



Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2022-2027

Thank you to the CEDS Strategy Committee:

Dianne Lehm	Big Sky EDA
Lorene Hintz	Small Business Development Center
Gena Southworth	City College-MSUB
Stephanie Ray	Stillwater County Economic Development
Randy Weimer	Sibanye-Stillwater Mine Environmental & Public Affairs
Charlene Johnson	Plenty Doors CDC
Ryan VanBallegooyen	Billings Job Service
Holly Higgins	First Interstate Bank of Hardin
Marissa Hauge	Montana Family Pharmacies
Raymond Porter	Sweet Grass Chamber of Commerce

Thank you to the Beartooth RC&D Staff:

Joel Bertolino	Executive Director
Nan Knight	Finance Director
Jacy Head	Economic Development Director
Myrna Lastusky	Administrative Assistant

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
SUMMARY BACKGROUND	6
SWOT ANALYSIS	26
STRATEGIC DIRECTION / ACTION PLAN	27
EVALUATION FRAMEWORK	34
APPENDIX	40

- Beartooth RC&D Board Roster
- National Economic Resilience Data Explorer
- Population Estimates by Age in 2020
- Partner Agencies and Other Resources

Why CEDS?



Why invest in a retirement account? Why have health insurance? Why make a To Do list before an important event? These are all ways to ensure a positive outcome no matter what circumstances may arise. They are habits to safeguard one's future and provide a roadmap for guidance. The CEDS - Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy - achieves the same outcomes, helping communities and local governments to see a clear path ahead as they plan for the future of their area.

Who We Are

The Beartooth RC&D Economic Development District (EDD) includes five counties located in south-central Montana: Big Horn, Carbon, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, and Yellowstone. The District covers 13,328 square miles, and according to 2020 population estimates provided by Stats America, has a population of 203,717. Within the EDD are 2 Native American reservations, 5 county governments, 12 incorporated cities and towns, and 29 unincorporated communities. The largest city in the state, Billings, is located in Yellowstone County and has an estimated population of 109,595. Billings is the only city in Montana with a population over 100,000 and the largest metropolitan area over 500 miles.

The five counties in the area are each governed by a 3-member county commission, elected every 6 years on a rotating basis. Within these counties are 12 incorporated cities or towns, operating under the jurisdiction of a City Council. The nine smaller communities are governed by the Mayor and a four-member Council. The City of Hardin has a Mayor and six-member Council; the City of Laurel has a Mayor, eight-member Council, and a Chief Administrative Officer. The Billings City Government includes a ten-member Council, Mayor and City Manager. The District's unincorporated communities have service districts, but no organized government structure, so the county has jurisdiction in these areas.

The Crow Tribe's form of government is unique and quite extensive. The Executive Branch is composed of the Cabinet, Executive Departments and Offices, Committees, Commissions, and Boards that are subordinate to the Executive Officials. The Cabinet includes the Chief Executive Officer and the heads of 10 executive departments including Crowland Security, Economic Development, Education, Finance, Health and Human Services, Human Resources, Natural Resource, Public Works, Residences and Renovation, and Water and Reclamation, as well as the Chief Operations Officer.

Within the Crow government is the Crow Nation Legislature, established by Article 5 of their Constitution. The Legislature is the law-making body of the Crow Nation Government and has 18 members elected by the voters of six reservation districts to staggered four-year terms. Legislative officers are elected to a one-year term by the body every January.

