



COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGY

2024-2028

Prepared by :

**WHITE RIVER PLANNING
& DEVELOPMENT**

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In Partnership With :

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
ADMINISTRATION**

www.wrpdd.org

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



JAN SMITH

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WRPDD

White River Planning and Development District (WRPDD) is pleased to be the premier economic development resource for ten of North Central Arkansas's highest performing counties. Partnering with the Economic Development Administration since 1968, WRPDD prides itself on delivering a targeted strategy with meaningful data for its constituents and stakeholders. WRPDD looks forward to many more years of economic growth and continued resiliency throughout the District.

-Janet E. Smith

Chartered under the Arkansas Nonprofit Corporation Act, the White River Planning and Development District, Inc. was first incorporated in 1967. As a non-profit corporation serving the counties of Cleburne, Fulton, Independence, Izard, Jackson, Sharp, Stone, Van Buren, White and Woodruff, the District was designated as an Economic Development District under the provisions of the Public Works and Economic Development Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce in May 1968. Since that time, the Economic Development Administration has designated the District counties as Distressed Areas, with nine of the ten participating counties designated as being located within the Delta Initiative.

Originally prepared in 1968, this Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy's purpose is to provide an update of the area's economic and social status and reflect changes that have occurred since the previous CEDS was prepared, while addressing the challenges faced by the District's communities today in regards to economic development.

This strategy is the foundation for local and regional planning projects of White River Planning and Development. The following provides a description of the current economic and demographic conditions of the region, an analysis of regional strengths and weaknesses and an analysis of regional clusters. It provides economic development goals and objectives, as well as a plan of action and the District's ability to demonstrate resilience while outlying the activities necessary to implement the goals and objectives.

CEDS Committee

CLEBURNE

ERIC CROSBY
KASEY GRIFFIN

FULTON

KENNETH CROW
CURREN EVERETT

INDEPENDENCE

KEVIN JEFFERY
RICK ELUMBAUGH
BORIS DOVER

IZARD

ERIC SMITH
KATY BLEVINS
DUANE DELAIR

JACKSON

JEFF PHILLIPS
DERRICK RATLIFFE
JERRY CARLEW
PHILLIP BROWN

SHARP

MARK COUNTS
GARRY LAWRENCE
JON ABELE

STONE

STACEY AVEY
ROGER GARDNER
STAN TOWNSEND

VAN BUREN

DALE JAMES
RICHARD MCCORMAC
GAYLA BRADLEY

WHITE

LISA BROWN
MAT FAULKNER
JANET HEARYMAN

WOODRUFF

MICHAEL JOHN GRAY
REGINA BURKETT
BEVERLY CHAPPLE

CEDS Planning Process

Assembly of planning team and determination of community leaders and regional stakeholders. Regional CEDS committee formed.

October 2023

WRPDD initiated collection of data and information for CEDS Committee.

January 2024

Regional data and information presented to the public. The SWOT analysis was formed from feedback, current and future needs.

April 2024

Final draft of the WRPDD CEDS presented to the CEDS committee and submitted to EDA and other invested agencies.

August 2024

Summary and Background

Introduction

What is a CEDS? Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

The White River Planning and Development District region consists of a ten-county area that serves a collective population of around 234,665 citizens. Comprised of rural farmland, high quality water resources and a steady growing tourism industry, the District is enriched with robust soils and rolling hills. Each county that lies within the District has qualities that are unique to its area, yet the ten-county District shares a commonality that creates a region of consistent desirability throughout.

The District's CEDS consist of five sections including:

1. Summary and background of the economic conditions of the District and counties.
2. SWOT analysis of the regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.
3. An action plan which outlines future expectations of the District and how to accomplish them.
4. Evaluation framework that will explain how the District will monitor performance procedures.
5. Economic Resilience and the ability to recover, withstand and avoid.

Summary and Background

Economic Conditions of the Region Where are we Going?

Originally prepared in 1968, the White River Overall Economic Development Program defined the purpose of the economic development process to seek economic growth through multi-county economic planning efforts. The ten-county area, like much of Arkansas, had fell behind the nation for many years in terms of standard of living, economic status, employment, and technology.

The initiation of a regional planning process guaranteed an effort to utilize scarce resources in an orderly and efficient manner. The White River OEDP became a multipurpose tool designed to coordinate and implement various federal, state, and local activities, which contributed to the economic development of North Central Arkansas. This Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is to provide an update of the area's economic and social status and reflect changes that have occurred since the previous CEDS was prepared, and address the challenges faced by District communities today regarding economic development.

The primary emphasis of White River Planning and Development District, Inc. has always been to preserve and improve the quality of life within the White River area; and the direction of District activity continues to address economic development and community development, while maintaining the original concept of regional cooperation and coordination and efficient use of resources. Under the direction of Jan Smith, Executive Director, the staff of WRPDD aids the local communities, counties, federal agencies, the private sector, and other entities in such areas as infrastructure development, business development, recreation, solid waste management, and transportation planning, and expansion resulting in job creation/retention.

Administering programs such as solid waste management, recycling programs, workforce development, grant management, loan programs, community development and childcare programs enables WRPDD to effectively coordinate services for the ten-county region. Working with federal, state and local officials the private sector and agencies such as Arkansas Department of Rural Services, the Arkansas Department of Emergency Management, the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department, Arkansas Economic Development Commission, the Economic Development Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture-Rural Development, and Delta Regional Authority allows a unique relationship, which promotes healthy development within the region.

The following information summarizes the current economic conditions of the ten-county District following with more specific demographics of each county.

White River Planning and Development District

State of the Economy

Throughout the history of the agency, developing adequate infrastructure for local communities and cities, i.e., water and wastewater systems, to serve the business community and the residential population has been of major importance. Rural water systems are now developed throughout the region in areas previously unserved while updates to those first installed continue in progress. WRPDD continues to expand and improve upon the basic infrastructure of the local communities as they grow and prosper, working with local officials, funding agencies, and private sectors to enhance and improve infrastructure. In addition to infrastructure needs, meeting community facility equipment needs such as fire protection, police and emergency services, community centers, senior centers, healthcare, education, municipal/county buildings and libraries will improve community services as well as public safety to citizens throughout the District. Addressing community facility equipment needs will improve community services and public safety to citizens throughout the District.

Transportation improvements and activities have been an integral component of development of the region. The continued development of arterial routes, such as U.S. 412, U.S. 67, and U.S. 167, within the region's transportation system have enhanced the area's economic development. Previous local improvements such as State Highway 36 route in Searcy, along with a fourth clover leaf interchange on U.S. Highway 67 expanded opportunities available. Additions and improvements to these areas over the years have guaranteed safe, efficient travel and commerce throughout the region as WRPDD actively works to support transportation improvements which will benefit the entire region. In addition, rail transportation has been integral in attracting steel industries to North Central

Arkansas. District staff have been instrumental in securing funding from the Economic Development Administration for rail spurs to serve both existing and new industry. By providing rail spurs to existing buildings in Newport, McCrory and Independence County, WRPDD aided in creating and retaining job opportunities to create a tri-county impact.

A continued concern of equitable resources in North Central Arkansas is a lack of access to broadband. Although Arkansas spent millions of dollars during the Covid Pandemic to target areas which lacked broadband, due to the rural nature of WRPDD's counties many did not experience the full benefit. As needs since the pandemic have shifted drastically towards technology, the area has made strides towards broadband accessibility for everyone; however, the demand has far outgrown the actual capability of cities, counties and emerging and existing industry. New and innovative ways to provide these services to the public, as well as the professional community, has become challenging.

During the past, the financial tools available to the District through the Economic Development Administration Revolving Loan Fund and the Rural Development Intermediary Relending Program have enabled WRPDD to be instrumental in many development projects, both public and private. Growth and expansion of the economy would be the direct result of such programs, in combination with the working relationships of financial institutions who serve North Central Arkansas.

Demographics for the District

Based on the most current census information, 18 percent of families in the District were below the poverty level. Stone County had the highest percent at 21.2 percent total population below poverty level, followed by Jackson County at 20.4 percent population below poverty level. Cleburne County represented the lowest level, 14.1 percent population below the poverty level. The poverty level of the District increased by 4 percent since the previous CEDS update. This would be mostly attributed to the pandemic and economic conditions which were a direct result.

