties, Municipalities, and Redevelopment Authorities • Economic Development Partners • State and Federal Funders • Recreational Authorities • Private Businesses, Employers, and Investors
OBJECTIVE F: Provide services and amenities intended to attract retired (or near retired) households.	<i>Strategy 1:</i> Provide more choice in housing options for retired individuals or empty nesters, especially near college campuses, healthcare facilities, walkable shopping districts, open space amenities, and cultural venues.	• Number of senior housing options built as specified	• Counties and Municipalities • Private Developers and Tax Credit Developers
OBJECTIVE G: Build local leadership capacity.	<i>Strategy 1:</i> Promote local government collaboration with state and federal agencies (e.g. PennDOT Connects, Local Technical Assistance Program).	• Increased collaboration • Increased attendance at LTAP courses	• County and Local Governments • Southern Alleghenies RPO • Altoona and Johnstown MPOs • PennDOT
	<i>Strategy 2:</i> Continue to support local governments with asset mapping and geographic information system services.	• Amount of GIS support provided to local governments	• County and Local Governments • Municipal and Local Government Authorities • PennDOT and other state GIS providers/users
	<i>Strategy 3:</i> Promote local government coordination between industry, business, and economic development organizations.	• Amount of increased coordination between organizations	• County and Local Governments • Private Businesses, Employers, and Investors • Economic Development Partners • Chambers of Commerce

Objective	Strategy	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
	<u>Strategy 4:</u> Enhance the quality of local planning, build regional collaboration, aid county planning commissions, and minimize costs by updating <i>Alleghenies Ahead</i> as a six-county regional effort if possible.	• Updating <i>Alleghenies Ahead</i>	• Counties and Municipalities • County Planning Commissions • PaDCED • PennDOT • ARC
	<u>Strategy 5:</u> Where feasible and where it will result in improved quality, capacity, economy of scale, consistency, and efficiency, encourage the consolidation and regionalization of development reviews (e.g., subdivision and land development reviews), likely at the county level.	• Number of intermunicipal agreements signed • Average review times • Number of new consolidated ordinances enacted	• County planning commissions • Chambers of commerce • Civil engineering firms • Developers • Municipalities

GOAL 5: INVEST IN AREAS THAT INFLUENCE THE HEALTH AND WELL BEING OF THE COMMUNITY WHILE RAISING AWARENESS OF HEALTH OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL RESIDENTS.

Objective	Strategy	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
OBJECTIVE A: Provide support to the healthcare industry to establish and maintain the highest possible level of medical care by extending services to underserved populations.	<u>Strategy 1:</u> Support the expansion of rural health services throughout the region, especially where needs are unmet (e.g., maternal delivery care).	• Number of rural health provider expansions	• Private Businesses, Employers, and Investors • Healthcare Providers • Economic Development Partners • County Planning Commissions • ARC and other State and Federal Funders
	<u>Strategy 2:</u> Explore the unmet health needs of the region's population, particularly outside the core areas.	• Amount of research	• Local Colleges and Universities • Healthcare Providers • Counties, Municipalities, and their Authorities • State Government
	<u>Strategy 3:</u> Provide rural health screening opportunities for those residents that are unable to reach clinics.	• Increased rural health screenings	• Private Businesses, Employers, and Investors • Health Care Providers
OBJECTIVE B: Work to improve the region's social determinants of health to help residents live healthier lives and reduce the demand on healthcare infrastructure.	<u>Strategy 1:</u> Identify and address systemic barriers that prevent the region's population from accessing safe, healthy, and affordable food.	• Amount of research and barriers identified	• Counties and Municipalities • Local Colleges and Universities • Healthcare Providers • Local Advocacy Groups • County Conservation Districts • Food Banks • Social Service Agencies
	<u>Strategy 2:</u> Work to improve regional access to and awareness of mental health resources both locally and remotely.	• Number of people enrolled in mental health services	• Healthcare and Mental Healthcare Providers • ARC • Private Businesses & Employers • Workforce Development Board
	<u>Strategy 3:</u> Support active lifestyles in the community through the continuation and expansion of programs like WalkWorks and Let's Move.	• Route established • Groups active	• County planning commissions • Private sponsors • Municipalities

Objective	Strategy	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
OBJECTIVE C: Collaborate with employers to address employee health needs.	<u>Strategy 1:</u> Promote employee use of Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs).	• Number of employees enrolled in an EAP	• Employers • Insurers • Private Businesses and Employers
	<u>Strategy 2:</u> Establish workplace wellness committees.	• Number workplace wellness committees	• Employers • Insurers
	<u>Strategy 3:</u> Provide a model for employers to undertake workplace wellness assessments.	• Provision of a model	• Employers • Insurers
OBJECTIVE D: Work to address substance abuse issues, on a multi-county regional basis if prudent.	<u>Strategy 1:</u> Identify the specific drug problems in the community and address them through research-based prevention programs.	• Research • Number of prevention programs established	• County and Local Governments and Authorities • Healthcare Providers • Drug and Alcohol Advocacy Organizations • ARC INSPIRE • Employers
	<u>Strategy 2:</u> Support programs and applications for programs that will treat individuals recovering from substance abuse, provide them with housing, and return them to the workforce.	• Number of people enrolled in such programs	• County and Local Governments and Authorities • Healthcare Providers • Drug and Alcohol Advocacy Organizations • ARC INSPIRE • Employers

GOAL 6: STRIVE FOR AND MEASURE EQUITY IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF INVESTMENTS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES.

