

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

2022



OMEGA
OHIO MID-EASTERN GOVERNMENTS ASSOCIATION



Table of Contents

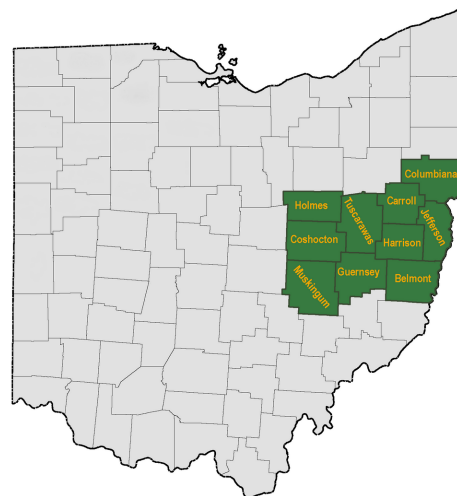
2	CEDS Committee and Process
4	Regional Overview
16	Resiliency
18	SWOT Analysis
21	Action Plan
28	Evaluation Framework
	Appendix A: AML and OZ Map
	Appendix B: Commuting Patterns Maps
	Appendix C: 2019 - 2021 Grant Record Map

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The Ohio Mid-Eastern Governments Association (OMEGA) is organized as a Council of Governments pursuant to Section 167 of the Ohio Revised Code and is designated by the Appalachian Regional Commission as a Local Development District and by the US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, as an Economic Development District. Since 2016, OMEGA has also been designated as an Ohio Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) for eight of our ten counties. Belmont and Jefferson Counties are excluded from the OMEGA RTPO as transportation planning activities in Jefferson and Belmont counties are provided by the Metropolitan Planning Organizations of Brooke-Hancock-Jefferson Metropolitan Planning Commission (BHJ) and Belomar Regional Council, respectively.

OMEGA is a collaborative body of member governments that serves as a facilitator between state and federal government agencies and local entities to provide opportunities in economic and community development through networking, education, planning, research, and allocation of resources. OMEGA's mission is to provide a pathway to enhance community and economic growth in the region. OMEGA's main objective is to foster a cooperative effort in planning, development and implementation of local and regional plans, programs and projects which will increase the economic activity in the area and improve the quality of life for its citizens.



The member governments of OMEGA include 10 county governments; Belmont, Carroll, Columbiana, Coshocton, Guernsey, Harrison, Holmes, Jefferson, Muskingum, and Tuscarawas as well as 12 city governments; Cambridge, Coshocton, Dover, East Liverpool, Martins Ferry, New Philadelphia, St. Clairsville, Salem, Steubenville, Toronto, Uhrichsville, and Zanesville.

OMEGA MISSION STATEMENT: Provide a pathway to enhance community and economic growth in our region.

CEDS Committee

Matt Abbott ----- Zanesville-Muskingum County Port Authority

Marla Akridge ----- Tuscarawas Economic Development Corporation

Bill Beisel ----- Kent State - Tuscarawas

Norm Blanchard ----- Guernsey County Community Improvement Corporation

Ed Looman ----- Ohio SE

Larry Merry ----- Belmont County Port Authority

Chris Modranski ----- Carroll County Commissioner

Robert Naylor ----- Jefferson County Port Authority

Arnie Oliver ----- Holmes County Planning Commission

Christopher Olney ----- North Valley Bank

Mikayla Pollitt ----- Muskingum University

Jason Ricker ----- Kimble Company

Kate Sedgmer ----- Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce

Tiffany Swigert ----- Coshocton Port Authority

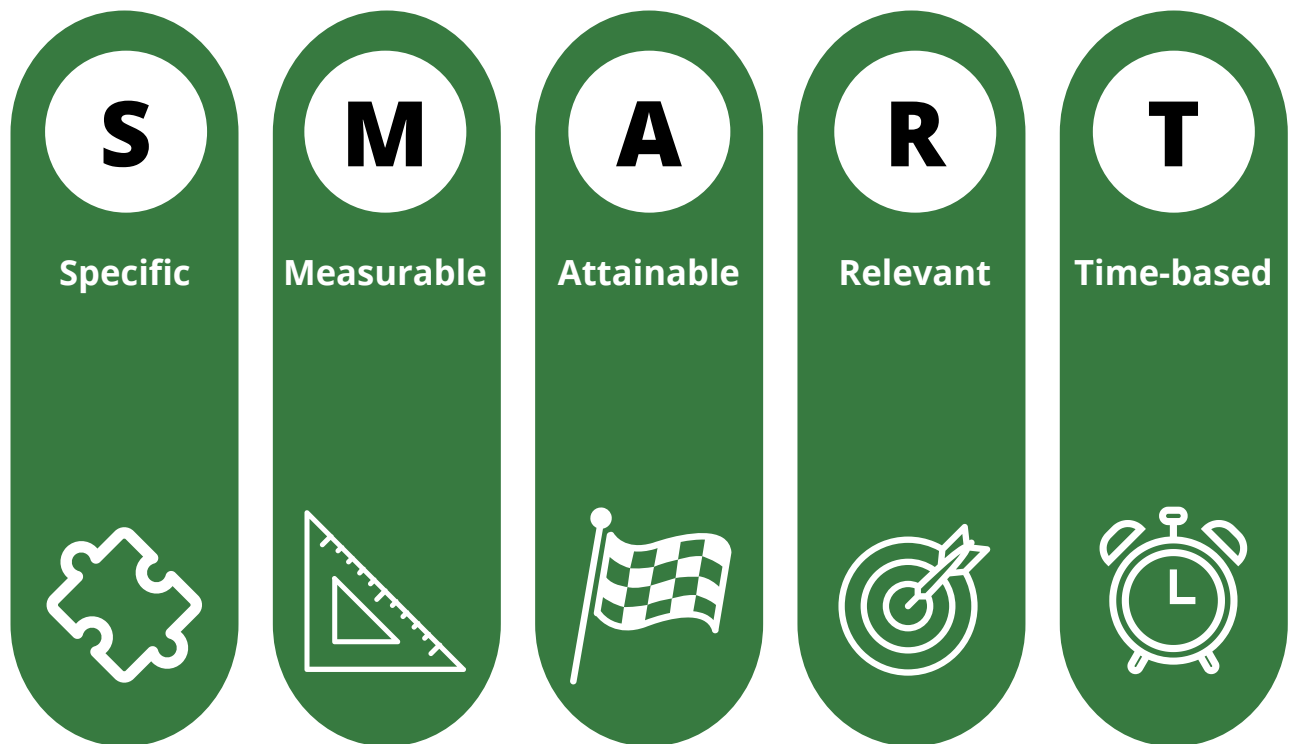
Jennifer Vincent ----- Cambridge Area Chamber of Commerce

CEDS Process

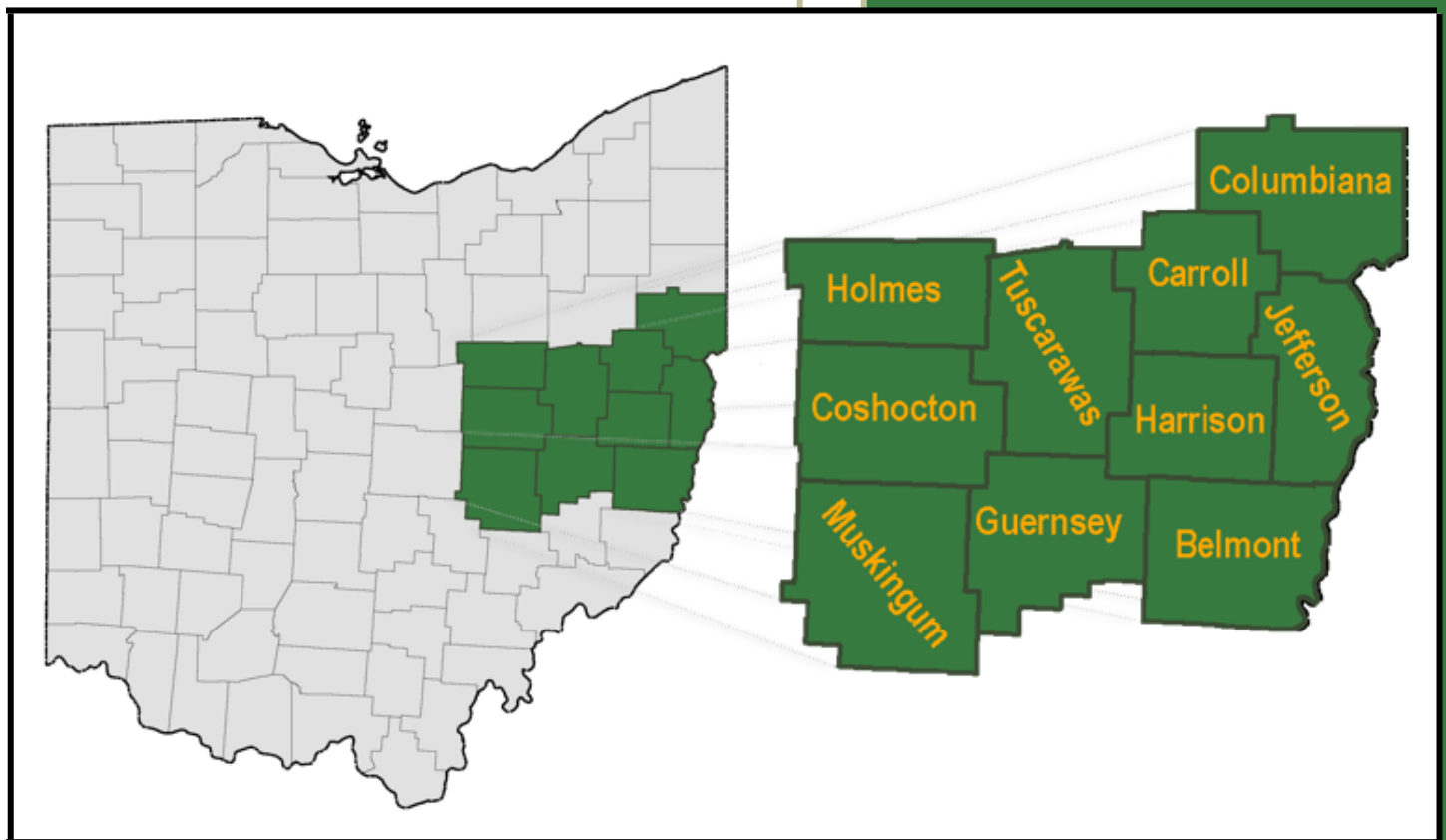
The CEDS development process began with a [survey](#) sent out in July 2020 to all OMEGA members to determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the region.

The CEDS Committee was established and the first committee meeting was held in February 2022 where the SWOT Analysis was reviewed and discussed, and the goals were developed. The second committee meeting was held in April 2022 and the action plan was discussed. The CEDS Committee met again in August 2022 to review the draft of the CEDS. After CEDS committee approval, OMEGA's Executive Board reviewed and approved the CEDS before EDA submission.

