



AREA 15

REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

MAHASKA • KEOKUK • WAPELLO
JEFFERSON • DAVIS • VAN BUREN

PLANNING FOR BETTER COMMUNITIES

2023-2028

AREA 15 PLANNING COMMISSION

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The 2023-2028 Comprehensive Economic
Development Strategy (CEDS) is a planning guide
for the Area 15 region of Iowa

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Area15RPC.com



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Area 15 Regional Planning Commission's 2023-2028 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) provides the region's economic developers, cities and counties, and industry members a framework to guide economic growth in the region.

The CEDS plan is developed by analyzing the region's current economic and demographic conditions, strengths, and weaknesses. This information is used to develop goals and objectives to address the needs of the region by Area 15 Regional Planning Commission its partners in economic development. From this work the following goals were generated by the CEDS strategic committee for the next five years:

Goal #1: Housing and Neighborhoods

Increase and expand housing stock options to all income levels, develop adequate workforce housing, make housing options attractive to potential new businesses and residents.

Goal #2: Infrastructure Improvements

Plan and invest in infrastructure improvements including roads, rail, bridges, telecommunications systems and transportation systems, sidewalks, and water, sewer, and stormwater systems.



Goal #3: Economic/Business Development

Boost the regional economy through industry and creation of new employment opportunities through expansion of new industries. Attract industries that use talent and skills that already exist in the region's population. Train and support potential entrepreneurship in the region.

Goal #4: Workforce Development

Develop and retain a highly- trained workforce that meets the needs of current and future employers and attracts more businesses and industry to the region.

Goal #5: Quality of Life

Find regional solutions to resident needs and increase quality of life in communities to retain populations, including families and senior residents, and attract new residents and businesses.

**Area 15 Regional Planning Commission
Resolution# 2023-00**

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Adoption

WHEREAS, the six-county economic development region served by the Area 15 Regional Planning Commission, comprising Davis, Jefferson, Keokuk, Mahaska, Van Buren and Wapello Counties in Iowa, is proactively planning for future economic development, and;

WHEREAS, a committee of economic development professionals and area leaders has worked with the Area 15 Regional Planning Commission staff to create the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, 2023-2028, and;

WHEREAS, notice of the plan has been published for at least 30 days and the public has been allowed to comment on the plan during that time, and;

WHEREAS, it is a requirement of the US Department of Commerce - Economic Development Administration that Economic Development District (EDD) organizations submit an updated Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy every 5 years;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Area 15 Regional Planning Commission Board adopts the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, 2023 - 2028 and will work to implement the recommendations therein.

Passed this 25th day of April 2023

Michael Hadley
Chairman Area 15 RPC Committee

Date

Chris Bowers
Executive Director Area 15 RPC

Date



REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

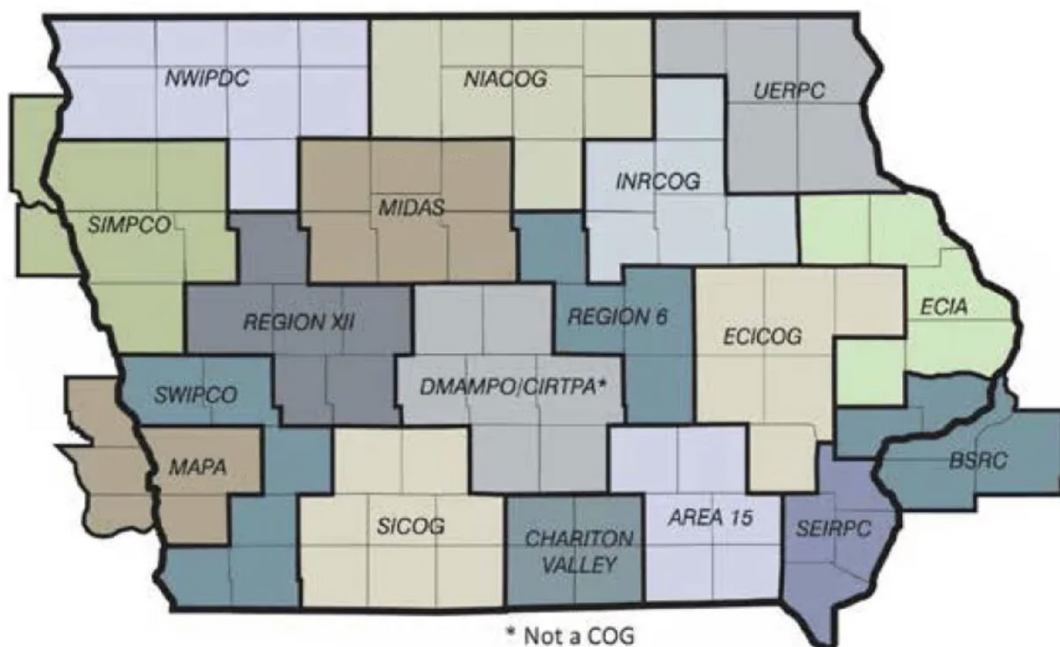
This CEDS report gives a snapshot of the region and is the basis of the economic development strategy for the region. It allows for a comparison of important economic metrics with the state and nation. The report summarizes the communities' priorities and the economic metrics for the region. The 2023 - 2028 CEDS comes after two major events in the region, the derecho and the Covid pandemic. The derecho did not have a significant impact on the region as compared to other parts of Iowa, the pandemic impacted everyday lives of the communities in the region.

The report provides an in-depth look at the economic state of the region, the process used to develop the plan, and the goals, objectives, and actions created from the process. The report also discusses the evaluation framework for the plan, and how the CEDS plans for economic resiliency.

INTRODUCTION

Organization Overview

The Area 15 Regional Planning Commission (RPC) is one of 17 Iowa Council of Governments that was formed in 1974 under Iowa Code 28H.3. Area 15 RPC serves as the U.S. Department of Commerce - Economic Development Administration designated Economic Development District organization.



Economic Development Districts in Iowa (Source\ lowacog.com)

Today, the Area15 Regional Planning Commission is a membership supported organization of local governmental bodies in Davis, Jefferson, Keokuk, Mahaska, Van Buren and Wapello Counties and their municipalities. A voluntary organization of cities and counties, the Area 15 Regional Planning Commission is a membership supported organization of local governmental bodies in Davis, Jefferson, Keokuk, Mahaska, Van Buren and Wapello Counties and their municipalities.

The participating local governments and their populations:

Davis County	9,110
Bloomfield	2,682
Drakesville	164
Floris	116
Pulaski	264

Jefferson County	15,663
Batavia	430
Fairfield	9,416
Libertyville	274
Lockridge	244
Maharishi Vedic City	277

Van Buren County	7,203
Birmingham	367
Bonaparte	359
Cantril	224
Farmington	579
Keosauqua	936


Wapello County	35,437
Agency	620
Blakesburg	274
Chillicothe	76
Eddyville*	734
Eldon	783

Keokuk County	10,033
Delta	264
Gibson	63
Harper	118
Hayesville	41
Hedrick	728
Keota	897
Keswick	242
Kinross	80
Martinsburg	110
Ollie	201
Richland	542
Sigourney	2,004
South English	202
Thornburg	45
Webster	94
What Cheer	607

Mahaska County	22,190
Barnes City	139
Beacon	445
Fremont	743
Eddyville*	236
Keomah Village	110
Leighton	158
New Sharon	1,262
Oskaloosa	11,558
Rose Hill	157
University Park	487

(Source\ Census.Gov)

The Area 15 RPC exists to promote the general welfare, convenience, safety and prosperity of its regional neighborhood. These activities are approached on a cooperative basis and provide local governments with coordination of service delivery, planning, advocacy, technical assistance and project development in such areas as community development, economic development, transportation, housing, land use, and natural resources.



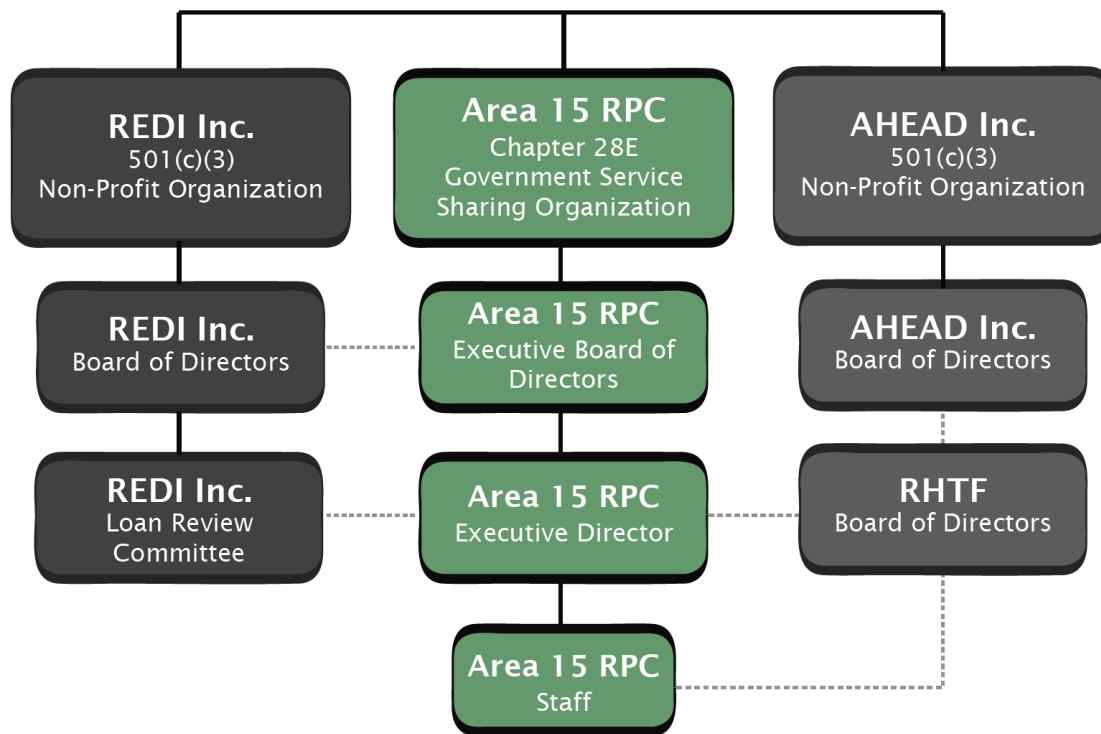
Area 15 RPC oversees several agencies/funding opportunities. The Regional Economic Development Investments, Inc. (R.E.D.I.), provides low-interest “gap financing” loans to businesses for start-up, expansion or retention activities that creates new or retains current jobs. The Affordable Housing Enterprises & Development Inc. (AHEAD, Inc.) operates as an affiliate of Area 15 RPC, as a ten-county non-profit Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO). AHEAD Inc. provides first-time homebuyer low-interest loans throughout its service delivery area. Additionally, AHEAD, Inc. assisted in the formation and funding of a Regional Housing Trust Fund (RHTF). The RHTF’s mission is to promote the creation and preservation of affordable housing for low to moderate income people in the Area 15 region.

Area 15 RPC provides administrative assistance to the Iowa South regional marketing group, whose mission is to market and position the region as “OPEN for BUSINESS – OPPORTUNITY READY” to existing businesses, site selectors, and entrepreneurs. In addition, it provides administrative assistance to Regional Planning Affiliation 15, a 5-county regional planning region recognized by the Iowa Department of Transportation. It manages the funding/spending of federal transportation funds in the region.

Management Structure

The Area 15 RPC Board of Directors represent all member Counties and Cities in the six-county region and has authority over directing the staff and projects. The RPC Executive Board also serves as the REDI Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Board. The Area 15 RPC Board includes a representative from each County government, appointed by that government entity. One member represents small communities, while four Directors represent regional interests such as: banking/finance, rural small business, and farming.

Area 15 RPC Organizational Chart



Board Representatives

Michael Hadley

Keokuk County Supervisor

Dale House

Van Buren County Supervisor

Bryan Ziegler

Wapello County Supervisor

Dave Henderson

Davis County Supervisor

Dee Sandquist

Jefferson County Supervisor

Mark Groenendyk

Mahaska County Supervisor

Jimmy Morlan

City of Sigourney Mayor

John Helgersen

Private Sector (Wapello)

Donnie Garrett

Private Sector (Davis)

Tom Flaherty

Economic Development (Mahaska)

Staff Members

Chris Bowers

Executive Director

Matt Naumann

Program Manager

Chris Kukla

Transportation Director

Varsha Borde

Senior Planner

Brandon Dicks

Regional Planner

WHAT IS CEDS?

The Comprehensive Development Strategy (CEDS) is a guide developed to lead the way for economic prosperity and resiliency in an economic development region. This plan identifies goals, partners, and projects for collaborative economic development in the Area 15 region. As a designated Economic Development District (EDD) by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), the CEDS is a requirement to retain the status. A designated EDD enables municipalities and counties to qualify for EDA funding under EDA's current public works, economic adjustment and planning grant programs. To ensure goals and strategies align with the current economic needs of the region, the process must be conducted and a new CEDS plan submitted every five years.

CEDS Process

CEDS Strategic Committee Members of the Iowa South regional marketing board were selected as Strategic Committee members for the CEDS planning process. The board's membership represents the region's economic developers, institutions of higher learning, and utilities, making it a group with an extensive knowledge of the region and its stakeholders.

CEDS Strategic Committee Members

Deann DeGroot

Mahaska Chamber and Development Group

Sarah Lind

Indian Hills Community College

Marc Roe

Greater Ottumwa Partners in Progress

Josh Laraby

Fairfield Economic Development Association

John Schroeder

Davis County Development Corporation

Emily Starnes

Van Buren Corporation

Christopher Watkins

Lucas County Development Corporation

Mike Matthes

Promoting Appanoose CT

Dan Tometich

Albia County Development Corporation

Tod Faris

Appanoose Economic Development Corporation

Allie Bennett

Northeast Missouri Electric

Katie Lord

Mid-American Energy

David Vollmar

Alliant Energy

Open Position

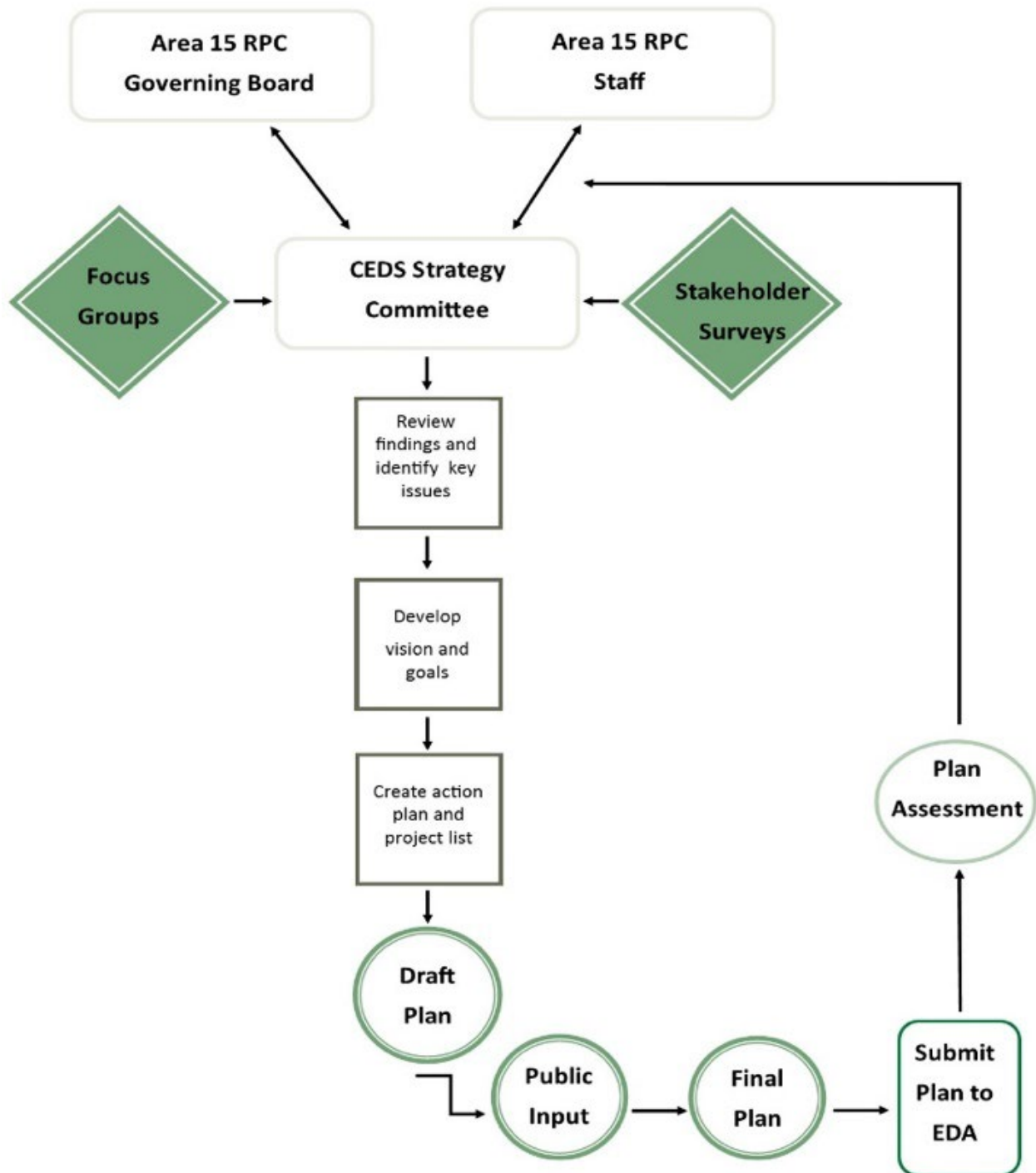
Keokuk Corporation

When developing the CEDS plan, the primary goal was to be as inclusive as possible when gathering input from members in the region. Development of the plan first began with meetings with the Area 15 staff, Area 15 board members, and the CEDS Strategic Committee. These meetings provided an initial discussion of the economic climate of the region.

