

# **2020 - 2025 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy**

**EAPDD**

East Arkansas  
Planning & Development District





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## EAPDD Board of Directors

Clay County Judge	Judge Mike Patterson	Mayor of Aubrey	Mayor Stephen Powell
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Craighead County Judge	Judge Marvin Day	Mayor of Blytheville	Mayor James Sanders
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Mayor of Brookland	Mayor Kenneth Jones	Phillips County Judge	Judge Clark Hall
Crittenden County Judge	Judge Woody Wheelless	Mayor of Helena-West Helena	Mayor Kevin Smith
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Cross County Judge	Judge Donnie Sanders	Member at large	Mr. Leon Phillips
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Mayor of Cherry Valley	Mayor Adam Love	Mayor of Trumann	Mayor Barbara Lewallen
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Greene County Judge	Judge Rusty McMillon	Randolph County Judge	Judge David Jansen
Mayor of Paragould	Mayor Mike Gaskill	Mayor of Pocahontas	Mayor Keith Sutton
City of Marmaduke	Mayor Steve Dixon	Mayor of Ravenden Springs	Mayor Johnny Cochran
Lawrence County Judge	Judge John Thomison	St Francis County Judge	Judge Gary Hughes
Mayor of Walnut Ridge	Mayor Charles Snapp	Mayor of Hughes	Mayor Lincoln Barnett
Mayor of Black Rock	Mayor Bonnie Ragsdale	Mayor of Forrest City	Mayor Cedric Williams
Lee County Judge	Judge Terry Sandefer	Mayor of Marianna	Mayor Jimmy Williams





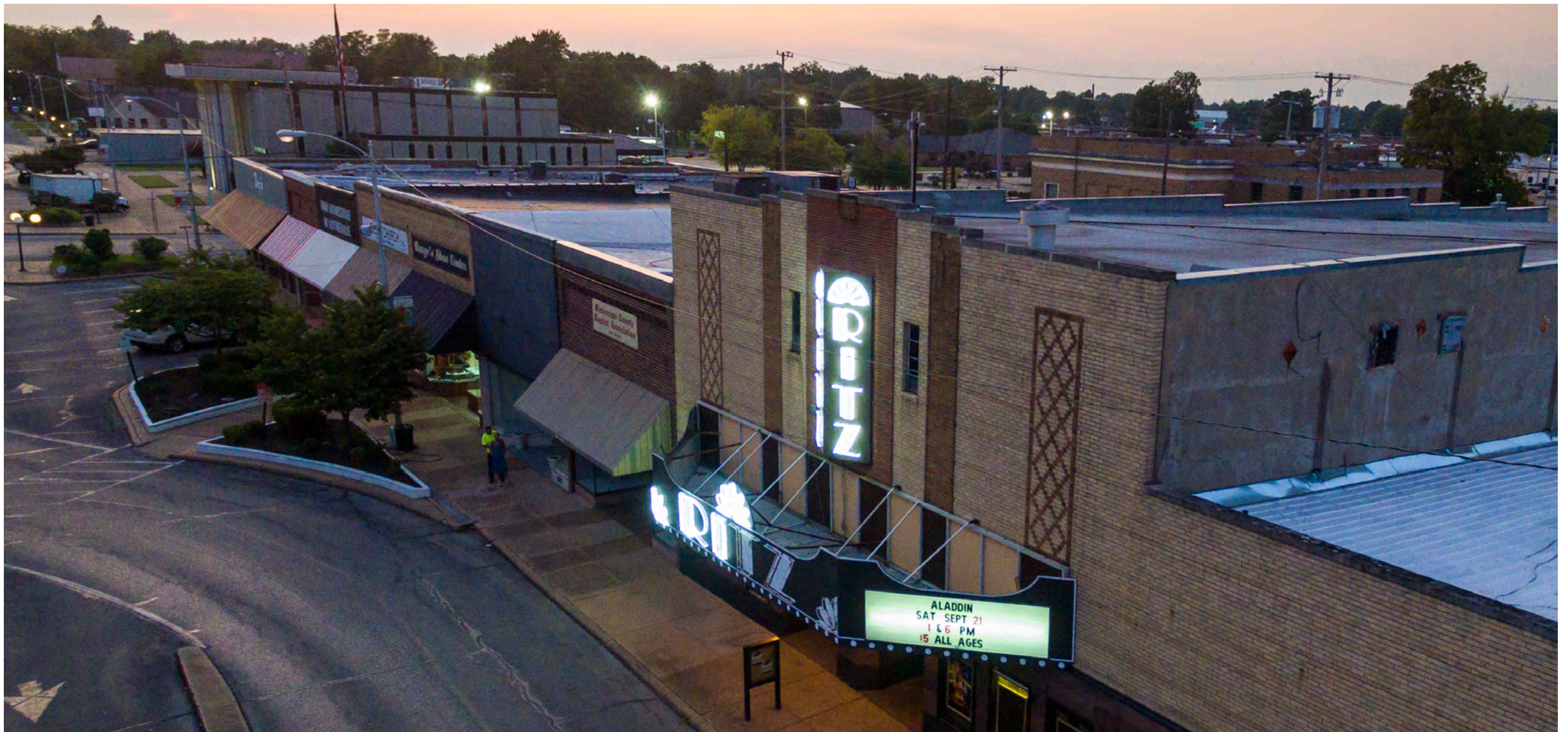
# INTRODUCTION

## What is a CEDS?

A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, (CEDS) is designed to bring together the public and private sectors in the creation of an economic roadmap to diversify and strengthen regional economies. The CEDS should analyze the regional economy and serve as a guide for establishing regional goals and objectives, developing and implementing a regional plan of action, and identifying investment priorities and funding sources. A CEDS integrates a region's human and physical capital planning in the service of economic development. Integrated economic development planning provides the flexibility to adapt to global economic conditions and fully utilize the region's unique advantages to maximize economic opportunity for its residents by attracting the private investment that creates jobs for the region's residents. A CEDS must be the result of a continuing economic development planning process developed with broad-based and diverse public and private sector participation, and must set forth the goals and objectives necessary to solve the economic development problems of the region and clearly define the metrics of success. Finally, a CEDS provides a useful benchmark by which a regional economy can evaluate opportunities with other regions in the national economy.

The CEDS is a mandated document by the Economic Development Administration, (EDA) to define Economic Development Districts throughout the nation. EDA, East Arkansas Planning and Development District and the CEDS Strategy Committee to provide this document for the reference of economic conditions, development strategies and projects through the 12-county district; this CEDS is not intended to be used as a "stand-alone" document. The CEDS is just one tool used in economic development.





## EAPDD Region

Nestled against the Mississippi River to the east, Missouri to the north and the Ozark Mountains to the west, East Arkansas is an area of lush farms, rich heritage and diverse population. Its natural beauty is surpassed only by the beauty of the people who call this place home.

It's a region of contrasts: areas of economic growth versus severe decline; fertile land versus extreme poverty; a variety of educational options versus low educational attainment. Yet even with the dichotomous complexity, there is a spirit that pervades the region and binds it together. The gritty determination to persevere through hardship and make a positive difference is embedded in the culture.

This determination is what sets East Arkansas apart. It's an area with great, untapped potential. As one of the world's leaders in agricultural production, the land is a valuable resource. However, there are other attributes that make East Arkansas a region on the brink of revitalization. Wondrous beauty, unique heritage, excellent access to markets,

top-notch educational institutions and world-class healthcare facilities provide the backbone for development and growth.

The challenge for the region is one of resources. Years of decline have left communities – especially small towns – in financial straits. Finding the funds to take care of existing assets is difficult – investing in new projects is nearly impossible. This has led to a cycle of outmigration and additional decline, leaving the best and the brightest with no choice but to leave the area to seek opportunity.

Change is coming, however slowly. In recent years, though the population has continued to decline in much of the region, every county saw positive growth in the age group between 25 and 44. New, significant investments from outside of the region have started to impact economic opportunity. Growth in cities like Jonesboro and Paragould has begun to spread. For the first time in many years, there is a sense of optimism about the future.



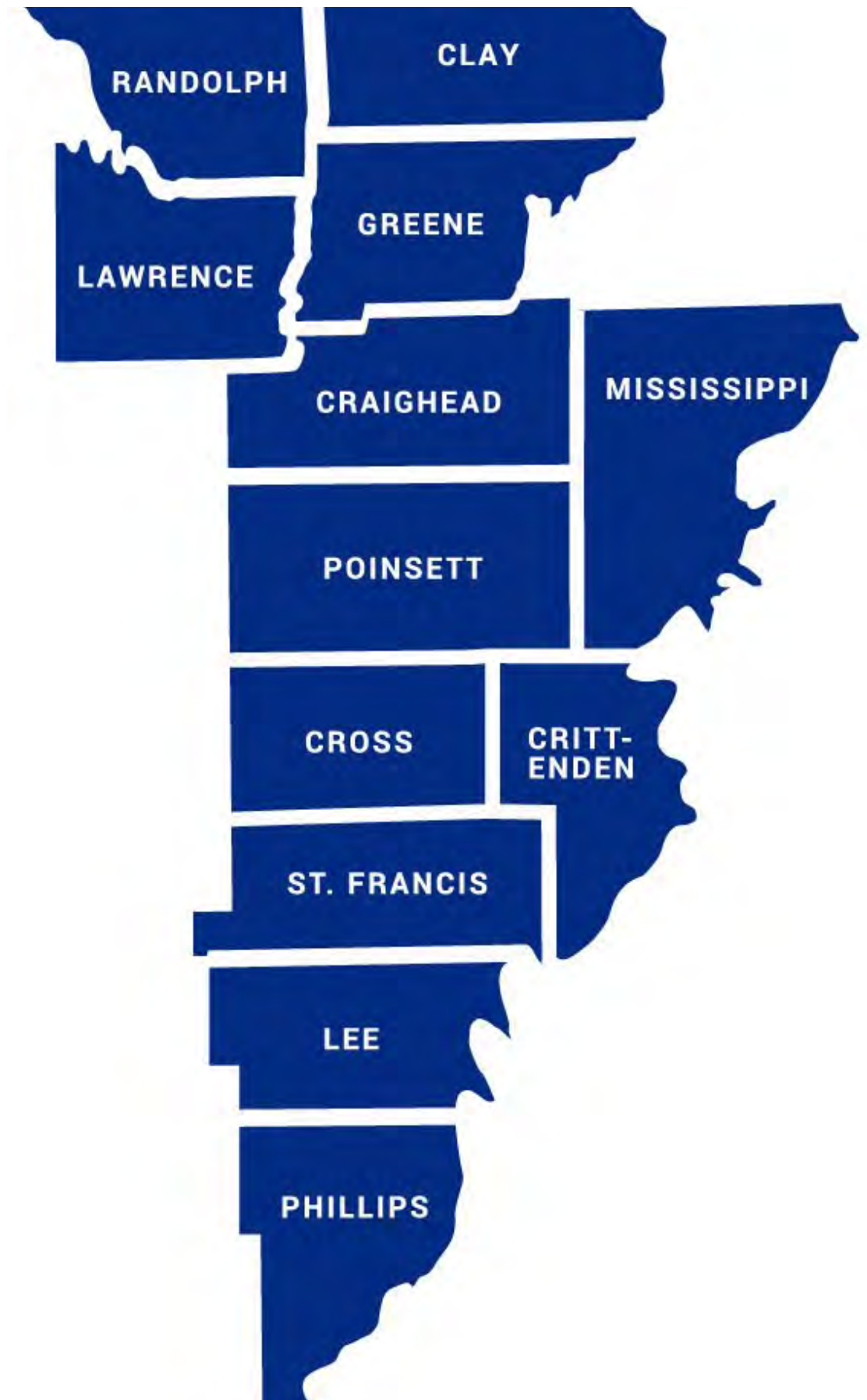
# SUMMARY BACKGROUND

The regional and county snapshots shown on the following pages highlight the demographic and economic statistics of the region. As the data shows, the largest industries are currently related to Government, Health Care, Retail, and Manufacturing. To support these industries, and develop a broader foundation in other industries such as manufacturing and professional services, it is essential that local governments in the region continue collaborate on essential services such as infrastructure, broadband, and housing.