The goals of the CEDS were developed using the SMART goal method:



Regional Overview



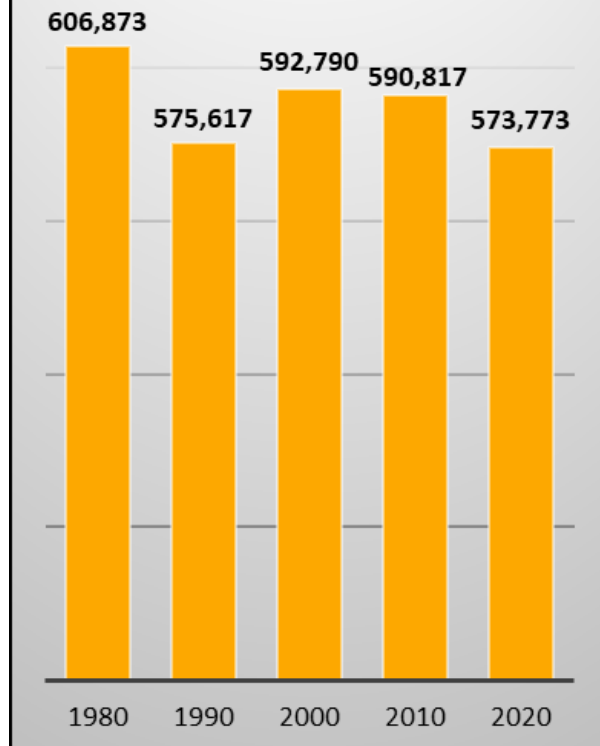
People of the OMEGA Region

While the national and state populations have continued to grow, the OMEGA region's overall population has been slowly declining over the last 20 years. However, the population of Holmes County, the region's fastest growing county, has increased by 14% in the last 20 years. Modest growth has occurred in Muskingum and Tuscarawas Counties.

The fall of the coal and steel industries are a major factor in the OMEGA region's dramatic population loss between 1980 and 1990. Like many communities in Appalachia, the region has had to transform its economy and bring new jobs and more diverse employers to the region.

The recent Intel investment immediately to the west of the region in Licking County may also mean population growth for Coshocton and Muskingum Counties.

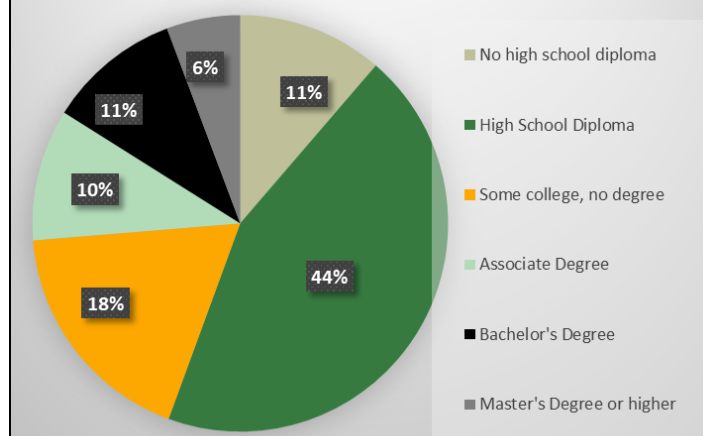
Over the Years: Population



Source: U.S. Census data

Educational Attainment

(excluding Holmes County)



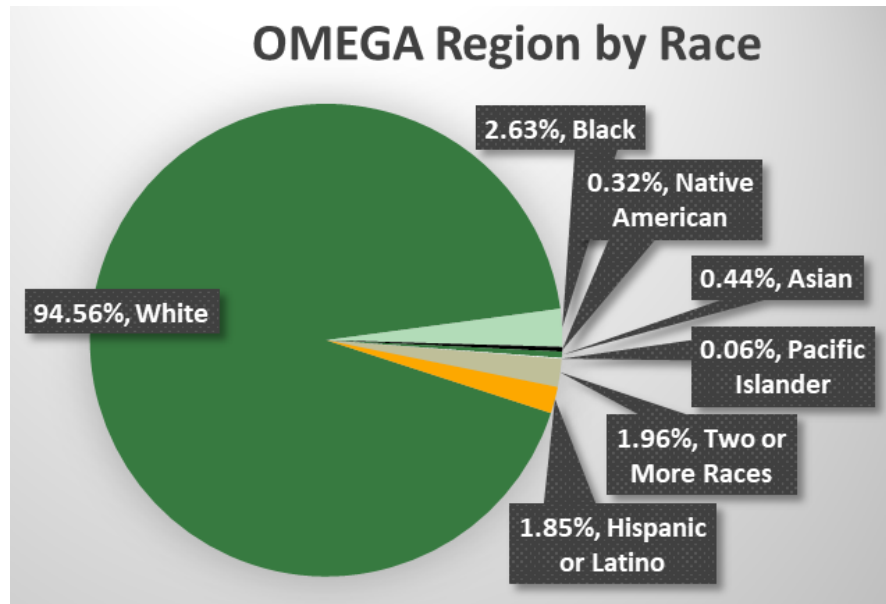
Source: 2020 American Community Survey

Holmes County is home to the second largest Amish community and has the highest percentage of Amish of any county in the U.S. The Amish are legally allowed to take their children out of school after the eighth grade, resulting in 44% of Holmes County adults 25 years or older having no high school diploma. Because of this, Holmes County was excluded from the Educational Attainment chart to the right, resulting in a less skewed representation of the region.

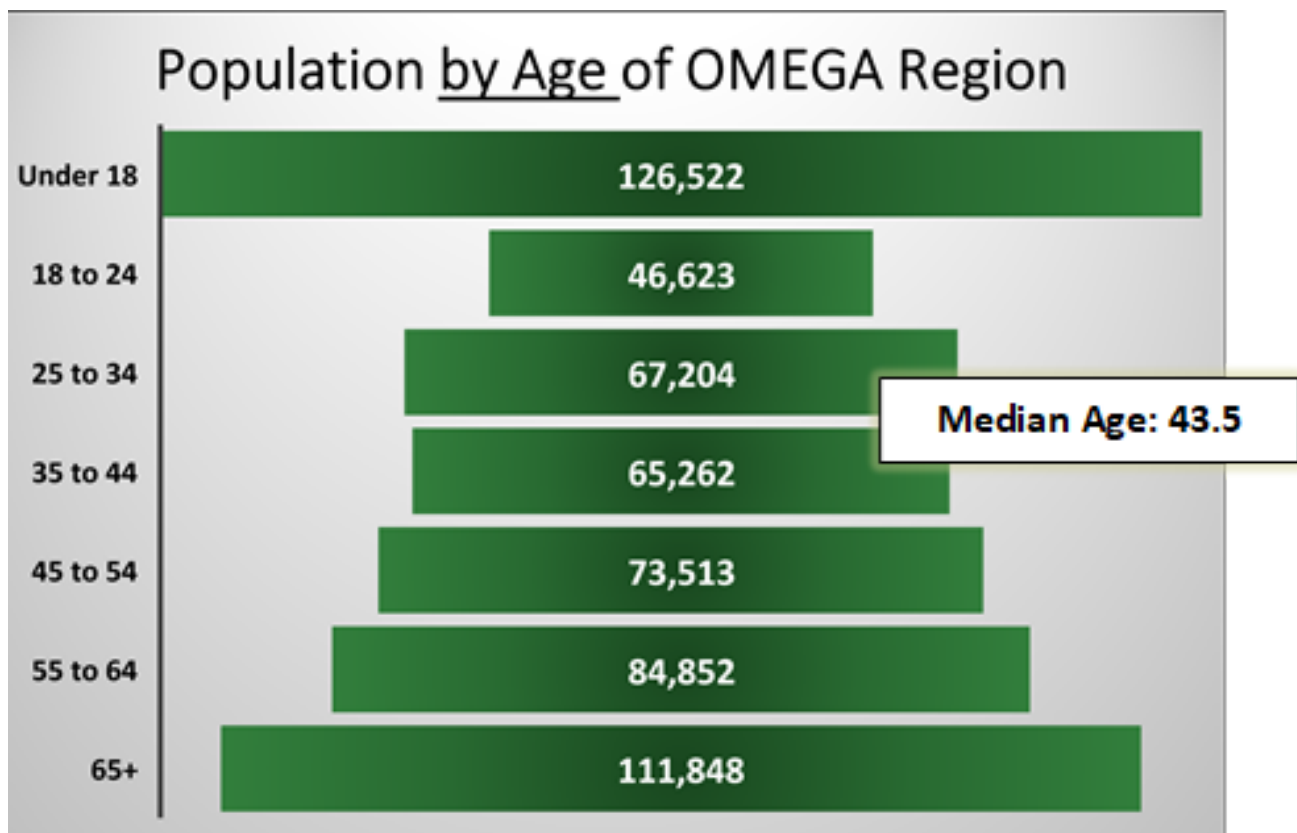
The population of the OMEGA region is 95.6% white, compared to Ohio at 81.2% and the U.S. at 75.8%. The second largest racial group in the OMEGA region is Black, 2.6%, compared to Ohio at 13.2% and the U.S. at 13.6%.

With a higher median age than the state and country, it seems likely that as the population

ages, the youth in the region are leaving to pursue opportunities such as employment, technical training, or higher-level education in more metropolitan areas. This is a concept often referred to as "brain drain". The median age of the OMEGA region is 43.5 compared to Ohio's of 39.5 and the United States' of 38.1. Harrison and Carroll Counties have the oldest median age of 46.1.



Source: U.S. 2020 Census



Source: 2020 American Community Survey

Places in the OMEGA Region

The Ohio Mid-Eastern Government's Association is comprised of ten counties in Appalachian Ohio including Belmont, Carroll, Columbiana, Coshocton, Guernsey, Harrison, Holmes, Jefferson, Muskingum, and Tuscarawas Counties. Belmont, Jefferson, and Columbiana all border West Virginia, while Columbiana also borders Pennsylvania.

While the OMEGA region is uniquely rural, each of its borders lie within easy access (one to two-hour drive) of the major metropolitan areas of Columbus to the west, Cleveland to the north, and Pittsburgh to the east. This positioning allows for distinctive opportunities to leverage the best of both the urban and rural worlds.

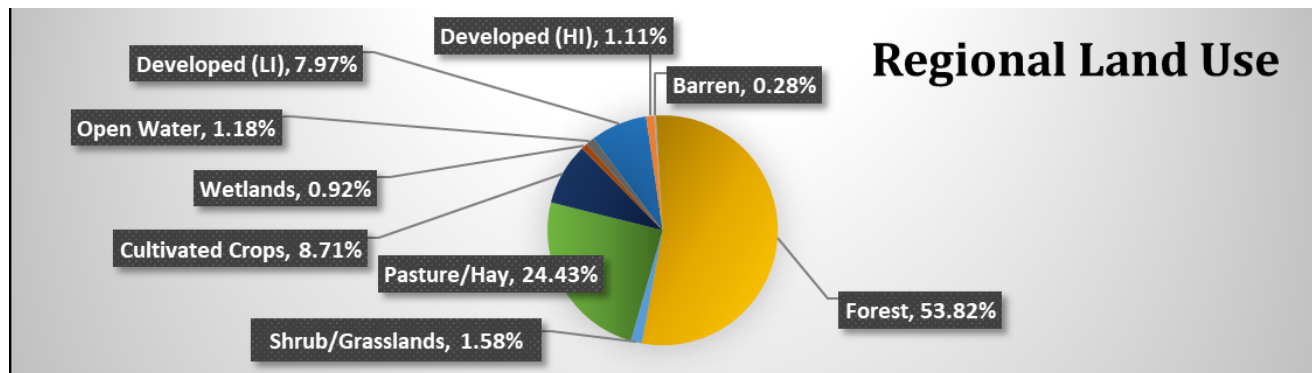
The Ohio River borders three of OMEGA's counties and provides a strong freight and intermodal transport system, due to the existing rail in the region. More than 184 million tons of cargo are transported on the Ohio River each year. The Wellsville Intermodal Facility in Columbiana County is the last deep water port on the Ohio River. The intermodal facility and Pier 48 recently ranked No. 1 in the U.S. for inland port tonnage. The port is trimodal, able to move material by rail, truck, and barge, providing the region with a flexible method of material transportation. In 2020, the US Army Corps of Engineers at the request of ODOT, WVDOT, local governments and agencies including OMEGA, created the Mid-Ohio River Valley Statistical Port which includes the section of the Ohio River between the Port of Pittsburgh and the Port of Huntington. Since this designation, this area of the Ohio River is now the largest inland port in the U.S. by freight tonnage.