In 2022, Stats America states that Arkansas had a population of 3.02 million people with a median age of 38.4 and a median household income of \$56,335. Between 2021 and 2022 the population of Arkansas grew from 3.01 million to 3.02 million, a 0.4% increase. The State's median household income grew from \$52,123 to \$56,335, also an increase of 8.08%. Within the District, the highest ranked county for median income is White County, at \$57,015. Fulton County holds the lowest at \$38,917. In the previous CEDS, Jackson County had the lowest median income; however, theirs has risen to \$41,929 as new employment opportunities have come to the area.

The ten counties of the District have been designated as long-term economically deteriorated. The U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, under the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965, as amended, officially designated the counties as redevelopment areas based on a number of qualifications, such as substantial and persistent unemployment; low median family income; unusual and abrupt rise in unemployment resulting from the loss, removal, curtailment or closing of major employment sources; special impact area; decline in per capita employment; and substantial unemployment rates.

As the region is relatively isolated geographically, large-scale industrial development has been confined to the three growth centers designated economic redevelopment centers: Batesville (Independence County), Newport (Jackson County), and Searcy (White County). This continues to hold true in 2024 at the time of the current report. With ready access to the railway system and a more developed road network, these areas can offer a more suitable transportation system to industry, which serves as a stimulus to large industrial development. In addition, much of the necessary infrastructure is in place and can adequately serve the larger industries.

The more rural areas of the District have little or no success in attracting industry, with exceptions in certain areas throughout Cleburne, Van Buren, Stone and more recently Sharp. The transition for Stone County in the development of an industrial park is different from other counties. Two of the three major industries in the park are local small businesses that made the decision to become manufacturing facilities. Stone County Ironworks, beginning as a local craft, was an excellent example of the success experienced by the county. The company at one time employed in-excess of 100 people; however, it has scaled back to a smaller team to focus on design and quality of productivity. Excel Boat Company, also located in Stone County, is a boat manufacturer which has over 80 employees from the area. In 2020, Ash Flat attracted the attention of a national company who manufactures professional tools. Emerson, with the help of EDA, AEDC, USDA and DRA made a \$35 million investment to transform an existing underutilized industrial structure into a modern manufacturing plant for its professional tools business.

Although several of WRPDD's counties have experienced recent success, others have not for specific reasons. Two primary reasons are inadequate transportation networks and the high cost of providing the necessary community infrastructure for economic development. Another reason which is becoming more evident would be the lack of efficient and adequate access to broadband. The District has a continued need to gain access to broadband services in order to attract new industry and businesses. Throughout the pandemic, many resources were available in the State; however, the WRPDD region remained largely under-subsidized when considering broadband solutions.

Additionally, transportation facilities within the District are sparse. Independence, Jackson, and White Counties represent the most improved transportation facilities of the region. Newport has river transportation developed and is considering port development along with improved rail service. Batesville has a regional airport facility, with over 8,800-foot of runway. A major four-lane route, U.S. Highway 67, a direct connection to Little Rock, serves White County. Highway 167 which runs from Batesville to Ash Flat has seen major renovations in recent years and work is now underway along Highway 412 to increase access to Northwest Arkansas. Most counties within the District have plans which are underway for major four-lane improvements to their road networks.

Major employment centers are located primarily in the three economic redevelopment centers. While manufacturing employment seems to be confined to the economic redevelopment centers in Independence, Jackson, and White Counties; the retail trade and service industries showed significant growth throughout the area in Cleburne, Van Buren and Sharp. New opportunities in the service and retail industries have become more prevalent over the past four years.

Two factors have made this possible. The region's residents have expectations for quality and quantity of goods and services. The most significant of new opportunities, is the emergence of tourism as a notable motivator in the regional economy. Another reason for increased opportunities in these industries were from incentives that various pandemic relief provided.

Other areas of the region have continued with an agrarian based economy, which in recent years has become a detriment to growing the economy. This industry has suffered the past years to a point where it no longer supports the area economy. Family farms, which traditionally have been the backbone of Arkansas and the national agriculture, are in a crisis. Large-scale corporate farming operations have dominated the agricultural scene in Arkansas for the past decade. Costs of production, cost of equipment and production inputs and credit costs have risen dramatically while commodity prices have either stagnated or declined.

The farm situation has deteriorated the economic base of the Delta counties, Jackson and Woodruff, and has also negatively impacted the northern counties. As farm population decreases, other rural economic activity decreases. The discontinuance of small farms and the out-migration of farm population, decrease demand for a variety of retail and personal services, causing further out-migration and unemployment. Thus begins the chain of events, which decay the components of the local economy. Major changes in the agricultural sector are expected to continue as retail and service industries will increase.

A major change in the agriculture economy has been the expansion of the poultry industry in the Ozark counties. This, combined with changes in poultry processing industries in Batesville, has helped offset some of the negativity in the agriculture segment. Many portions of Sharp and IZard counties have seen a recent growth in the addition of poultry houses. Most poultry houses in the District lie within the borders of Sharp and IZard Counties, while the poultry is then being transferred to production, which primarily occurs within Independence County. The need to have year around access to these houses has resulted in the collaboration between local poultry manufactures such as Ozark Mountain Poultry and PECO and the counties and cities in which the poultry farms reside. Due to this collaboration, roads and bridges have been slowly improved.

Online sales have consistently changed the economy of many of the counties. Since the pandemic, small businesses have shifted sales online in hopes of competing with foreign, cheaper made products as well as reaching a bigger sales base. Measures are being taken on a state level to pull back in some of the manufacturing and retail sales which have been lost to foreign based mega-businesses.

In summary, although the economy has shifted and measures have been taken to create a more resilient and progressive culture, economic deterioration within White River Planning and Development District is indicative of rural issues still evidenced. As new problems in the region arise, continued issues surrounding low incomes, lack of a skilled workforce, lack of transportation, and agricultural uncertainties continue to undermine the area economy. Strides have been taken within the last five years to correct these areas and as new programs, grants and access to broadband become available, it is expected that the District will continue to compete on all levels going forward.

Although local, state and federal governments have aided in advancements to the District over the years, some significant barriers still exist. Per capita personal income of the District is well below that of the state and nation, although there have been small increases over the years. The State of Arkansas is not a positive scale of measurement for comparison purposes due to its rank of 47th in the nation; however, it was ranked 48th only five years previously. The State percent of population below poverty level reflects a 16.8%, compared to 18% for the District.

Continued efforts will be directed towards the specific problems affecting each county. Traditional resolutions to regional and community problems no longer share a universal remedy. Over the years, efforts have been made to alleviate the barriers, which prevent a sound and healthy economy; and it is evident that progress has been made. New economic tools coupled with new approaches will continue to assist in progressing the WRPDD region. Only through coordination of programs and the cooperation of individuals at the local, state, and federal levels will a healthy and flourishing economy be reached. Better access to broadband along with a more skilled and “job ready” workforce will be key to the District’s success over the next five years.



District Profiles

Although rural, the White River Planning and Development District's unique region has had a significant impact on not only the tourism industry of Arkansas, but also the natural beauty and appeal the state has to offer to those looking for a more permanent location. After Covid, many of the travelers who once came as tourists seasonally to the area chose to make the WRPDD region their permanent residence.

The 10 County region of Cleburne, Fulton, Independence, Izard, Jackson, Sharp, Stone, Van Buren, White and Woodruff offers citizens and tourists alike spectacular rolling hills with 322 named lakes and reservoirs throughout the 6,691 square mile area the district is comprised. Each decade the District grows in its rich natural resources and bountiful, academic and educational opportunities.

One of eight Economic Development Districts throughout the state, WRPDD is home to multiple outdoor marvels such as Blanchard Springs Caverns and recreational waterways like Greers Ferry Lake and Norfolk Lake which attract thousands of out of state tourists seasonally. The White River Planning and Development District is arguably the most diverse tourist area with the highest economic growth potential in the State.

