

# GEODC

Greater Eastern Oregon Development Corporation



## Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2024-2029



UNIVERSITY OF  
OREGON

Institute for Policy  
Research and Engagement

# Executive Summary

## What is a CEDS?

Every five years, GEODC updates the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), a planning document that guides economic development efforts through innovative and collaborative thinking. The 2024-2029 CEDS highlights priorities for the region and creates a blueprint that GEODC and its partners will use to pursue economic activities over the next five years.

## What is GEODC?

Greater Eastern Oregon Development Corporation (GEODC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit designated by the EDA as the Economic Development District serving Gilliam, Grant, Harney, Malheur, Morrow, Umatilla, and Wheeler counties. GEODC provides small business loans, drafts and administers grants, and coordinates economic development efforts in the region. Their mission statement: "To assist, support, and promote economic growth and development for businesses and communities within Eastern Oregon."

## Organization of the CEDS

- Introduction
- District Profile
- SWOT Analysis
- Goals & Objectives
- Action Plan and Evaluation Metrics

## Economic Resilience

Building resiliency is a key element of economic development work and is emphasized throughout the CEDS. The EDA defines resilience as an economy's ability to "anticipate, withstand, and bounce back from any type of shock, disruption, or stress it may experience." In Eastern Oregon, rural and frontier vitality and resilience may look very different than in urban environments.

# Regional Profile

One of the largest Economic Development Districts in the country by land area, Greater Eastern Oregon Development Corporation (GEODC) proudly serves Gilliam, Grant, Harney, Malheur, Morrow, Umatilla, and Wheeler counties. The region boasts a variety of natural landscapes, cultural heritage sites, and recreation opportunities. Two federally-recognized tribes - the Burns Paiute Tribe and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation - also call the region their home. GEODC works to support the region by upholding values of close-knit community, natural resource management, hospitality, and entrepreneurship in order to create a sustainable, evolving economy.

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\*PSU Certified Population Estimates (2023); †U.S. Census (2020); ‡ACS 5-Year Estimates Table SE:A14006 (2021)

# Regional Economy

The region is heavily based in agriculture, natural resource management, transportation, warehousing, and manufacturing, as well as tourism, hospitality, and entrepreneurship. From 2021 to 2022, Information Technology and Professional Services grew the most in Eastern Oregon - 15.5% and 9.2% respectively. Mining & Logging and Manufacturing declined the most during this period, falling 3.7% and 1.9% respectively.<sup>1</sup> The region employed an estimated 57,509 individuals in 2022, an increase of roughly 3% since 2016.<sup>2</sup>

The region is predominantly White, with 34% of residents identifying as People of Color and 27% as Hispanic/Latino.<sup>3</sup> Poverty and housing shortages pose issues for the region: in 2021, about 34% of renters were considered cost-burdened, meaning that they spent at least 30% of monthly income on rental costs.<sup>4</sup> In many areas, demand for labor outpaces supply; aging and declining population rates pose concerns for the workforce. Developing innovative methods for training a skilled workforce and attracting residents will be crucial for long-term population maintenance.

Regional Workforce Highlights (2022)	
Top Sectors by Employment	Percent Employed
Total all government	24% (▼1%)
Trade, transportation, & utilities	20% (▲4%)
Education & health services	11% (▲14%)
Natural resources and mining	11% (no change)
Top Sectors by Wage	Avg. Annual Wage
Total all government	\$54,740 (▲28%)
Professional and business services	\$53,609 (▲12%)
Trade, transportation, & utilities	\$46,837 (▲26%)
Natural resources & mining	\$43,927 (▲27%)

All data derived from the Oregon Employment Department's 2022 Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages. ▲ and ▼ denote rate of change since 2016. Note that inflation between 2016-2021 increased by 22%.

<sup>1</sup> OED Eastern Oregon Workforce Board Report, 2022

<sup>2</sup> OED QCEW, 2022

<sup>3</sup> ACS 2021 5-Year Estimates Table SE:B04001

<sup>4</sup> ACS 2021 5-Year Estimates Table SE:B18002



Credit: Gary Halvorson, Oregon Scenic Images

# SWOT Analysis

We asked residents and community partners to identify key factors that influence economic development in Eastern Oregon.