The OMEGA region has multiple modes of transportation contributing to the regional and state economy, including highway, rail, maritime, and limited public transportation.

Population Centers		
	2020 Census	2010 Census
Zanesville (Muskingum)	24,765	25,487
Steubenville (Jefferson)	18,161	18,659
New Philadelphia (Tuscarawas)	17,677	17,288
Dover (Tuscarawas)	13,112	12,826
Salem (Columbiana)	11,915	12,299

The OMEGA district contains 10,350 lane miles of roadway, 1,261 miles of railroad, and 70 miles of shoreline along the Ohio River frontage. The OMEGA region is also served by eight public transit agencies.

Over half (53.82%) of the OMEGA region is forested. Just under 10% of the total region is developed. Pastured land and cultivated crops are also two significant land uses/covers at 24.43% and 8.71%, respectively. (As seen on following regional land use chart). The development rate for the OMEGA region is 9.08% compared to the state at 13.5%. The predominantly rural nature of the OMEGA region often presents infrastructure challenges for utilities due to the vast open areas between communities and businesses being served or targeted for service. The hilly terrain and presence of Abandoned Mine Land (AML) in the region creates additional obstacles when considering new development. (A map of the region's AML is included in Appendix A).

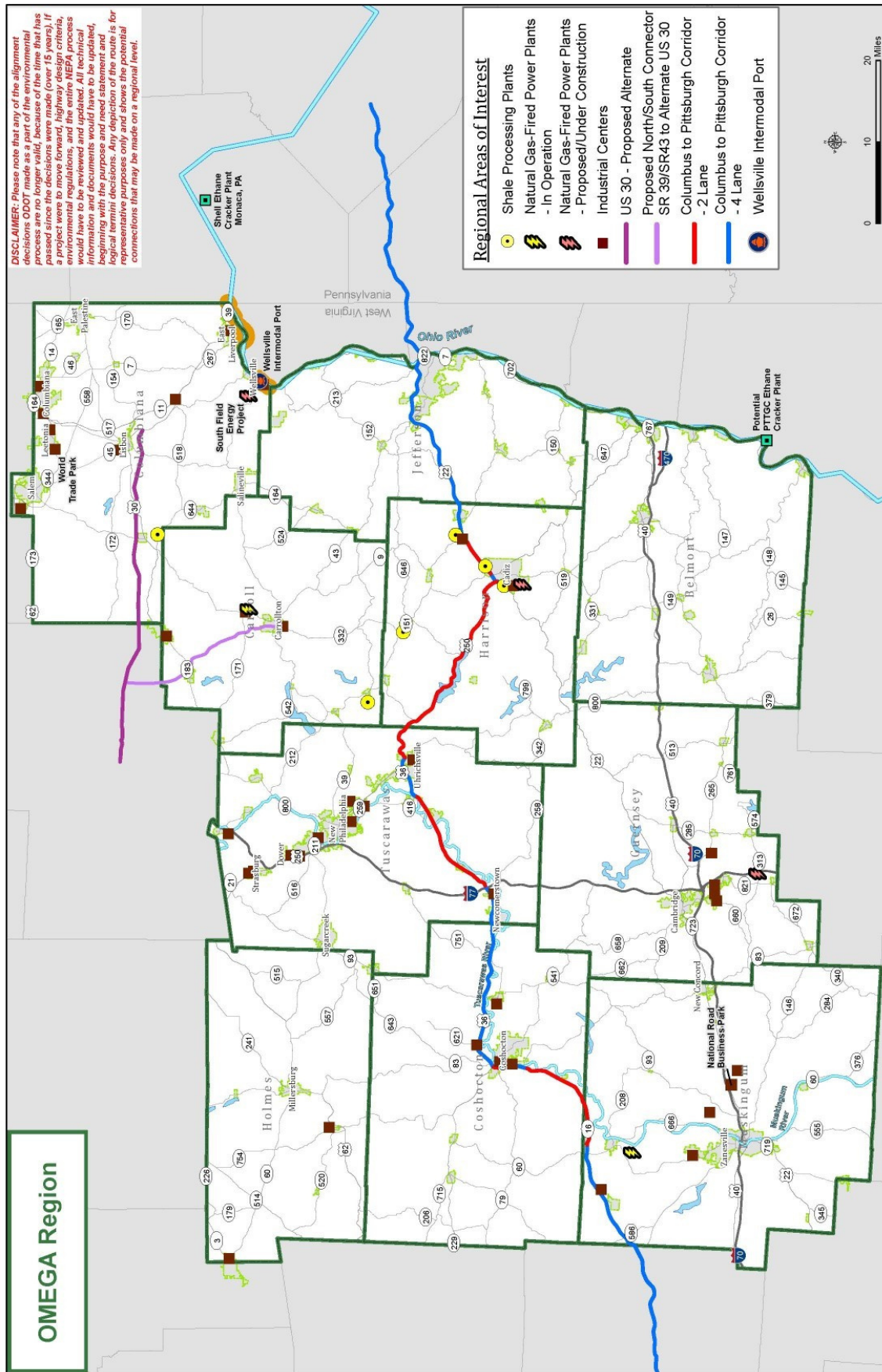


Source: Office of Research: Ohio County Profiles 2021 Edition

The OMEGA Region is home to over 150,000 acres of 92 different State Parks, Forests, Nature Preserves, Scenic Waterways, and Wildlife areas, making it an outdoor oasis. In 2020, the Tuscarawas River was designated as a State Water Trail, joining the Muskingum and the Kokosing Rivers in the OMEGA region. Salt Fork State Park, located in Guernsey County, is the largest state park in Ohio. In the OMEGA region, you can find mountain biking, kayaking, bouldering, and deer, turkey, or mushroom hunting, among a plethora of other outdoor activities. This wealth of recreational resources improves the quality of life for residents and also attracts tourists to the region.

The Muskingum River Watershed Conservatory District (MWCD) is the largest Conservancy District in the state of Ohio and has operations in eight of OMEGA's ten counties (Belmont, Carroll, Coshocton, Guernsey, Holmes, Harrison, Muskingum, and Tuscarawas). The MWCD is a political subdivision that was organized in 1933 to develop and implement a plan to reduce the effects of flooding and conserve water for beneficial public uses under the Conservancy Act. Their mission statement reads as follows: Responsible stewards dedicated to providing the benefits of flood reduction, conservation, and recreation in the Muskingum River Watershed. The lakes and facilities in the MWCD attract an estimated 5.5 million visitors to the area each year.

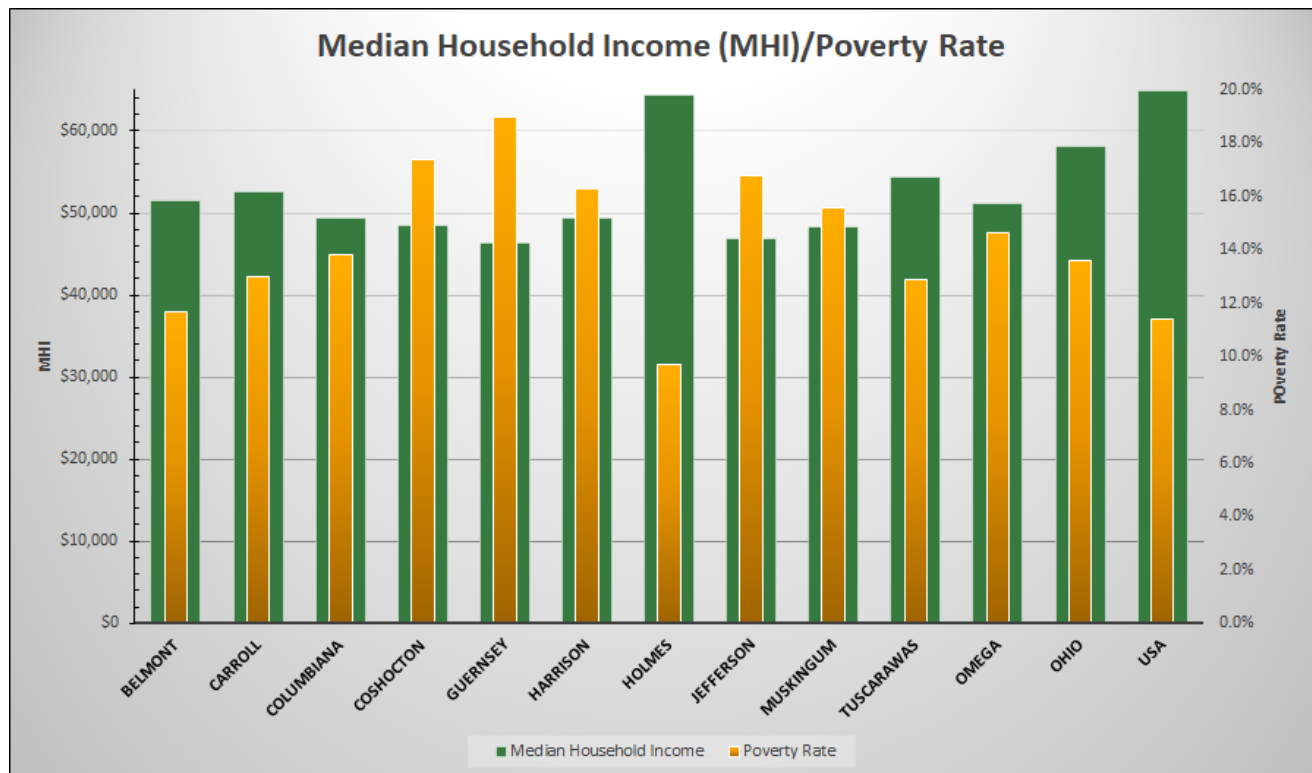
In the development of this economic development strategy, it is important to recognize that most businesses do not see county lines. Development must be approached at a regional level and remember that collaboration is more beneficial than competition.



The map above showcases the landmarks and assets of the OMEGA region, including industrial centers, natural gas-fired power plants (both under construction, in operation, and in the planning phase, with the Guernsey Power Station expected to be online in November 2022), shale processing plants, the Wellsville Intermodal Port, the US 30 Opportunity Corridor, and the Columbus to Pittsburgh Corridor.