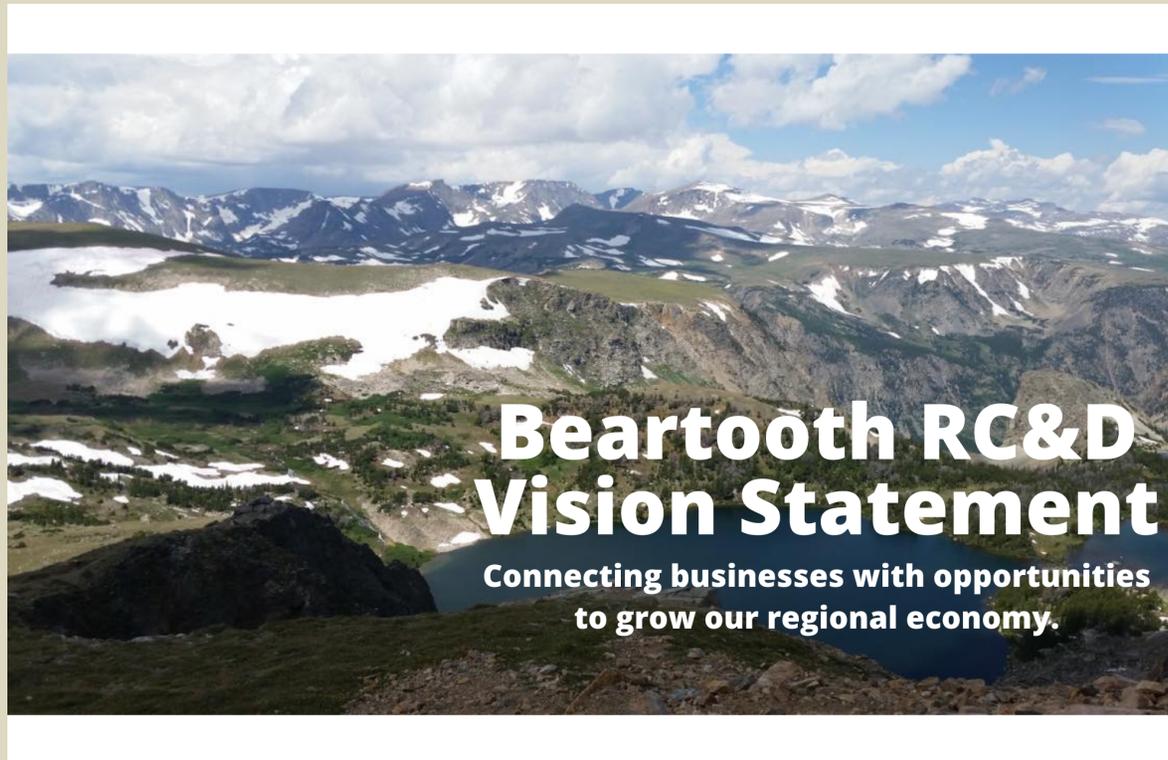
The Northern Cheyenne Tribe has a representative form of government. Each district elects its representative to sit on the 16-person Tribal Council and the general membership votes for a Chairman. Departments carry out much of the activity conducted by the Northern Cheyenne tribe.

What does Beartooth RC&D offer to the region?

Core services to constituents in our service region include needs assessment, planning, value-added agriculture and development of business and community development projects.

We deliver:

1. Business development and financial planning assistance.
2. Direct and indirect business lending through the Revolving Loan Fund.
3. Specialized agricultural business planning and development.
4. Regional and local community and economic development planning and facilitation.
5. Assistance to municipalities and counties with improvement of public services, infrastructure and facilities.