From these conversations, a broad range of stakeholders were identified to include in the assessment process. Stakeholder groups included counties, cities, economic development groups, business owners, institutions of learning, emergency managers, young professionals, non-profit groups, banking/business development groups, and utility and telecommunications companies.

Surveys were utilized gather feedback from stakeholders. Once responses were compiled, Area 15 staff and CEDS Strategic Committee members analyzed the results to identify key areas of importance. These areas were used as a basis to create a list of goals, objectives, and strategies for a plan of action for the region.

From this planning, a draft CEDS document was developed, reviewed, and released for public comment. After the public comment period, the plan was finalized, adopted by the Area 15 RPC Board of Directors, and submitted to EDA for approval.



Thanks to member organizations!



South Central Iowa



Northeast Power



DAVIS COUNTY
Development Corporation

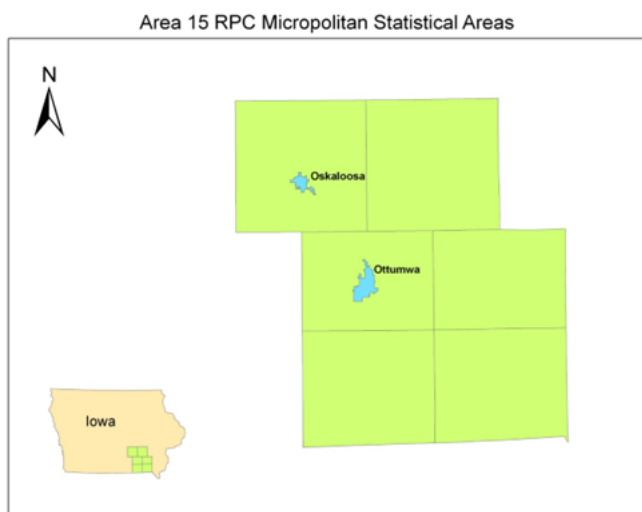
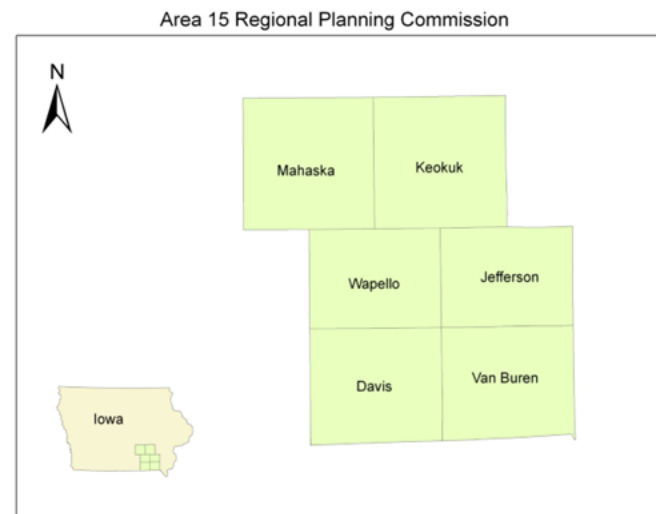


SUMMARY BACKGROUND

The Region

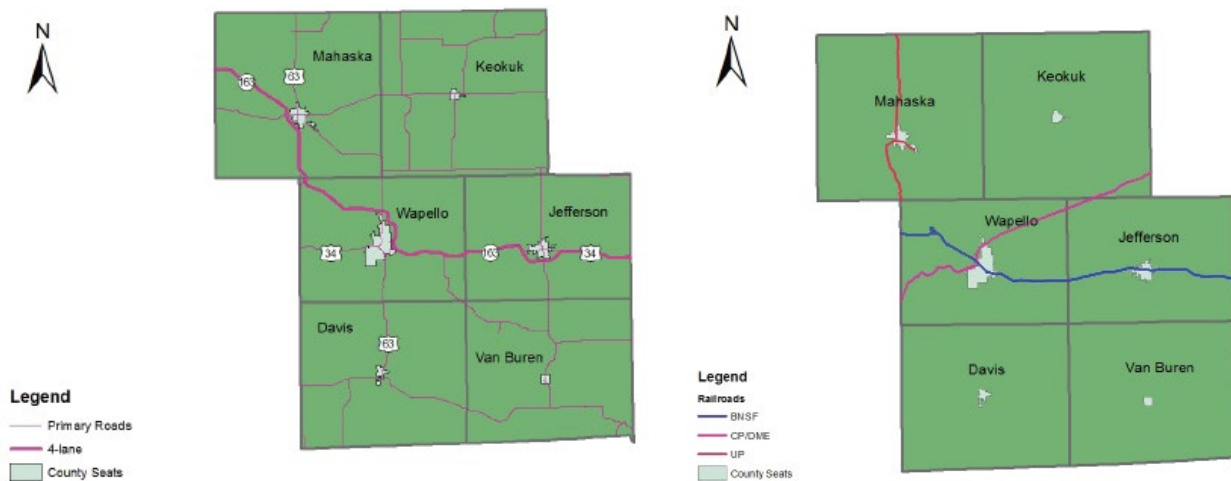
The Area 15 RPC region in southeast Iowa covers a land area 3,004 square miles. This region is comprised of scenic river valleys, croplands, pasture lands, historic villages and communities that serve as commercial, industrial, and cultural centers of the region. Two major rivers, the Des Moines River and the Skunk River as well as numerous smaller rivers and creeks flow through the region. With a population of 99,633, the

region has a low population density of 33.2 people per square mile. It includes a total of six counties – Davis, Jefferson, Keokuk, Mahaska, Van Buren and Wapello and a total of 50 cities and towns of varying sizes (ranging from 0.65 square miles to 16.5 square miles square miles) and populations (ranging from a 41 to a 25,529). Oskaloosa, Ottumwa, and Fairfield are the most urbanized in the region out of which Oskaloosa and Ottumwa are micropolitan. These account for 37.6% percent of the population and 0.78% of the land area.



The region developed in the 1940s when settlers moving west used the Des Moines River as a transportation corridor to the west and some settled in the region for agriculture or river related development. Coal mining and transportation was a means of income for the settlers in the region during 1800s to 1930s.

The region is served by the four-lane highway 163/63/34, along with two-lane US highways US 63 and 34 and State Highways 92, 2 and 1, these primary roads provide accessibility to the surrounding area and connect to Interstates 80, 35 and US Highway 218. Commercial aviation is available an average driving distance of two hours from the region in Des Moines and Cedar Rapids, general aviation services are available at smaller airports in the region at Bloomfield, Fairfield, Keosauqua, Oskaloosa, and Ottumwa. Four railroads provide long-distance freight rail service to the region: the Burlington Northern Santa-Fe (BNSF), Union Pacific (UP), Canadian Pacific (CP), and Norfolk Southern (NS) which has trackage rights over the BNSF. AMTRAK provides intercity passenger rail service and has a station in Ottumwa. AMTRAK operates the California Zephyr through the region, which runs from Chicago IL to Oakland CA, and includes stops in Omaha, Denver, and Salt Lake City. Intercity bus service in the region is provided by Burlington Trailways, with daily stops in Fairfield and Ottumwa. Des Moines and Cedar Rapids in Iowa serve as the commercial airports for the Area 15 region.



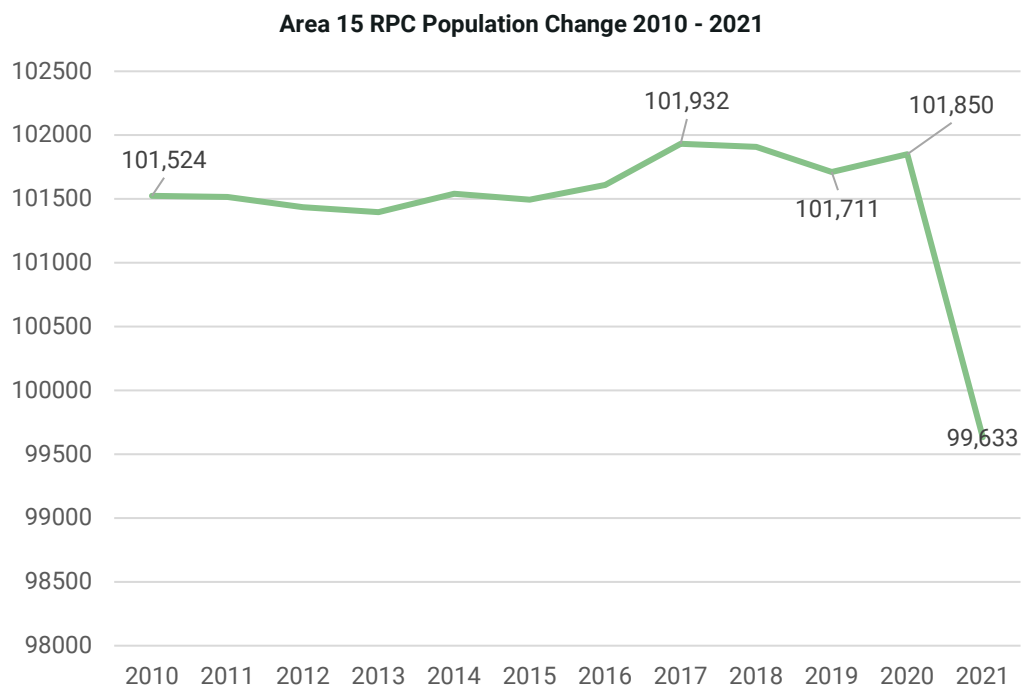
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) guides economic development in a region. In order to have a future planning strategy for the region, it is important to understand where the region stands currently. Comparing the national and state trends with the region will help make some important strategy decisions.

Demographics and Socio-Economic Data

Area 15 region's population has declined and aged in recent years. The pandemic has further negatively affected the population of the area. The following section gives an overview of the region's population trends in recent years.

Population

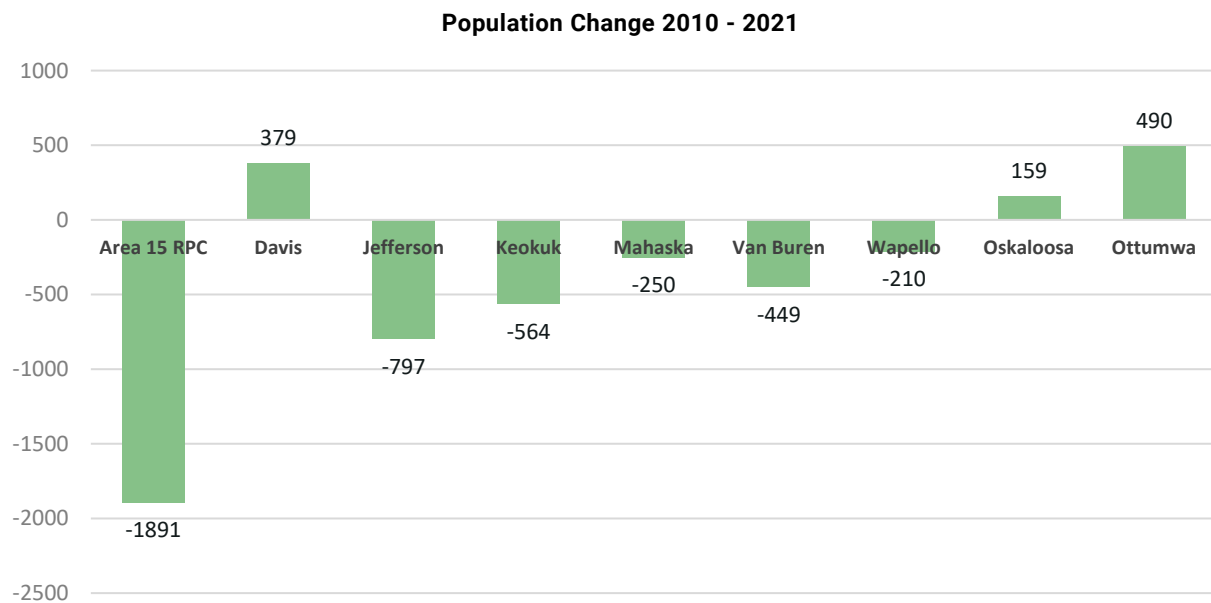
The Area 15 RPC region has a current population of 99,633. The region's population decreased by approximately 2.12% since 2010. Iowa's population has grown by approximately 5% in this period. The City of Fairfield saw a small decrease while Oskaloosa and Ottumwa have seen slight increases in population. The small increase in the population of Davis County can be attributed to rural areas.



Source | Census.gov

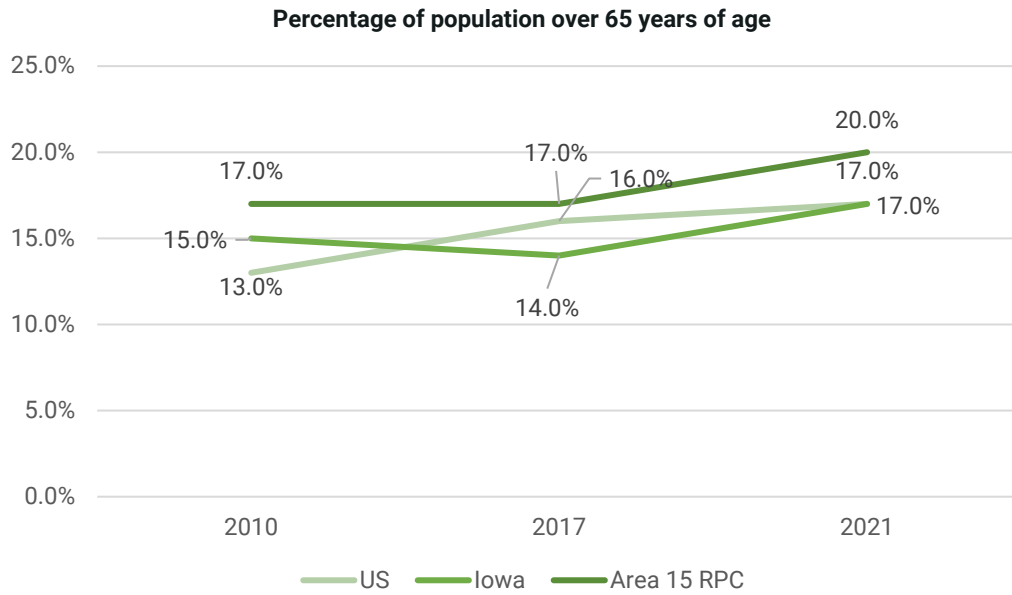
Population changes by County

Area 15 RPC (and the counties in the region except Davis County) saw a decline in population during 2010 to 2021. Davis county saw a 4% increase in population. Jefferson County, after a steady growth in the previous years, saw a 13% decrease in population from 2020 to 2021. This could be attributed to the decrease in international enrollment in institutions across the nation due the pandemic.