Life in the OMEGA Region

In the OMEGA region, small-town living is the norm. However, with easy highway access in much of the region, metropolitan areas like Cleveland, Columbus, and Pittsburgh can be reached within two hours from most locations. The poverty rate is 14.6% compared to the state's 13.6%. Guernsey County has the highest poverty rate in the region at 19%. The Median Household Income (MHI) of the region is \$51,202 which is 88.1% of the state's MHI and 78.8% of the national MHI. The following bar chart reflects the MHI and poverty rates of the region by county along with a regional average. The state and national MHI and poverty rate are also included for comparison.



Source: 2020 American Community Survey

While the cost of living in the OMEGA region is also lower than the state and country, it is proportional to the difference in MHI. Renters in the region spend a median of \$666 a month on rent, which is 80.7% lower than the state's median rental expenditure of \$825.

The average drive time to work for OMEGA residents is 26.9 minutes. Fifty-six percent of residents live and work in the region, while almost half, (44%) of residents leave the region for work. Thirty-one percent of workers commute to work from outside the region. (Commuting pattern maps can be found in Appendix B).

Housing in the OMEGA Region							
	Housing Units	Occupied Units	% Occupied	Vacant Units	% Vacant	Homeownership Rate	Median Rent
Belmont	31,618	27,333	86.4%	4,285	13.6%	76.1%	\$665
Carroll	13,395	11,065	82.6%	2,330	17.4%	78.6%	\$713
Columbiana	46,091	41,706	90.5%	4,385	9.5%	73.4%	\$648
Coshocton	16,324	14,621	89.6%	1,703	10.4%	74.4%	\$632
Guernsey	19,009	16,100	84.7%	2,909	15.3%	71.4%	\$715
Harrison	7,379	6,032	81.7%	1,347	18.3%	78.4%	\$585
Holmes	14,588	13,490	92.5%	1,098	7.5%	77.8%	\$666
Jefferson	31,125	27,464	88.2%	3,661	11.8%	69.5%	\$665
Muskingum	38,358	35,091	91.5%	3,267	8.5%	69.8%	\$702
Tuscarawas	40,817	37,711	92.4%	3,106	7.6%	70.9%	\$772
OMEGA Total	258,704	230,613	89.1%	28,091	10.9%	74.0%	\$666
<i>Ohio</i>	5,242,524	4,808,773	91.7%	433,751	8.3%	66.3%	\$825

Source: Office of Research: Ohio County Profiles 2021 Edition

As part of OMEGA's Economy Recovery Coordinator project for post-pandemic recovery, meetings were held in each county, during which the critical need for affordable middle-class housing was identified. As many OMEGA counties are planning for large industrial projects, there is ongoing concern regarding housing for potential workers and their families.

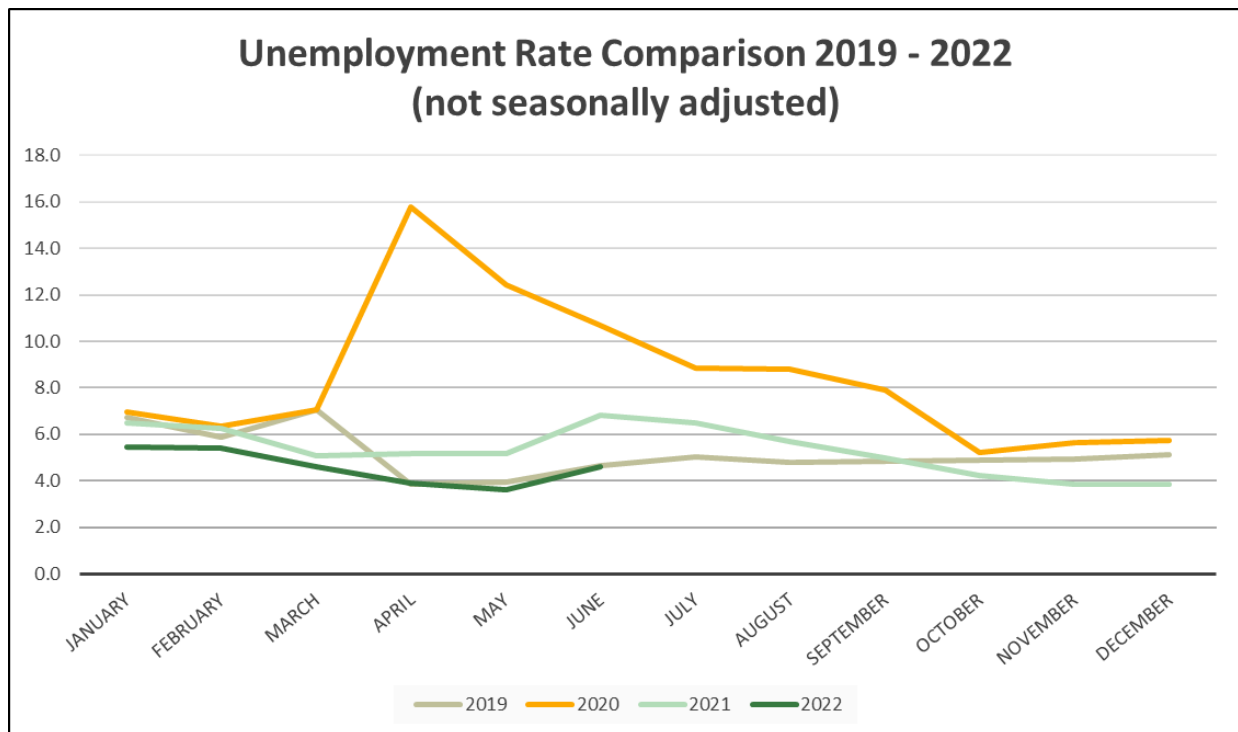
Infrastructure (especially broadband) is lacking in the region as well. According to the recently completed Broadband Feasibility Study (Reid Consulting, July 2022) for the OMEGA region, 38% of the households in the region do not have access to reliable broadband service defined as 25 Mbps download speed and 3 Mbps upload speed, well below the new federal guidelines. This study provides an overview of the extent of the problem and outlines a methodology for expanding broadband to those households and businesses that are unserved or underserved.

As part of our economic development strategy, we must address the opioid epidemic that is disproportionately affecting Appalachia's workforce. Jefferson and Columbiana rank in the highest overdose death rate category (developed by NORC at the University of Chicago) with more than 60 drug overdose deaths per 100,000 population per year (ages 15 to 64). Belmont, Guernsey, and Muskingum rank in the second highest category with between 35 and 60 drug overdose deaths per 100,000 population per year (ages 15 to 64). The remaining counties have moderate overdose death rates, excluding Holmes County, which has the lowest overdose death rate in the state.

The OMEGA region has a wealth of educational resources, including all or part of 57 school districts and 15 colleges. With programs like TechCred, collaboration between education and employers, and the development of programs in local schools, the OMEGA region is working to develop a more efficient school to career pipeline.

Economic Climate of the Region

The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 truly showcased the resiliency of the OMEGA region. The chart below shows the unemployment rates of 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022 so far. As demonstrated by the graph lines, the region's unemployment rate has recovered from the 15.8% spike in April 2020, and has returned to levels on par and lower than the pre-pandemic rates. As of June 2022, the OMEGA region has a 4.6% unemployment rate compared to the state's of 4.5% and the United States' of 3.6%.



Source: Ohio Labor Market Information

The labor force of the OMEGA region in June 2022 was 259,500. This is 1,700 more than the 2021 annual labor force as seen in the table. From 2019 to 2021, the labor force of the OMEGA region has decreased by 7,800.

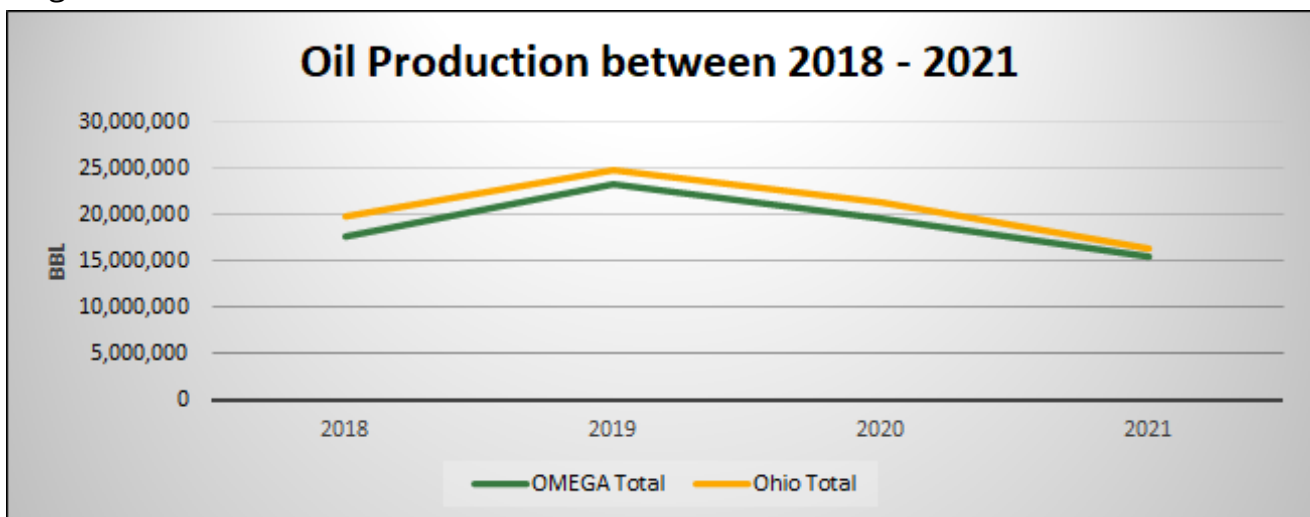
OMEGA Region Labor Force

2019	2020	2021
265,600	260,400	257,800

Holmes County's Amish population has created a thriving and diverse small business and manufacturing economy with 333 manufacturing establishments (Ohio Office of Research's 2021 Holmes County Profile) that leads the state in low unemployment rates and has created a resilient and sustainable economy that sparks the aspirations of the rest of the region. Holmes County also maintained an impressively low unemployment rate throughout the pandemic, peaking at 6.5% - still lower than many OMEGA counties pre-pandemic.