Between 2010 and 2018 there was anticipated decline of 1%. The minor decrease is due to the fact that Craighead County is expected to see an increase during this time period of 12.6%. The other 11 counties are expected to see decreases from .1% - 17%.

A growing demographic is of those aged 25 - 44. This reflects the region's attraction due to significant investments from outside of the region. Growth in cities like Jonesboro and Paragould has begun to spread minimizing the decrease in population for the EAPDD region. This requires planning and strategic investment to address the needs of the 25 - 44 population through additional transportation options, infrastructure improvements, and consideration of land use design incorporating transportation. This demographic is also a resource for additional workforce development in the region.

East Arkansas Planning and Development District serves a twelve county area in the north east part of the state, including Clay, Craighead, Crittenden, Cross, Greene, Lawrence, Lee, Mississippi, Phillips, Poinsett, Randolph, St. Francis Counties.







## Environment

EAPDD is located in the heart of the Arkansas Delta region. This region is part of the Mississippi embayment and bisected by Crowley's Ridge. As a result there are flat fertile areas where a variety of agriculture is grown. There are areas of this regions that consist of marsh. A majority of the EAPDD region is in the Upper Delta with Two Counties resting in another area known as the Lower Delta.

## Population

Population has steadily declined in the region over the past fifty years. In all but two of the twelve counties, population is shrinking. Eight of the twelve have fewer people now than they did in 1980.

The result is a region with a contracting tax base, decreasing resources and fewer opportunities for its citizens. Changing this trend will be an important milestone for the region in the future.

## Poverty

Poverty rates continue to be high in East Arkansas, as is the case for much of the Delta. In fact, six of the twelve counties in the region are classified as "Persistent Poverty Counties," having rates of over 20% consistently for the past thirty years. Extreme poverty takes its toll on a region, making the climb to prosperity even more difficult.





## Economy

To thrive economically, the region must continue to be a place where talented people – and businesses-want to be. Which includes preserving the high quality of life in the region and providing the critical infrastructure needed by businesses to succeed.

Supporting the economy is s a system of infrastructure that provides the critical services necessary for the well being of residents, the success of businesses and the safety of communities.

Many of the region's communities do not have Broadband Internet service and it limited to the more urban areas. In addition, the topography, geology, and hydrology of the region combines to dramatically increase the cost of building and maintaining infrastructure in our region.

Local and State jurisdictions must work together to develop a well-balanced system of infrastructure, economic and community development that serves residents, supports communities and attracts new businesses to ensure both economic vitality and environmental resiliency.

## Culture

While the region's natural assets are unparalleled, it is the cultural traditions that set EAPDD apart. Using natural resources in the area, farmers and industry have created a culture unto its own ie;

Farming and manufacturing in the region have contributed to a resilient and self-sufficient people and a unique and thriving culture.

Festivals, fairs, and other community events are a huge part of the regions pastimes and nuances. From College football at Arkansas State University to attending the King Biscuit Blues Festival there are a diverse number of activities for all ages and interest.





## Outdoor Recreation

Outdoor recreation plays a major role in the EAPDD region. With such a diverse region there is an opportunity for everyone to enjoy the area. This includes the numerous waterfronts that dot the region as well. There are also multiple trails that are managed by the Arkansas State Parks System as well as the National Park Services.

Activities in this region include kayaking, biking, fishing, horseback riding and hunting just to name a few. This area is know for its wide variety of hunting

activities. As a result people from all over will come to hunt and vacation in this area of the state.

Hiking the many trails and heritage sites are another popular activity for this area. Sites will include Crowleys Ridge Nature Center as well as the Parkin Archeological State Park. These activities vary in their degree of intensity making it ideal for almost everyone in the family to enjoy.



# Workforce Development

The East Arkansas Planning and Development area is composed up of two Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDA) which are the Northeast Arkansas Workforce Development Area and the Eastern Arkansas Workforce Development Area. Both areas have experienced a decline in population. Top industry in the EAPDD region and are expected to see growth include. Construction, Manufacturing, Trade,/Transport/Utilities, Financial Activities, Professional/Business Services, Education/Health Services, Leisure, and Government.

County	Civilian Labor Force	Number of Employed	Number of Unemployed	Unemployment Rate (%)
Crittenden County	21,641	20,819	822	3.8
Cross County	7,396	7,086	310	4.2
Lee County	2,853	2,719	134	4.7
Phillips County	6,372	5,970	402	6.3
St. Francis County	8,123	7,734	389	4.8
Clay County	5,639	5,348	291	5.2
Craighead County	55,271	53,852	1,419	2.6
Greene County	19,947	19,278	669	3.4
Lawrence County	6,865	6,587	278	4
Mississippi County	17,333	16,475	858	5
Poinsett County	10,483	10,125	358	3.4
Randolph County	7,366	7,075	291	4
EAPDD Region	169,289	163,068	6221	3.8

Source: <http://www.discover.arkansas.gov/Local-Area-Statistics>



# Clay County

Clay  
EAPDD  
Arkansas  
National



Median Household Income

## Median Household Income

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS

Clay  
EAPDD  
Arkansas  
National



Homeowner cost  
+30% Income

Gross rent  
+30% Income

## Housing Affordability

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS



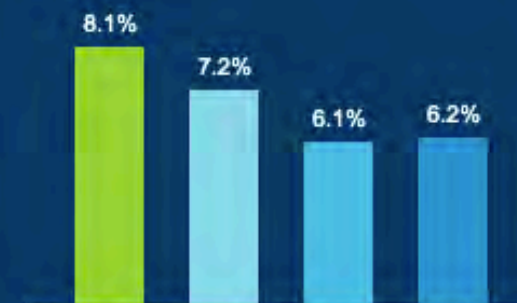
74%  
Enrolled

26% Other

## Pre-K Enrollment

Source: U.S. DOE, Census Bureau.  
% of Population Age 3-4.

Clay  
EAPDD  
Arkansas  
National

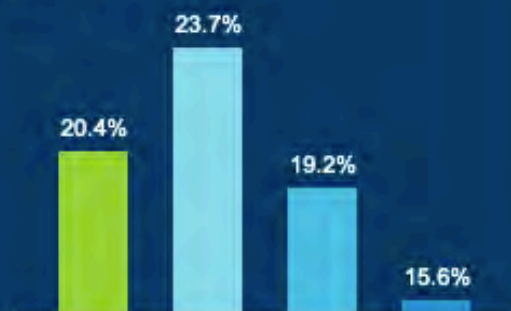


March 2015

## Unemployment Rate

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics  
Not Seasonally Adjusted

Clay  
EAPDD  
AR  
USA

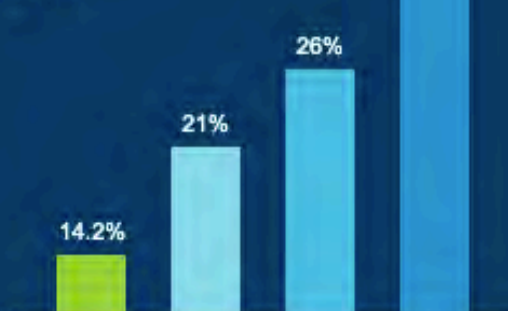


Poverty Rates

## Poverty Rates

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS 5YR

Clay  
EAPDD  
AR  
USA

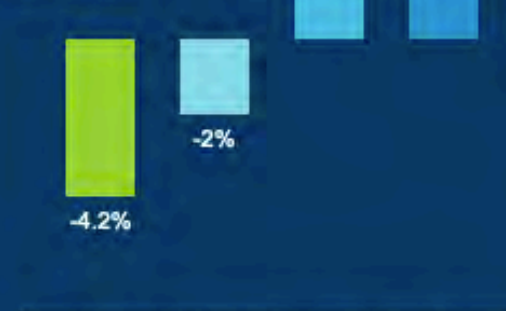


Associate's Degree or Better

## Associate's Degree or Better

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2013 ACS 5YR  
\*For persons 25 or older

Clay  
EAPDD  
Arkansas  
National

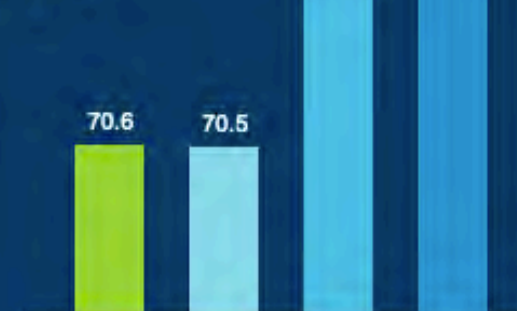


April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2014

## Rate of Population Change

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS 5YR

Clay  
EAPDD  
AR  
USA



Life Expectancy

## Life Expectancy

Source: Measures of America  
2011



# Craighead County

Craighead  
 EAPDD  
 Arkansas  
 National

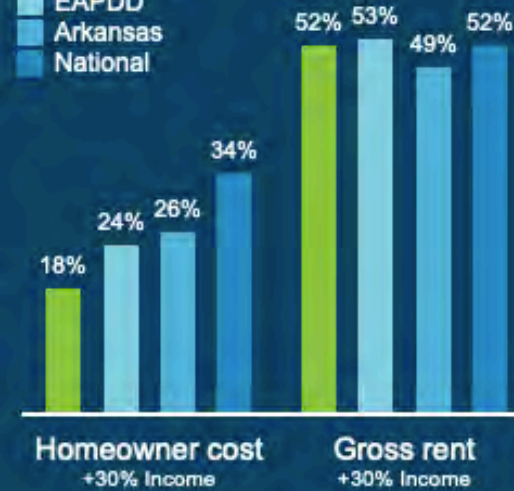


Median Household Income

## Median Household Income

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS

Craighead  
 EAPDD  
 Arkansas  
 National



Housing Affordability

## Housing Affordability

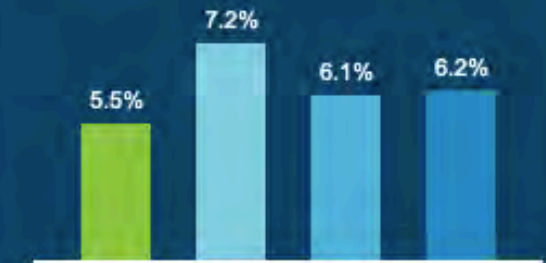
Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS



## Pre-K Enrollment

Source: U.S. DOE, Census Bureau  
% of Population Age 3-4

Craighead  
 EAPDD  
 Arkansas  
 National

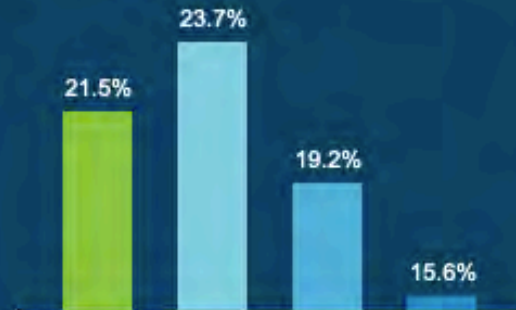


March 2015

## Unemployment Rate

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics  
Not Seasonally Adjusted

Craighead  
 EAPDD  
 AR  
 USA

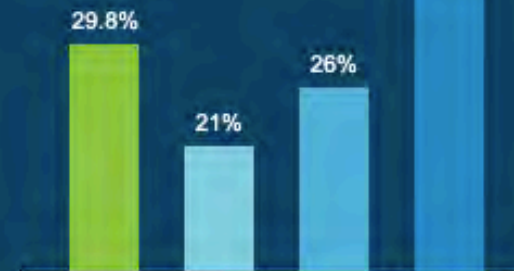


Poverty Rates

## Poverty Rates

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS 5YR

Craighead  
 EAPDD  
 AR  
 USA

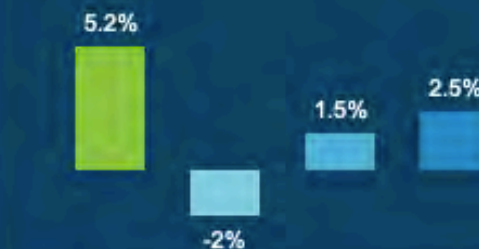


Associate's Degree or Better

## Associate's Degree or Better

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2013 ACS 5YR  
\*For persons 25 or older

Craighead  
 EAPDD  
 Arkansas  
 National

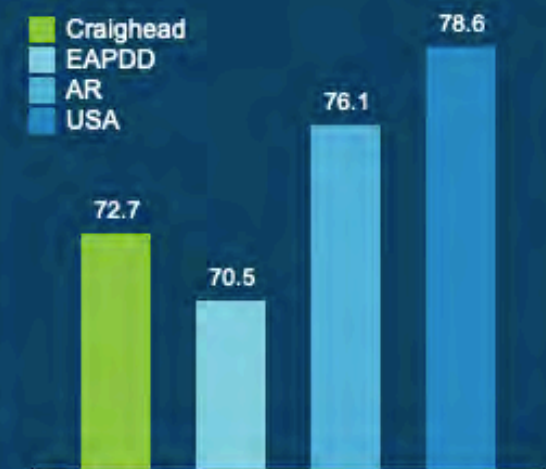


April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2014

## Rate of Population Change

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS 5YR

Craighead  
 EAPDD  
 AR  
 USA



Life Expectancy

## Life Expectancy

Source: Measures of America  
2011



# Crittenden County

■ Crittenden  
■ EAPDD  
■ Arkansas  
■ National

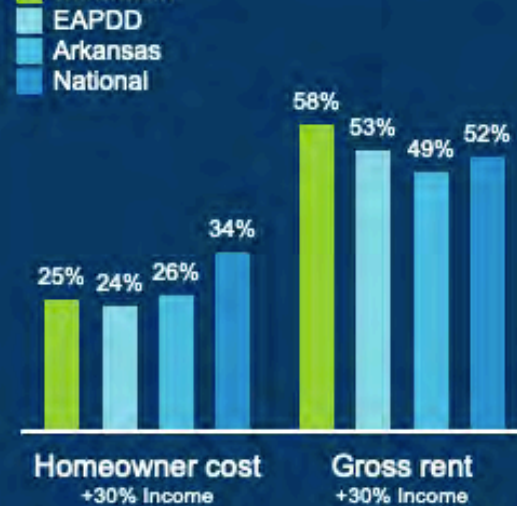


Median Household Income

## Median Household Income

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS

■ Crittenden  
■ EAPDD  
■ Arkansas  
■ National



Homeowner cost  
+30% Income

Gross rent  
+30% Income

## Housing Affordability

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS



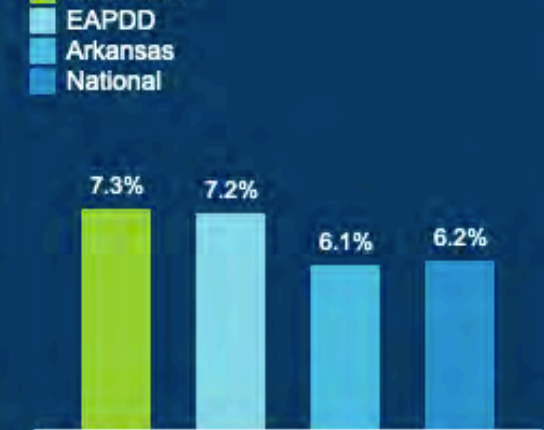
52%  
Enrolled

48% Other

## Pre-K Enrollment

Source: U.S. DOE, Census Bureau.  
% of Population Age 3-4

■ Crittenden  
■ EAPDD  
■ Arkansas  
■ National

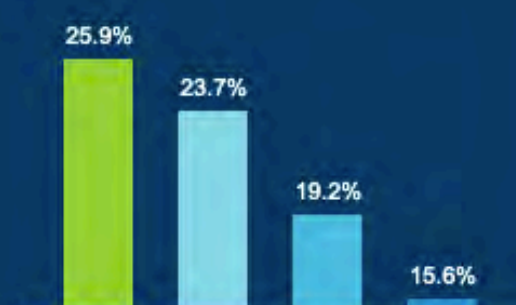


March 2015

## Unemployment Rate

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics  
Not Seasonally Adjusted

■ Crittenden  
■ EAPDD  
■ AR  
■ USA

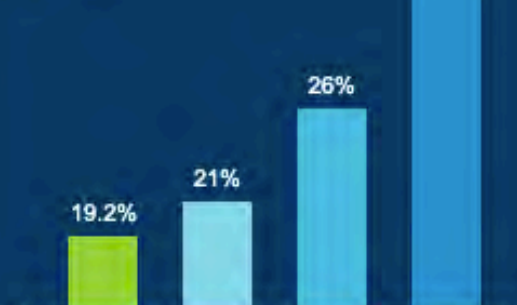


Poverty Rates

## Poverty Rates

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS 5YR

■ Crittenden  
■ EAPDD  
■ AR  
■ USA

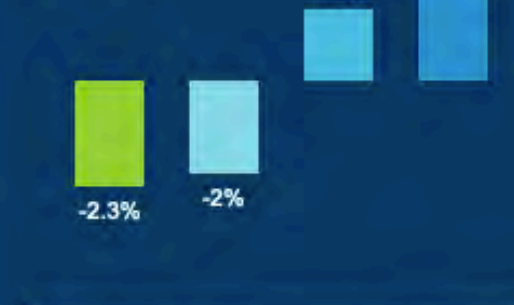


Associate's Degree or Better

## Associate's Degree or Better

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2013 ACS 5YR  
\*For persons 25 or older

■ Crittenden  
■ EAPDD  
■ Arkansas  
■ National

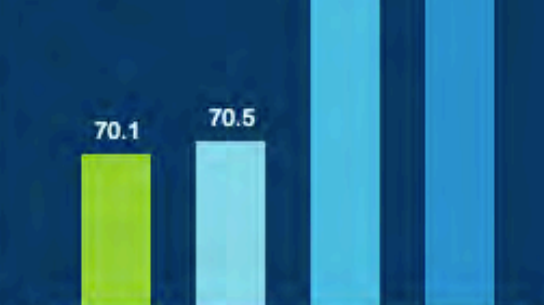


April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2014

## Rate of Population Change

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS 5YR

■ Crittenden  
■ EAPDD  
■ AR  
■ USA



Life Expectancy

## Life Expectancy

Source: Measures of America  
2011



# Cross County

■ Cross  
■ EAPDD  
■ Arkansas  
■ National



Median Household Income

## Median Household Income

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS

■ Cross  
■ EAPDD  
■ Arkansas  
■ National



Homeowner cost +30% Income  
Gross rent +30% Income

## Housing Affordability

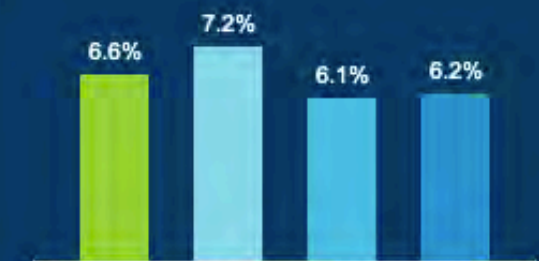
Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS



## Pre-K Enrollment

Source: U.S. DOE, Census Bureau.  
% of Population Age 3-4.

■ Cross  
■ EAPDD  
■ Arkansas  
■ National

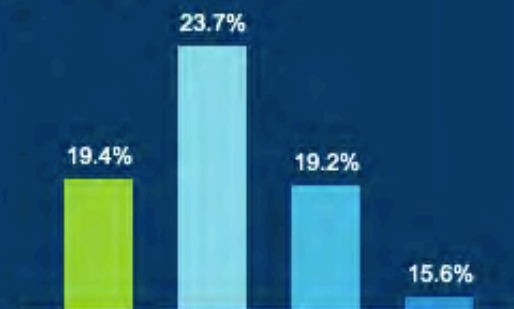


March 2015

## Unemployment Rate

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics  
Not Seasonally Adjusted

■ Cross  
■ EAPDD  
■ AR  
■ USA

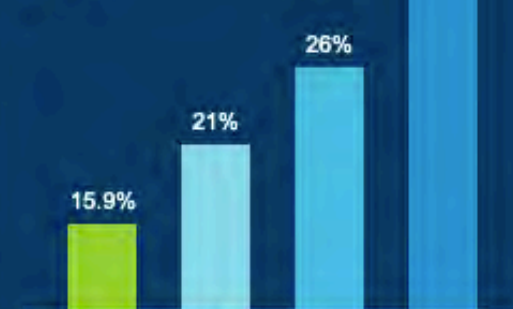


Poverty Rates

## Poverty Rates

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS 5YR

■ Cross  
■ EAPDD  
■ AR  
■ USA

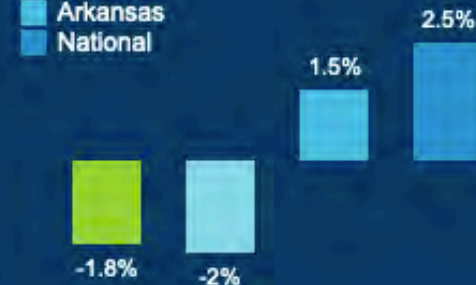


Associate's Degree or Better

## Associate's Degree or Better

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2013 ACS 5YR  
\*For persons 25 or older