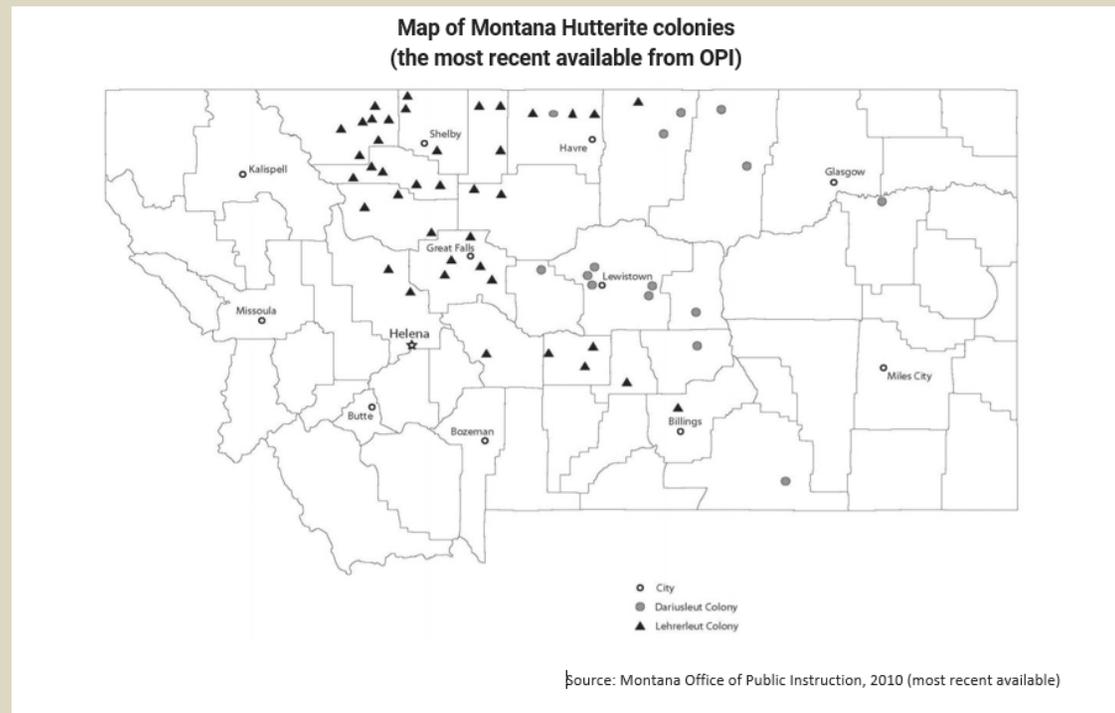
What Have We Done?

Demographics

Population

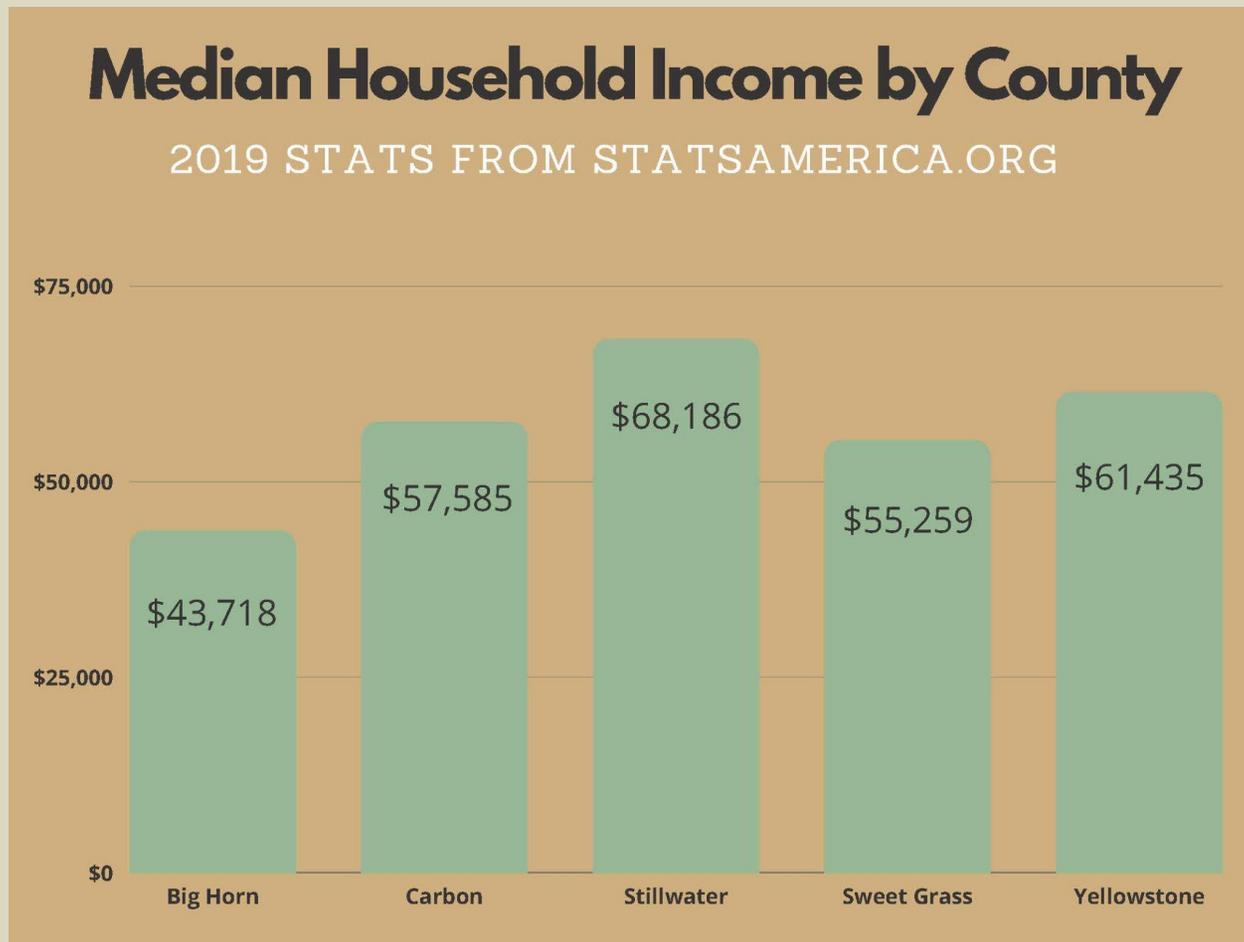
The Beartooth Resource Conservation & Development region has a total population of 203,717 according to the 2021 population estimates provided by StatsAmerica. Yellowstone County contains 82% of the region's population with 65% of the County's population residing in the City of Billings. From 2010 to 2020, 4 of the region's 5 counties increased in population with Stillwater County showing a small decrease of -0.8%. The SWOT analysis identified the increased aging population as a threat. In all of the counties except for Big Horn, the least populous age groups were 0-4 year olds, 5-17 year olds, and 18-24 year olds. In contrast, Big Horn County possesses the highest percentage of the population in these three age groups. For an age group comparison across the five counties, see Appendix C.