Development District Comparisons

	White River Planning and Development District	East Arkansas Planning and Development District	Central Arkansas Planning and Development District	Northwest Arkansas Economic Development District, Inc.	Southeast Arkansas Economic Development District	Southwest Arkansas Planning and Development District	West Central Arkansas Planning and Development District	Western Arkansas Planning and Development District
Total Population	234,665	382,713	736,217	690,449	190,851	213,377	313,958	256,439
Total Households	90,668	145,810	297,351	262,738	70,118	79,432	124,256	101,321
Commuting to Work	89,269	157,240	343,410	322,128	70,739	83,690	129,303	108,405
Employed	90,264	161,583	343,328	326,172	71,912	84,835	131,310	110,079

Information for the regional and county profiles was derived from the following sources as well as previous strategies:

<http://www.statsamerica.org/USCP/>

<https://www.arkansas.com/industry-insider/research/economic-impact-report>

<http://datausa.io>

<http://arkansasedc.com>

<http://data.census.gov>

<http://local.arkansas.gov>



WRPDD Region

Demographics

Population by Age, 2022	Value	Pct. of Total	U.S.	Pct. of Total
Total	234,665	100%	331,097,593	100%
Preschool (0 to 4)	12,473	5.3%	19,004,925	5.7%
School Age (5 to 17)	37,882	16.1%	54,208,780	16.4%
College Age (18 to 24)	20,849	8.9%	31,282,896	9.4%
Young Adult (25 to 44)	52,598	22.4%	88,198,512	26.6%
Adult (45 to 64)	61,590	26.2%	83,664,832	25.3%
Older Adult (65 plus)	49,273	21.0%	54,737,648	16.5%

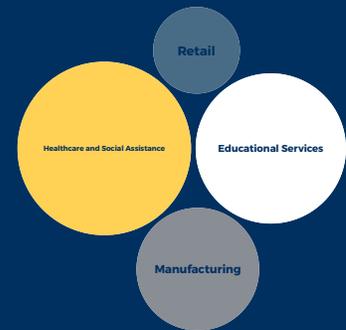
Households, 2022	Value	Pct. of Total	U.S. Households	Pct. of Total
Total Households	90,668	100%	125,736,353	100%
Family Households	59,671	65.8%	81,432,908	64.8%
Married with Children	16,443	18.1%	23,088,518	18.4%
Married without Children	28,523	31.5%	36,672,063	29.2%
Single Parents	7,322	8.1%	10,702,470	8.5%
Other	7,383	8.1%	10,969,857	8.7%
Non-family Households	30,997	34.2%	44,303,445	35.2%
Living Alone	26,837	29.6%	35,550,232	28.3%

Commuting to Work, 2022	Value	Pct. of Total	U.S.	Pct. of Total
Workers 16 years and over	89,269	100%	156,703,623	100%
Car, truck, or van -- drove alone	73,127	81.9%	112,314,702	71.7%
Car, truck, or van -- carpooled	8,809	9.9%	13,388,082	8.5%
Public transportation (including taxicab)	139	0.2%	5,945,723	3.8%
Walked	1,772	2.0%	3,807,792	2.4%
Other means	1,389	1.6%	2,930,639	1.9%
Worked at home	4,033	4.5%	18,316,685	11.7%

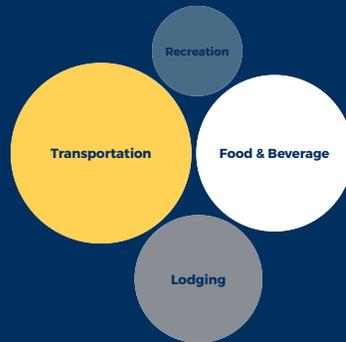
Educational Attainment, 2022	Value	Pct. of Total	U.S.	Pct. of Total
Total Population 25 and Older	163,461	100%	226,600,992	100%
Less Than 9th Grade	7,083	4.3%	10,742,781	4.7%
9th to 12th, No Diploma	15,659	9.6%	13,856,917	6.1%
High School Graduate (incl. equiv.)	64,875	39.7%	59,741,825	26.4%
Some College, No Degree	34,284	21.0%	44,692,390	19.7%
Associate Degree	13,563	8.3%	19,815,732	8.7%
Bachelor's Degree	17,683	10.8%	47,391,673	20.9%
Graduate or Professional Degree	10,314	6.3%	30,359,674	13.4%



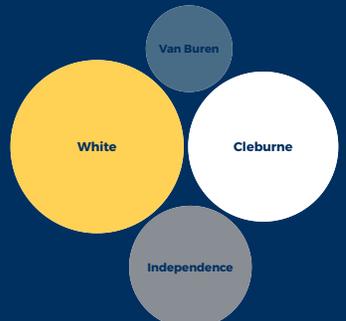
Leading Industries



Leading Tourism by Category



Leading Tourism by County



Cleburne County



Demographics

People & Income Overview (By Place of Residence)	Value	Rank in State	Industry Overview, 2023 (By Place of Work)	Value	Rank in State
Population (2023)	25,445	25	Covered Employment	6,461	33
Growth (%) since 2020 Census	3.0%	10	Avg Wage per Job	\$40,597	57
Households (2022)	10,626	24	Manufacturing - % All Jobs in County	20.3%	24
Labor Force (persons) (Ann. Avg. 2023)	N/A		Avg Wage per Job	\$49,197	42
Unemployment Rate (Ann. Avg. 2023)	N/A		Transportation & Warehousing - % All Jobs in County	2.0%	49
Per Capita Personal Income (2022)	\$48,466	12	Avg Wage per Job	\$50,566	57
Median Household Income (2022)	\$52,662	19	Health Care, Social Assist. - % All Jobs in County	12.3%	35
Poverty Rate (2022)	13.0	72	Avg Wage per Job	\$40,805	57
High School Diploma or More - % of Adults 25+ (2022)	87.9%	26	Finance and Insurance - % All Jobs in County	3.0%	18
Bachelor's Degree or More - % of Adults 25+ (2022)	17.2%	26	Avg Wage per Job	\$49,998	60

*StatsAmerica.org

Tourism Direct Spending by Category

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	\$112.9M	\$113.5M	\$110.1M	\$120.1M	\$123.1M
Lodging		\$21.7M	\$22.7M	\$25.2M	\$24.9M
Transportation		\$32.9M	\$28.7M	\$35.2M	\$38.6M
Food & Beverage		\$29.0M	\$29.8M	\$29.9M	\$29.2M
Retail		\$14.2M	\$14.2M	\$14.5M	\$13.9M
Recreation		\$15.7M	\$14.7M	\$15.3M	\$16.5M

*Arkansas.com

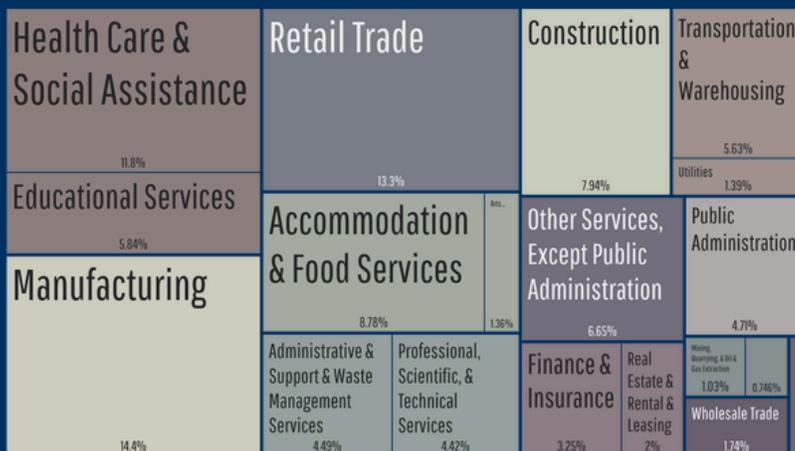
Cities and Towns

Concord
Fairfield Bay**
Greers Ferry

Heber Springs
Higden
Quitman

*Local.Arkansas.gov
**Located in multiple counties.