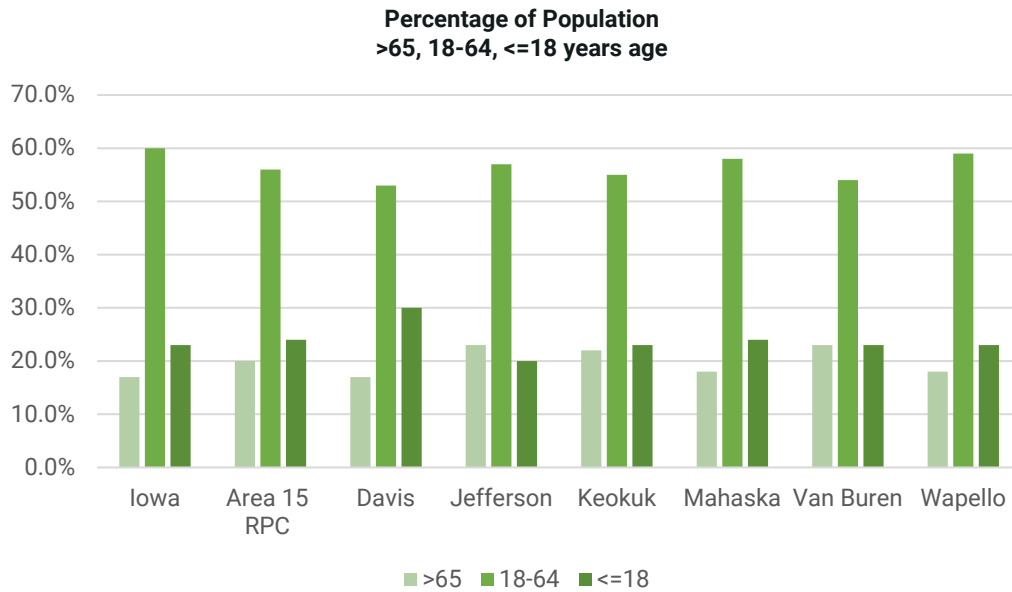
Source | Census.gov

The percentage of population over 65 years of age in the region has increased since 2010 and the rate of increase of this cohort has grown faster for the region when compared to the state and the nation. This could translate to a lower workforce availability.



Source | Census.gov

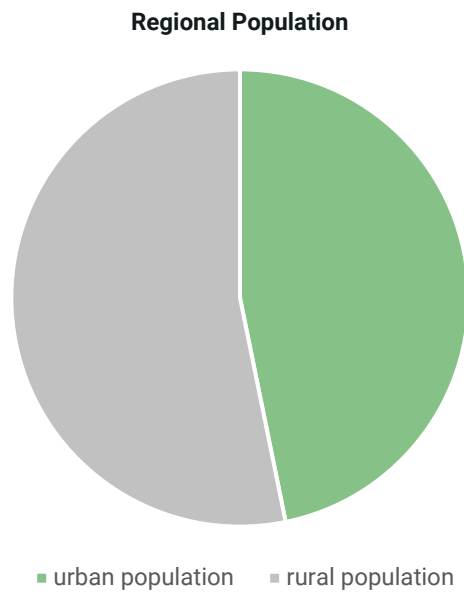
The percentage of working age population (18 years – 65 years of age) in the region is lower than of the state. Davis county has the highest percentage of population under 18 of age.



Source | Census.gov

Urban and Rural

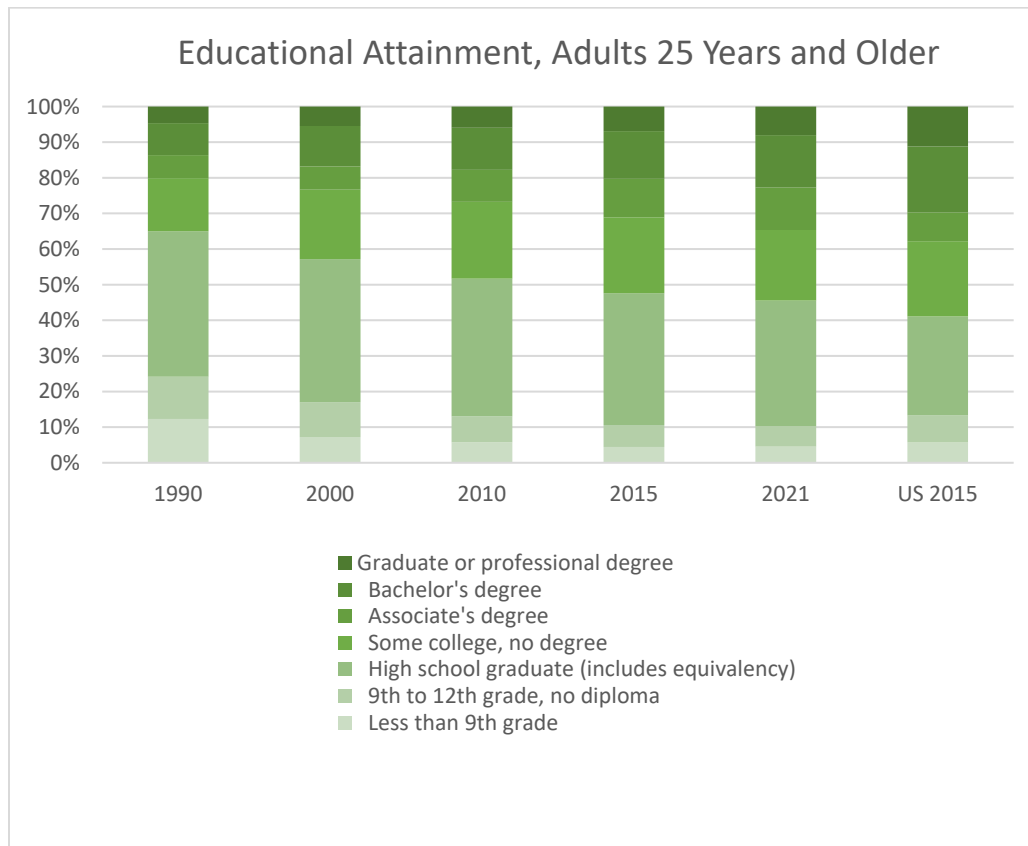
The majority of the population in the regions is rural. The percentage of rural population is 53.2% and of urban population of 46.8%.



Source | [Census.gov](https://www.census.gov)

Education

The percentage of residents with a higher level of education (Graduate or Professional degrees and a bachelor's and associate degree) has increased since 1990, with a greater margin of increase seen in 2021. At the same time, the percentage of residents without a high school diploma has gone down.



Source | Census.gov

Census data for 2021 shows that although Area 15 has a higher percentage of high school graduates than in the previous years, it trails behind state and National levels in undergraduate and graduate/professional degrees. Davis (17.2%) and Van Buren (8.6%) counties have the highest percentage of residents who did not attend high school. Keokuk (42.8%) and Mahaska (39.6%) counties have a greater percentage of residents graduating high school as compared to

the state (30.6%) and national (26.5%) averages. Davis and Jefferson counties beat the state and national averages for bachelor's as well as graduate and professional degrees.

Area 15 Educational Attainment, Adults 25 Years and Older

	Davis	Jefferson	Keokuk	Mahaska	Van Buren	Wapello	Area 15	Iowa	US
Less than 9th grade	17.2%	2.4%	2.0%	3.1%	8.6%	5.2%	6.0%	2.8%	4.8%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	3.3%	4.9%	5.0%	4.9%	3.6%	6.8%	4.8%	4.4%	6.3%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	28.9%	24.9%	42.8%	39.6%	38.2%	36.6%	35.2%	30.6%	26.5%
Some college, no degree	17.4%	18.2%	20.2%	19.7%	21.8%	20.9%	19.7%	20.5%	20.0%
Associate's degree	14.0%	11.4%	13.0%	11.7%	11.5%	11.4%	12.2%	12.0%	8.7%
Bachelor's degree	14.1%	21.8%	12.0%	15.2%	10.1%	12.1%	14.2%	20.0%	20.6%
Graduate or professional degree	13.1%	9.7%	5.1%	16.4%	5.0%	5.8%	9.2%	6.2%	7.0%

Source | Census.gov

Enrollment in K-12 public schools decreased by 41% in Keokuk school district in the 2022-2023 school year when compared to the 2020-2021 school year. A major part of the resources of the Davis County school district are spent towards transportation. Davis County has only one school district that covers the entire county and spends a major percentage of its resources on busing. In order to save on fuel and resources, Davis county is planning to go to a 4-day week. (Source - Bleeding Heartland)

K-12 Enrollment

	2011-2012 K-12 Enrollment	2020-2021 K-12 Enrollment	2022-2023 K-12 Enrollment	Change	Change %
Davis	1,195	1,210	1,210	15	1.3%
Jefferson	1,674	1,526	2,058	384	22.9%
Keokuk	1,774	1,732	1,041	-733	-41.3%
Mahaska	2,977	2,550	2,565	-412	-13.8%
Van Buren	922	776	807	-115	-12.5%
Wapello	5,756	6,677	6,415	659	11.4%
Area 15	14,298	14,471	14,096	-202	-1.4%

Source | Iowa Department of Education

Higher Education

Area 15 region is home to many higher education institutions. These include community colleges (Indian Hills Community College, Private universities such as Maharishi University of Management and William Penn University offer four-year degree programs. Buena Vista University and St. Ambrose also offer a remote learning location in Ottumwa. William Penn saw an increase in enrollment. It has in-person and online programs. Enrollment (especially international student enrollment) was impacted in many colleges and universities across the nation by the pandemic. Maharshi Institute of Management near Fairfield has a greater percentage of International enrollment saw lower enrollment numbers during the pandemic.

Source | Final fall enrollment numbers show pandemic's full impact ([insidehighered.com](https://www.insidehighered.com))



William Penn Hall Source – William Penn University



William Penn Community College in Oskaloosa has an seen increase in enrollment. It currently has the highest enrollment till date. Enrollment numbers at William Penn can be found in Appendix K.

Housing

Housing availability is an important aspect of retaining current residents and attracting new residents to a community. The housing stock in the region shows that most housing stock is old (which might mean it needs repairs or upgrades). Low homeowners' vacancy rates and rental vacancy rates in the region suggests that there exists a high demand for new housing in the region.

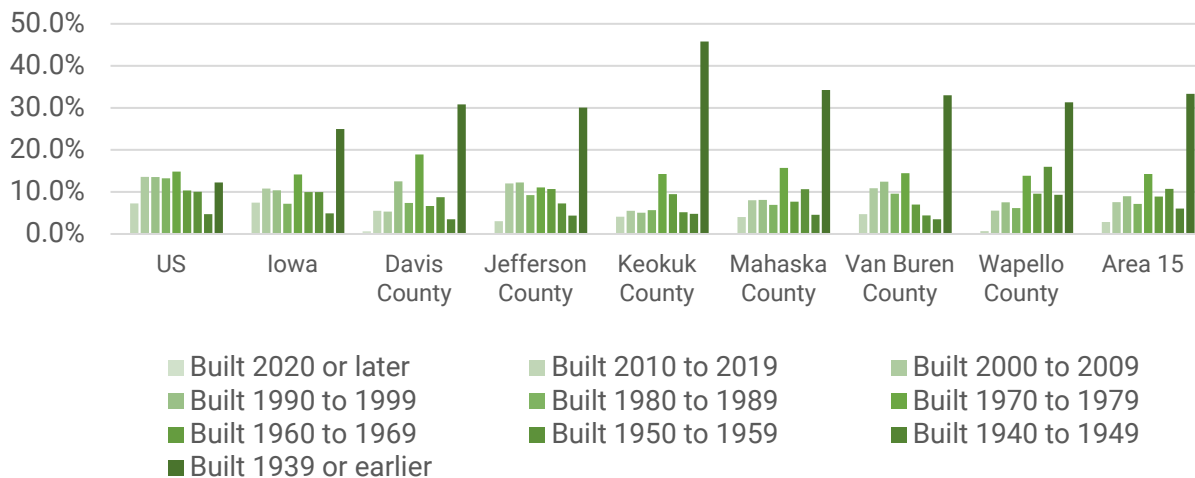


Age of Housing Stock

The housing stock in Area15 region is old. 33% of the housing stock in the region was built before 1939. Keokuk County has almost half of its housing stock built before 1940. Less than 0.1% new houses were built after 2020 in Davis and Wapello Counties. Davis County had a 0.6% growth in its housing stock after 2020, which is higher than the rate seen in the state. 4-5% were

built during 2010 – 2019. Older homes are generally not well maintained and lack energy efficient systems.

Age of Housing Stock Estimates, 2017-2022



Source | Census.gov

Housing Built Over The Years

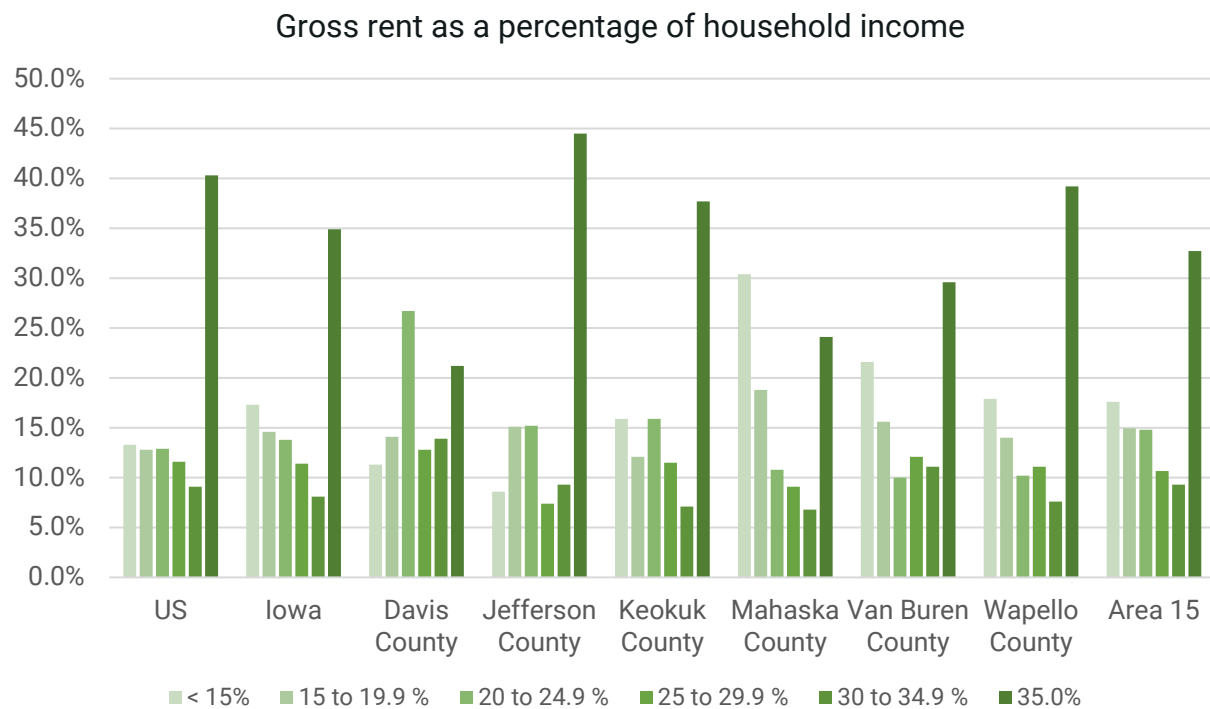
Year(s) Built	2020 or later	2010 - 2019	2000 - 2009	1990 - 1999	1980 - 1989	1970 - 1979	1960 - 1969	1950 - 1959	1940 - 1949	Before 1940
US	0.2%	7.3%	13.6%	13.6%	13.2%	14.8%	10.3%	10.0%	4.7%	12.2%
Iowa	0.2%	7.4%	10.8%	10.4%	7.2%	14.2%	10.0%	10.0%	4.9%	25.0%
Davis	0.6%	5.5%	5.3%	12.5%	7.4%	18.9%	6.6%	8.7%	3.5%	30.8%
Jefferson	0.0%	3.1%	12.0%	12.2%	9.2%	11.1%	10.7%	7.3%	4.4%	30.1%
Keokuk	0.2%	4.1%	5.5%	5.0%	5.7%	14.3%	9.5%	5.2%	4.8%	45.8%
Mahaska	0.0%	4.0%	8.0%	8.1%	6.9%	15.7%	7.7%	10.7%	4.6%	34.3%
Van Buren	0.0%	4.7%	10.9%	12.5%	9.6%	14.4%	7.0%	4.4%	3.5%	33.0%
Wapello	0.0%	0.7%	5.6%	7.5%	6.2%	13.9%	9.6%	16.0%	9.3%	31.3%
Area 15	0.1%	2.9%	7.6%	9.0%	7.2%	14.3%	8.9%	10.7%	6.1%	33.3%

Source | ACS

Gross rent as a percentage of Household Income

The Area 15 region has more than 40 percent of rent paying residents pay more than 30 percent of their household income on rent. 45% of the rent paying residents of Jefferson County pay more than 35% of their household income on rent. Those renting in Mahaska (30%), Van Buren

(21.6%), Wapello (17.9%) and Keokuk (15.9%) counties pay less than 15% of their household income on rent which is more than the national and state average.