Objective	Strategy	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
OBJECTIVE A: Track concentrations of minority populations and poverty within the region.	<u>Strategy 1:</u> Using U.S. Census Bureau and PennDOT Environmental Justice data, SAP&DC will track concentrations of minority populations and poverty annually.	• Amount of research	• U.S. Census Bureau • PennDOT • Southern Alleghenies RPO • Altoona and Johnstown MPOs
	<u>Strategy 2:</u> Increase outreach to identified communities to better understand and address their specific needs through regional development.	• Amount of community outreach	• Counties and Municipalities • Economic Development Partners • Local Civic Organizations
OBJECTIVE B: Target economic development resources, when feasible and prudent, to concentrations of minority populations and poverty.	<u>Strategy 1:</u> SAP&DC will consider the relevant data in building economic development strategies and projects.	• Number of projects targeting identified communities	• Counties and Municipalities • Economic Development Partners • Local Civic Organizations • Private Businesses, Employers, and Investors • ARC, EDA, PaDCED, and other State and Federal Funders
	<u>Strategy 2:</u> SAP&DC will track and report on investments in these communities and their impacts.	• Amount of research	• Local Civic Organizations • ARC, EDA, PaDCED, and other State and Federal Funders • Economic Development Partners • Private Businesses, Employers, and Investors • Counties and Municipalities
OBJECTIVE C: SAP&DC will continue to identify and track additional communities that have been left behind by economic development efforts.		• Amount of research	• Local Civic Organizations • Economic Development Partners • Private Businesses, Employers, and Investors • Counties and Municipalities

GOAL 7: BUILD RESILIENCE INTO THE REGIONAL ECONOMY

Objective	Strategy	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
OBJECTIVE A: The Southern Alleghenies Recovery & Resilience Plan recommended that the region focus on addressing the following four areas of concern to improve economic resilience: workforce retention and attraction, quality of place, attracting remote workers, and housing development and blight reduction.	<u>Strategy 1:</u> Continue to implement the <i>Southern Alleghenies Recovery & Resilience Plan</i> .	• Number of initiatives implemented	• Counties and Municipalities • County Planning Commissions • Economic Development Partners • Chambers of Commerce • Convention & Visitors Bureaus • Private Businesses, Employers, and Investors • Housing Task Forces • Workforce Development Board
OBJECTIVE B: Establish information networks for business disaster planning.	<u>Strategy 1:</u> Work with our economic development corporations and chambers of commerce to build their capacity to serve as information distribution centers during an economic loss or disaster.	• Number of collaborations	• Economic Development Partners • Chambers of Commerce • Private Businesses, Employers, and Investors
	<u>Strategy 2:</u> Build coordinating bodies of employers through our economic development corporations and chambers of commerce.	• Number of collaborations	• Economic Development Partners • Chambers of Commerce • Private Businesses, Employers, and Investors
OBJECTIVE C: Promote business continuity and preparedness planning efforts to help our entrepreneurs become more resilient.	<u>Strategy 1:</u> Work with our economic development corporations and chambers of commerce to promote and facilitate business and supply chain continuity planning in the face of economic downturns or disasters.	• Number of collaborations	• Economic Development Partners • Chambers of Commerce • Private Businesses, Employers, and Investors
OBJECTIVE D: Implement county hazard mitigation plans.	<u>Strategy 1:</u> Support and coordinate county hazard mitigation planning efforts.	• Support and collaboration efforts	• Counties and Municipalities • County Planning Commissions • PEMA

Objective	Strategy	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
	<u>Strategy 2:</u> Track, review, and implement each county's hazard mitigation plan.	• Eliminating any economic development initiatives that contradict a county plan • Support and collaboration efforts	• Counties and Municipalities • County Planning Commissions • PEMA • Economic Development Partners
	<u>Strategy 3:</u> Support grant applications and funding to implement county disaster mitigation planning.	• Number of projects and grant applications	• Counties and Municipalities • County Planning Commissions • PEMA, ARC, EDA, PaDCED, PennVEST, USDA, USACE, and other state and federal funders and lenders • Emergency Service Providers
OBJECTIVE E: Protect critical infrastructure and build disaster-resistant future development.	<u>Strategy 1:</u> Review economic development proposals and projects for consistency with local comprehensive plans and county hazard mitigation plans.	• Number of proposals reviewed	• Counties and Municipalities • County Planning Commissions
	<u>Strategy 2:</u> Avoid funding development in floodplains.	• Avoid developments in floodplains	• Counties and Municipalities • County Planning Commissions • Economic Development Partners
OBJECTIVE F: Support emergency services within the region.	<u>Strategy 1:</u> Secure funding for needed improvements to emergency services and facilities.	• Amount of funding secured • Number of applications submitted	• ARC, EDA, PennVEST, USDA, PEMA, USACE, PaDCED, and other State and Federal Funders and Lenders • Counties and Municipalities • Emergency Service Providers

Objective	Strategy	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
	<u>Strategy 2:</u> Conduct studies of emergency services systems to look for capacity, equipment, training, personnel, and fiscal solvency issues and solutions.	• Number of studies	• Emergency service providers • Municipalities • PaDCED • PEMA/FEMA • PA Fire Commissioner • County planning commissions • County emergency management agencies
	<u>Strategy 3:</u> Support the development of local training facilities and services for emergency providers.	• Number of training facilities built • Number of services established	• Emergency service providers • Municipalities • PEMA/FEMA • PA Fire Commissioner • County emergency management agencies
OBJECTIVE G: Support efforts to improve the resiliency of our power grid and natural gas infrastructure.		• Number of efforts supported	• Local Utilities and Co-ops • ARC, EDA, PennVEST, USDA, PEMA, USACE, PaDCED, and other State and Federal Funders and Lenders • Economic Development Partners • Counties and Municipalities
OBJECTIVE H: Measure resilience using EDA supplied metrics.		• Metrics tracked	• EDA