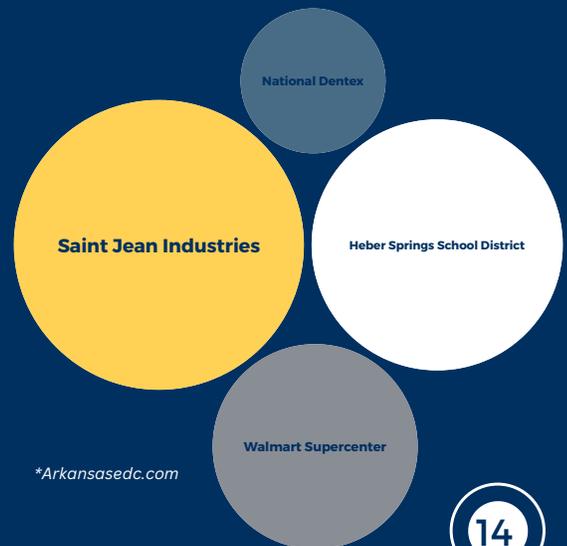
Employment by Industry



*DataUSA.io



Leading Employers



*Arkansasedc.com

Fulton County



Demographics

People & Income Overview (By Place of Residence)	Value	Rank in State	Industry Overview, 2023 (By Place of Work)	Value	Rank in State
Population (2023)	12,421	56	Covered Employment	1,852	66
Growth (%) since 2020 Census	2.9%	12	Avg Wage per Job	\$39,290	66
Households (2022)	4,780	54	Manufacturing - % All Jobs in County	6.5%	57
Labor Force (persons) (Ann. Avg. 2023)	N/A		Avg Wage per Job	\$41,619	60
Unemployment Rate (Ann. Avg. 2023)	N/A		Transportation & Warehousing - % All Jobs in County	0.9%	66
Per Capita Personal Income (2022)	\$34,007	73	Avg Wage per Job	\$50,547	58
Median Household Income (2022)	\$42,588	64	Health Care, Social Assist. - % All Jobs in County	8.4%	44
Poverty Rate (2022)	17.2	49	Avg Wage per Job	\$34,372	74
High School Diploma or More - % of Adults 25+ (2022)	86.9%	33	Finance and Insurance - % All Jobs in County	3.8%	4
Bachelor's Degree or More - % of Adults 25+ (2022)	14.4%	53	Avg Wage per Job	\$68,833	16

*StatsAmerica.org

Tourism Direct Spending by Category

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	\$19.1M	\$20.5M	\$21.0M	\$22.4M	\$23.8M
Lodging		\$3.9M	\$4.3M	\$4.7M	\$4.9M
Transportation		\$5.8M	\$5.4M	\$6.3M	\$7.0M
Food & Beverage		\$5.2M	\$5.6M	\$5.7M	\$5.8M
Retail	\$2.4M	\$2.4M	\$2.4M	\$2.5M	\$2.4M
Recreation		\$3.2M	\$3.3M	\$3.3M	\$3.7M

*Arkansas.com

Cities and Towns

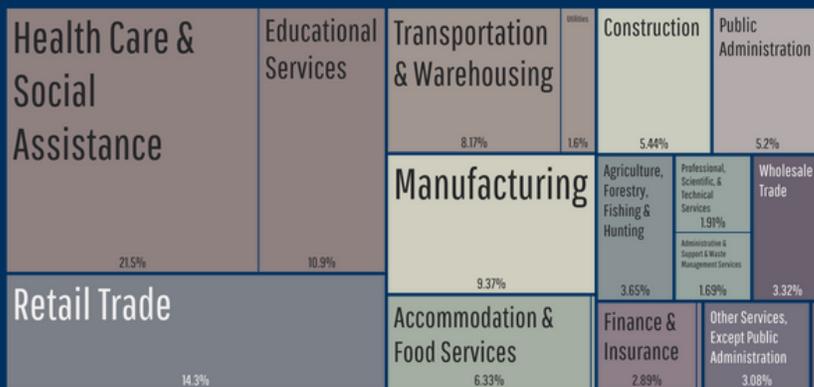
Ash Flat**
Cherokee Village**
Horseshoe Bend**

Mammoth Spring
Salem
Viola

*Local.Arkansas.gov

**Located in multiple counties.

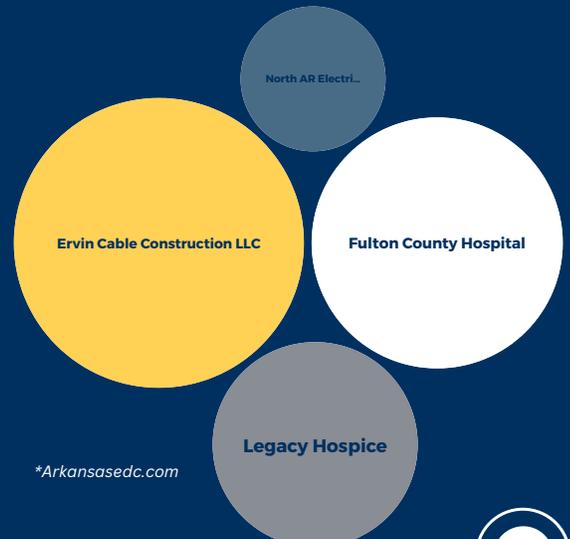
Employment by Industry



*DataUSA.io

2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022

Leading Employers



*Arkansasedc.com

Independence County



Demographics

People & Income Overview (By Place of Residence)	Value	Rank in State	Industry Overview, 2023 (By Place of Work)	Value	Rank in State
Population (2023)	38,320	20	Covered Employment	17,383	14
Growth (%) since 2020 Census	1.0%	31	Avg Wage per Job	\$49,262	14
Households (2022)	14,417	21	Manufacturing - % All Jobs in County	21.7%	22
Labor Force (persons) (Ann. Avg. 2023)	N/A		Avg Wage per Job	\$60,385	19
Unemployment Rate (Ann. Avg. 2023)	N/A		Transportation & Warehousing - % All Jobs in County	3.8%	29
Per Capita Personal Income (2022)	\$44,216	34	Avg Wage per Job	\$54,330	40
Median Household Income (2022)	\$57,611	9	Health Care, Social Assist. - % All Jobs in County	20.3%	11
Poverty Rate (2022)	15.0	65	Avg Wage per Job	\$57,666	6
High School Diploma or More - % of Adults 25+ (2022)	86.8%	34	Finance and Insurance - % All Jobs in County	3.3%	11
Bachelor's Degree or More - % of Adults 25+ (2022)	17.1%	27	Avg Wage per Job	\$69,182	15

*StatsAmerica.org

Tourism Direct Spending by Category

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	\$52.5M	\$53.3M	\$52.0M	\$70.8M	\$76.6M
Lodging		\$7.2M	\$7.5M	\$11.2M	\$12.4M
Transportation		\$16.9M	\$15.4M	\$23.2M	\$26.4M
Food & Beverage		\$15.2M	\$15.6M	\$19.7M	\$20.2M
Retail		\$7.9M	\$7.8M	\$9.6M	\$9.5M
Recreation		\$6.0M	\$5.6M	\$7.2M	\$8.0M

*Arkansas.com

Cities and Towns

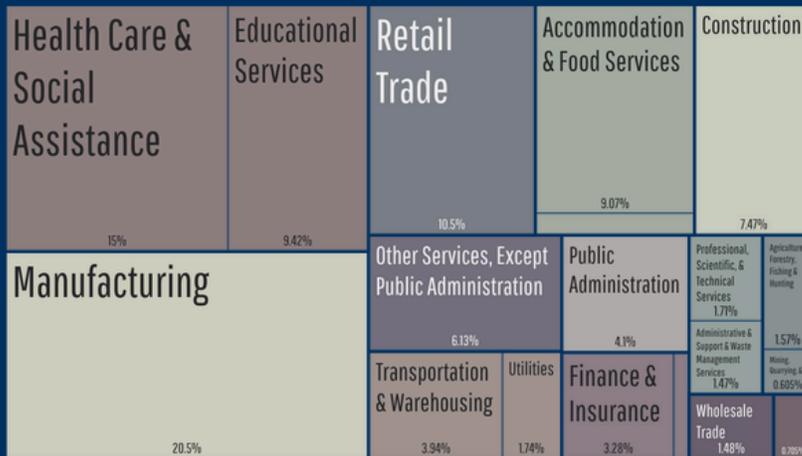
Batesville
Cave City**
Cushman
Magness
Moorefield