Source | Census.gov

Vacancy rate

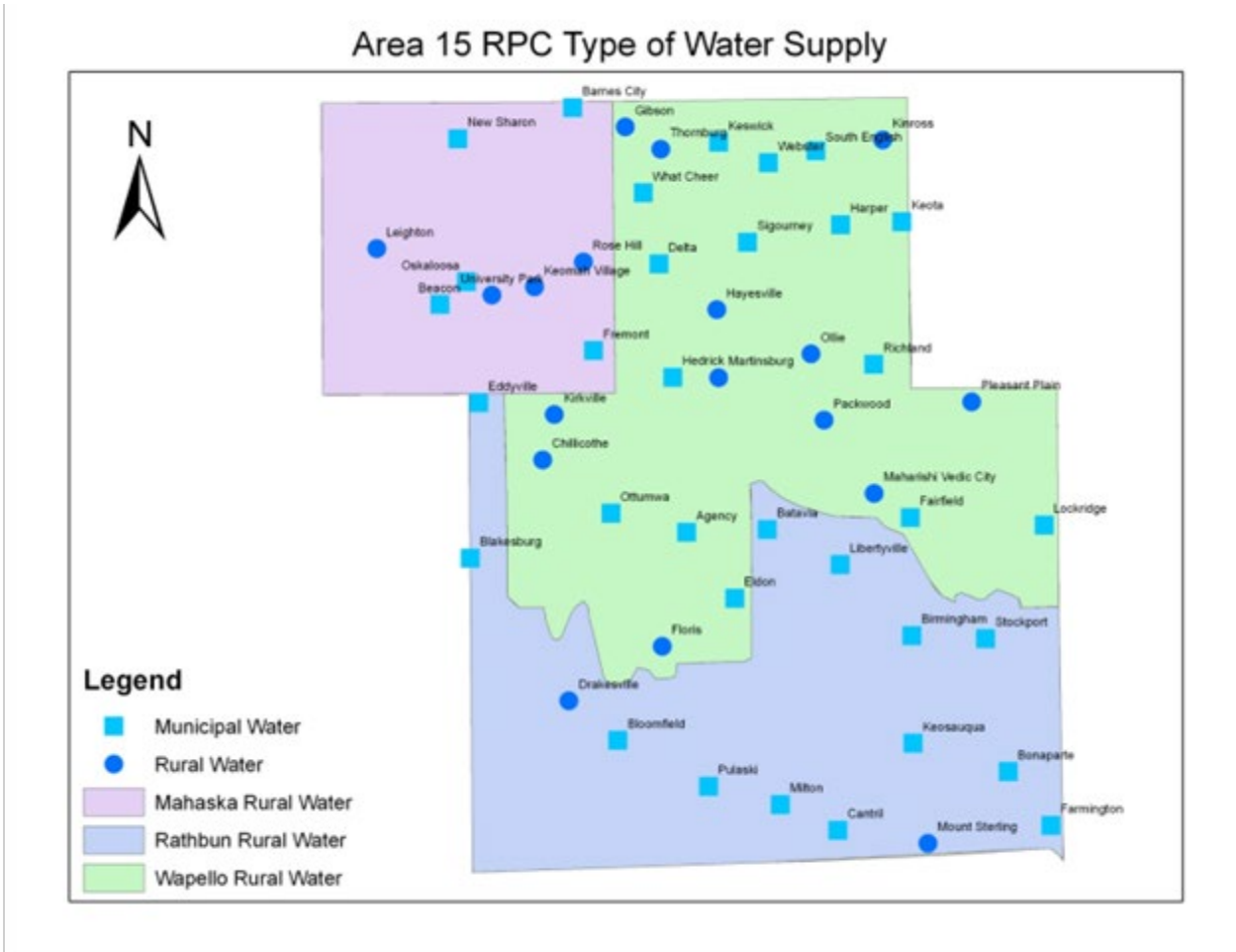
Homeowner vacancy rates in the region are very low which suggests that there is a need for new housing in the region. Davis County has the lowest vacancy rate (3%). Rental vacancy rates in the region are also low. Jefferson County has the lowest rate of rental vacancy (3.0%) showing a very high demand for new rental units.

	Homeowner vacancy rate	Rental vacancy rate
US	1.2	5.7
Iowa	1.2	6.4
Davis County	0.3	5.5
Jefferson County	1.2	0.3
Keokuk County	1.8	3.7
Mahaska County	2.2	3.8
Van Buren County	1.1	5.1
Wapello County	1.8	9.8
Area 15	1.4	4.7

Source | Census.gov

Thirty-three communities have their own municipal water systems while the remaining communities and rural areas are served by three Rural Water Systems: Mahaska Rural Water, Wapello Rural Water and Rathbun Regional Water.

American Gothic House. Source - WikiCommons.com





Risk Levels for Natural Disasters





The National Risk Index is a dataset and online tool to help illustrate the United States communities most at risk for natural hazards. It also calculates the expected annual loss and social vulnerability from such events. The indexes are scored from 0 (zero) to 100 (highest), zero being at low risk and hundred being at the highest risk.

Risk analysis for the Area 15 Region shows that the region is at very low to moderate risk for various natural hazards. The region is at low to moderate risk for natural events such as flooding, strong winds, tornadoes, and ice storms. The expected annual loss from these natural events is also low. Even with a low-risk index, efforts should be made to be more resilient to recover from such events. The region shows – level of social vulnerability. Davis and Wapello counties region show a high index for social vulnerability.

According to FEMA, a community resilience is the capability of a region to prepare for anticipated events, adapt to changing conditions, and withstand and recover rapidly from disruptions. A complete Risk Comparison Report can be found at Appendix H.

Risk Index Legend

The region is at low to moderate risk for natural events such as flooding, strong winds, tornadoes, and ice storms.

Rank	Community	State	Rating	Score	
1	Wapello County	IA	Relatively Low	12.72	
2	Davis County	IA	Relatively Low	10.24	
3	Mahaska County	IA	Relatively Low	8.84	
4	Van Buren County	IA	Relatively Low	8.26	
5	Keokuk County	IA	Very Low	7.63	
6	Jefferson County	IA	Very Low	5.56	

(Source – National Risk Index, FEMA.gov)

Expected Annual Loss

The expected annual loss from such natural events is at low.



(Source – National Risk Index , FEMA.gov)

Social Vulnerability Legend







Social Vulnerability index is the susceptibility of social groups to the adverse effect of natural hazards including disproportionate death, injury, loss or livelihood.



(Source – National Risk Index , FEMA.gov)

Community Resilience

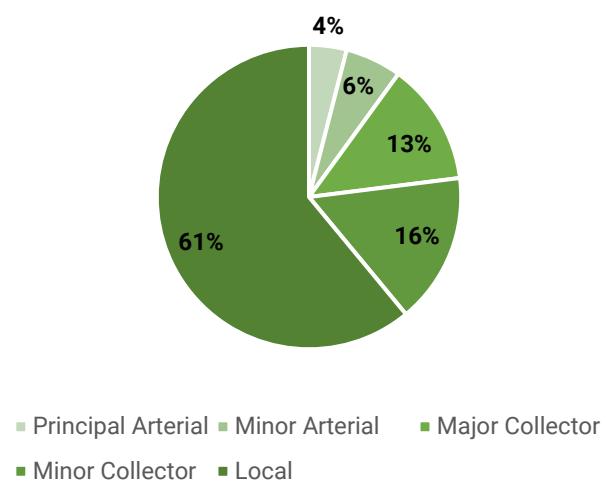
The Area 15 Region shows a moderate to high rating for community resilience.

Rank	Community	State	Rating	Score	
1	Keokuk County	IA	Very High	58.29	0  100
2	Mahaska County	IA	Relatively High	57.52	0  100
3	Wapello County	IA	Relatively High	56.89	0  100
4	Van Buren County	IA	Relatively High	56.19	0  100
5	Davis County	IA	Relatively Moderate	54.67	0  100
6	Jefferson County	IA	Relatively Moderate	53.63	0  100

(Source – National Risk Index , FEMA.gov)

Transportation

In 2016, the road network within RPA 15 consisted of over 5,000 miles of road, this includes 381 miles of primary roads and 4,098 of secondary roads. Of the region's total mileage, 1,503 miles or 30% are farm-to-market roads. Compared to the entire statewide road mileage, the region contains about 5% of the road mileage.



Road mileage by Federal Functional Classification in 2016

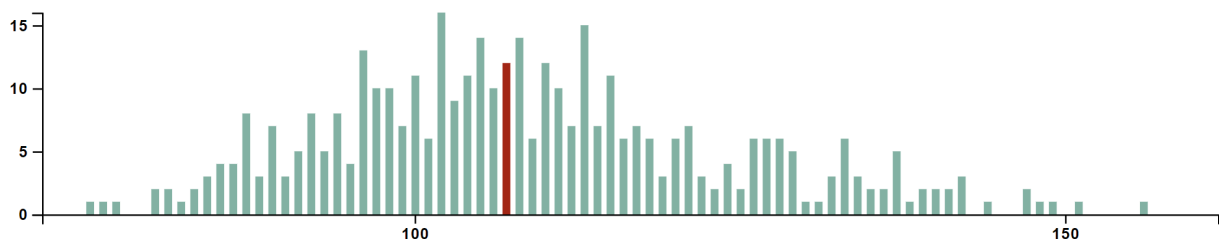
ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT

The Innovation Intelligence Index (I²I³) by EDA's StatsAmerica online tool for economic development helps explore regional characteristics related to innovation and entrepreneurship to help advance economic development strategies. StatsAmerica ranks all the 393 EDDs in the nation by Innovation Index based on different characteristics of the regions. These are based on Human Capital and Knowledge Create Index, Business Dynamics Index, Business Profile Index, Employment and Productivity Index and the Economic Well-Being Index. It also ranks the EDDs on an overall innovation index and helps determine innovation capacity and competitiveness of the region. Area 15 region has a moderate relative overall innovation index 107.6 (ranking 194 the among 393 EDDs across the nation).

Area 15 Regional Planning Commission Overall Innovation Index

The Overall Innovation Index is based on five core indexes. The Area 15 region ranks 194 among 393 EDDs on the overall innovation index. This means that the region has a moderate capacity for innovation.

Population: **99,633** Per Capita Income: **\$48,702** Largest City: **Ottumwa**
Innovation Intelligence Index: **107.6**
Rank: **194**



The graph above, and the similar graphs below, show the distribution of index values for all counties. The value for Area 15 Regional Planning Commission is highlighted in red.

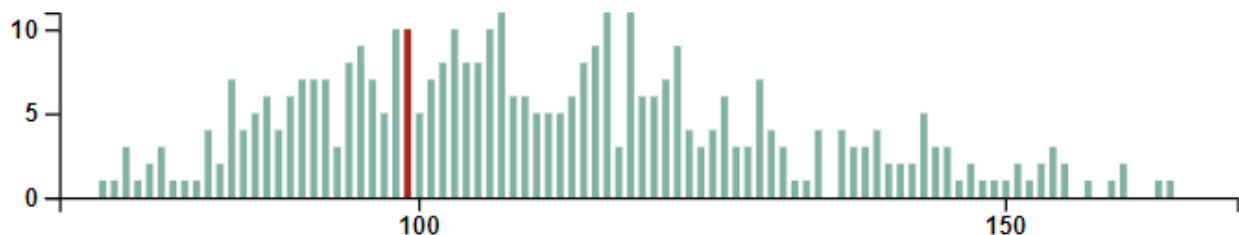
Source | StatsAmerica website 2021 <https://www.statsamerica.org/innovation/>

The Area 15 region ranks 270 on the Human Capital and Knowledge Creation Index which indicates a moderate level of business competitiveness. The above statistics show that even though the region is doing average compared to the nations EDDs, there is scope to improve the economic competitiveness of the region.

Human Capital and Knowledge Create Index: 99.5 (rank:270)

The Human Capital and Knowledge Create Index suggests the extent to which a region's population and labor force are able to engage in innovative activities. The region ranks 211 on the Business Dynamics Index.

- Patterns of establishment formation and composition indicate a moderate level
- The top measures for this index are:
 1. Associate's Degree Attainment (rank 55)
 2. Average Prime Working-Age Population Growth (rank 150)

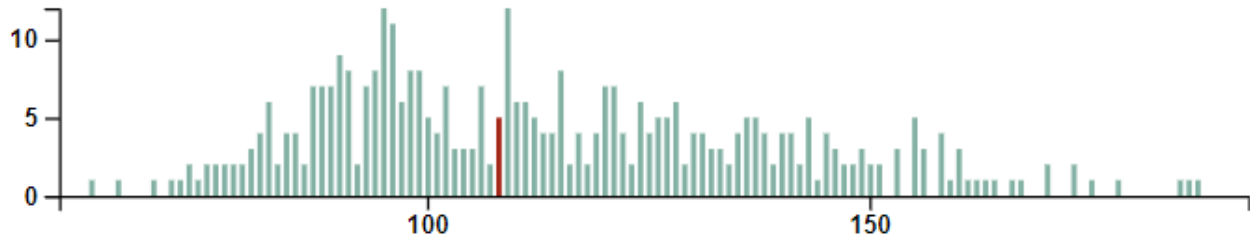


Source | StatsAmerica website 2021 <https://www.statsamerica.org/innovation/>

Business Dynamics Index: 108.8 (rank: 211)

The Business Dynamics Index calculates the competitiveness of a region by investigating the entry and exit of individual firms. The region ranks 196 on the Business Profile Index (the availability of resources for entrepreneurs and businesses)

- Patterns of establishment formation and composition indicate a moderate level of business competitiveness.
- The top measures for this index are:
 1. Traded Sector Establishment Births to Deaths Ratio (rank 132)
 2. Change in Establishment Births to All Establishment Ratio (rank 98)

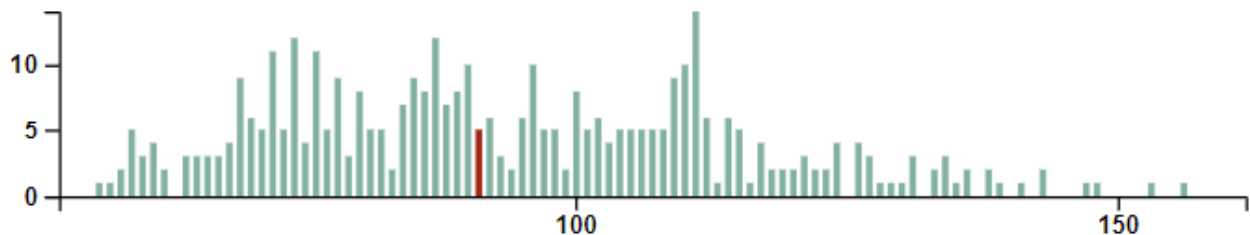


Source | StatsAmerica website 2021 <https://www.statsamerica.org/innovation/>

Business Profile Index: **91.0** (rank: 196)

This Business Profile Index measures local business conditions and the availability of resources to entrepreneurs and businesses.