■ Cross  
■ EAPDD  
■ Arkansas  
■ National

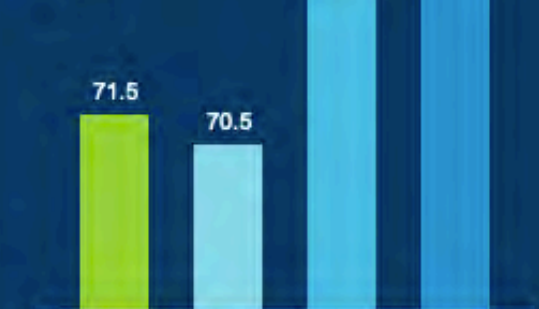


April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2014

## Rate of Population Change

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS 5YR

■ Cross  
■ EAPDD  
■ AR  
■ USA



Life Expectancy

## Life Expectancy

Source: Measures of America  
2011

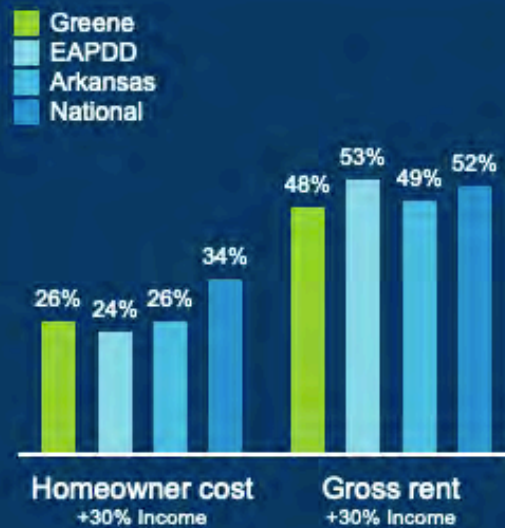


# Greene County



**Median Household Income**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS



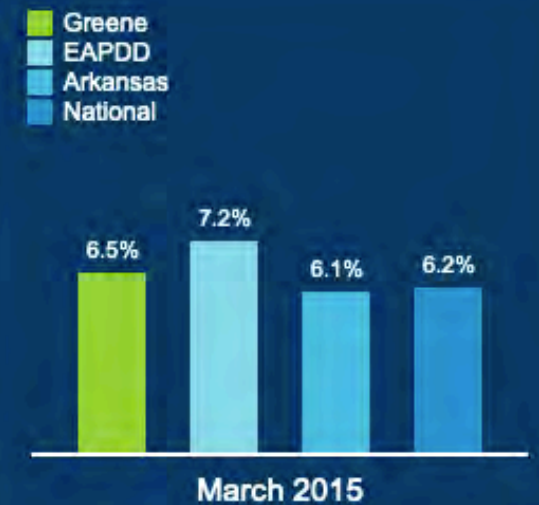
**Housing Affordability**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS



**Pre-K Enrollment**

Source: U.S. DOE, Census Bureau.  
% of Population Age 3-4.



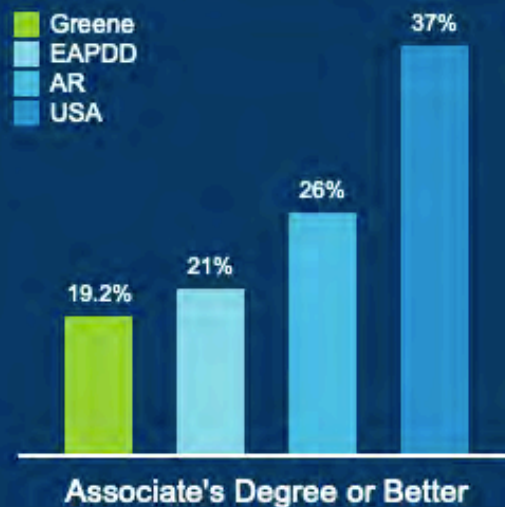
**Unemployment Rate**

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics  
Not Seasonally Adjusted



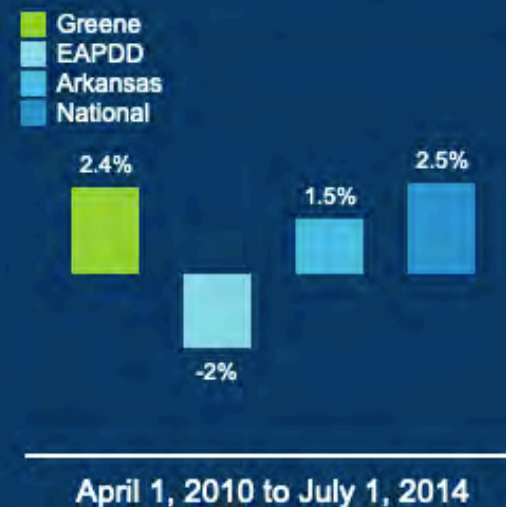
**Poverty Rates**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS 5YR



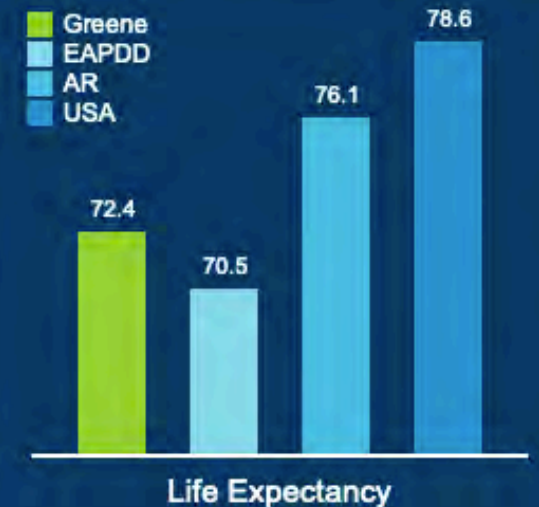
**Associate's Degree or Better**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2013 ACS 5YR  
\*For persons 25 or older



**Rate of Population Change**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS 5YR

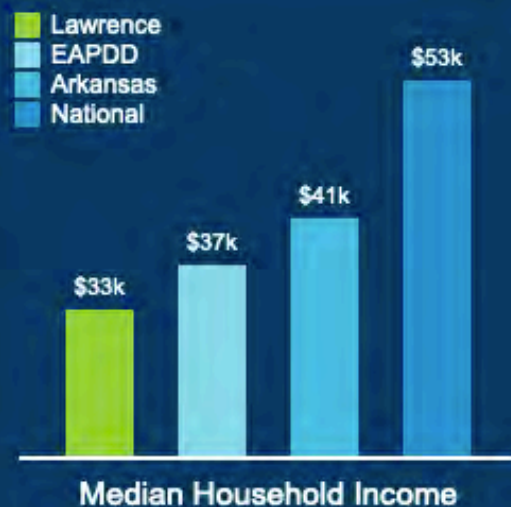


**Life Expectancy**

Source: Measures of America  
2011



# Lawrence County



**Median Household Income**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS



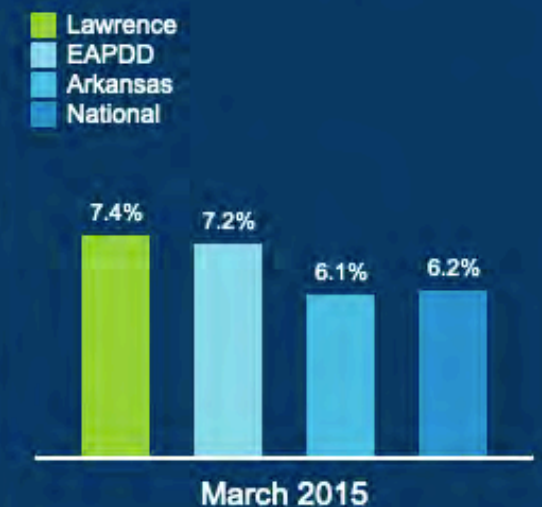
**Housing Affordability**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS



**Pre-K Enrollment**

Source: U.S. DOE, Census Bureau.  
% of Population Age 3-4.



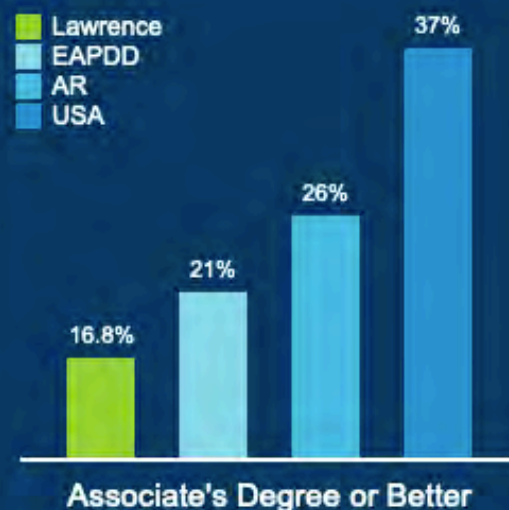
**Unemployment Rate**

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics  
Not Seasonally Adjusted



**Poverty Rates**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS 5YR



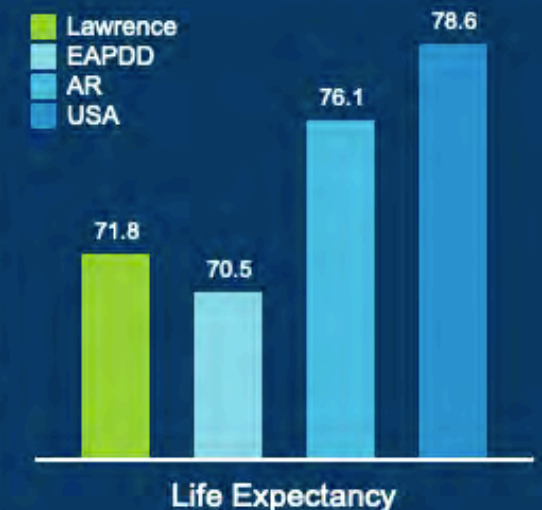
**Associate's Degree or Better**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2013 ACS 5YR  
\*For persons 25 or older



**Rate of Population Change**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS 5YR



**Life Expectancy**

Source: Measures of America  
2011



# Lee County

Lee  
EAPDD  
Arkansas  
National



Median Household Income

## Median Household Income

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS

Lee  
EAPDD  
Arkansas  
National



Homeowner cost  
+30% Income

Gross rent  
+30% Income

## Housing Affordability

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS

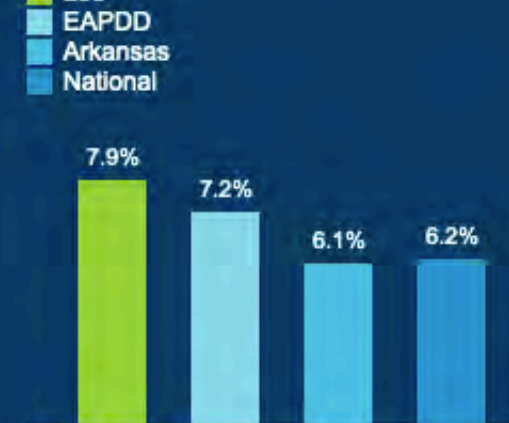


27% Other

## Pre-K Enrollment

Source: U.S. DOE, Census Bureau.  
% of Population Age 3-4.