Newark
Oil Trough
Pleasant Plains
Southside
Sulphur Rock

*Local.Arkansas.gov

**Located in multiple counties.

Employment by Industry



*DataUSA.io

2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022

Leading Employers



*Arkansasedc.com

Izard County



Demographics

People & Income Overview (By Place of Residence)	Value	Rank in State	Industry Overview, 2023 (By Place of Work)	Value	Rank in State
Population (2023)	14,169	52	Covered Employment	2,862	58
Growth (%) since 2020 Census	4.4%	6	Avg Wage per Job	\$40,232	60
Households (2022)	4,850	53	Manufacturing - % All Jobs in County	5.1%	65
Labor Force (persons) (Ann. Avg. 2023)	N/A		Avg Wage per Job	\$44,502	52
Unemployment Rate (Ann. Avg. 2023)	N/A		Transportation & Warehousing - % All Jobs in County	4.4%	22
Per Capita Personal Income (2022)	\$34,660	72	Avg Wage per Job	\$55,809	31
Median Household Income (2022)	\$43,920	61	Health Care, Social Assist. - % All Jobs in County	21.1%	10
Poverty Rate (2022)	22.4	12	Avg Wage per Job	\$36,505	70
High School Diploma or More - % of Adults 25+ (2022)	83.2%	63	Finance and Insurance - % All Jobs in County	2.6%	29
Bachelor's Degree or More - % of Adults 25+ (2022)	18.9%	19	Avg Wage per Job	\$61,618	36

*StatsAmerica.org

Tourism Direct Spending by Category

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	\$16.0M	\$17.1M	\$15.3M	\$16.9M	\$18.6M
Lodging		\$3.5M	\$3.2M	\$3.5M	\$4.1M
Transportation		\$5.0M	\$4.4M	\$5.3M	\$6.0M
Food & Beverage		\$4.1M	\$3.8M	\$3.9M	\$4.1M
Retail		\$2.1M	\$2.0M	\$2.0M	\$2.1M
Recreation		\$2.4M	\$1.9M	\$2.1M	\$2.3M

*Arkansas.com

Cities and Towns

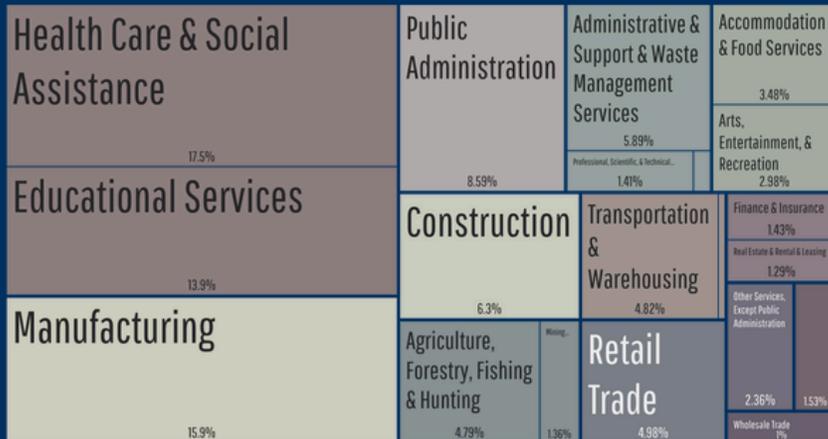
Calico Rock
Franklin
Guion
Horseshoe Bend**

Melbourne
Mount Pleasant
Oxford
Pineville

*Local.Arkansas.gov
**Located in multiple counties.

Employment by Industry

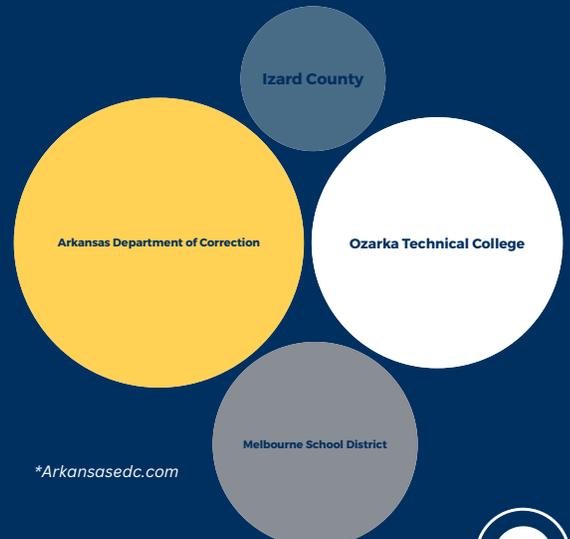
4,192 workers



*DataUSA.io

2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022

Leading Employers



*Arkansasedc.com

Jackson County



Demographics

People & Income Overview (By Place of Residence)	Value	Rank in State	Industry Overview, 2023 (By Place of Work)	Value	Rank in State
Population (2023)	16,784	44	Covered Employment	5,068	41
Growth (%) since 2020 Census	0.2%	36	Avg Wage per Job	\$47,871	20
Households (2022)	6,116	49	Manufacturing - % All Jobs in County	18.8%	28
Labor Force (persons) (Ann. Avg. 2023)	N/A		Avg Wage per Job	\$64,074	12
Unemployment Rate (Ann. Avg. 2023)	N/A		Transportation & Warehousing - % All Jobs in County	1.5%	58
Per Capita Personal Income (2022)	\$45,916	24	Avg Wage per Job	\$58,165	20
Median Household Income (2022)	\$43,579	62	Health Care, Social Assist. - % All Jobs in County	0.5%	66
Poverty Rate (2022)	24.7	8	Avg Wage per Job	\$46,153	25
High School Diploma or More - % of Adults 25+ (2022)	86.3%	37	Finance and Insurance - % All Jobs in County	2.0%	52
Bachelor's Degree or More - % of Adults 25+ (2022)	11.9%	67	Avg Wage per Job	\$54,967	44

*StatsAmerica.org

Tourism Direct Spending by Category

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	\$16.4M	\$16.4M	\$15.1M	\$19.6M	\$22.2M
Lodging		\$1.8M	\$1.7M	\$2.4M	\$2.9M
Transportation		\$6.8M	\$5.9M	\$8.3M	\$9.7M
Food & Beverage		\$3.5M	\$3.5M	\$4.1M	\$4.5M
Retail		\$2.5M	\$2.4M	\$2.8M	\$2.9M
Recreation		\$1.8M	\$1.6M	\$2.0M	\$2.3M

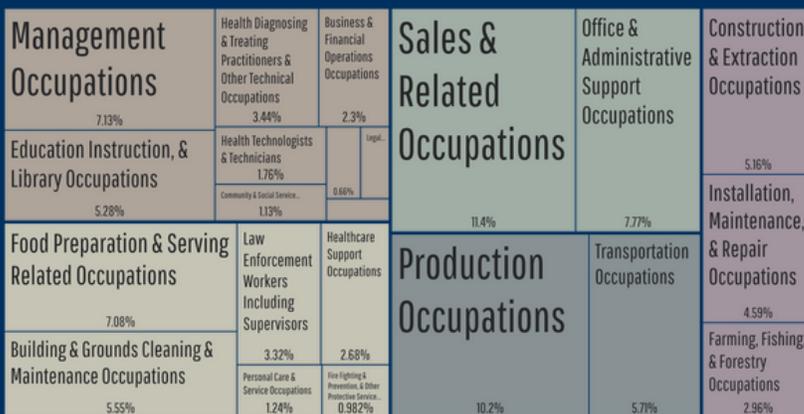
*Arkansas.com

Cities and Towns

- Amagon
- Beedeville
- Campbell Station
- Diaz
- Grubbs
- Jacksonport
- Newport
- Swifton
- Tuckerman
- Tupelo
- Weldon

*Local.Arkansas.gov

Employment by Industry



*DataUSA.io

2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022

Leading Employers



*Arkansasedc.com

Sharp County



Demographics

People & Income Overview (By Place of Residence)	Value	Rank in State	Industry Overview, 2023 (By Place of Work)	Value	Rank in State
Population (2023)	17,968	39	Covered Employment	3,897	49
Growth (%) since 2020 Census	4.0%	8	Avg Wage per Job	\$37,708	69
Households (2022)	6,901	40	Manufacturing - % All Jobs in County	7.5%	54
Labor Force (persons) (Ann. Avg. 2023)	N/A		Avg Wage per Job	\$47,151	48
Unemployment Rate (Ann. Avg. 2023)	N/A		Transportation & Warehousing - % All Jobs in County	0.9%	66
Per Capita Personal Income (2022)	\$43,728	37	Avg Wage per Job	\$54,999	36
Median Household Income (2022)	\$45,740	54	Health Care, Social Assist. - % All Jobs in County	0.6%	63
Poverty Rate (2022)	19.5	34	Avg Wage per Job	\$39,987	61
High School Diploma or More - % of Adults 25+ (2022)	84.6%	53	Finance and Insurance - % All Jobs in County	4.0%	3
Bachelor's Degree or More - % of Adults 25+ (2022)	11.5%	70	Avg Wage per Job	\$66,125	23