- The relative availability of resources for entrepreneurs and businesses is **moderate** level in this area.
- The top measures for this index are:
 1. Average Large Establishments (per 10,000 Workers) (rank 21)
 2. FDI Investment Ratio, Domestic Source (rank 12)



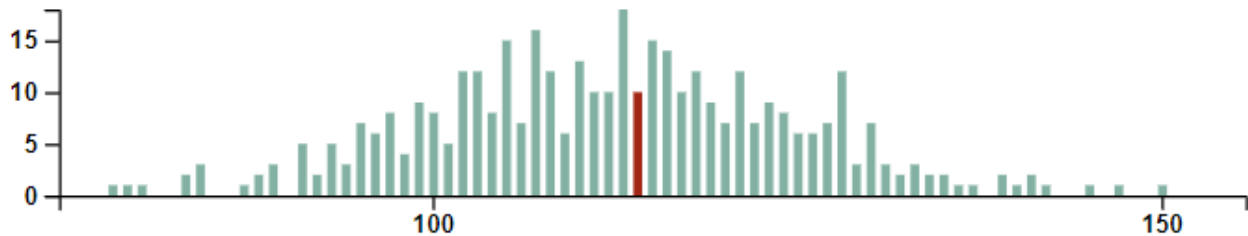
Source | StatsAmerica website 2021 <https://www.statsamerica.org/innovation/>

Employment and Productivity Index: **114.1** (rank: 176)

The Employment and Productivity Index describes economic growth, regional desirability or direct outcomes of innovative activity. Area 15 region ranks 176 on the Economic Well-Being Index (Internet connectivity and income).

- Industry performance in Area 15 Regional Planning Commission indicate a moderate level of positive outcomes from existing economic activity.
- The top measures for this index are:

1. Patent Diversity (rank 181)
2. Change in Share of High-Tech Industry Employment (rank 46)

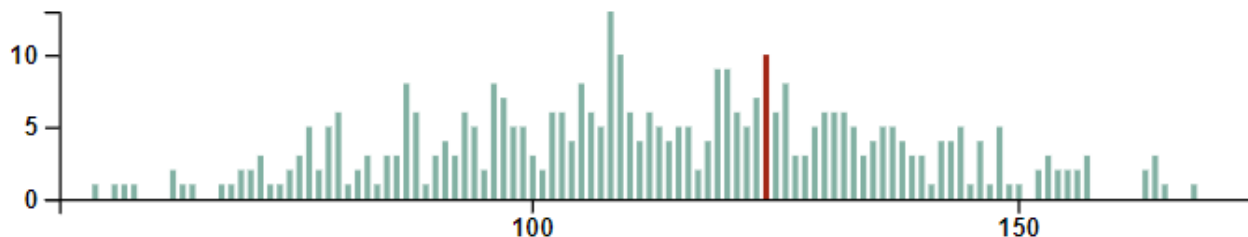


Source | StatsAmerica website 2021 <https://www.statsamerica.org/innovation/>

Economic Well-Being Index: **124.7** (rank: 127)

The Economic Well-Being Index explores standard of living and other economic outcomes. The Area 15 region ranks 127 on the Economic Well-Being Index (Internet connectivity and income).

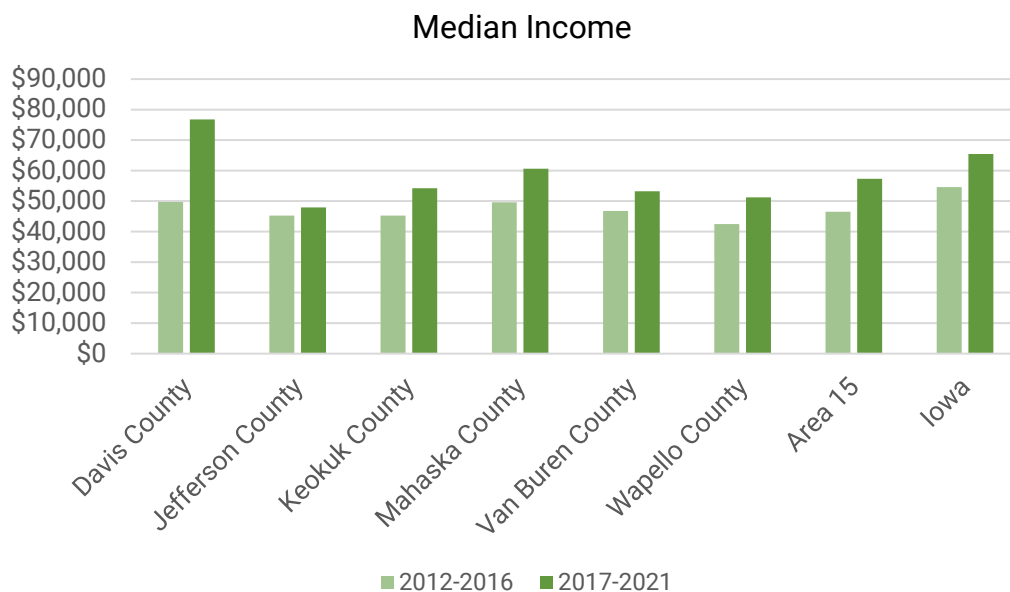
- As measured by residential internet connectivity and income, this area has a **moderate** standard of living.
- The top measures for this index are:
 1. Per Capita Personal Income Growth (rank 23)
 2. Change in Annual Wage and Salary Earnings per Worker (rank 52)



Source | StatsAmerica website 2021 <https://www.statsamerica.org/innovation/>

Median Household Income

Median household income in the region has increased since 2012, although it still trails behind the state average. Davis County (\$76,755) has seen the highest increase in median income since 2012 surpassing the state average (\$65,429).



Source | Census.gov

Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

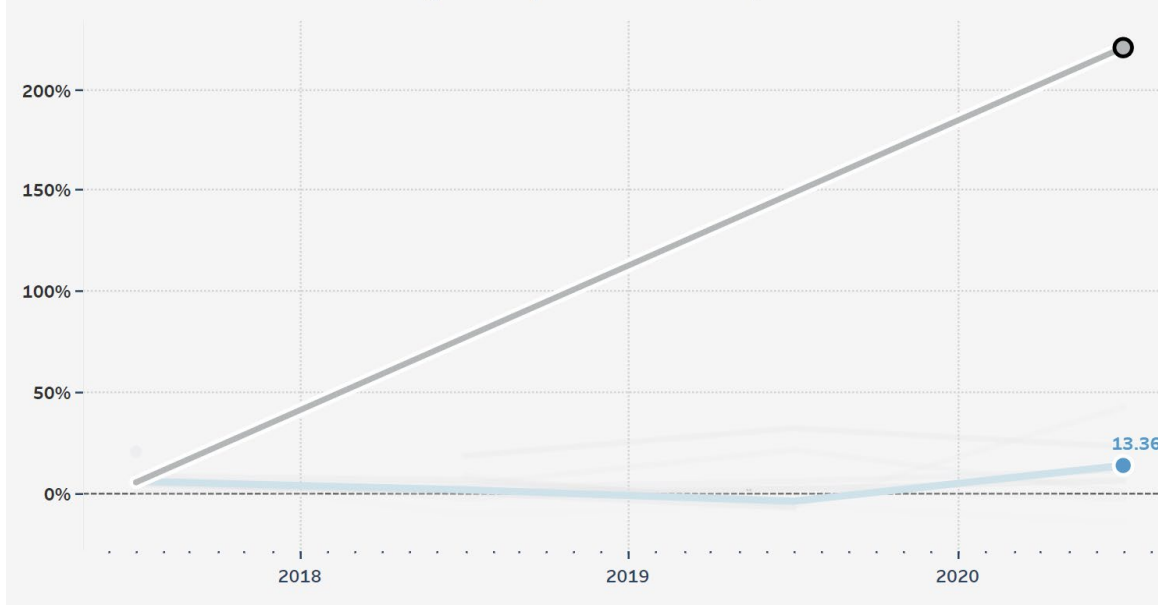
Area 15 RPC region has a rural economy. The area saw an increase in the GDP in a few industries. The maximum GDP increase was 220.2% in the agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting industry from 2017 – 2022. During the same period, these industries that saw an increase in GDP are utilities (44%), wholesale trade (22%), durable goods manufacturing (12.2%) and retail trade. (11.1%). The real estate and rental and leasing industry saw a decrease in GDP by 14%.

Top Industry GDP Change

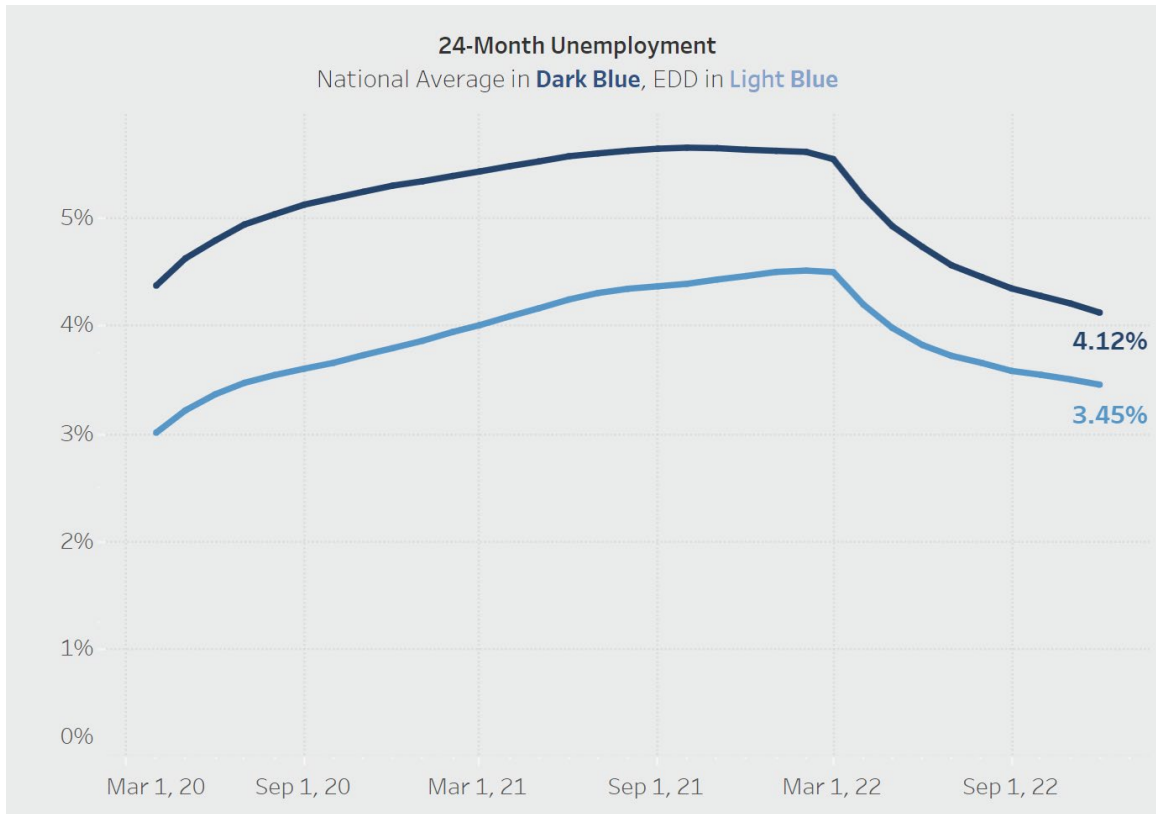
Attribute	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting		5.0%			220.2%
Construction		4.5%	-0.1%	-7.6%	
Durable goods manufacturing		8.1%	6.2%	-4.4%	12.2%
Finance and insurance		7.2%	-2.9%	2.1%	-3.1%
Government and government enterprises		3.7%	0.5%	1.9%	5.8%
Health care and social assistance		3.5%	4.3%	-2.1%	7.9%
Nondurable goods manufacturing		5.8%	3.8%	21.1%	0.3%
Real estate and rental and leasing		8.8%	-10.7%	-6.1%	-14.9%
Retail trade		0.1%	2.6%	5.3%	11.1%
Transportation and warehousing		20.3%			
Utilities			8.3%	-6.9%	42.1%
Wholesale trade			18.1%	31.8%	22.6%

Source | *NERDE Economic Development District Dashboard | Argonne National Laboratory (anl.gov)*

Average Industry Annual Growth Rate, Last 3 Years



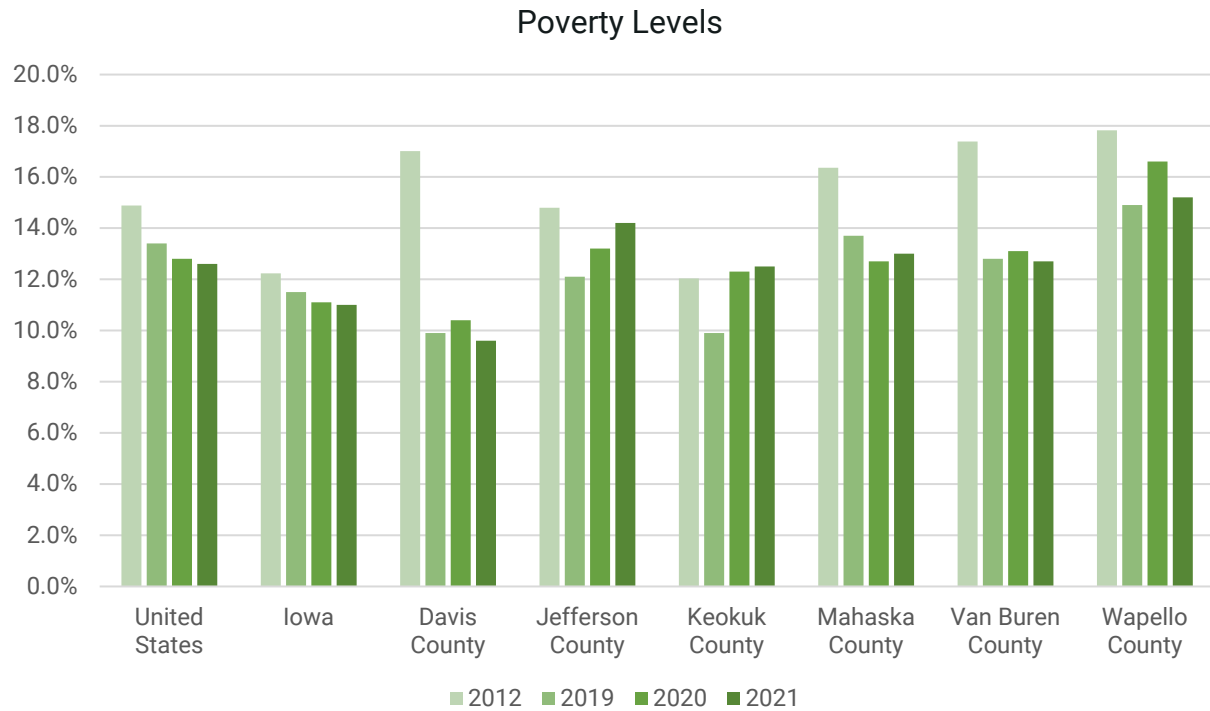
Source | *NERDE Economic Development District Dashboard | Argonne National Laboratory (anl.gov)*



Source | *NERDE Economic Development District Dashboard* | Argonne National Laboratory (anl.gov)

Poverty in the Region

Poverty rates in the state are lower than the national averages, but the region has higher levels of poverty. Poverty levels in Wapello have been historically high (15.2%). Although the poverty in all the counties has decreased since 2012, Jefferson and Keokuk counties showed an increase in poverty levels after the pandemic. Davis County has the lowest poverty (9.6%).