Throughout the BRCD region, diversity is becoming more commonplace. Big Horn County has the most racial diversity with over 65% of the county identifying as Native American and 4.6% being two or more race groups. Yellowstone County has the second highest percentage with 4% identifying as Native American. The area has also seen cultural diversity with the presence of Hutterite colonies in Big Horn and Yellowstone counties and a newly-formed Amish colony in Carbon County.



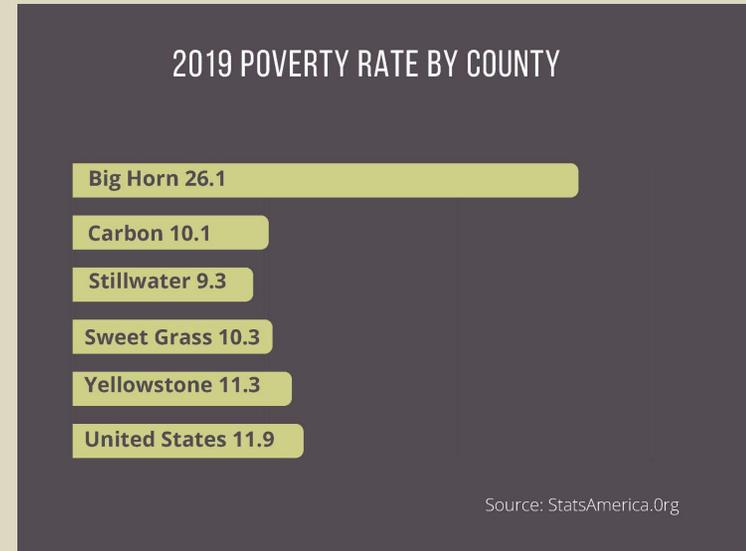
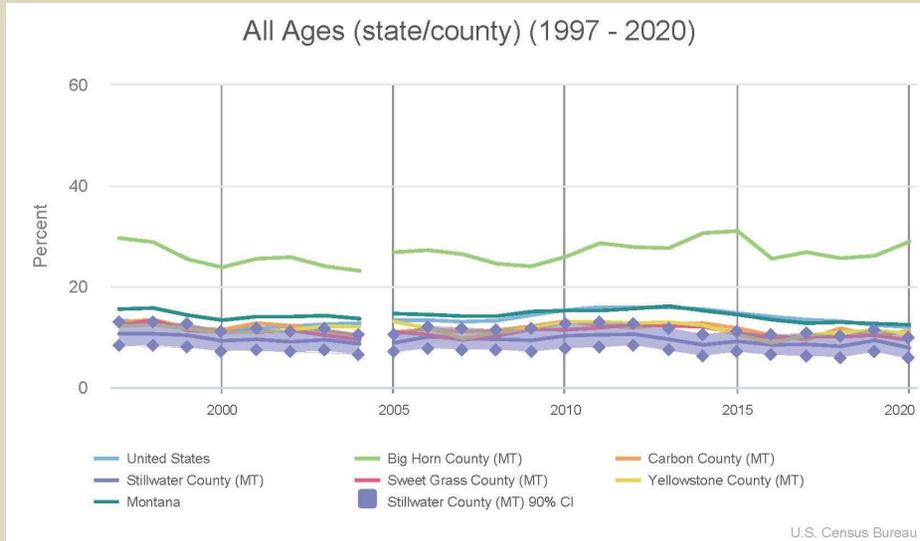
Income