*StatsAmerica.org

Tourism Direct Spending by Category

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	\$30.3M	\$30.8M	\$30.3M	\$34.6M	\$36.2M
Lodging		\$5.6M	\$5.9M	\$6.9M	\$7.0M
Transportation		\$10.3M	\$9.4M	\$11.9M	\$13.3M
Food & Beverage		\$7.6M	\$7.7M	\$8.1M	\$8.1M
Retail		\$3.9M	\$3.9M	\$4.2M	\$4.0M
Recreation		\$3.4M	\$3.3M	\$3.5M	\$3.8M

*Arkansas.com

Cities and Towns

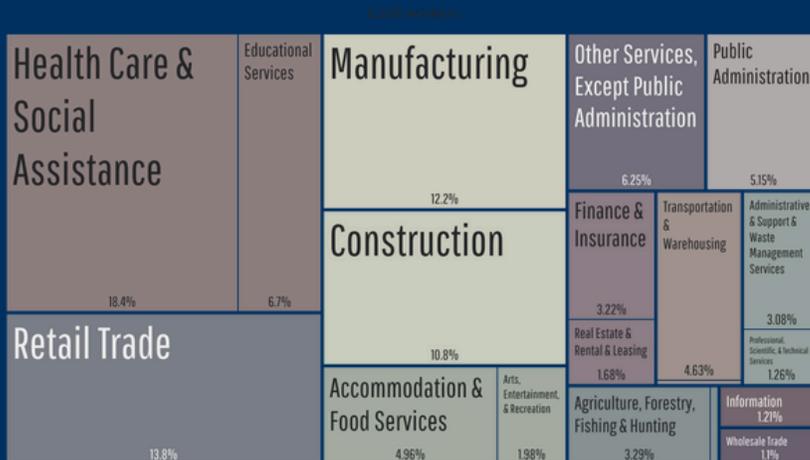
Ash Flat**
Cave City**
Cherokee Village**
Evening Shade

Hardy
Highland
Sidney
Williford

*Local.Arkansas.gov

**Located in multiple counties.

Employment by Industry



*DataUSA.io

2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022

Leading Employers



*Arkansasedc.com

Stone County



Demographics

People & Income Overview (By Place of Residence)	Value	Rank in State	Industry Overview, 2023 (By Place of Work)	Value	Rank in State
Population (2023)	12,671	54	Covered Employment	2,628	62
Growth (%) since 2020 Census	2.5%	15	Avg Wage per Job	\$37,101	71
Households (2022)	4,731	56	Manufacturing - % All Jobs in County	9.8%	49
Labor Force (persons) (Ann. Avg. 2023)	N/A		Avg Wage per Job	\$38,262	64
Unemployment Rate (Ann. Avg. 2023)	N/A		Transportation & Warehousing - % All Jobs in County	1.2%	62
Per Capita Personal Income (2022)	\$36,857	67	Avg Wage per Job	\$62,470	8
Median Household Income (2022)	\$41,063	69	Health Care, Social Assist. - % All Jobs in County	1.8%	54
Poverty Rate (2022)	20.4	26	Avg Wage per Job	\$62,594	3
High School Diploma or More - % of Adults 25+ (2022)	86.1%	40	Finance and Insurance - % All Jobs in County	3.5%	8
Bachelor's Degree or More - % of Adults 25+ (2022)	14.4%	53	Avg Wage per Job	\$65,098	25

*StatsAmerica.org

Tourism Direct Spending by Category

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	\$45.7M	\$46.7M	\$44.5M	\$53.2M	\$55.0M
Lodging		\$8.9M	\$9.0M	\$11.5M	\$11.5M
Transportation		\$13.3M	\$11.2M	\$14.5M	\$16.0M
Food & Beverage		\$12.7M	\$13.0M	\$14.7M	\$14.8M
Retail		\$6.0M	\$5.8M	\$6.6M	\$6.4M
Recreation		\$5.7M	\$5.4M	\$5.9M	\$6.4M

*Arkansas.com

Cities and Towns

Fifty Six
Mountain View

*Local.Arkansas.gov

Employment by Industry



*DataUSA.io

2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022

Leading Employers



*Arkansasedc.com

Van Buren County



Demographics

People & Income Overview (By Place of Residence)	Value	Rank in State	Industry Overview, 2023 (By Place of Work)	Value	Rank in State
Population (2023)	16,142	48	Covered Employment	3,821	50
Growth (%) since 2020 Census	2.2%	18	Avg Wage per Job	\$42,117	47
Households (2022)	6,833	42	Manufacturing - % All Jobs in County	4.4%	68
Labor Force (persons) (Ann. Avg. 2023)	N/A		Avg Wage per Job	\$36,247	66
Unemployment Rate (Ann. Avg. 2023)	N/A		Transportation & Warehousing - % All Jobs in County	10.0%	4
Per Capita Personal Income (2022)	\$38,450	63	Avg Wage per Job	\$79,514	1
Median Household Income (2022)	\$47,150	47	Health Care, Social Assist. - % All Jobs in County	1.3%	57
Poverty Rate (2022)	19.6	33	Avg Wage per Job	\$34,150	75
High School Diploma or More - % of Adults 25+ (2022)	84.4%	54	Finance and Insurance - % All Jobs in County	3.4%	9
Bachelor's Degree or More - % of Adults 25+ (2022)	16.8%	28	Avg Wage per Job	\$51,817	55

*StatsAmerica.org

Tourism Direct Spending by Category

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	\$47.4M	\$49.4M	\$48.1M	\$56.3M	\$58.6M
Lodging		\$9.6M	\$10.1M	\$12.3M	\$12.3M
Transportation		\$13.9M	\$12.0M	\$16.0M	\$17.8M
Food & Beverage		\$11.5M	\$11.9M	\$12.8M	\$12.7M
Retail		\$6.1M	\$6.0M	\$6.3M	\$6.0M
Recreation		\$8.4M	\$8.1M	\$9.0M	\$9.8M

*Arkansas.com

Cities and Towns

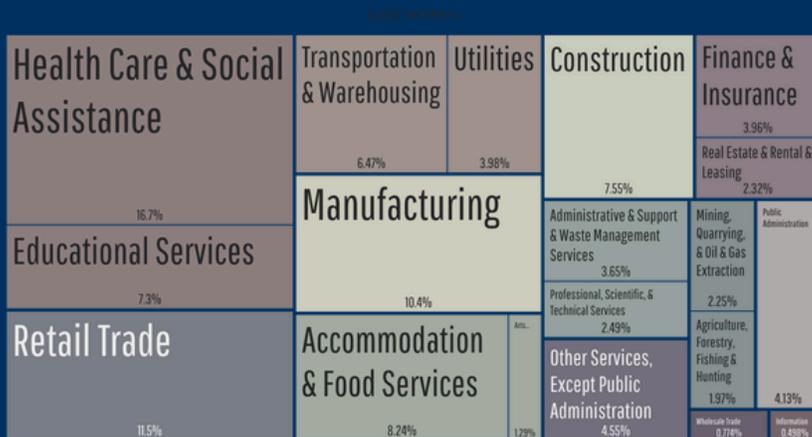
Clinton
Damascus

Fairfield Bay**
Shirley

*Local.Arkansas.gov

**Located in multiple counties.

Employment by Industry



*DataUSA.io

2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022

Leading Employers



*Arkansasedc.com

White County

Demographics



People & Income Overview (By Place of Residence)	Value	Rank in State	Industry Overview, 2023 (By Place of Work)	Value	Rank in State
Population (2023)	78,452	9	Covered Employment	25,106	11
Growth (%) since 2020 Census	2.1%	21	Avg Wage per Job	\$44,704	34
Households (2022)	28,788	9	Manufacturing - % All Jobs in County	10.2%	47
Labor Force (persons) (Ann. Avg. 2023)	N/A		Avg Wage per Job	\$51,661	37
Unemployment Rate (Ann. Avg. 2023)	N/A		Transportation & Warehousing - % All Jobs in County	8.6%	6
Per Capita Personal Income (2022)	\$43,574	38	Avg Wage per Job	\$56,456	28
Median Household Income (2022)	\$56,866	11	Health Care, Social Assist. - % All Jobs in County	17.5%	17
Poverty Rate (2022)	15.9	60	Avg Wage per Job	\$53,356	11
High School Diploma or More - % of Adults 25+ (2022)	86.3%	37	Finance and Insurance - % All Jobs in County	2.8%	23
Bachelor's Degree or More - % of Adults 25+ (2022)	20.5%	13	Avg Wage per Job	\$58,542	41