Lee  
EAPDD  
Arkansas  
National

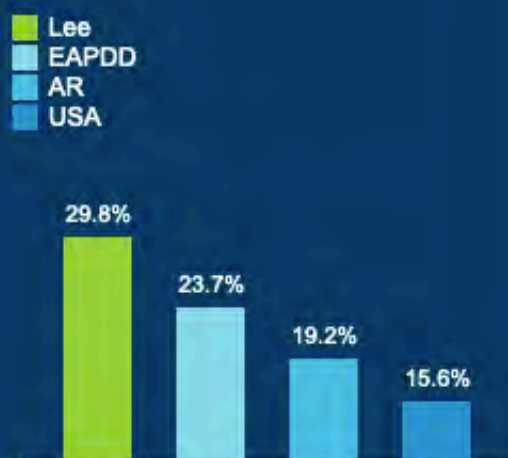


March 2015

## Unemployment Rate

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics  
Not Seasonally Adjusted

Lee  
EAPDD  
AR  
USA



Poverty Rates

## Poverty Rates

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS 5YR

Lee  
EAPDD  
AR  
USA

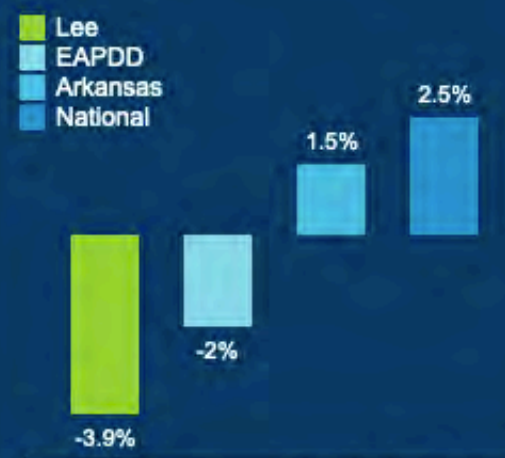


Associate's Degree or Better

## Associate's Degree or Better

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2013 ACS 5YR  
\*For persons 25 or older

Lee  
EAPDD  
Arkansas  
National



April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2014

## Rate of Population Change

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS 5YR

Lee  
EAPDD  
AR  
USA



Life Expectancy

## Life Expectancy

Source: Measures of America  
2011



# Mississippi County

Mississippi  
EAPDD  
Arkansas  
National



## Median Household Income

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS

Mississippi  
EAPDD  
Arkansas  
National



## Housing Affordability

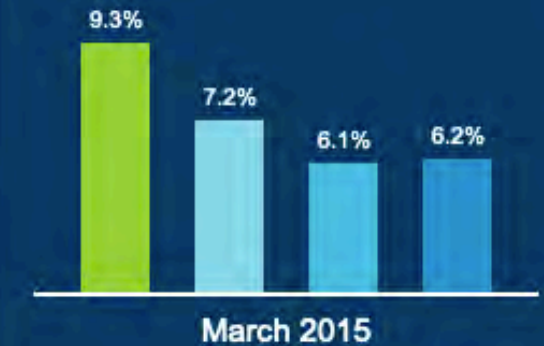
Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS



## Pre-K Enrollment

Source: U.S. DOE, Census Bureau.  
% of Population Age 3-4.

Mississippi  
EAPDD  
Arkansas  
National



## Unemployment Rate

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics  
Not Seasonally Adjusted

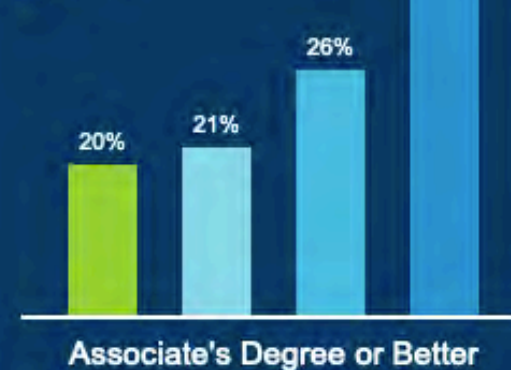
Mississippi  
EAPDD  
AR  
USA



## Poverty Rates

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS 5YR

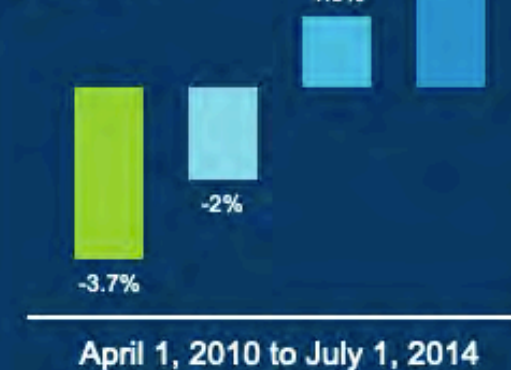
Mississippi  
EAPDD  
AR  
USA



## Associate's Degree or Better

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2013 ACS 5YR  
\*For persons 25 or older

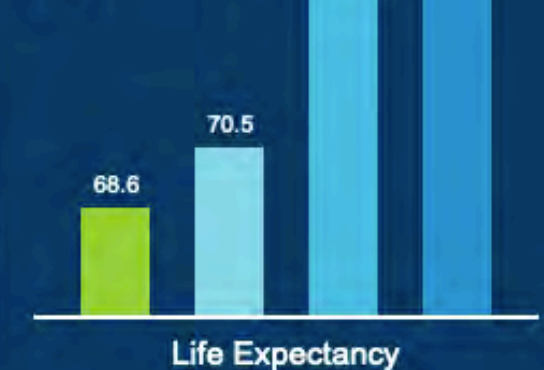
Mississippi  
EAPDD  
Arkansas  
National



## Rate of Population Change

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS 5YR

Mississippi  
EAPDD  
AR  
USA

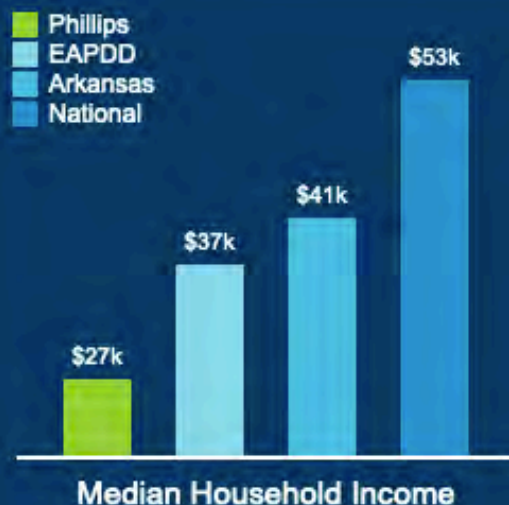


## Life Expectancy

Source: Measures of America  
2011

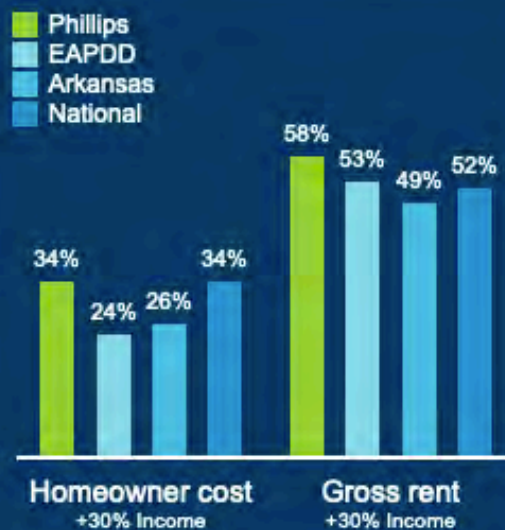


# Phillips County



**Median Household Income**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS



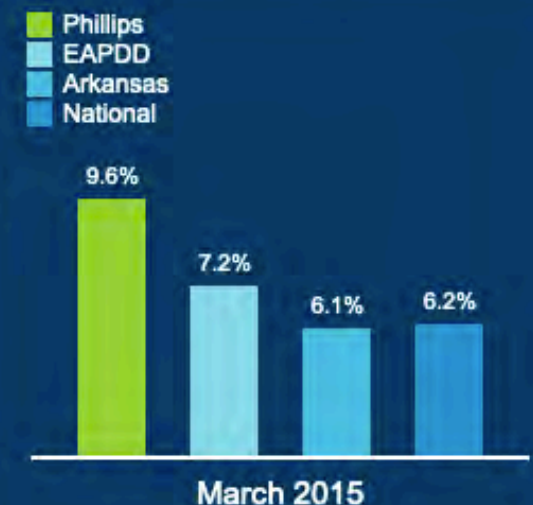
**Housing Affordability**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS



**Pre-K Enrollment**

Source: U.S. DOE, Census Bureau.  
% of Population Age 3-4.



**Unemployment Rate**

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics  
Not Seasonally Adjusted



**Poverty Rates**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS 5YR



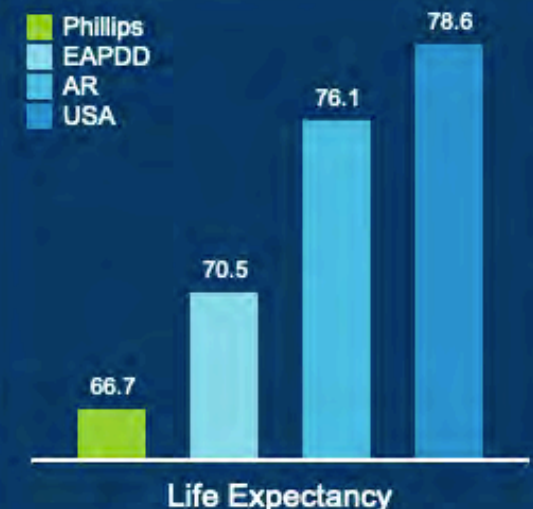
**Associate's Degree or Better**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2013 ACS 5YR  
\*For persons 25 or older



**Rate of Population Change**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS 5YR



**Life Expectancy**

Source: Measures of America  
2011



# Poinsett County

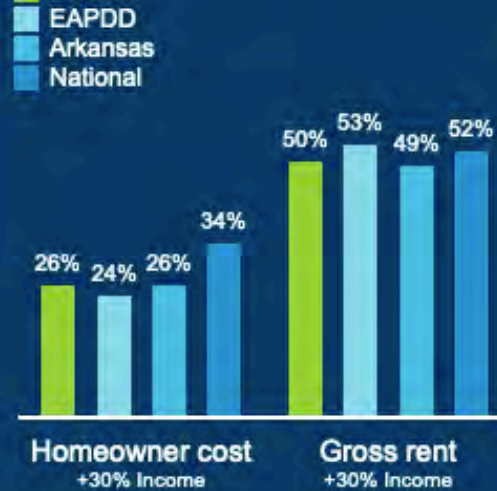
■ Poinsett  
■ EAPDD  
■ Arkansas  
■ National



## Median Household Income

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS

■ Poinsett  
■ EAPDD  
■ Arkansas  
■ National



## Housing Affordability

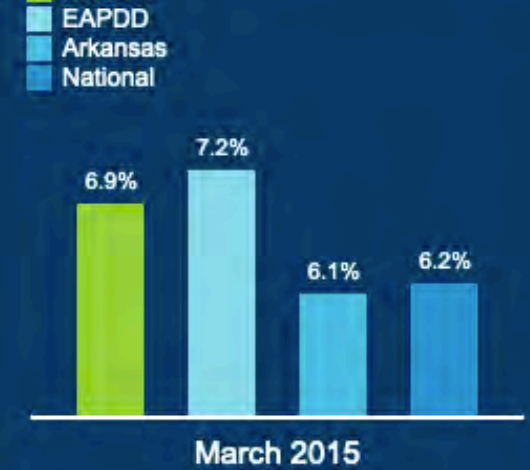
Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS



## Pre-K Enrollment

Source: U.S. DOE, Census Bureau.  
% of Population Age 3-4.