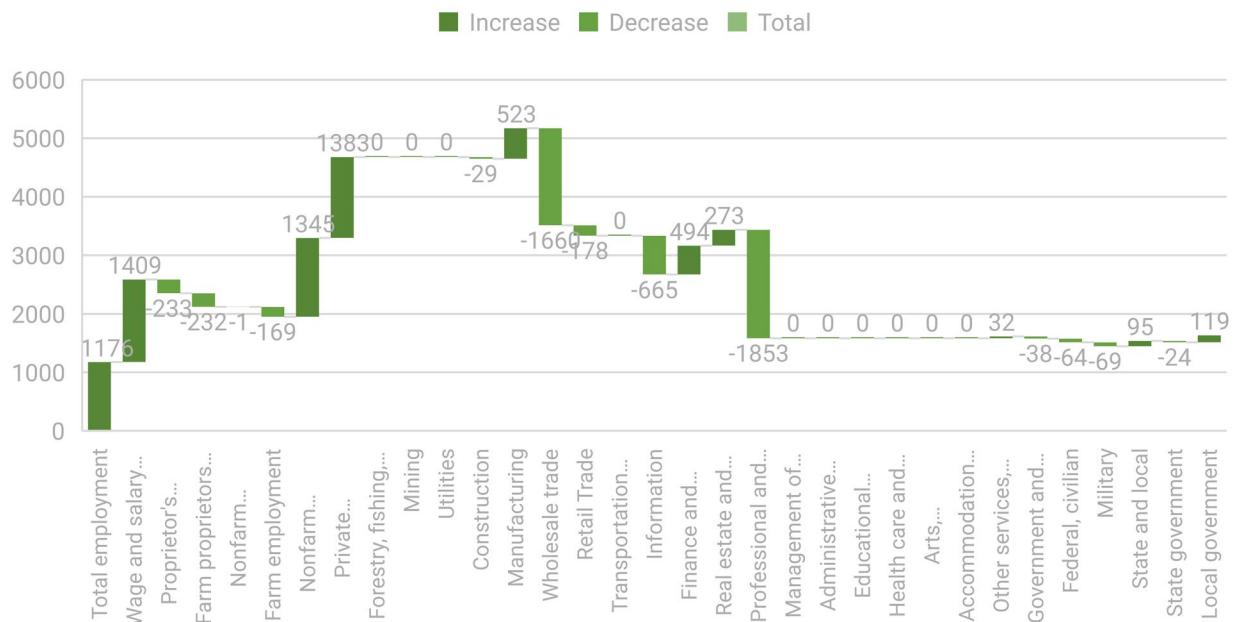


Source | Census.Gov

EMPLOYMENT

Total employment in the region has declined. Nonfarm and private employment has increased whereas wholesale trade and professional and technical services has reduced.

Change in Area 15 Regions industry Employment 2010- 2019



Source | Innovation Intelligence: StatsAmerica

A list of major employers in the region can be found in Appendix A.

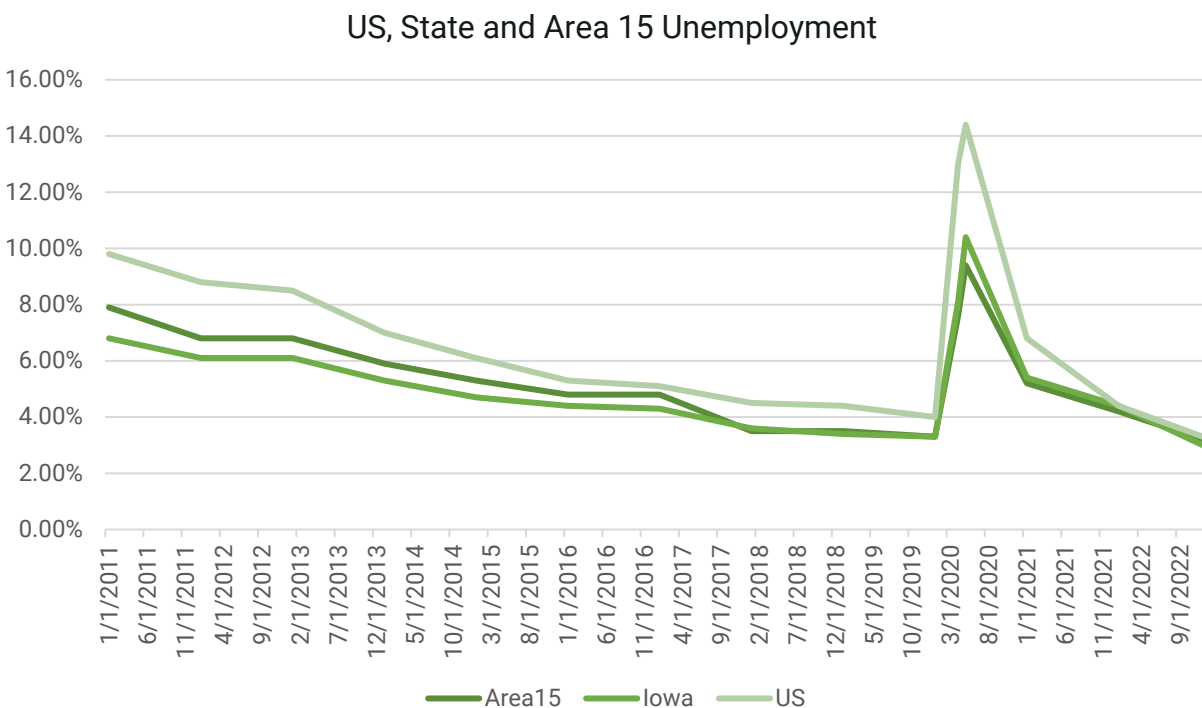
Workforce

The current workforce in the region is 42,240. The available workforce in the region is comprised of both unemployed (23.7%) and a portion of the currently employed (43%) of the current population. This available workforce needs to be converted to potential jobs. The economic wellbeing index for the region is moderate and increasing highspeed broadband availability in the area could be an attraction for this potential workforce to say in the region. Workforce development and retainment was very important to many survey takers. The percentage of population over 65 years of age is higher in the region than the state and national averages. Workforce development will help the economic development of the region by making the region attractive for industries and businesses.

Unemployment

The pandemic impacted employment in all parts of the nation and the Area 15 Region also was impacted. Unemployment levels shot up starting April 2020 as many businesses had to close down. The Area 15 Region saw lower unemployment levels as compared to the nation and the state of Iowa.

The current economic indicators for the region show that the region has a slightly lower unemployment rate (3.18%) compared to the national average (3.26%) and slightly higher than the state average (3%). The labor force participation rate (61.35%) for the region is higher than the national average (57.39%).

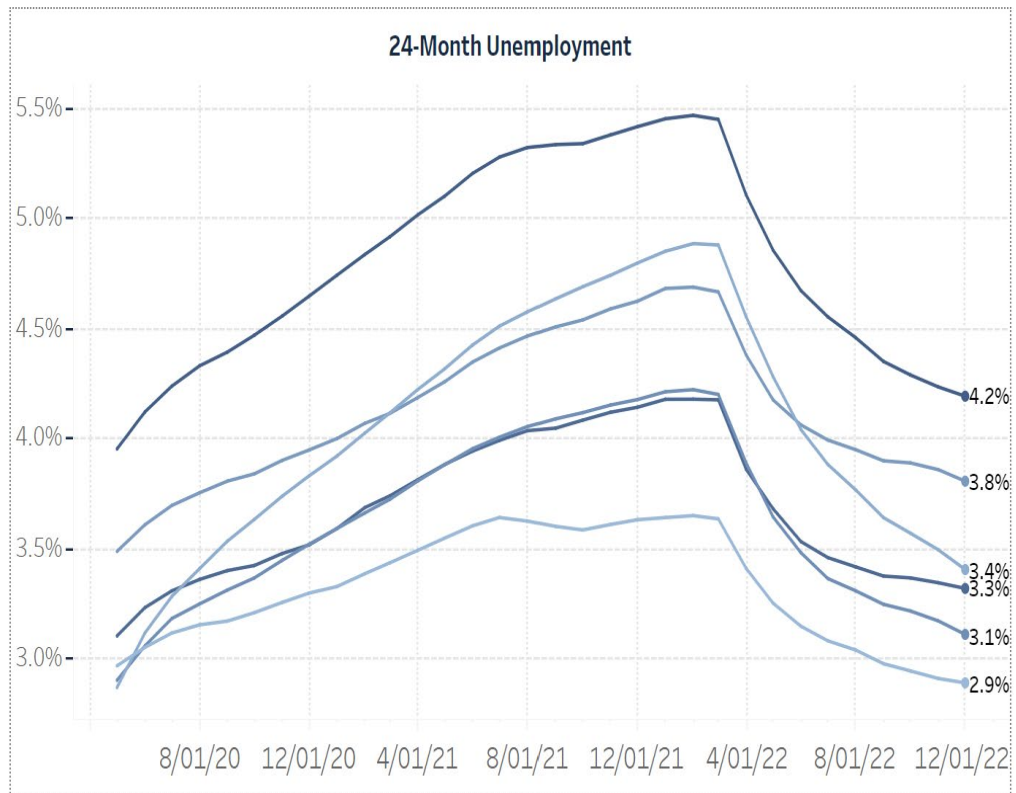


Source | BLS.gov, NERDE Economic Development District Dashboard | Argonne National Laboratory (anl.gov)

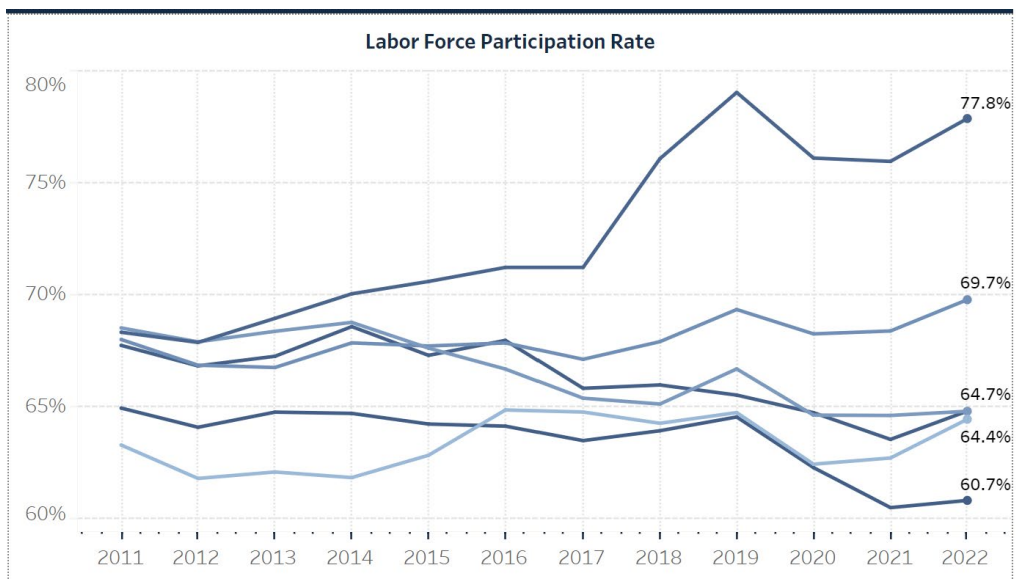
The 6 counties in the region had a downward trend in unemployment during the pre-pandemic years (2011 – 2020) saw a sudden increase in unemployment in 2020 due to the pandemic. Wapello County with the highest unemployment rate of 10.6% also saw the highest increase in unemployment rate due to the pandemic. All counties bounced back and achieved pre-pandemic unemployment rates by 2021 except Wapello county (4.4%).



Source | Census.gov



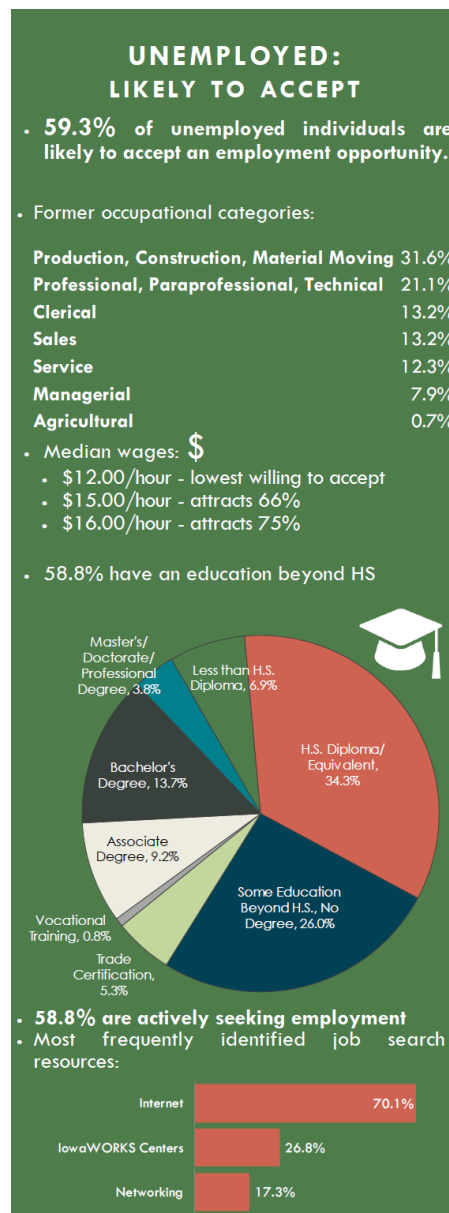
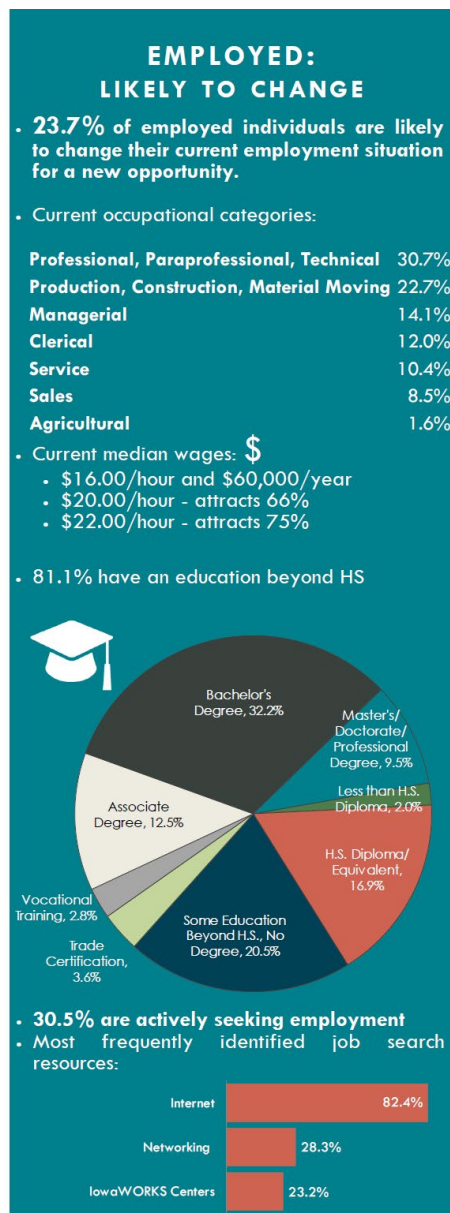
Source | *NERDE Economic Development District Dashboard | Argonne National Laboratory (anl.gov)*



Source | *NERDE Economic Development District Dashboard | Argonne National Laboratory (anl.gov)*

Laborshed

According to the Iowa workforce development's Iowa Labor Market website, a laborshed area is defined by its commuting pattern and illustrates which communities contribute to an employment center's workforce and at what level. The characteristics shown in the following tables are specific to the workforce in the Iowa South's (previously OPPORTUNITY2) Laborshed area. Laborshed analyses for all counties and cities for the region can be found in Appendix G.