*StatsAmerica.org

Tourism Direct Spending by Category

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	\$100.0M	\$103.3M	\$88.5M	\$117.2M	\$134.4M
Lodging		\$13.3M	\$11.4M	\$16.6M	\$20.6M
Transportation		\$33.1M	\$26.8M	\$40.4M	\$47.9M
Food & Beverage		\$29.0M	\$26.8M	\$32.0M	\$35.0M
Retail		\$15.2M	\$13.5M	\$15.8M	\$16.5M
Recreation		\$12.6M	\$10.0M	\$12.4M	\$14.4M

*Arkansas.com

Cities and Towns

- | | |
|---------------|------------|
| Bald Knob | Kensett |
| Beebe | Letona |
| Bradford | McRae |
| Garner | Pangburn |
| Georgetown | Rosebud |
| Griffithville | Russell |
| Higginson | Searcy |
| Judsonia | West Point |

*Local.Arkansas.gov

Employment by Industry



*DataUSA.io

2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022

Leading Employers



*Arkansasedc.com

Woodruff County



Demographics

People & Income Overview (By Place of Residence)	Value	Rank in State	Industry Overview, 2023 (By Place of Work)	Value	Rank in State
Population (2023)	5,964	74	Covered Employment	1,976	65
Growth (%) since 2020 Census	-4.9%	69	Avg Wage per Job	\$44,638	36
Households (2022)	2,626	71	Manufacturing - % All Jobs in County	9.6%	50
Labor Force (persons) (Ann. Avg. 2023)	N/A		Avg Wage per Job	\$45,962	49
Unemployment Rate (Ann. Avg. 2023)	N/A		Transportation & Warehousing - % All Jobs in County	0.8%	68
Per Capita Personal Income (2022)	\$50,313	7	Avg Wage per Job	\$51,403	54
Median Household Income (2022)	\$41,225	68	Health Care, Social Assist. - % All Jobs in County	5.3%	48
Poverty Rate (2022)	22.6	11	Avg Wage per Job	\$40,639	59
High School Diploma or More - % of Adults 25+ (2022)	84.4%	54	Finance and Insurance - % All Jobs in County	1.5%	64
Bachelor's Degree or More - % of Adults 25+ (2022)	16.5%	31	Avg Wage per Job	\$46,661	65

*StatsAmerica.org

Tourism Direct Spending by Category

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	\$3.8M	\$4.0M	\$3.3M	\$3.9M	\$5.0M
Lodging		\$794.5K	\$648.7K	\$810.9K	\$1.2M
Transportation		\$1.1M	\$868.8K	\$1.1M	\$1.4M
Food & Beverage		\$970.2K	\$843.0K	\$914.1K	\$1.1M
Retail		\$582.0K	\$501.0K	\$533.4K	\$590.0K
Recreation		\$571.1K	\$483.4K	\$515.5K	\$650.8K

*Arkansas.com

Cities and Towns

Augusta
Cotton Plant
Hunter

McCrory
Patterson

*Local.Arkansas.gov

Employment by Industry



*DataUSA.io

2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022

Leading Employers



*Arkansasedc.com

SWOT Analysis

The White River Planning and Development SWOT is an in-depth analysis of regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats which could affect the ten-county District presently and throughout the future. This categorization better determines where the District is now, where it should be going and what areas it needs focus on in order to avoid damage to the economy.

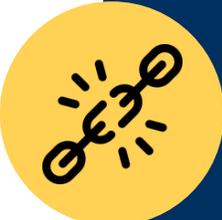


STRENGTHS

Tourism
Job Growth
Workforce Training
Access to Technical Schools
Low Crime Rates
Regional Health Care
K-12 School Systems

Tourism

Access to Utilities
Community Leadership
Resiliency to Natural Disasters
Close Supportive Communities
Agricultural Financial and Resource Support



WEAKNESSES

Competitive Living Wages
Affordable Housing
Broadband Access
Lack of Skilled Workforce
Rural Access to Health Care
Isolation of Rural Areas

Living Wages

Maturing Infrastructure
Lack of Work Ready Communities
Technology Driven Job Opportunity
High Poverty
Disaster Planning
Access to Quality Childcare



OPPORTUNITIES

Transportation
Business Retention and Expansion
Brownfield Development
Outdoor Recreation
Expanding Broadband to Rural Areas

Transportation

Cluster Development
Specialized Workforce Training
Opportunity Zones
Regional Collaboration
Green Energy



THREATS

Population Decline
Opiate Crisis
Housing Options
Lack of Accessible Broadband

Population Decline

Adequate Mass Transportation
Lack of Employment Opportunities
Affordable Alternative Energy Sources

Action Plan

Strategic Direction and Evaluation Framework

The White River Planning and Development District, Inc. Action Plan addresses eight significant priorities developed by the CEDS committee during the planning process. These action items reflect the current interests of the planning district and future aspirations.

Although this action plan will provide a guide for prioritizing resources and efforts, it will not be used to limit the identification and implementation of other activities which support the strategic direction of the overall vision and goals of the District. Activities may be added to or changed as needed to best serve the District collectively.

The following action items have been determined as areas of focus for the 2024-2028 CEDS:

- Goal 1 Workforce Development and Training
- Goal 2 Access to Broadband
- Goal 3 Infrastructure Improvements
- Goal 4 Competitive Living Wages
- Goal 5 Tourism
- Goal 6 Rural Access to Quality Healthcare
- Goal 7 Disaster Planning
- Goal 8 Access to Quality Childcare

The *Evaluation Framework* for the WRPDD CEDS process serves as a mechanism to gauge progress for the successful implementation of the overall CEDS. A combination of the action plan and the evaluation framework has been determined for this CEDS as it allows a more comparable overall document.

The *Framework* is an important element of the ongoing planning process and assists with answering how well the overall district is doing and areas needing further development. The CEDS is reviewed annually by the committee with changes submitted to EDA. The review may serve as a performance report for EDA and allows EDA to monitor any progress or changes which occurred throughout the District.

Goals and Activities

Evaluation Framework

1

Workforce Development and Training

TARGET

Businesses and industry do not have the skilled workforce available while out of school youth and dislocated worker numbers are growing.

STRATEGY

Through WRPDD's WIOA program, offer job placement and monetary assistance for training while connecting local businesses with skilled workers.

BENEFIT

Increasing the number of skilled laborers will attract industry and will provide economic stability and resiliency.

ACTIVITIES

1. Continue to educate local government on the need for a more skilled workforce to supply new businesses and industry and improve the overall quality of life.
2. Keep connections with local businesses and continue delivering to what their main needs are concerning skilled labor.
3. Enhance bridges between local institutions of higher education or training and industry or businesses.
4. Connect out of school youth and dislocated workers with monetary assistance and training resources.

ACCOUNTIBILITY

WRPDD
City and County Governments
Colleges and Training Centers
Industry and Businesses

TIMEFRAME

1-5 Years
Continuing Efforts
Ongoing

PRIORITY

High

2

Access to Broadband

TARGET

Broadband access throughout the district is limited to the more populous areas and controlled by companies who prohibit local governments from offering services.

STRATEGY

Work with interested parties to offer a better solution and bridge communication gaps that currently exist with companies.

BENEFIT

Ensuring everyone has access to broadband will boost economic development, spur job growth and benefit educational institutions.

ACTIVITIES

1. Bring together local and county governments with state legislators to discuss broadband issues and needs. Encourage education of citizens on the importance of broadband to their area.
2. Meet with telecommunication companies that service the District to discuss concerns and what can be done to better service our areas locally.
3. Research other rural states and what they are doing to provide services to their areas more efficiently.
4. Correspond with local utility service providers to explore the steps to take in order to ensure broadband can easily be provided when the opportunity arises.