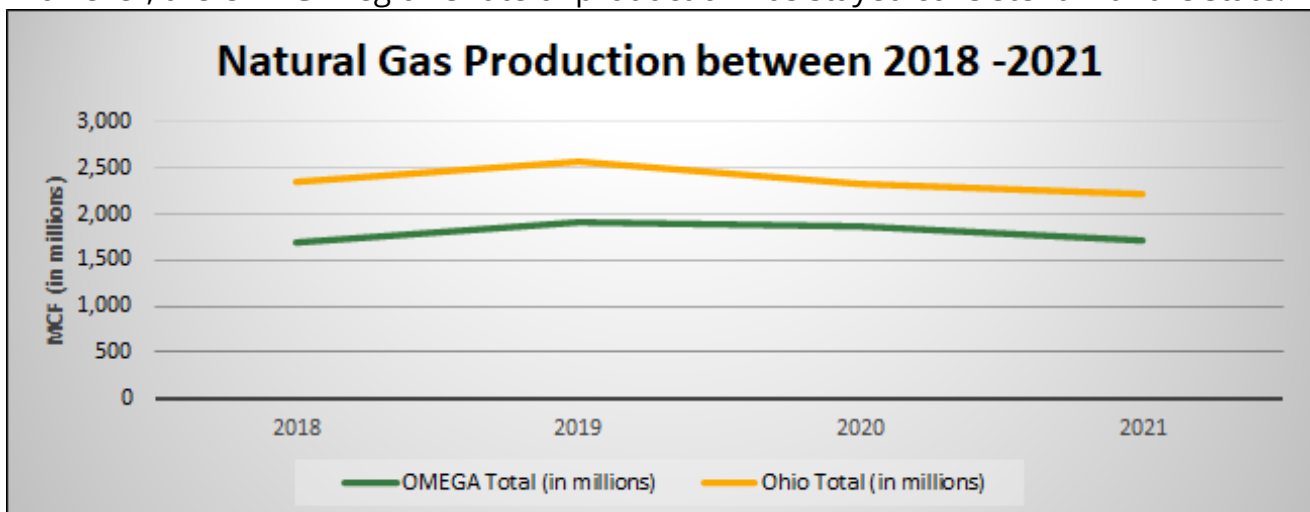
Accommodation and Food Services are the fourth largest industry sector, which attests to the value that Tourism adds to the regional economy. According to The Ohio Visitor Economy: Appalachia Region 2021 report prepared by Tourism Economics, tourism in the OMEGA region contributed **\$2.12 billion** in total sales and over 19,000 jobs. The tourism industry generated \$283.4 million in tax revenues in 2021 as well as \$471.8 million in total labor income impact. Tourism remains a competitive industry for the OMEGA region and is a natural asset that should not be ignored when considering development strategies for the region.

According to JobsEQ 2021 Q4 data the oil and gas extraction sector has the highest location quotient in the OMEGA region (**4.79**). and the second highest average annual wage (\$77,370).



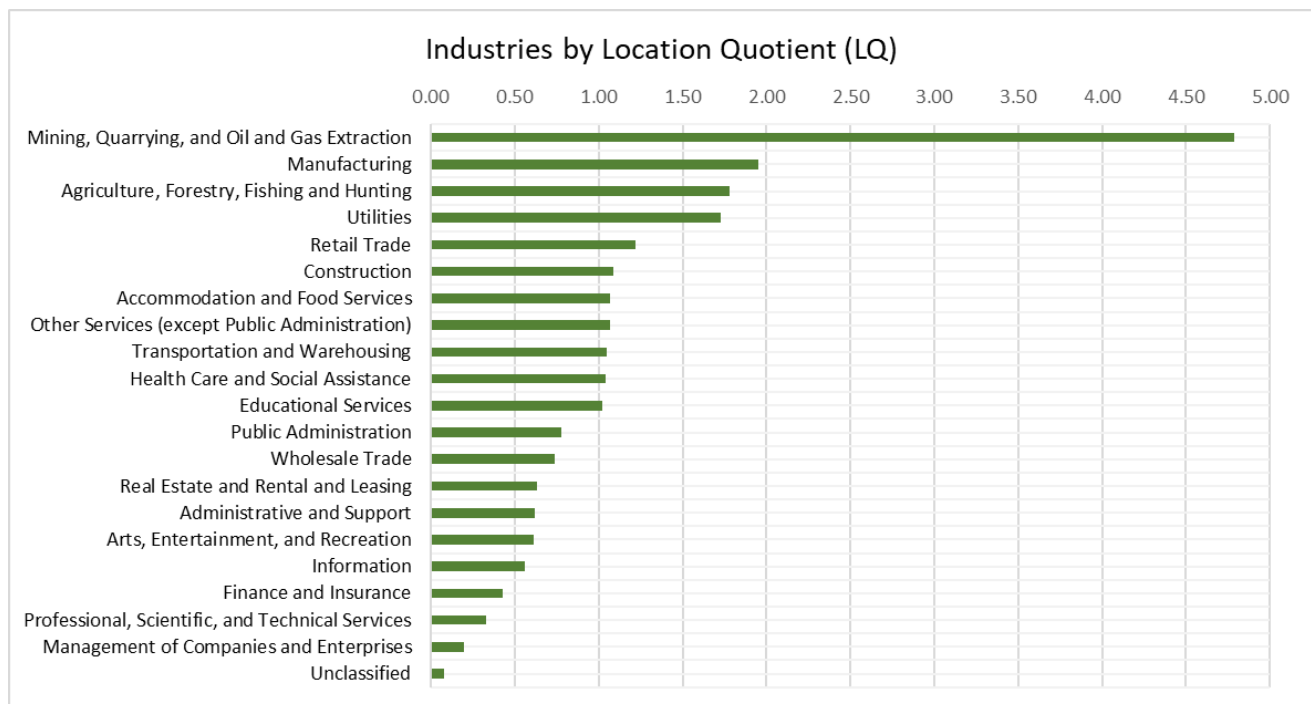
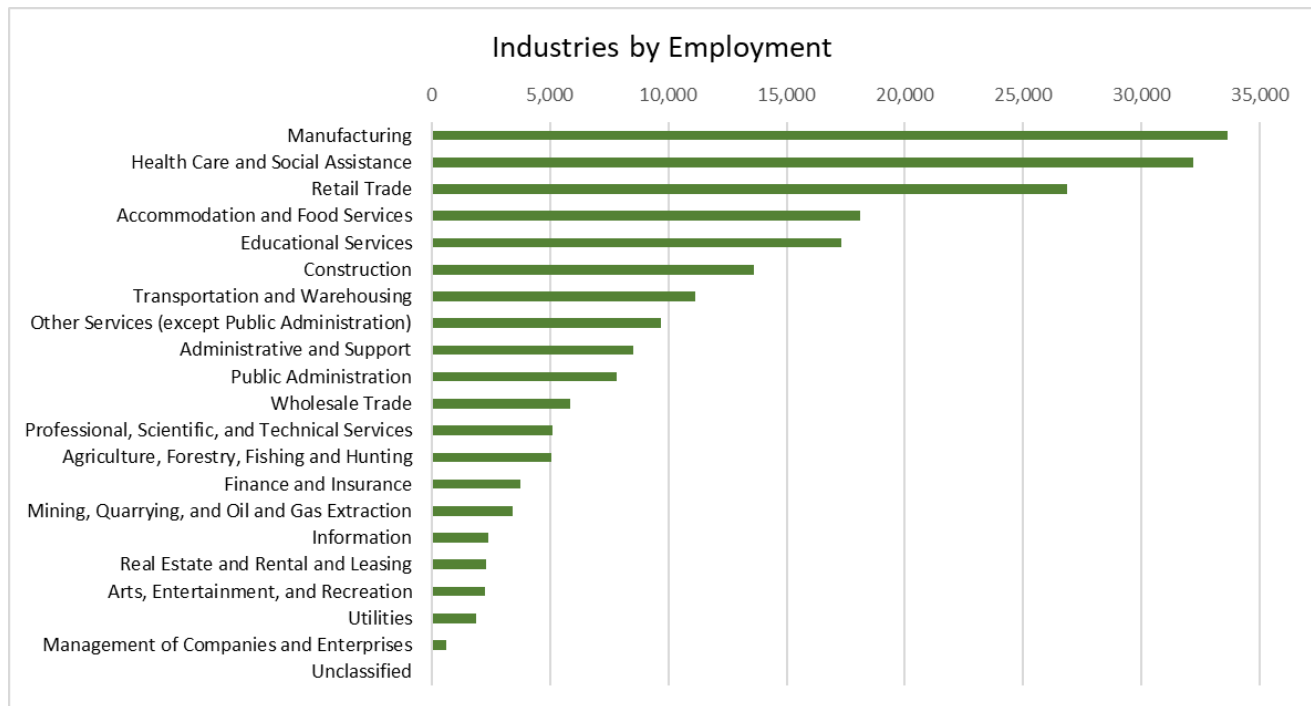
Source: Ohio Department of Natural Resources

In 2021, The OMEGA region managed to produce **94%** of the state's oil and **77%** of the state's natural gas. In 2019, both oil and natural gas production peaked. Compared to 2019, 2021 oil and natural gas production decreased by 33.9% and 10.3%, respectively. However, the OMEGA region's rate of production has stayed consistent with the state.



Source: Ohio Department of Natural Resources

According to JobsEQ 2021 Q4 data (graphs below), the top five industries in the OMEGA region by employment (excluding healthcare and education) are Manufacturing, Retail Trade, Accommodation and Food Service, Construction, and Transportation and Warehousing, in order. Focusing on manufacturing, the top manufacturing sectors are shown on the following page.



Top Manufacturing Industries



Metals Fabrication*



Food Manufacturing*



Plastics and Rubber Manufacturing



Wood Product Manufacturing



Machinery Manufacturing



Furniture Manufacturing



Oil and Gas



Transportation Equipment



Energy and Chemicals*



Computers and Electronic Products

**OhioSE Priority Industries*

Resiliency

Regional economic success is closely associated with the region's ability to prevent or mitigate, withstand, and recover from significant disturbances to its economy. Green infrastructure and diversification are two of the most important considerations in the future planning and support of economic development activities.

As legislation moves toward cleaner energy solutions, it is vitally important for our region to support green infrastructure when building and rehabbing structures. Historically, Appalachia has trailed behind in the implementation of green strategies. With proper planning and a forward-thinking outlook, the OMEGA region can create a more level playing field and become competitive with the rest of the country.

Diversification is an extremely effective way to increase long-term economic resilience. The diversification of businesses allows for flexibility when markets ebb and flow as they naturally do over time. A lack of economic diversification increases vulnerability to external shocks that can undermine long-term economic growth. Historically, many Appalachian towns were “one industry” communities (coal, paper and steel mills, and other industries that employed entire towns at some points in history). When those industries came crashing down, unemployment skyrocketed and the towns were in economic shock. The impact goes far beyond just the failing business and its employees, but extends to the families, tax revenue, local businesses, and supply chains. To ensure that history does not repeat itself, it is essential to implement diversification strategies into the planning process.

As outlined by the EDA, integrating resilience into the CEDS should be undertaken as part of a two-pronged approach:

1. Planning for and implementing resilience through specific goals or actions to bolster the long-term economic durability of the region (steady state), and
2. Establishing information networks among the various stakeholders in the region to encourage active and regular communications between the public, private, education, and non-profit sectors to collaborate on existing and potential future challenges (responsive).

Steady State Approach

Steady state approaches to economic resilience focus on the long-term planning efforts designed to avoid or mitigate major disruptions to the economy. These approaches may include aligning regional plans with other planning efforts, such as hazard mitigation plans. Other efforts may include assisting communities to develop and implement safe development practices in business districts, industrial parks, and surrounding communities by locating structures outside of floodplains, preserving lands that act as natural buffers from storms, and protecting existing developments from the impacts of extreme weather. Additionally, efforts to grow and diversify the region's economic and employment base will help ensure timely recovery from both economic and natural disasters. Potential strategies to achieve this are listed below:

- Support economic diversification
- Enhance infrastructure to support economic growth
- Facilitate the development of quality housing to support economic development
- Provide small businesses with accessible financing to support entrepreneurship
- Capitalize on existing recreational resources through tourism sector development and promotion
- Encourage the relationship between educational resources/institutions and local businesses' workforce needs
- Support the update of county hazard mitigation and disaster recovery plans
- Support expansion of industries less vulnerable to disaster

Each goal in the action plan was developed with the underlying intention that its achievement will lead to increased resiliency and long-term economic sustainability in the OMEGA region.