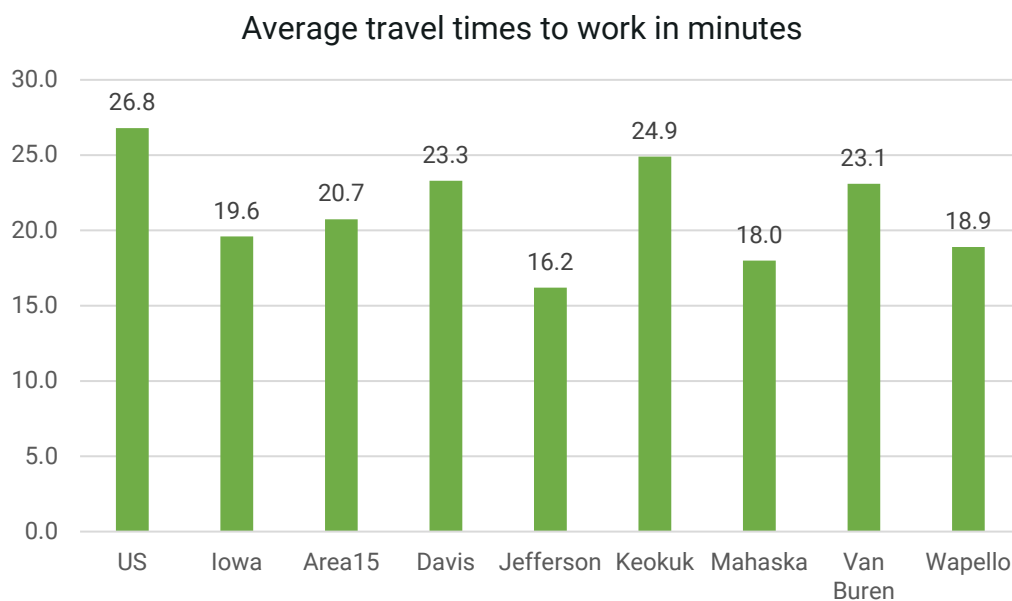


Source – iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov

Commuting

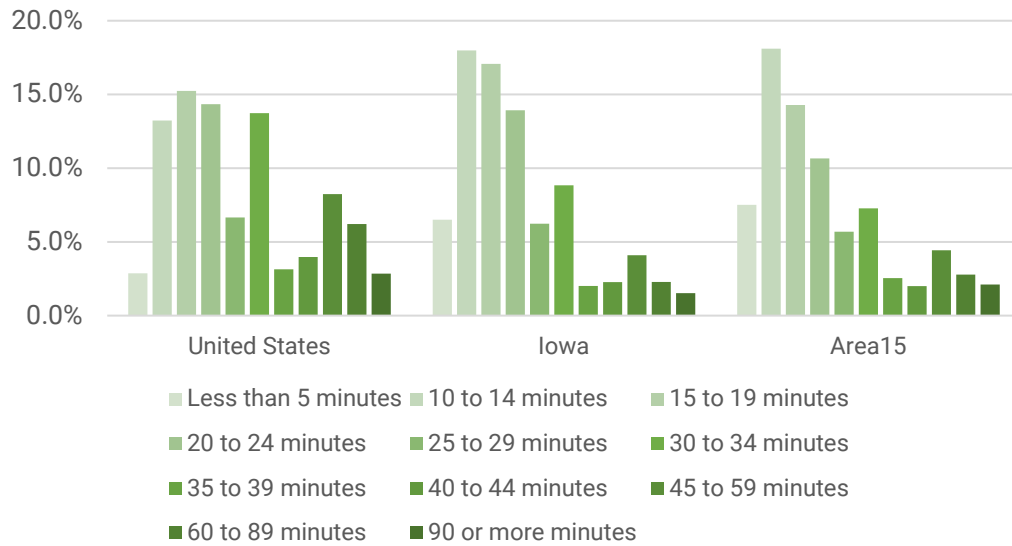
Commuting times for the region are comparable to the states averages and lower than national averages for commutes longer than 25 minutes and much lower for commutes 35 longer than minutes.

The average commuting time for the region is 20.7 minutes, which is close to the State of Iowa's average 19.6 minutes, but less than the national average 26.8 minutes.



Source | Quickfacts - Census.gov

Commuting Times



Source | Census.gov

Industry

The region is home to major industries such as food and beverage manufacturers (like JBS foods, Dr. Pepper), machinery manufacturing (agricultural and construction machinery manufacturing (John Deere), Educational facilities (Indian Hills Community college), automotive components production and warehouse and distribution services, Financial Services, Bioprocessing Center.



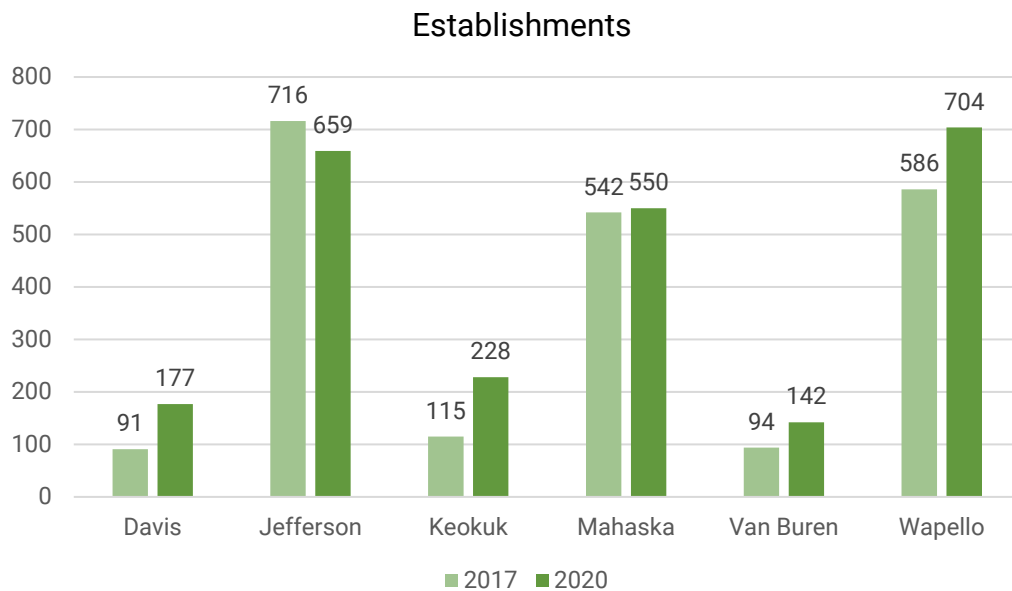
Source | kboeradio.com

Establishments in the Area 15 region -

The region is currently home to 2460 major establishments. The number of establishments in all counties has increased since 2017 except for Jefferson County which lost 55 establishments during this period.

	# of Establishments (2020)	Paid Employees	Annual Payroll (\$1,000s)
Davis	177	1,451	61,584
Jefferson	659	7,160	287,987
Keokuk	228	1,633	63,390
Mahaska	550	6,695	250,870
Van Buren	142	1,462	55,997
Wapello	704	13,510	587,250

Source | Census.gov



Source | Census.gov

Clusters

A Cluster is a regional concentration of related industries in a particular location. Clusters make regions competitive for jobs and investment. They are comprised of companies, suppliers, training agencies. Clusters arise out of various types of linkages and externalities that span across industries. (Clustermapping.org)

The agricultural industries of crop and livestock production are significant economic sectors in the Area 15 region in large part due to the value-added agriculture production facilities in the Region (Table 1). The livestock/crop production industries more than doubled their employment numbers since 2014 (Employment in this industry increased from 1700 in 2014 to 3790 in 2021).

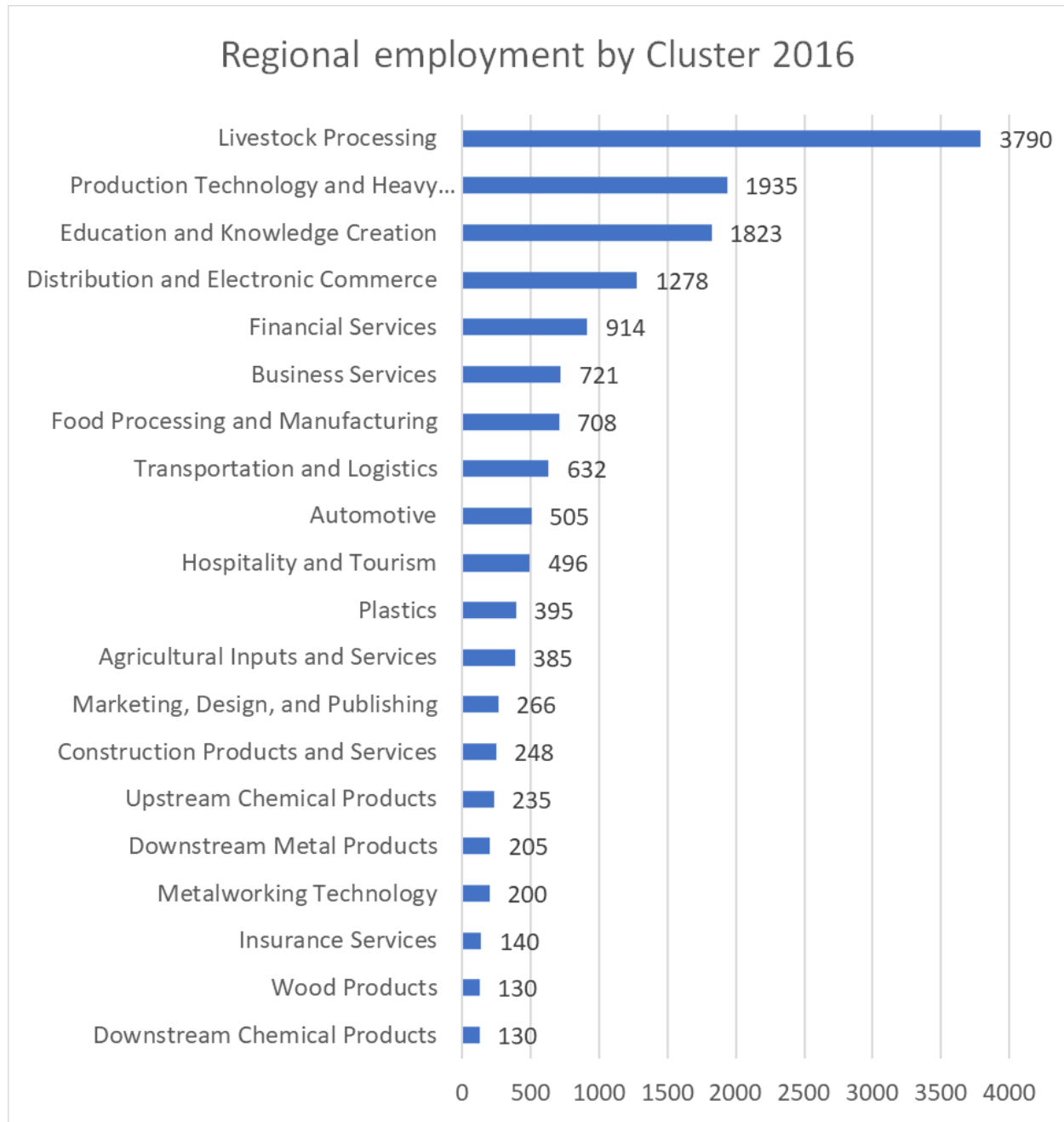
The largest employers in the region include those specializing in livestock processing, production technology and heavy machinery, education and knowledge creation, distribution and electronic commerce, financial services and business services.

Major Agricultural Crop and Livestock production in the 6-county Region
2010 - 2022 Comparison

	2010	2022
Corn	47,050,000 bushels	77,924,000 bushels
Soyabean	17,641,000 bushels	23,529,000 bushels
Oats	85,300 bushels	40,600 bushels
	2008	2022
Cattle and Calves	145,100	138,900

Source - quickstats.nass.usda.gov

The following graph shows Area 15 Regions Employment by Clusters. Livestock Processing was the highest followed by Production Technology and Education and Knowledge Creation clusters.



Source | U.S. Cluster Mapping (<http://clustermapping.us>), Institute for Strategy and Competitiveness, Harvard Business School. Copyright © 2014 President and Fellows of Harvard College. All rights reserved. Research funded in part by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration.

SWOT ANALYSIS

A SWOT analysis helps identify a region's capacity to achieve its economic goals and the threats that prevent the region from achieving its full economic potential. It helps in creating a future planning strategy for the region, by helping understand where the region stands now. The SWOT analysis data also makes it easier to compare the regions trends with the national and state trends which further help with the strategy.

To develop an understanding of the competitive advantages and threats in the region, a SWOT analysis of the region was conducted. Three separate surveys were distributed online to gather input from stakeholders in the region. Cities, counties, business owners, and community members including some youth participated in the survey. A total of 23 city and county surveys, 51 community surveys and 2 youth surveys were returned. Information from the survey was used to identify the Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats and Opportunities of the region. A summary of the top strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats was then prioritized by CEDS Executive Committee. The SWOT analysis helped make decisions on how to capitalize on the strengths and opportunities and overcome the weaknesses and threats and create the action plan.

The following table lists the top Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats as listed by the community. The numbers in parentheses are the number of times they were mentioned in the surveys by the community members and the city and county officials. The CEDS committee then prioritized them. Housing is the top concern for the community followed by infrastructure and workforce. Lack of population growth also is a matter of concern. Sample surveys can be found in Appendix C and the Survey results can be found in Appendix E.

Prioritized SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Priority 1 = High 10 = Low
Good healthcare (5)	3.9
Good Schools (28)	4.0
Employment base, reliable skilled workforce (2)	4.4
Historic downtown square and courthouse (6)	5.3
Quality of life amenities: parks, greenspaces, and trails (23)	5.4
Safe environment low crime rate police protection fire station (5)	5.5
Community pride, friendly small rural community (25)	6.3
Community events community pride (9)	6.6
College Education (5)	6.6
Agricultural Production, ag diversity (18)	7.1

Opportunities	Priority 1 = High 10 = Low
New housing projects, Improving current housing stock (14)	2.8
Attract people to live here. Improve quality of life amenities (3)	3.9
Skilled workforce training/development retain workforce (3)	4.9
Maintain our infrastructure (8)	5.3
Park and recreation improvements (13)	5.8
Get funding for school system (10)	5.9
Develop the Des Moines River and the riverfront. Develop lakes in the region (Fisher and Rathbun) to create water recreation and tourism opportunities (12)	5.9
Attract and create new businesses and industry to Ottumwa (18)	6.3
Parks for organized sports, Sports Complex (8)	6.3
Restaurants (3)	8.3

Weaknesses	Priority 1 = High 10 = Low
Deteriorated housing/lack of housing/lack of affordable housing (21)	2.4
Aging infrastructure (17)	4.5
Lack of long-term vision and long-range planning from leadership (8)	4.9
Lack of skilled workforce (12)	5.0
Lack of population growth (4)	5.6
Lack of quality and good paying jobs (9)	6.3
Aging workforce (5)	6.3
Lack of businesses including department stores (12)	6.4
Lack of funding/investment (8)	6.5
Lack of programs for youth (4)	7.5

Threats	Priority 1 = High 10 = Low
Lack of affordable housing (4)	3.1
Lack of population growth (13)	3.5
Lack of skilled and educated workforce (7)	4.5
Aging infrastructure (6)	4.8
Lack of high paying jobs to attract young families (3)	4.8
Lack of funding, lack of help seeking funding (16)	5.8
Potential threat major employers laying off or closing, difficulty attract new employers	5.8
Rural Iowa brain drain (5)	6.3
Loss of city revenue due to low retail (5)	7.6
High taxes, utility bills (4)	9.0

ACTION PLAN

Major themes that emerged from the SWOT analysis are the lack of affordable and good housing stock, aging infrastructure needing maintenance, lack of skilled workforce and lack of population growth. Quality of life was also cited as important. These themes were then incorporated into goals and objectives that would be used as a guide to define future growth in the region of the next five years.