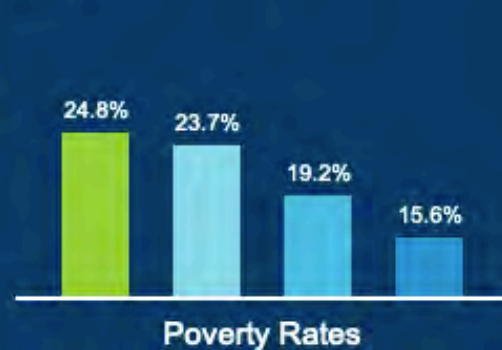
■ Poinsett  
■ EAPDD  
■ Arkansas  
■ National



## Unemployment Rate

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics  
Not Seasonally Adjusted

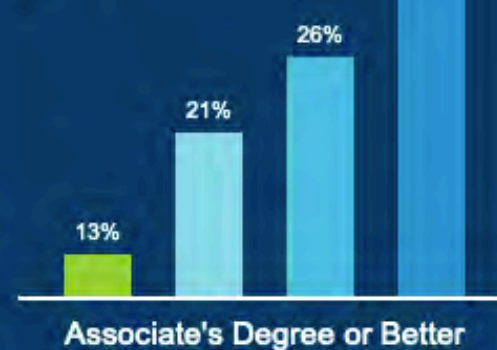
■ Poinsett  
■ EAPDD  
■ AR  
■ USA



## Poverty Rates

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS 5YR

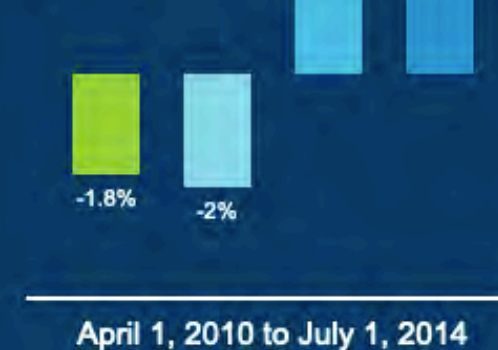
■ Poinsett  
■ EAPDD  
■ AR  
■ USA



## Associate's Degree or Better

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2013 ACS 5YR  
\*For persons 25 or older

■ Poinsett  
■ EAPDD  
■ Arkansas  
■ National



## Rate of Population Change

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS 5YR

■ Poinsett  
■ EAPDD  
■ AR  
■ USA



## Life Expectancy

Source: Measures of America  
2011



# Randolph County

Randolph  
 EAPDD  
 Arkansas  
 National

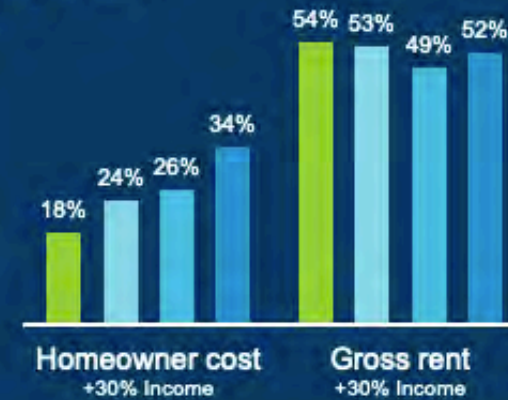


Median Household Income

## Median Household Income

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS

Randolph  
 EAPDD  
 Arkansas  
 National



Homeowner cost  
+30% Income

## Housing Affordability

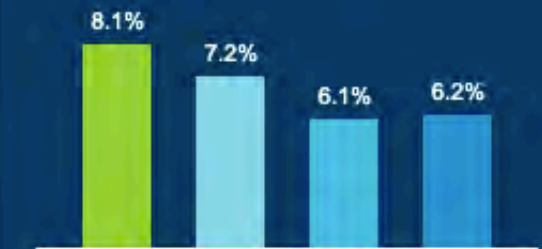
Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS



## Pre-K Enrollment

Source: U.S. DOE, Census Bureau.  
% of Population Age 3-4.

Randolph  
 EAPDD  
 Arkansas  
 National

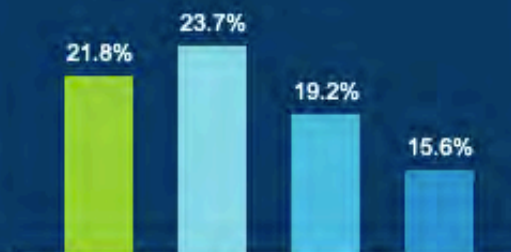


March 2015

## Unemployment Rate

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics  
Not Seasonally Adjusted

Randolph  
 EAPDD  
 AR  
 USA

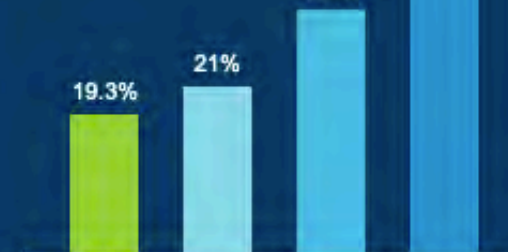


Poverty Rates

## Poverty Rates

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS 5YR

Randolph  
 EAPDD  
 AR  
 USA

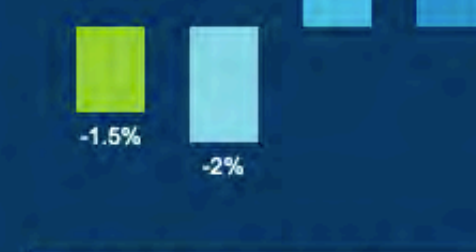


Associate's Degree or Better

## Associate's Degree or Better

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2013 ACS 5YR  
\*For persons 25 or older

Randolph  
 EAPDD  
 Arkansas  
 National

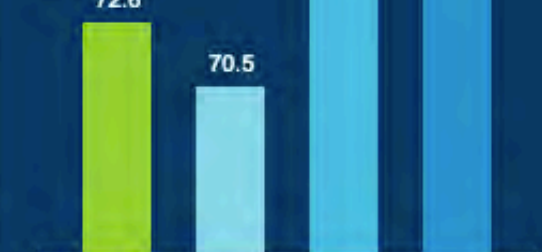


April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2014

## Rate of Population Change

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS 5YR

Randolph  
 EAPDD  
 AR  
 USA



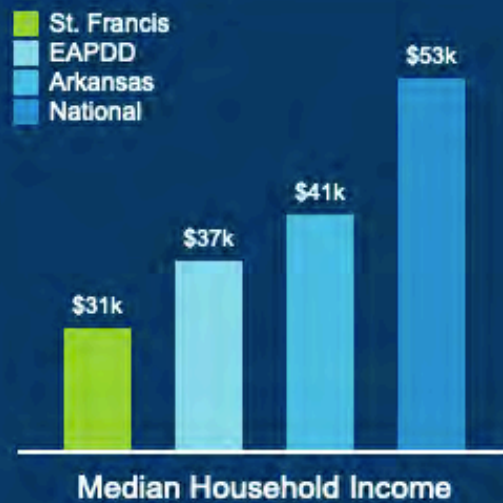
Life Expectancy

## Life Expectancy

Source: Measures of America  
2011

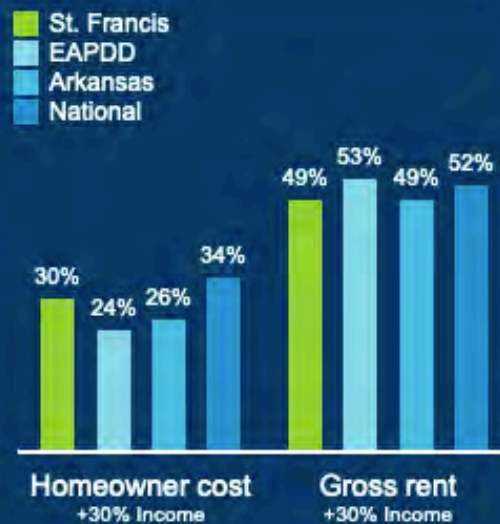


# St. Francis County



**Median Household Income**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS



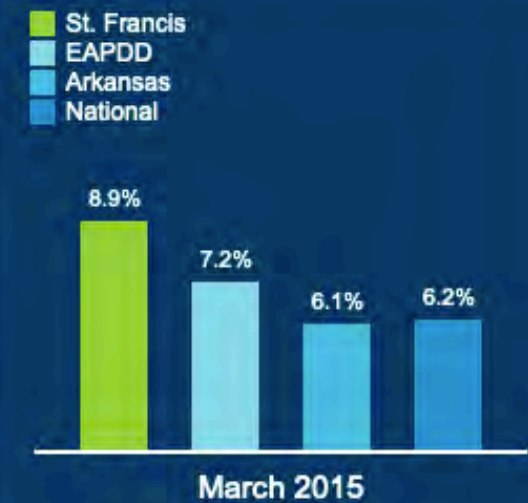
**Housing Affordability**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS



**Pre-K Enrollment**

Source: U.S. DOE, Census Bureau,  
% of Population Age 3-4.



**Unemployment Rate**

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics  
Not Seasonally Adjusted



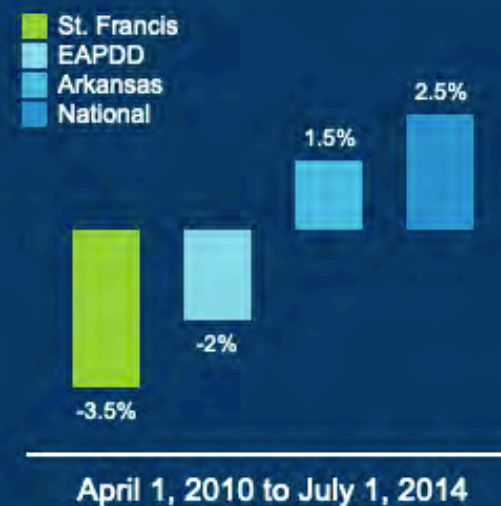
**Poverty Rates**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS 5YR



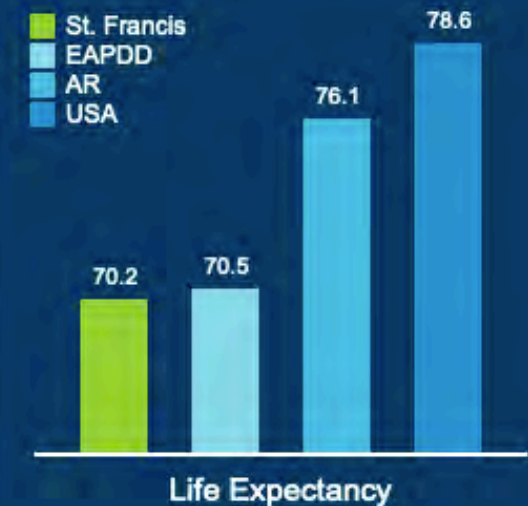
**Associate's Degree or Better**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2013 ACS 5YR  
\*For persons 25 or older



**Rate of Population Change**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
2013 ACS 5YR



**Life Expectancy**

Source: Measures of America  
2011





## Colleges and Universities

EAPDD is fortunate to house six higher education institutions within our region. the opportunities for learning whether at a four year university, two year college or trade school is available to this region and surrounding areas.