Responsive Approach

Responsive approaches to economic resiliency focus on short or intermediate planning efforts designed to initiate recovery from a major disruption. Examples of these efforts may include:

- Implementation of disaster mitigation plans
- Establishing a process for regular communication, monitoring, and updating of business community needs and issues (which can then be used after an incident).
- Establishing/using a capability to rapidly contact key local, regional, state, and federal officials to communicate business sector needs and coordinate impact assessment efforts; and
- Establishing/using coordination mechanisms and plans for short, intermediate, and long-term recovery needs (which may include pursuing emergency funding, when available).

STRENGTHS

**Interstate Access
Sense of Community
Resiliency
Educational Opportunities**

WEAKNESSES

**Lack of Interstate Access
Broadband
Quality Housing
Competitive Jobs
Attracting Young Talent**

SWOT Analysis

OPPORTUNITIES

**Natural Resources
Recreation
Proximity to Markets
Entrepreneurship
OhioBuilds**

THREATS

**Workforce
Substance Abuse
Aging Population
Outdated Infrastructure**

Strengths and Opportunities

Four OMEGA region counties, (Guernsey, Muskingum, Belmont, and Tuscarawas) experience key transportation advantages due to two major interstates, I-70 and I-77. The intersection of these interstates occurs in Guernsey County. Additionally, these major highway systems allow OMEGA's smaller communities to access resources that would typically be found only in large cities like Columbus and Cleveland, while retaining a small-town charm and sense of community. This, combined with the natural beauty and recreational opportunities of Appalachian Ohio makes the OMEGA region unique and attractive for businesses and families alike. Most of the OMEGA region is within a day's drive of 60% of U.S. and Canadian markets, which further elevates the marketability of the area.

There are 16 higher education facilities in the region, including four regional campuses and two four-year universities. The wide array of programs and degrees offered helps facilitate diversity and resiliency, and people from all over the state and country travel to the OMEGA region to seek higher education. Oil and Gas is the region's top industry by location quotient and this industry has invested in new schools, road improvements, and other community assets. As educational opportunities continue to be developed, they will play a key role in the diversification of the regional economy.

The spirit and resiliency of the Appalachian people and the OMEGA region was never more apparent than during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the region faced challenges that most urban areas did not due to lack of resources and funding, recovery was remarkably quick, as unwavering determination and a willingness to make do with the resources available propelled the region forward. This same spirit of resiliency has been strongly demonstrated in the post-pandemic years as employment rates rise and entrepreneurship thrives and continues to bolster the regional economy.

In June 2022, Governor DeWine signed House Bill 377 "OhioBuilds - Small Communities, Big Impact - A Plan for Appalachia", which will invest \$500 million in 32 Appalachian counties with three main investment priorities: (1) downtown redevelopment, multi-community connecting trails, and outdoor community space, (2) workforce, and (3) healthcare. While preparing for program guidelines, communities have this opportunity to plan ahead and strategize how to work collaboratively on projects that will transform the economic landscape of the Appalachian Ohio region.

Weaknesses and Threats

While major transportation systems provide a strong momentum for growth in some part of the OMEGA region, there is a distinct lack of interstate access in others. Two OMEGA counties, (Holmes and Carroll) have no four-lane highway, while Harrison County has very limited access. Carroll County does not have a hospital facility, and the closest such access is a 45-minute drive.

Outdated infrastructure in some capacity continues to be a weakness throughout the entire region. Roads, water and sewer, broadband, and deteriorating downtown buildings remain a challenge to OMEGA's communities, many of whom suffer from a combination of infrastructure needs.

While the OMEGA region offers a lower cost of living, the amenities of more urban areas such as broadband access, quality housing, and competitive jobs holds a strong appeal for talented youth and young adults. This "Brain Drain" effect has ultimately resulted in an aging population and a diminishing economy. The lack of a ready workforce in the region makes it a struggle to attract companies that supply competitive jobs, while the lack of competitive jobs contributes to the out migration of talented workers. This circular dynamic continues to challenge the economic growth of the region. Outdated infrastructure makes it additionally difficult to attract and retain businesses that require adequate access to utilities, including high-speed broadband.

Like much of rural America, the opioid epidemic is rampant in the OMEGA region and effectively takes many people out of the workforce. Unfortunately, even during and post-recovery, many addicts struggled to find competitive jobs, sometimes resulting in relapse, thus creating a cycle. OMEGA is building upon the learning cohort in the Appalachian Regional Commission's Recovery to Work program, and is working on ways to address the issue in the OMEGA region.

Action Plan

The overarching objective of the following goals, strategies, and action steps is to build a prosperous and resilient region that maximizes the potential of its existing assets. By encouraging the development of a diverse economy with a focus on attracting a talented workforce, fostering entrepreneurship, improving infrastructure, and keeping and attracting new businesses, the quality of life for the region's residents will increase, thus strengthening the regional economy and leading to further job creation.

The goals, strategies, and outcomes that have been established exhibit commonalities that should prompt a holistic approach to an overall development strategy. None of these stated goals can be singularly achieved.



**"The ultimate
resource in
economic
development is
people"
- Peter Drucker**

Goal 1:

1. Attracting and Retaining a Vibrant Workforce

Strategies:

- 1.1. Market the region's strengths
- 1.2. Improve broadband connectivity
- 1.3. Focus on quality housing development
- 1.4. Encourage strong education and industry relationships

Action Steps:

- 1.1.1. Work with municipalities and local groups with social media reach on marketing efforts for the region
- 1.1.2. Encourage advertisement of local events on a wide variety of media outlets
- 1.2.1. Following the Summer 2022 Broadband Feasibility Study, OMEGA will work on implementation and track progress
- 1.3.1. Explore incentives to encourage private housing development and redevelopment
- 1.4.1. Support business advisory councils at a local level and facilitate communications between education and industry including focus groups, interviews, surveys, market research, etc. to establish career pathways for in-demand jobs
- 1.4.2. Continue to provide funding assistance for workforce development and monitor performance measures for accountability

Expected Outcome:

By focusing on comprehensive community planning (housing, modern infrastructure, and quality education at all levels), the OMEGA region will attract and retain workers and residents from a wide variety of age ranges and backgrounds.

Partners:

Convention and Visitor's Bureaus, newspapers, career centers, local social media managers, Broadband Ohio, Housing Authorities, Land Banks, housing developers, school districts, community colleges and universities, major employers, business advisory councils, Ohio Means Jobs, OhioSE, Team NEO, local banks, community foundations

Goal 2:

2. Foster Culture of Entrepreneurship and Innovation

Strategies:

2.1. Provide support and resources to entrepreneurs and businesses, such as OMEGA's Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) and the Appalachian Growth Capital Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI)

2.2. Establish new business incubators, makerspaces, and co-working spaces and strengthen existing ones

2.3. Continue to promote the region as a place where small businesses can start, grow, and thrive

2.4. Encourage youth to explore entrepreneurship opportunities

Action Steps:

2.1.1. Market OMEGA's Revolving Loan Fund program

2.1.2. Connect entrepreneurs to resources such as the Small Business Administration (SBA), Small Business Development Centers (SBDC's), Chambers of Commerce, etc.

2.1.3. Build database of financing opportunities for private entities

2.2.1. Support the development of innovative facilities which include business incubators, makerspace, and co-working space, such as the Coshocton Collaborative which can be replicated in similar historic downtowns throughout the region

2.2.2. Support the development of other idea spaces for new and emerging technologies

2.3.1. Strengthen relationships with Chambers of Commerce and other business resources to enhance future collaborations

2.3.2. Support events and activities to connect investors to entrepreneurs

2.4.1. Support entrepreneurial clubs and junior achievement programs

Expected Outcome:

Using strengths like community and educational opportunities to foster entrepreneurship will create more competitive wage jobs and attract young talent.

Partners:

SBA, SBDC's, Port Authorities, local banks, Chambers of Commerce, Convention and Visitor's Bureaus, local colleges and universities, local education partners, community foundations

Goal 3:

3. Improve Quality of Life

Strategies:

- 3.1. Encourage retention, attraction, and participation of diversity
- 3.2. Develop and execute plans that focus on underserved populations
- 3.3. Encourage and provide technical assistance for downtown development and redevelopment
- 3.4. Develop regional approach to tourism and local activities
- 3.5. Support improvement of parks and recreational activities by connecting projects to funding sources
- 3.6. Increase accessibility and walkability

Action Steps:

- 3.1.1. Incorporate diverse groups to increase the exchange and flow of ideas and highlight how diversity creates resiliency
- 3.1.2. Encourage the inclusion of diverse groups in decision making
- 3.2.1. Facilitate Recovery to Work in the district by working with service providers, job trainers, businesses, and support service providers to ensure that persons in recovery from Substance Abuse Disorder have access to training and support to obtain meaningful employment
- 3.3.1. Initiate conversations regarding downtown development and provide resources for historic tax credits and other incentives
- 3.4.1. Collaborate with tourism and event organizations to create regional network of events, festivals, and new business announcements
- 3.5.1. Capitalize on our natural and cultural assets and work with communities to obtain funding for these features
- 3.6.1. Assist communities in obtaining funding for improved mobility features

Expected Outcome:

Improved quality of life will attract and retain workforce leading to increased business attraction and entrepreneurship.

Partners:

Local economic development partners, local social media managers, downtown organizations, Convention and Visitors Bureaus, local municipalities, community foundations

Goal 4:

4. Advance Infrastructure in Region

Strategies:

- 4.1. Continue to connect funding sources to infrastructure projects including accessibility and mobility projects
- 4.2. Facilitate completion of Columbus to Pittsburgh corridor
- 4.3. Facilitate completion of US 30 Opportunity Corridor through Columbiana and Carroll Counties
- 4.4. Continue to support broadband development

Action Steps:

- 4.1.1. Prioritize the expansion and replacement of infrastructure to meet the needs of businesses
- 4.1.2. Provide technical assistance in applying for grants for water, sewer, and road replacement and expansion projects
- 4.1.3. Continue to work to obtain funding for accessibility projects
- 4.2.1. Update Columbus to Pittsburgh Feasibility Study with an emphasis on the Intel investment in Licking County and support efforts to fund completion of the corridor
- 4.3.1. Continue to advocate for extension of the four-lane US 30 Opportunity Corridor from Trump Ave. to SR 44 and support efforts to fund the completion of the corridor
- 4.4.1. Following completion of the 2022 Broadband Feasibility Study, support efforts to expand broadband in the region
- 4.4.2. Build database of funding resources for infrastructure

Expected Outcome:

In order to attract, retain, and grow a strong and diverse economy, the region's infrastructure must have the capacity to support the industries relying on it.

Partners:

Local governments, Regional Transportation Improvement Projects, transit agencies, ODOT, county engineers, state and federal legislators, Transportation Improvement Districts, and other local organizations

Goal 5:

5. Emphasize Business Retention, Expansion, and Attraction

Strategies:

5.1. Focus on the need for site development and ready sites and provide technical assistance to local development organizations to fund projects

5.2. Provide examples and assistance for development of Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) visits and plans

5.3. Increase knowledge of region's commercial and development properties (site readiness, Abandoned Mine Land (AML), utility capacities, incentives, brownfields, environmental issues, etc.)