## Strengths

### Land and infrastructure

- Availability of buildable lands
- Transportation networks/linkages

### Variety of natural resources

- Renewable/green energy sources
- New natural resource economy

### Variety in local culture and flair

### Agriculture, food, and recreation industries

### Access to grants and loans

- Federal and state grants
- GEODC loan services for small businesses

### Support for economic development in communities and government

## Weaknesses

### Workforce infrastructure

- Family-wage job shortage
- Lack of affordable housing
- Childcare shortages
- Lack of skilled labor

### Workforce supply

- Lack of diversity in employment opportunities
- Mismatch between employer needs and employee skills

### Diverse sources of capital

### Technical support for innovation

- Access to grant-writing or administration

### Development infrastructure

### Rural/frontier vitality

- Small tax base, limited local commerce

## Opportunities

### Expansion of local industry

- Tourism, leisure, entertainment
- Small-town and Main Street culture
- Unmanned Aerial Vehicles test sites
- Data processing centers

### Business infrastructure

- Increasing demand for renewable energy
- Access to ports for transporting goods

### Demographic changes

### Access to regional development funding

### Columbia Basin as alternative energy hub

## Threats

### Water Access

- Degradation of infrastructure over time
- Climate change and environmental shifts

### Population demographics in Eastern Oregon

- Aging generations
- Lack of proximity to metro areas

### Access to private financing

### Increasing regulations

- Statewide Land Use Program
- Regulations for natural resource and land development

# Goals & Priorities

The 2024-2029 CEDS Action Plan is organized around four broad goals that capture the economic development priorities of GEODC’s region. The areas of need and strategies to address these needs were identified through our community outreach efforts.

## 2024-2029 CEDS Action Plan *(continued on next page)*

<b>Goal: Community Development</b>		
<b>Areas of Need</b>	<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Priority</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workforce Supply</li> <li>• Affordable and Available Housing</li> <li>• Population Retention and Growth</li> <li>• Childcare Supply and Sustainability</li> <li>• Community Health</li> <li>• Technical Assistance and Capacity Support</li> </ul>	Develop a Roadmap to Childcare Solutions	High
	Promote Local Childcare Sustainability	High
	Enhance Visibility and Capacity of GEODC’s Core Services	High
	Increase Affordable and Available Housing Supply	High
	Support Workforce Education and Training	Other
	Seek Healthy Food Access	Other
	Create Pathways for Increased Technical Assistance and Capacity Support	Other
<b>Goal: Regional Collaboration &amp; Rural/Frontier Vitality</b>		
<b>Areas of Need</b>	<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Priority</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resource-Sharing Networks</li> <li>• Training for Local Leadership</li> <li>• Community Readiness Assessments</li> <li>• Regional Coalition for Economic Needs</li> <li>• Tribal Funding Support</li> </ul>	Explore Local Planning Capacity through a Regional Planner Circuit Rider Model	High
	Increase Regional Resiliency Partnerships and Planning; Develop Regional Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan Templates	High
	Expand Capacity for Tribal Populations	High
	Produce a Community Readiness Assessment	Other
	Enhance Regional Planner Training	Other

# Goals & Priorities

2024-2029 CEDS Action Plan (continued from previous page)

Goal: Business Support		
Areas of Need	Strategies	Priority
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small Business Support</li> <li>• Emerging Industries</li> <li>• Main Street Revitalization</li> <li>• Cultivate a Regional Culture of Entrepreneurship</li> </ul>	Support Small Business	High
	Expand Culture of Local Entrepreneurism	High
	Embrace Emerging Industry Regionally	Other
	Increase Support for Main Street Projects	Other
Goal: Infrastructure & Resiliency		
Areas of Need	Strategies	Priority
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water/Wastewater/ Groundwater Infrastructure</li> <li>• Water Storage and Reuse</li> <li>• Equitable Broadband Access</li> <li>• Basic Utilities</li> <li>• Community NHMP Readiness</li> <li>• Resiliency Planning</li> </ul>	Support Local Aquifer, Reuse, and Water Storage Projects through CEDS Narrative and a Working Group	High
	Enhance Rural Community Assistance Corporation 2023 Technical Assistance Resource Guide	High
	Explore Operator Circuit Rider Cooperative in GEODC's Region	High
	Increase Certified Drinking Water and Wastewater Operator Education in GEODC's Region	Other
	Increase Regional Broadband Access	Other
	Expand Regional Resiliency Planning	Other