- Arkansas State University
- Arkansas State university Mid South
- Black River technical College
- East Arkansas Community College
- Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas
- Williams Baptist University



# SWOT Analysis

East Arkansas Planning & Development District conducted an analysis of the region’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats-also known as a SWOT analysis. This analysis identified what local government staff, elected officials, community members, and other stakeholders believe to be important in each category. This helps guide the process to identify regional priorities for economic and community development.

## Strengths

- Natural Beauty
- Good Public Schools
- Tourism
- Utilities
- Cultural and Recreational Activities
- Higher Education
- Industry
- Broadening Agricultural Opportunities
- Natural Resources

## Weaknesses

- Opportunities for Young People
- Entrepreneurial Training Opportunities
- Broadband Internet
- Job Growth
- High Paying Jobs
- Port/Rail Intermodal Assets
- Lack of Industrial Park and Facilities
- Vocational Training High School Level
- Workforce Soft Skills
- Opioid Crisis
- Housing

## Opportunities

- Infrastructure Investment
- Health Care
- Grants
- Sports Complex
- Proposed Intermodal Facilities
- Broadening Agricultural Opportunities
- Trail Systems
- Higher Education

## Threats

- Skilled Workforce
- Job Creation
- Inability to attract young talent
- Lack of diverse industry
- Lack of industry growth
- Population decline
- Growing socioeconomic disparity
- Attitudes concerning infrastructure and development
- Poverty
- Opioid Crisis
- Municipalities ability to match grants
- Natural Hazards



# Regional Services Priorities

- Civic & Leadership Development
- Regional Infrastructure
  - Rail Access
  - Intermodal systems
  - Industrial Properties
- Affordable and Suitable Housing
- Workforce Development
  - Soft Skills
  - Public and Private Investment
- Broadband Internet Access
- Business Development
- Access to Healthcare
- Tourism







## Broadband Internet Access

Broadband access has been a growing problem in the East Arkansas Planning and Development District region. There are many areas that do not have reliable internet access or internet speed that meet the official FCC definition of 25Mbps download and 3Mbps upload. This creates a problem not only in the work sector but also with education and healthcare.

In today's world education has grown to require adequate broadband access not only on the school campus but also at students homes. Many students in the area are assigned electronic devices for school and home use that require Internet access to complete assignments for the school. This is occurring today at the

elementary school level as well. During times of inclement weather where schools are closed students assignments are online so that school can officially continue.

Healthcare also requires adequate broadband for telemedicine purposes but also for operational purposes. Broadband access enables hospitals and healthcare clinics to better communicate with one another enabling a better response for the patient. Files can now be shared within seconds instead of days which has had a profound impact on what is expected of healthcare facilities today.

Industry also demands adequate broadband access at their plants. Broadband is used in almost every part of day to day operations within this sector.



- **Clay County**

- Urban Total - 5,732 People - 55.15% 1 provider, 19.7 2 provider
- Rural Total - 9,115 People - 31.91% 1 provider, 17.78 % 2 providers

- **Craighead County**

- Urban Total - 70,817 People - 8.11% 2 providers, 91.26 1 provider
- Rural Total - 37,729 people - 50.3% 1 provider, 15.62% 2providers

- **Crittenden County**

- Urban Total - 37,552 - 96.68% 1 provider,
- Rural Total - 10,790 People - 17.03% 1 provider, 82.21% 0 providers

- **Cross County**

- Urban Total - 7,454 People - 79.35% 1 provider, 18.27% 0 providers
- Rural Total - 9,222 People - 36.73% 1 provider, 62.98% 0 provider

- **Greene County**

- Urban Total - 25,512 People - 95.8% 1 provider,
- Rural Total - 19,813 People 5.65% 2 providers, 31.39% 1 provider, 62.95% 0 provider

- **Lawrence County**

- Urban Total - 6,001 People - 99.83% 1 provider,
- Rural Total - 10,433 People -20.54% 1 provider, 79.4% 0 provider

- **Lee County**

- Urban Total - 3,281 People - 65.01% 1 provider, 34.99% 0 Providers
- Rural Total - 5,704 People - 12.82% 1 provider, 87.18% 0 provider

- **Mississippi County**

- Urban Total - 25,442 People - 86.55 1 Provider
- Rural Total - 15,797 People - 44.697% 1 provider, 49% 0 provider

- **Phillips County**

- Urban Total - 9,293 People - 99.34% 1 provider,
- Rural Total - 8,736 People - 60.07% 1 provider, 29.41% 0 provider

- **Poinsett County**

- Urban Total - 6,820 People - 30.76% 2 providers, 66.85% 1 provider,
- Rural Total - 17,154 People - 46.43% 1 provider, 49.64% 0 provider

- **Randolph County**

- Urban Total - 5,711 People - 99.95% 1 provider,
- Rural Total - 12,233 People - 50.9% 1 provider, 46.84% 0 provider

- **St. Francis County**

- Urban Total - 11,468 People - 59.22% 1 provider, 39.52% 0 Providers
- Rural Total - 13,971 People - 16.81% 1 provider, 83.19% 0 provider





## Economic Resilience

Resiliency is one of the most important themes in the EAPDD region. Since 2008 there have been fifteen presidentially declared Disasters in Arkansas and at least half of those disasters have occurred in the East Arkansas Planning District area. The Counties within the planning district have been very adamant about preventing loss of life and property and being prepared for the next disaster whether it be an economic disaster or a natural disaster.

East Arkansas has assisted the Counties, Cities, and School Districts in our twelve county district with the development of Countywide Hazard Mitigation Plans, Disaster Recovery Plans, and East Arkansas Planning and Development District is expanding their planning capabilities to assist our district in future planning to develop strategies to build disaster and economic resilient economies.

Economic Development Plans can promote commercial or industrial expansion in areas that are not vulnerable to damage or disruption from hazard and by making community resilience a key feature in attracting, expanding and retaining businesses and industry.

East Arkansas provides access to resources such as; Community Development Block Grants through the Arkansas Economic Development Commission, Hazard Mitigation Grant Programs through FEMA.

All Counties within East Arkansas Planning and Development District participate in the Countywide Hazard Mitigation Planning. Each County must update their hazard mitigation plan to remain eligible for Hazard Mitigation Grant Program.



# ACTION PLAN

The East Arkansas Planning and Development District CEDS action plan was developed to address six regional priority areas identified during the CEDs development process and presented to the planning team.

These priorities were developed through discussion with the planning team to better serve the EAPDD region. The regional priorities for the 2020-2025 plan include:

- Improve Civic & leadership Development
- Increase Infrastructure
- Increase Affordable, Quality Housing
- Increase Education & Workforce Development
- Improve Tourism & Cultural Development
- Increase Business Development
- Increase Broadband Internet Access





# Priority 1: Improve Civic & leadership Development

**Benefit to the Community:** Enhancing civic and leadership development will increase local capacity and advance community development priorities.

**Issue:** There are communities within the region that have strong leadership and engaged citizenry. And in most cases, the highest elected officials are savvy and experienced. However, there is not a “deep bench” of leadership willing to step up and take on projects.

**Strategy:** Increase Civic and Leadership development opportunities in the district.



## Action Steps:

- Utilize all available technology to aid with sharing the vision for the region (website, Facebook, twitter, TV, radio, newspapers).
- Increase knowledge of public administration and available resources in local leaders throughout the region.
- Engage Foundations and Philanthropists in building local and regional capacity through education and training.

- Increase involvement by youth and young adults in Steering Committees, Regional boards and Committees and local projects.
- Showcase success stories from throughout the region.
- Educate and train communities in customer service, promoting their community and engaging everyone including newcomers.
- Build a cadre of regional leaders who work together for the overall improvement of the district.

## Responsible Parties:

- EAPDD Staff
- School Superintendents
- Middle and High School Counselors
- Chambers of Commerce
- Business Leaders
- Political leaders

## Resources Needed:

- EAPDD Staff
- Area school superintendents
- State and District Chambers of Commerce
- Middle and High School Counselors
- Selected innovative businesses and industries
- ACT officials

## Estimated Completion Date:

- On-going



## Priority 2: Improve Regional Infrastructure

**Benefit to the Community:** Economic growth, enhanced safety, increased mobility and an improved quality of life.

**Issue:** Critical aspects of the District's essential infrastructure, particularly rail access, intermodal systems and industrial properties, need repair, updating or rebuilding.

**Strategy:** Improve, repair and restore existing infrastructure supporting transportation and water and sewer services.

### Action Steps:

- Conduct an inventory of potential traditional and non-traditional funding for infrastructural needs available from state and federal sources.
- Organize local and state officials and policy leaders in rural areas to support the creation of a Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs) that will focus on strengthening and expanding rural transportation networks.
- Extend utilities and improve roads and rail lines (spurs) to existing industrial sites, especially ports.
- Develop a Regional Freight Plan based on 'best practices.'
- Work with the Logistics Management Institute (LMI) to secure funding for sewer and water improvements.
- Determine feasibility of securing funds through Alternative Transportation Grants to fund hiking trails, sidewalk and other improvements.

### Responsible Parties:

- EAPPD staff
- Local county, city and municipal officials
- District, state and federal infrastructure professionals
- Logistics Management Institute (LMI)

### Resources:

- EAPPD staff
- Local county, city and municipal officials
- District, state and federal infrastructure professionals
- Logistics Management Institute (LMI)
- Alternative Transportation Grants

**Estimated Completion Date:** Ongoing







## Priority 3: Increase Affordable and Suitable Housing

***Benefit to the Community:*** More affordable quality housing will encourage economic and community development, decrease out migration and improve the quality of life for District residents.

***Issue:*** A lack of affordable and suitable housing outside more populated urban areas makes it more difficult for new businesses or industries to locate in the region.

***Strategy:*** Help communities understand affordable and suitable housing and the need for increasing it.

### **Action Steps:**

- Gather data on available single-family homes, rentals and potential housing sites in each community.
- Develop a working definition of affordable and suitable housing linked to the housing market in each community.
- Compile a list of reliable builders and developers interested in providing low cost affordable housing, particularly multi-family and single family dwellings in rural areas.
- Work with area banks to raise awareness of the need for affordable housing and develop new and innovative methods for securing financing.
- Encourage communities to revitalize code enforcement and develop local incentives to encourage renovations or improvements to existing housing.
- Work with non-profit organizations, public schools and community colleges to establish (or enhance existing) financial education programs for area residents.
- Survey all existing investment in workforce training, education and infrastructure.
- Determine availability of all state and federal grants that apply to affordable housing.
- Assist local housing authorities with pursuing resources and funding through the Arkansas Development Finance Authority (ADFA) and other agencies.