Action Steps:

5.1.1. Make best use of programs such as the Rural Industrial Park Program (RIPL), Ohio Site Inventory Program (OSIP), Economic Development Administration Public Works, etc. for site development

5.2.1. Meet with Port Authorities and other interested parties and encourage BR&E efforts

5.2.2. Support workforce programs aimed to meet business needs

5.3.1. Encourage members to make sure their sites are listed on Zoom Prospector, the State's economic development site portal

5.3.2. Connect members to programs such as the Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization Program and Brownfield Program under Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR)

Expected Outcome:

Well-organized business outreach and site readiness programs throughout the OMEGA region will ensure that the region will be able to aggressively and successfully compete for capital investments as corporations consider investment options in other larger metropolitan areas.

Partners:

Port Authorities, local realtors, Chambers of Commerce, local and state development professionals, ODNR, local business leaders, local governments, Ohio SE, Team NEO

Goal 6:

6. Highlight Industry Strengths

Strategies:

6.1. Promote the region to leading and growing industries

6.2. Prepare the region for the upcoming Intel investment in neighboring Licking County

6.3. Facilitate mutually beneficial relationships between partners in industry and government

Action Steps:

6.1.1. Promote the region's assets and make them known through social media, planning documents, and reports

6.2.1. Work with the state's economic development partners to prepare for the Intel investment by ensuring that housing and industrial sites are ready

6.2.2. Continue infrastructure improvement and ready sites for supply chain to increase capacity for new development related to Intel investment

6.3.1. Facilitate partnerships between government and industry partners to identify issues and develop solutions, focusing on industries exhibiting strong growth potential

6.3.2. Support efforts to address supply chain issues for leading industries and Intel

6.3.3. Encourage investments in automation, innovation, and advanced manufacturing

Expected Outcome:

OMEGA will align internal and external resources with leading industries, ensuring that the region's strongest growth opportunities receive necessary assistance to maximize investment, innovation, and tax revenue to aid citizens and local governments.

Partners:

Port Authorities, local and state economic development partners, industry leaders, OhioSE, Team NEO

Evaluation Framework

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Unemployment Rate :	4.6%					
<i>State Comparison:</i>	4.5%					
Median Household Income:	\$51,202					
<i>State Comparison:</i>	\$58,116					
Labor Force:	259,500					
Capital Investment:	---					
Transfer Payments (billions):	\$5.972					
Broadband Coverage (% of households served):	62%					
*Miles of water/sewer line improved:	14.45					
*Miles of road improved:	2.2					
Funding Obtained for Region by OMEGA (millions):	\$9.28					

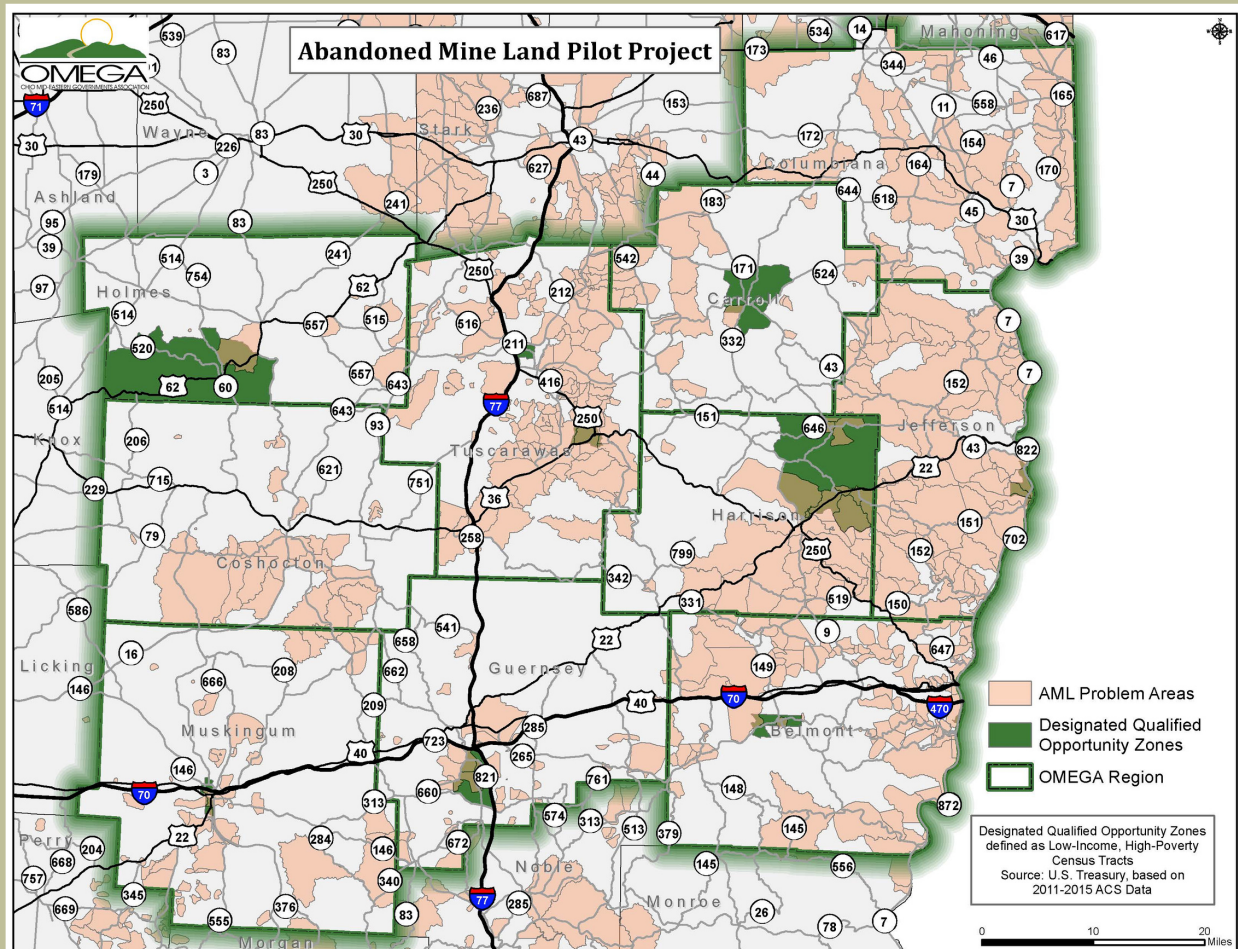
*Direct Result of OMEGA's grant assistance

Evaluation Explanation

The evaluation framework is intended to serve as a basis for the efficacy of the CEDS. The following outputs will allow for clear measurement of the region's improvement or decline in these key areas:

- **Median Household Income (MHI)** and **Unemployment Rates** and their relation to the state's is a clear indicator of where the region stands amongst its neighbors. Higher MHI and lower unemployment rates will indicate that the region's economy is improving.
- An increasing **labor force** suggests a growing and talented workforce that is prepared to take on jobs when businesses move to town.
- **Jobs created** as result of OMEGA's grant assistance will directly signal economic growth in the region.
- A reduction in **transfer payments** is indicative of an improving economy with less reliance on government assistance.
- The **percentage of households** covered based on federal standards will directly show the progress of **broadband infrastructure expansion** in the region.
- **Linear feet of water/sewer line** and **miles of road improved** as a result of OMEGA obtained funding will be a direct representation of the impact of infrastructure funding in the region.
- **Funding obtained in the region** will emphasize investments in the region that are a direct result of OMEGA's grant assistance. During the last three years, OMEGA has obtained over \$24.9 million in funding for the region. This funding has been geographically mapped in Appendix C.

Appendix A: Abandoned Mine Land and Opportunity Zones Map



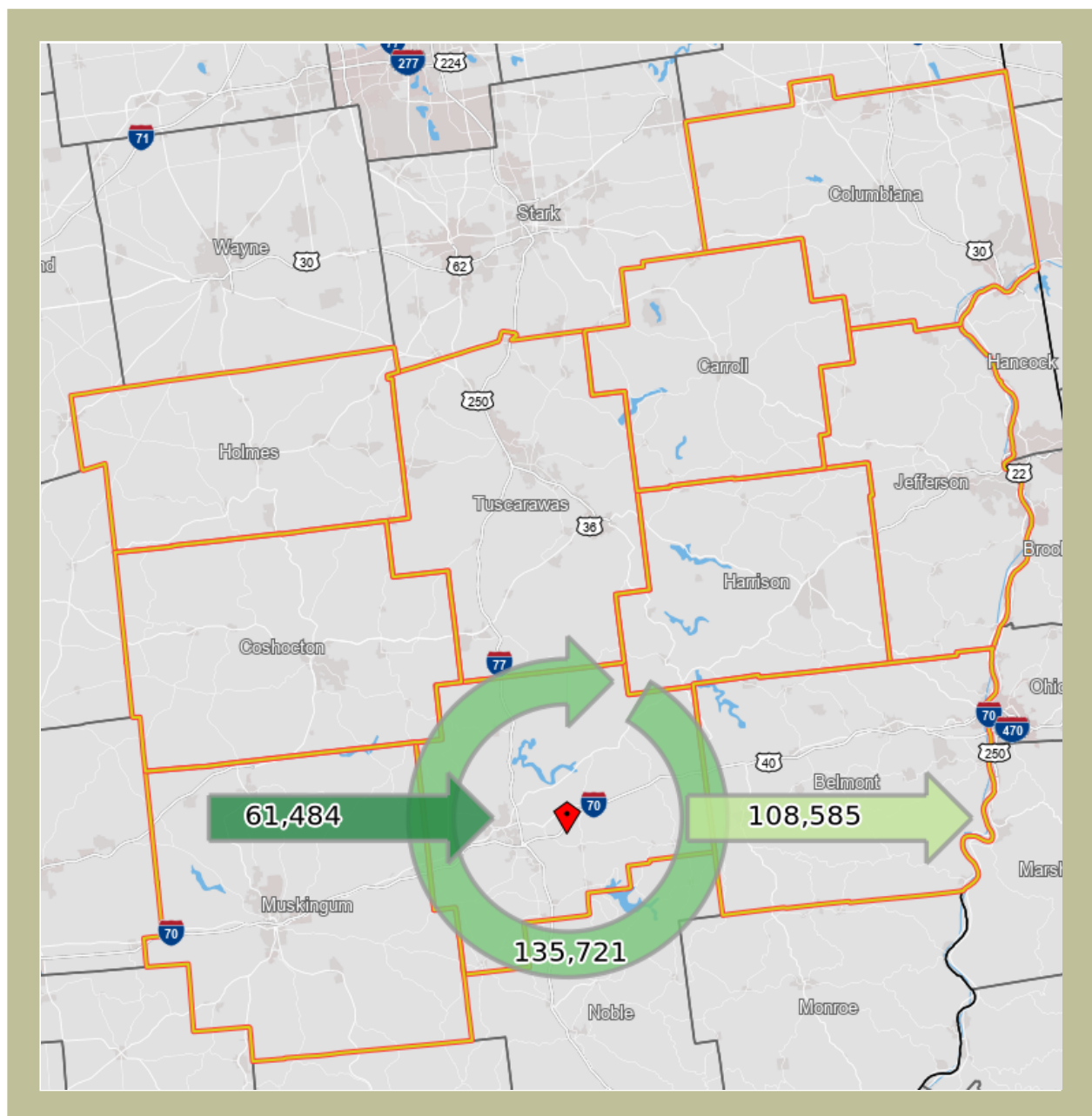
*available on omegadistrict.org

Appendix B:

Commuting Patterns Maps

108,585 (44.4%) OMEGA residents leave the region for work.