ACCOUNTIBILITY

WRPDD
City and County Governments
Telecommunication Companies
Utility Companies

TIMEFRAME

1-5 Years
Continuing Efforts
Ongoing

PRIORITY

Moderate

Goals and Activities

Evaluation Framework

3

Infrastructure Improvements

TARGET

Infrastructure throughout the District is aging and in need of replacement while new infrastructure for growing areas is required with little local funds available.

STRATEGY

Work with local government to address infrastructure needs in the area and how to provide funding for these projects.

BENEFIT

New infrastructure serving the communities' needs will ensure economic stability and allow communities to be more competitive.

ACTIVITIES

1. Meet with each county judge or city mayor to determine what immediate infrastructure needs would currently benefit their areas.
2. Compile a complete list of all needs and what past projects have already been completed.
3. Research and compile a growing list of funding sources that supply infrastructure support that can be distributed to judges and mayors. Encourage the education throughout their area of the need to provide infrastructure upgrades and additions.
4. Work with local and county governments to secure funding and administer projects.

ACCOUNTIBILITY

WRPDD
City and County Governments
State/Federal Funding Sources Local
Financial Institutions

TIMEFRAME

1-5 Years
Continuing Efforts
Ongoing

PRIORITY

High

4

Competitive Living Wages

TARGET

The District has made strides in attracting higher paying industry, however many areas still are experiencing high poverty and low paying jobs.

STRATEGY

Work with local and county governments to stress the need of attracting industry to the area and utilizing available Opportunity Zone advantages.

BENEFIT

Retaining jobs paying wages which are comparable to other parts of the state will attract citizens and provide economic stability.

ACTIVITIES

1. Meet with county and local officials to access what they find as the most attractable industry to their areas and how these industries could help decrease poverty.
2. Determine Opportunity Zone areas throughout the District and educate local government on the advantages and benefits of having these areas in their cities and counties.
3. Through WRPDD's WIOA program, work with citizens to develop a more skilled workforce that can attract higher paying industry.
4. Work with local government and industry to bridge any communication gap concerning expanding businesses and services in hopes of wage increases.

ACCOUNTIBILITY

WRPDD
City and County Governments
Local Industry/Businesses
State Government

TIMEFRAME

1-5 Years
Continuing Efforts
Ongoing as needed

PRIORITY

Moderate

Goals and Activities

Evaluation Framework

5

Tourism

TARGET

The District is rich in historical landmarks and attractions that are not being marketed and developed in order to boost the economy.

STRATEGY

Encourage county and city governments to work together to promote tourism throughout their area.

BENEFIT

Promoting tourism not only creates a sense of community but also helps create jobs and boost the local tax base.

ACTIVITIES

1. Research and compile a list of local historical landmarks and attractions in each county that could be marketable or further promoted.
2. Meet with local officials to determine if the list of sites in their area could be promoted through local funds or grants.
3. Work with local tourism committees to aid in the promotion and development of local tourist attractions.

ACCOUNTIBILITY

WRPDD
City and County Governments
Local Chambers of Commerce

TIMEFRAME

1-5 Years
Continuing Efforts
Ongoing

PRIORITY

Moderate

6

Rural Access to Quality Healthcare

TARGET

Due to the rural nature of the District, many areas lack access to quality healthcare and must travel long distances to reach emergency providers.

STRATEGY

Convene groups of stakeholders from each county to examine possibilities of making rural healthcare more accessible.

BENEFIT

Ensuring that the District has healthcare available to all of its citizens fosters a sense of economic stability and will attract and sustain citizens.

ACTIVITIES

1. Update lists of the most medically underserved areas throughout the District.
2. Organize a meeting with health care providers and county officials to discuss gaps in service and what steps can be taken to overcome the lack of service.
3. Work with healthcare providers to find funding to expand and enrich outreach programs to ensure they can serve a larger population.
4. With the help of local officials, conduct mass surveys to citizens that determines their immediate needs and expectations for quality healthcare in their areas.

ACCOUNTIBILITY

WRPDD
City and County Governments
Healthcare Providers

TIMEFRAME

1-5 Years
Continuing Efforts
Ongoing as needed

PRIORITY

High

Goals and Activities

Evaluation Framework

7

Disaster Planning

TARGET

Natural disasters occur throughout the District each year leaving financially strapped communities with little means to recover.

STRATEGY

Through programs and grants made possible by state and federal entities, disaster plans and funding will be made available to all counties and cities.

BENEFIT

By providing the cities and counties with a one-stop solution to disaster planning, this will ensure economic resilience to disasters.

ACTIVITIES

1. Continue to educate local cities and governments on the importance of Hazard Mitigation Planning and provide services administration of projects.
2. Compile a list of past catastrophic disasters that have occurred throughout the District and the response time as well as the economic impact that occurred.
3. Convene with county emergency response personnel as well as office of emergency management in each area to provide information and determine a response in the event of a disaster.
4. WRPDD serve as the alternate point of contact for OEM and personnel pre and post disaster.

ACCOUNTABILITY

WRPDD
City and County Governments
County OEMs
Emergency Response Personnel

TIMEFRAME

1-5 Years
Continuing Efforts
Ongoing

PRIORITY

High

8

Access to Quality Childcare

TARGET

Access to quality childcare is limited while costs are high for many families. Centers and homes find it difficult to attract and retain qualified childcare specialists.

STRATEGY

Work with centers, family childcare homes and other child care professionals to increase trainings, recruit new facilities and promote affordable quality care.

BENEFIT

Ensuring all children have access to quality care will impact how children learn, think, develop and behave and lessen the financial burden on families.

ACTIVITIES

1. Bring together childcare professionals, local and county governments and state legislators to discuss childcare issues and needs throughout the District.
2. Provide trainings and promote partnerships with centers and family childcare homes to encourage and support their efforts of providing quality childcare.
3. Work with state and national organizations to support access to affordable care for all parents while recruiting new centers.
4. Create and promote new programs and childcare initiatives which are tailored to the needs of providers in the WRPDD region.

ACCOUNTABILITY

WRPDD
City and County Governments
Childcare Providers

TIMEFRAME

1-5 Years
Continuing Efforts
Ongoing

PRIORITY

High

Economic Resilience

White River Planning and Development District believes that a region's economic prosperity is linked to an area's ability to prevent, withstand and quickly recover from major disruptions to its economic base. In 2020, WRPDD created the White River Planning & Development District Economic Resiliency Plan through the efforts of local, state and federal partners. This thirty-page document serves as the framework for the District in terms of Resiliency Strategic Planning and is available to all constituents in the White River Planning District upon request.

The CEDS committee feels it has included "steady-state" and "responsive" initiatives to this strategic plan in order to insure that the District's role in the pre and post incident environment of an economic disaster is effective. In addition to the factors that have already been included in the action plan as well as the before mentioned Economic Resiliency Plan, the District intends to incorporate the following into their framework and work plan:

- Work with local officials, governments and economic partners to engage in comprehensive planning efforts that involve extensive involvement from the community. These efforts will align with other current and future planning efforts such as Hazard Mitigation Plans, local city initiatives, school district COOP plans and county emergency plans. The District currently is active in assisting cities, counties and school districts in the writing and administration of Hazard Mitigation Plans. Each county within the District has either an active plan or is currently working on a plan.
- White River Planning and Development District, Inc. has worked to broaden the industrial base of the region through various projects since the District's conception. It has been and will continue to be a priority of the District to build on the area's unique assets and competitive strengths and to provide stability to any industry during economic distress. The State's and federal government's new focus and distinction of Opportunity Zones will be a priority in the recognition of potential cluster development. The District will continue to work with incoming and potential businesses to ensure that Opportunity Zone incentives are utilized to their fullest especially in the event of an economic downturn.
- The District has worked with various businesses to assist them with retention and expansion programs during the recovery process and has also worked to assist dislocated workers with job search and training. Workforce training is an important component to economic resilience thought the ten county districts and will remain part of its work plan. By helping dislocated workers quickly and effectively shift between jobs and industries the District will remain a strong and adaptable area.
- The District, through its Hazard Mitigation Program, works with cities, counties and entities to ensure that there is an established process for regular communication in the event of an economic disaster. This pre-disaster recover planning ensures that the District will better respond to any type of disaster that may occur. White River Planning and Development District, Inc. serves as point of contact for the north central region of the state in the event of a disaster and will serve as a point of collaboration between public, private, educational and non-profit sectors on existing and future tasks.



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Contact Us!

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