Goal #1: Housing

Increase and expand housing stock options to all income levels, develop workforce housing, make housing options attractive to potential new businesses and residents.

Housing is an important aspect of any community. Many Community members and City and County officials stated a strong need for more housing as well as renovation of the existing stock of housing. Lack of workforce housing was also a major concern for many residents.



Homes For Iowa, Bloomfield, IA



Objectives:

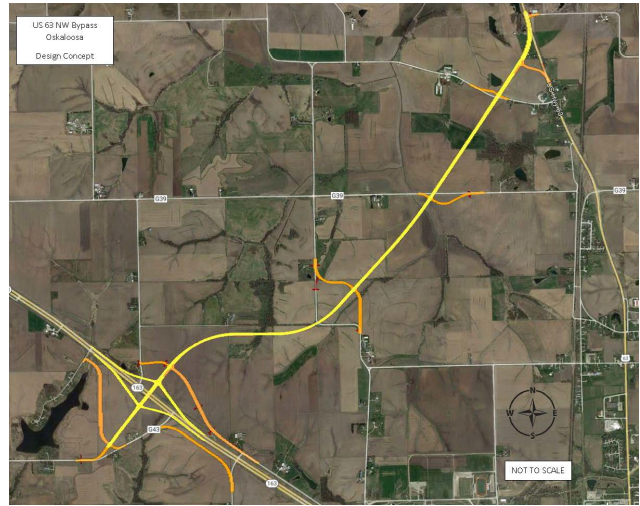
1. Increase home ownership, encourage new housing units and housing rehabilitation.
 - a. Increase current housing stock – Promote funding for new and diverse types of housing. Promote funding opportunities to residents, communities, employers, financial institutions, development agencies, realtors
 - b. Provide housing rehabilitation and renovation assistance for owner-based housing to low-to- moderate residents
 - c. Provide tenant-based rental/utility assistance to very low income (less than 30% MHI) households
 - d. Encourage home buying to low-income residents through down-payment assistance.
 - e. Provide financial assistance for owner occupied or rental units construction for low to medium income households
 - f. Encourage industries to build workforce housing
 - g. Encourage developers to build diverse housing units
2. Improve current housing stock
 - a. Provide owner occupied housing rehabilitation assistance to low- and medium-income residents.
 - b. Conduct housing need assessments and/or housing conditions surveys.
 - c. Work with cities to ensure codification allows for enforcement of neighborhood appearance.
 - d. Encourage cities and counties to buy out vacant dilapidated properties to create new low-income housing.

Goal #2: Infrastructure Improvements

Plan and invest in infrastructure improvements including roads, rail, bridges, telecommunications systems and transportation systems, sidewalks, and water, sewer and stormwater systems.



Amtrak Groundbreaking



US 63 NW Bypass Oskaloosa

Aging infrastructure is a major concern for many in the community. Good infrastructure is an important aspect for the economic growth of a community. Streets, sewer, water, roads, were the areas of concern. Fast broadband is now critical for businesses and employees to be able to work efficiently.

Objectives:

1. Increase broadband access to the maximum communities in the region.
 - a. Help communities avail the available broadband resources. Provide assistance communicating and setting up fast internet through the broadband companies.
 - b. Help the broadband companies reach out to all the rural and urban communities in the region.
2. Maintain current infrastructure and expand as necessary to meet the needs of the current and future population and industries.
 - a. Plan and program infrastructure replacement and expansion as needed.
 - b. Plan and program stormwater management projects.

- 
- c. Assist cities and counties address their infrastructure needs and apply for the available grants.
 - d. Create communication channels to communicate with telecommunication and utility companies in case of emergencies and service disruptions.
 - 3. Maintain and expand transportation networks as necessary to meet the needs of the current and future population and industries.
 - a. Plan and program highway, road, bridge, air, and rail projects.
 - b. Identify and access financial assistance for road/highway improvements for business/industry.
 - c. Work with cities and counties to research ride sharing opportunities.
 - d. Update and maintain a regional long-range Transportation Plan.
 - 4. Reduce the effect of natural hazards, utility, telecommunication and transportation disruptions through planning and mitigation projects.
 - a. Ensure Hazard Mitigation Plans are current and adopted for all counties in the region
 - b. Plan and program mitigation projects
 - c. Maintain communication channels to communicate with telecommunication and utility companies to plan for any service disruptions/improvements.

Goal #3: Economic/Business Development

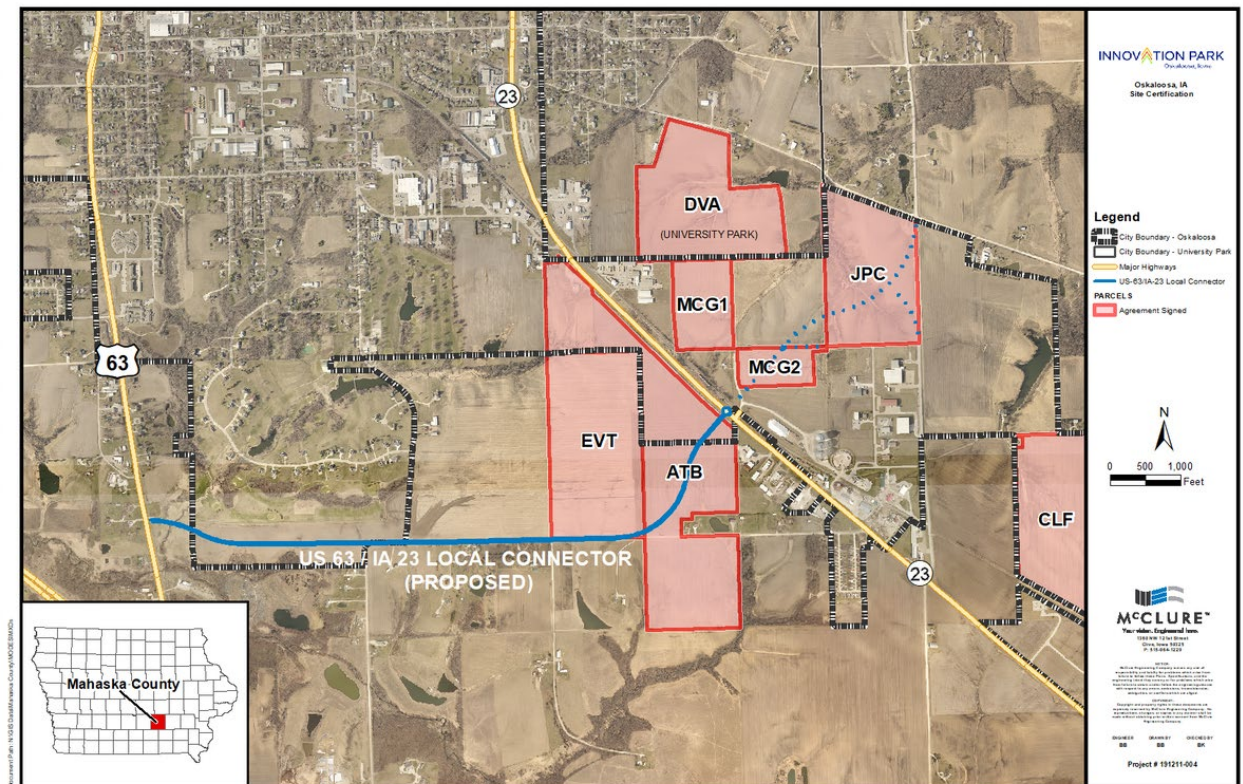
Boost the regional economy through industry and creation of new employment opportunities through expansion of new industries. Attract industries that use talent and skills that already exist in the region's population. Train and support potential entrepreneurship in the region.

Economic development is vital to the sustainability and quality of life of the region.

Objectives:

1. Create/ expand skilled employment opportunities in the region.
 - a. Promote entrepreneurship and assist new businesses.
 - b. Identify and recruit target businesses and industries for the region.
 - c. Identify and communicate availability of financial assistance for new as well as expanding businesses.
 - d. Advertise the availability of buildings/sites/available workforce to the concerned groups.
 - e. Maintain strong communication between EDCs, IEDA and EDA.
 - f. Foster growth of industrial parks and certified sites
 - g. Provide technical assistance to communities and EDCs related to economic development initiatives and funding opportunities.
2. Develop new business opportunities or expansions and capital investments within the region.
 - a. Advertise/Market availability of financial assistance for new as well as expanding businesses.
 - b. Accelerate regional marketing efforts to increase awareness of buildings/sites/available workforce to the concerned groups.
 - c. Foster growth of industrial parks and certified sites
 - d. Provide technical assistance to communities and EDCs related to economic development initiatives and funding opportunities.
 - e. Track private investment and jobs created in the region.
3. Support and create entrepreneurial initiatives for retail and commercial development.
 - a. Advertise/Market availability of financial assistance for new as well as expanding businesses.

- b. Accelerate regional marketing efforts to increase awareness of buildings/sites/ available workforce to the concerned groups.
 - c. Provide technical assistance to communities and EDCs related to economic development initiatives and funding opportunities.
- 4. Explore industry diversity with a focus on innovative clusters.
 - a. Maintain strong communication between EDCs, IEDA and EDA.
 - b. Foster growth of industrial parks and certified sites
 - c. Track private investment and jobs created in the region.



Proposed Certified site for an Innovation Park through Iowa EDA at the proposed US 63/US 23 Local Connector



Before and After pictures of Oskaloosa Façade Project 2017

Goal #4: Workforce Development

Develop and retain a highly- trained workforce that meets the needs of current and future employers and attracts more businesses and industry to the region.

Workforce development and retainment was very important to many survey takers. The percentage of population over 65 years of age is higher in the region than the state and national averages. Workforce development will help the economic development of the region by making the region attractive for industries and businesses. Marketing the available workforce development programs as well as available financial incentives is required to make residents and businesses/industries aware of the opportunities.



Objectives:

1. Identify workforce needs of current and potential future employers in the region
 - a. Pursue workforce development initiatives.
 - b. Regularly update and disseminate county and regional laborshed analyses
2. Support educational opportunities for current and potential workforce members
 - a. Promote career opportunities for advanced manufacturing, bioprocessing and other industries in the region
 - b. Train high school teachers the necessary skills and opportunities with region industries through the Educators in the Workplace program
 - c. Maintain strong communication between EDCs, IHCC, JobCorps, Iowa Workforce Development, and industry members
 - d. Regularly update and disseminate county and regional laborshed analyses
3. Improve employee retention in the region
 - a. Promote career opportunities for advanced manufacturing, bioprocessing and other industries in the region
 - b. Train high school teachers the necessary skills and opportunities with region industries through the Educators in the Workplace program

- c. Maintain strong communication between EDCs, IHCC, JobCorps, Iowa Workforce Development, and industry members.

Goal #5: Quality of Life

Find regional solutions to resident needs and increase quality of life in communities to retain populations, including families and senior residents, and attract new residents and businesses.

Research shows that investments in quality of life and place are equally important if not more than traditional economic development tools. (Improving quality of life—not just business—is the best path to Midwestern rejuvenation (brookings.edu). The region must offer better quality of life amenities such as good schools, parks, recreational and transportation opportunities to attract and retain population. Quality of life was also ranked high on the SWOT analysis.




Ottumwa Balloon Festival



Keosauqua Loop Trail

Objectives:

1. increased awareness and support recreational and cultural opportunities to residents and potential residents and businesses

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- a. Maintain communications with municipalities, tourism organizations, chambers of commerce, and Main Street organizations to understand the region's recreational and cultural amenities and needs
 - b. Seek and create new avenues of communications with cities to advertise grant opportunities for recreational and arts and cultural projects
 2. Improve and expand recreational facilities in the region
 - a. Plan and program trail development/expansion projects
 - b. Develop new, or improve existing, recreational facilities, especially youth focused opportunities
 - c. Maintain communications with municipalities, tourism organizations, chambers of commerce, and Main Street organizations to understand the region's recreational and cultural amenities and needs
 3. Create more diverse and attractive commercial districts
 - a. Encourage and facilitate planning and development of downtown revitalization projects including upper-story housing, facades, streetscapes and parking lots
 - b. Seek and create new avenues of communications with cities to advertise grant opportunities for recreational and arts and cultural projects
 4. Ensure consideration of low-to-moderate income residents in the development of quality-of-life initiatives
 - a. Plan and program trail development/expansion projects
 - b. Develop new, or improve existing, recreational facilities, especially youth-focused opportunities
 - c. Support development or improvement of childcare, schools, police/fire, medical, libraries, or other facilities/services within the region.
 - d. Plan and program public transportation projects
 5. Increase businesses and organizations which provide healthy living services and initiatives
 - a. Plan and program trail development/expansion projects
 - b. Develop new, or improve existing, recreational facilities, especially youth-focused opportunities
 - c. Plan and program public transportation projects

RESILIENCY PLANNING

Resiliency planning involves the ability to minimize the effects of shocks and disruptions to a regions economic base to a region The economic resiliency of a region depends on the income equality and income diversification in the region. Understanding a region's economics strengths and weaknesses against national averages help identify trends and better inform resiliency planning for such events.

Area 15 RPC collaborates closely with regional partners to address resiliency through both steady-state and responsive initiatives.

Steady-state initiatives encompass long-term plans. All six counties, often with the assistance of Area 15 RPC, maintain a current Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan to identify natural disaster risks and mitigation techniques to reduce risk. Area 15 RPC works with area economic developers and Iowa South to comprehend industry needs, issues, and trends to prepare for business changes in the region. A copy of the Area 15 EDD disaster plan can be found in Appendix L.

Steady-state resilience efforts utilized in the region include:

1. Comprehensive Planning
2. Hazard Mitigation Planning
3. Grant writing and administration of hazard mitigation projects, such as storm sirens, safe rooms, and stormwater reduction
4. Developing business and retention programs to assist firms with economic recovery post-disruption
5. Building a resilient workforce that can switch between jobs or industries when employment opportunities change
6. Promoting new industry with a focus on economic diversity
7. Employing safe development practices, such as locating projects and structures outside of floodplains
8. Responsive economic resilience includes reactive plans establishing capabilities to recover from an incident.



Initiatives utilized in the region include:

1. Conducting post disaster recovery planning
2. Establishing a process for regular communication, monitoring, and updating business community needs and issues
3. Establishing a plan to rapidly contact key local, regional, state, and federal officials to communicate business sector needs and coordinate impact assessment efforts

Establishing coordination mechanisms and leadership succession plans for recovery needs.

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Continual evaluation of the CEDS using is an important function in the execution of the plan. The CEDS goals and strategies, with project partners, can be found in Appendix I. Evaluation mechanisms gauge progress on the implementation of the goals and objectives identified in the CEDS and the impact on the regional economy. These mechanisms are useful in providing information for the CEDS annual performance Update and ensuring the plan remains updated and relevant. A list of strategic projects is in Appendix J.



Jefferson County Kids "Little Achievers"

As part of the evaluation process, Area 15 RPC plans to continue to conduct yearly surveys of city and county representatives to have an accurate understanding of the needs of the region, and to identify new projects which align with the CEDS plan. In addition, several performance measures will be tracked to ensure the plan's goals and objectives are being reached.

These performance measures include:

- Number of jobs created/retained
- Improvement of existing or development of new infrastructure
- Number and types of public and private investment undertaken in the region
- Amount of private sector investment in the region
- Number of projects assisted by Area 15 RPC
- Amount of grant and local dollars invested in the region



Ottumwa Façade project

APPENDICES



Appendix A | List of Higher Education Institutions

Appendix B | Major Employers in the Region

Appendix C | Surveys

Appendix D | 2023 Survey Press Release

Appendix E | Survey Results

Appendix F | SWOT Prioritized

Appendix G | Laborshed Analysis

Appendix H | Risk Analysis FEMA Report

Appendix I | Goals and Strategies for Evaluation

Appendix J | Projects

Appendix K | William Penn Enrollment Profile