61,484 workers enter the OMEGA region for work. This represents 31.2% of the total number employed in the OMEGA region.

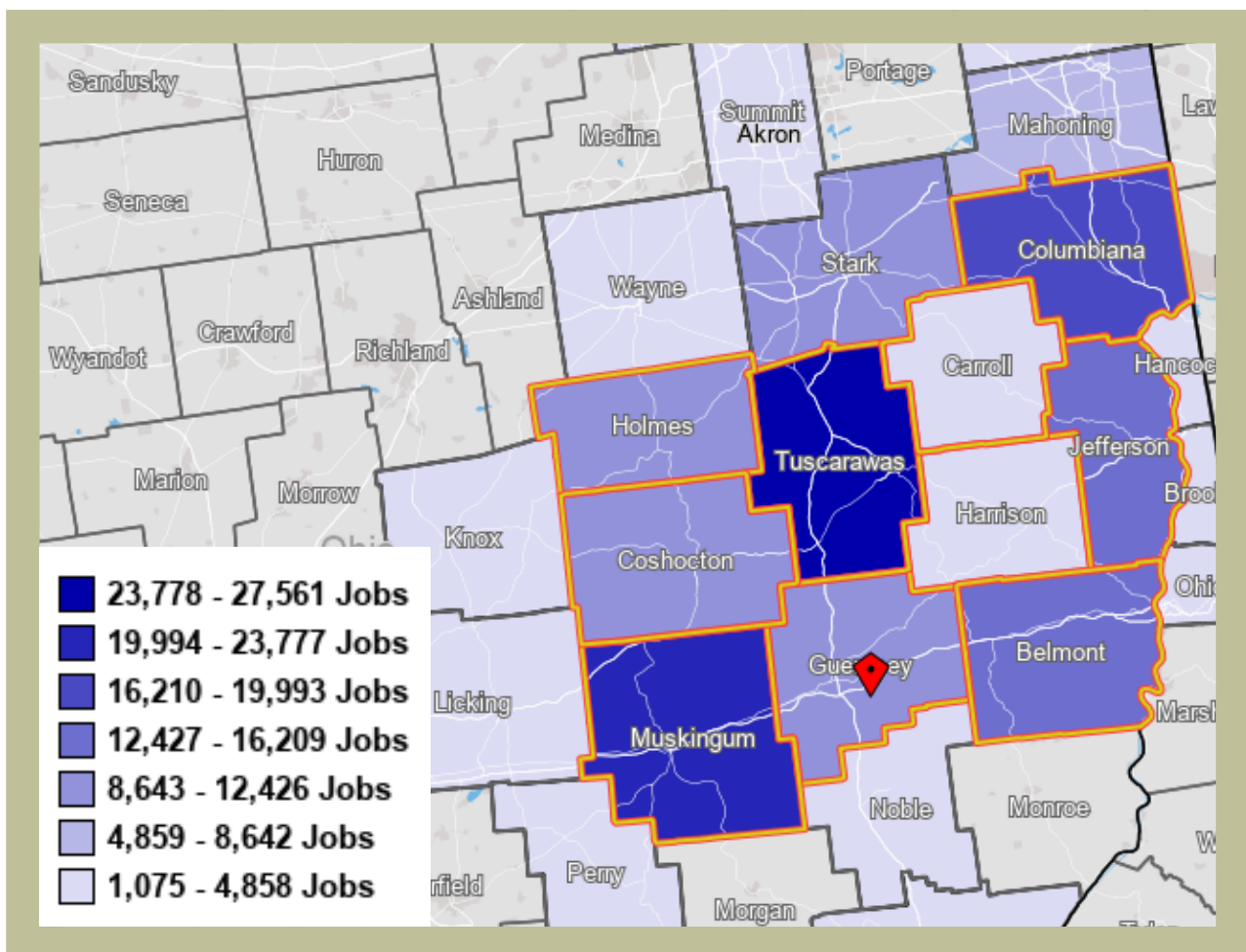


In-Commuting Data

The top three counties that OMEGA workers commute from are Stark, Mahoning, and Wayne.

The map below shows where workers in the OMEGA region live. For example, Knox County has 1,075 to 4,858 residents that travel to the OMEGA region for work and 8,643 to 12,426 residents of Coshocton County work within the OMEGA region.

County	Workers	Share
Stark	8,675	4.4%
Mahoning	5,132	2.6%
Wayne	3,102	1.6%

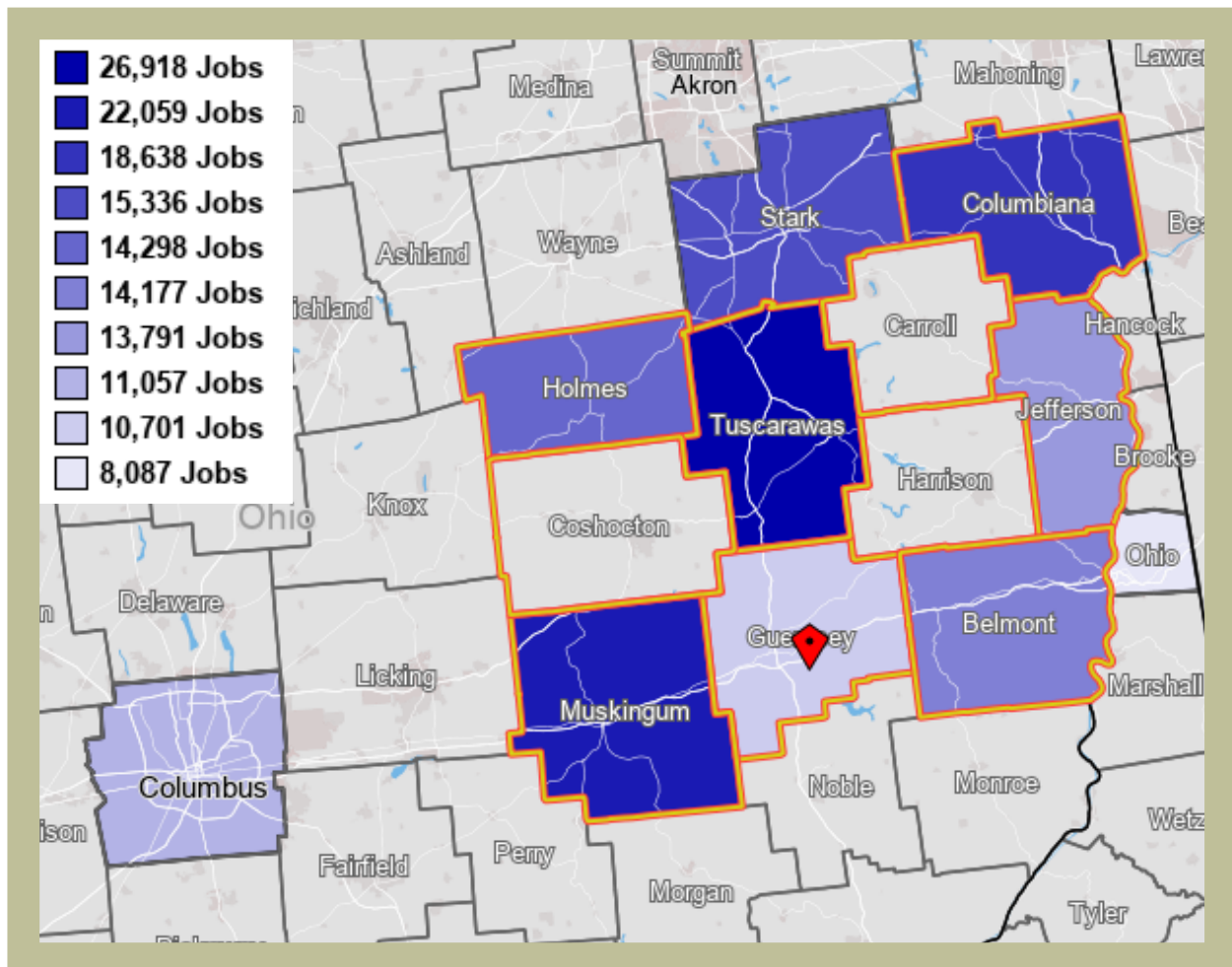


Out-Commuting Data

The top three counties that OMEGA residents commute to outside of the region are Stark, Franklin, and Ohio County in West Virginia.

The map below shows where residents of the OMEGA region work. For example, more OMEGA residents work in Tuscarawas county than any other county in or around the region.

County	Workers	Share
Stark	15,336	6.3%
Franklin	11,057	4.5%
Ohio County, WV	8,087	3.3%

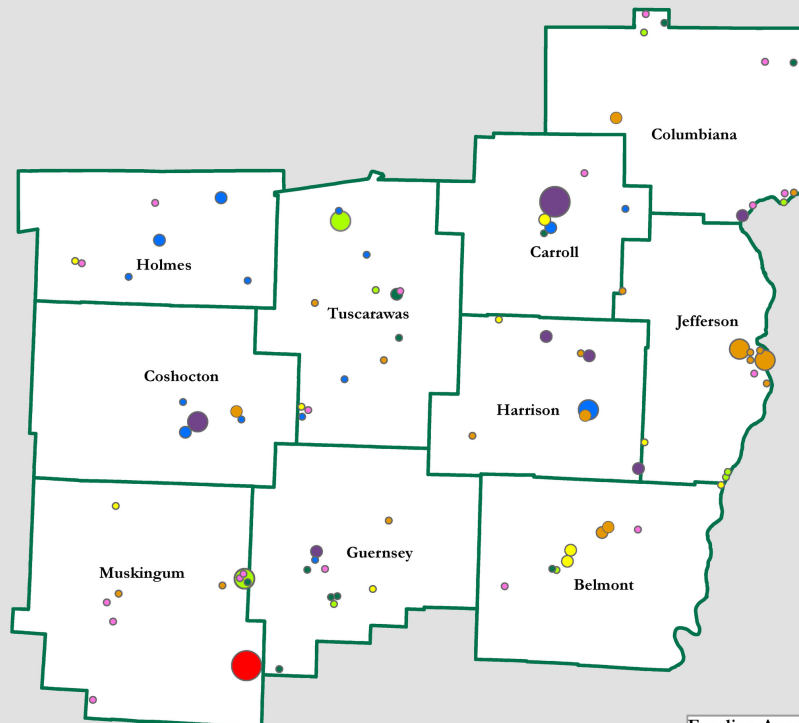


Appendix C:

2019 - 2021

Grant Record Map

Grant Funding Obtained by OMEGA from 2019 – 2021



Funding Agency	Grant Amount
● CDBG	○ \$0 - \$250,000
● ODNR	○ \$251,000 - \$500,000
● ODOT	○ \$501,000 - \$1,000,000
● EDA	○ >\$1,000,000
● ARC	
● OPWC	
● GOA	
● Other	

Map created by Josey Rabare, 7/27/2022
Source OMEGA, ODOT TIMS