Responsible Parties:

- WCAPPD staff
- Local city and county officials
- State government
- Rural USD Development
- Builders and Developers
- AEDI Data Center
- Local banks
- Public schools and community colleges
- Arkansas Home Builders Association
- Area Bankers
- Area Title Companies
- Area Realtors
- Local housing authorities
- Arkansas Development Finance Authority
- Relevant non-profit organizations

Resources:

- WCAPPD staff
- Local city and county officials
- State government
- Rural USD Development
- Builders and Developers
- AEDI Data Center
- Local banks
- Public schools and community colleges
- Arkansas Home Builders Association
- Area Bankers
- Area Title Companies
- Area Realtors
- Local housing authorities
- Arkansas Development Finance Authority
- Relevant non-profit organizations

Estimated Completion Date:

- On-going





# Priority 4: Improve Workforce Development

**Benefit to the Community:** Improving the skills and work readiness of the workforce will increase employment, spur business investment and improve the quality of life for District residents.

**Issue:** Employers complain of a lack of skilled work ready employees, which handicaps area business and damages efforts to recruit new businesses, industry and public and private investment needed for sustainable economic growth.

**Strategy:** Establish a systematic, collaborative and regional approach to workforce development that stresses vocational training focused on life skills and customized training opportunities.

## Action Steps:

- Work with schools and businesses to expand vocational training offerings.
- Encourage pilot programs that reflect best practices in skilled trades (e.g. Green Bay Packaging, Pope County Model Trades, Kirby Model School of Innovation) to promote innovative approaches to vocational training throughout the region.
- Assist middle and high school counselors with expanding their approach to career guidance to include job opportunities associated with skills based training.
- Work with (American College Testing) ACT to promote credentialing of skilled trades.
- Promote business-school internships.

## Responsible Parties:

- EAPDD Staff

- School Superintendents
- Middle and High School Counselors
- Russellville Technical Center
- Chambers of Commerce
- Business Leaders
- Educational Co-ops

## Resources Needed:

- EAPDD Staff
- Area school superintendents
- State and District Chambers of Commerce
- Middle and High School Counselors
- Educational Co-ops
- Russellville Technical Center
- Selected innovative businesses and industries
- ACT officials

## Estimated Completion Date:

- On-going





## Priority 5: Improve Tourism & Cultural Development

***Benefit to the Community:*** Creates jobs, supports new and existing businesses, and brings

new people to the region.

***Issue:*** No systemic approach to encouraging tourism at the community, municipal, county or regional level.

***Strategy:*** Encourage communities, towns, and cities to develop effective approaches to attracting tourists.

### Action Steps:

- Investigate establishing a ‘fee’ structure on successful tourism activities (hunting, fishing) that could generate revenue for tourism related improvements.
- Research ‘best practices’ used by other communities to promote the tourist trade.
- Encourage new and innovative approaches to farming and animal husbandry.
- Examine feasibility of Agri-tourism (corn mazes, berry picking, etc...)
- Review grants available for improving infrastructure tied to tourism.
- Review grants available for towns and cities focused on improving tourism.

### Responsible Parties:

- EAPPD staff
- Local county, city and municipal officials
- Arkansas Department of Tourism

### Resources:

- EAPPD staff
- Local county, city and municipal officials
- Arkansas Department of Tourism

**Estimated Completion Date:** On-going



## Priority 6: Increase Business Development

**Benefit to the Community:** Creates jobs, supports new and existing businesses, and brings new people to the region.

**Issue:** Incomes are low, poverty is high, population is declining and communities have few resources to invest.

**Strategy:** Encourage communities, towns, and cities to develop effective approaches to attracting and retaining businesses.

### Action Steps:

- Expand existing training and support to develop new or converted speciality crop and local livestock producers.
- Research ‘best practices’ used by other communities to promote business development.
- identify opportunities to market the region’s assets for business development
- host economic development 101 training for community leaders, local economic development staff and board members to address the basics of economic development, its complexity, and how EAPDD can help to deliver gap services.
- Review grants available for improving business development and retention.
- Develop facilities and programs to teach entrepreneurship and encourage the development of small business.

### Responsible Parties:

- EAPPD staff
- Local county, city and municipal officials
- Chambers of Commerce and Local Economic Development

### Resources:

- EAPPD staff
- Local county, city and municipal officials
- Chambers of Commerce and Local Economic Development

**Estimated Completion Date:** On-going







## Priority 7: Increase Broadband Internet Access in Rural Areas

**Benefit to Community:** Increasing access to high-speed internet service is essential to enhancing and sustaining economic development and job creation opportunities.

**Issue:** Broadband internet access varies widely throughout the EAPDD region with rural areas particularly underserved.

**Strategy:** Establish a collaborative effort with state and local government officials, telecom providers and other stakeholders to secure funding to create realistic and cost effective approaches that increase internet services to underserved areas throughout the region.

### Action Steps:

- Meet with state, county and local officials to discuss the impact of new state legislation on expanding the region's broadband coverage and encourage them to discuss with telecommunication providers the need to explore options for extending and funding coverage to underserved communities.
- Encourage greater local government involvement in securing broadband coverage for their communities.
- Investigate grants available from United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Reconnect Program.

- Identify 'best practices' used by other states and regions to increase internet service in underserved rural areas including pilot projects for licensing broadband providers in underserved areas.
- Convene a work session with local and state government officials and stakeholders in the region to discuss decentralizing control of broadband licensing and exploring regulatory changes needed to expand the number of entities able to provide internet services to smaller towns and remote rural areas.
- Investigate the implications of 5G internet for the region.

### Responsible Parties:

- EAPDD
- Telecommunication companies
- Federal government
- State, county and local government officials

### Resources Needed:

- EAPDD Staff
- Current data on broadband coverage
- Research on 'best practices' used to provide coverage to underserved small towns and rural areas
- Telecommunication companies
- Federal government
- State, county and local government officials

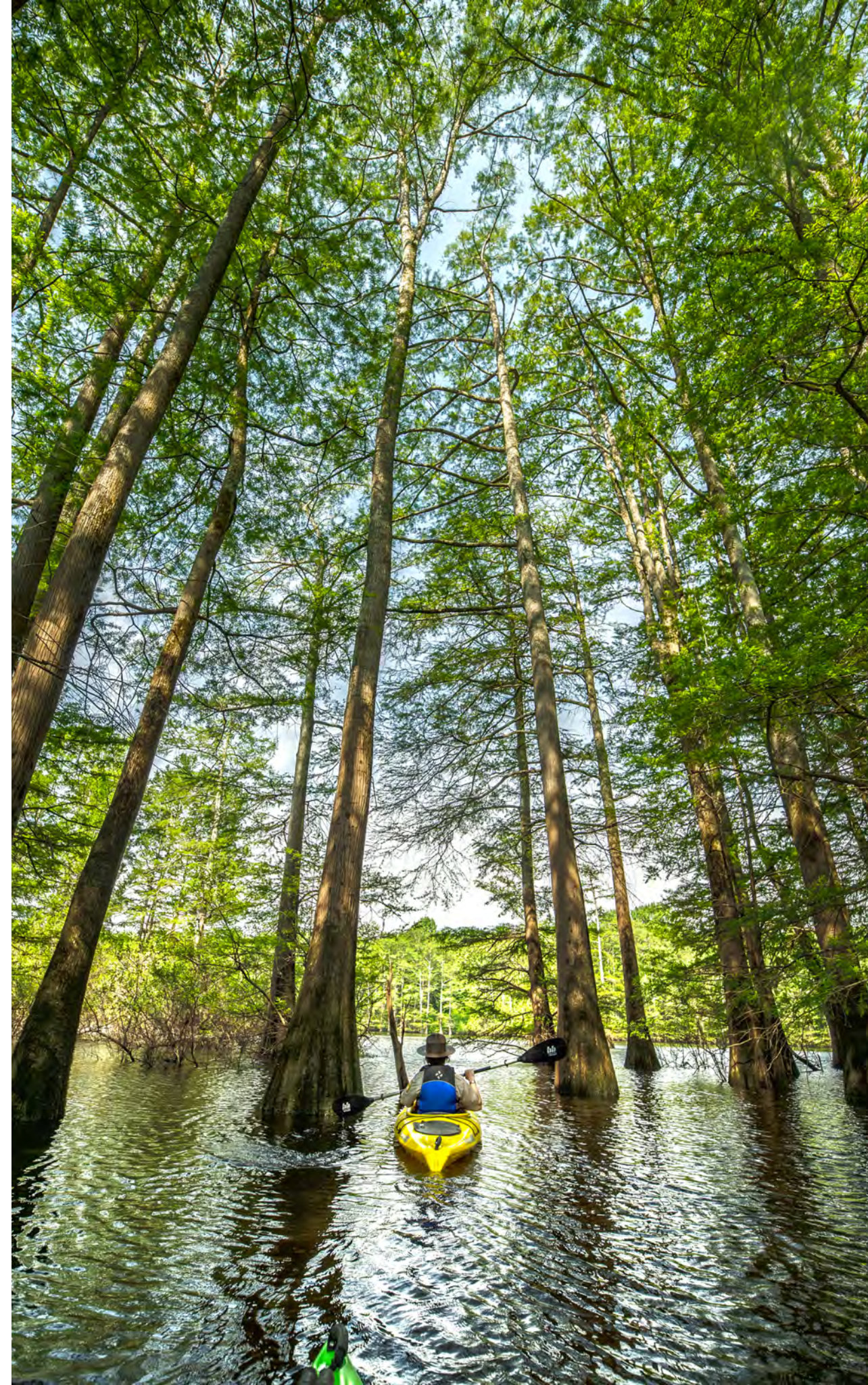
Timeframe: Immediate



# EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The Evaluation Framework is the schedule in which the CEDS plans to achieve the priorities that were set forth by the CEDS Committee. The responsible parties and resources were discussed in the Action Plan so therefore will not be discussed in this section.

- Improve Civic & leadership Development
  - Ongoing - 5+ years
- Increase Infrastructure
  - Ongoing - 5+ years
- Increase Affordable, Quality Housing
  - Ongoing - 5+ years
- Increase Education & Workforce Development
  - Ongoing - 5+ years
- Improve Tourism & Cultural Development
  - Ongoing - 5+ years
- Increase Business Development
  - Ongoing - 5+ years
- Increase Broadband Internet Access
  - Immediate - >5 years





# SOURCES

- U.S. Census, Vintage 2018 Population Estimates
- U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 Census, 2000 Census, 2010 Census, and Population Division
- U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division
- U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
- Bureau of Economic Analysis
- Bureau of Labor Statistics
- Federal Communication Commission Form 477 <https://broadbandmap.fcc.gov/#/>
- [livingwage.mit.edu/states/05/locations](http://livingwage.mit.edu/states/05/locations)
- Arkansas Assessment Coordination Department, "State of Arkansas, 2017 Millage Report", [www.arkansas.gov/acd](http://www.arkansas.gov/acd)
- EMSI Q4 2018 Data Set
- Arkansas Economic Development Commission, prepared February 2016 <http://www.arkansasedc.com/data/reports>
- <http://www.discover.arkansas.gov/Local-Area-Statistics>
- Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism
- East Arkansas Planning & Development District Regional Strategic Plan