The median household income level ranges throughout all of the BRCD counties. In 2019, Stillwater County possessed the highest median household income at \$68,186 while Big Horn County held the lowest median household income at \$43,718. In comparison, the U.S. median household income for the same period was \$69,560. The state of Montana was \$57,153 and was ranked 43rd in the nation. For median household income distribution across the five counties, see the chart below.



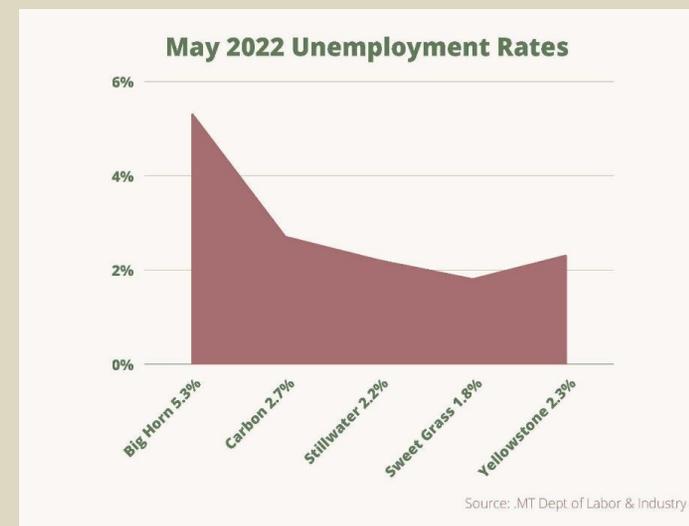
Poverty

Across the BRCD region, 13.5% of individuals and families are estimated to be living under the poverty line. For comparison, the United States is estimated at 11.9%. In the individual counties, the poverty estimates range even more. Big Horn County has the highest percent of poverty between the five counties and is the second-poorest county in the state. Stillwater County has the lowest percent in poverty between all of the counties in the region.



Unemployment Rate

Based on the current unemployment rates for 2022, the majority of the Beartooth region has recovered most of the jobs lost since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and the rates continue to decrease. In the past year, Big Horn County has experienced a decrease in unemployment and their current rate is 5.3. Sweet Grass County witnessed the smallest decrease from the previous year as its unemployment rate resides at 1.8. The graphic below shows a full comparison of unemployment rates between the five counties.



Education

As the demand for online learning increased as a result of the pandemic, higher education opportunities have continued to expand in both urban and rural areas. There is a high concentration of learning centers and higher education facilities primarily in Yellowstone County. There are extension offices located in the more rural counties. As identified in the SWOT, the weak broadband coverage in the region proves to be the biggest challenge with offering equal opportunity to education especially in the rural communities.

Educational Attainment, 2020	Value	Pct. of Total	U.S.	Pct. of Total
Total Population 25 and Older	135,128	100%	222,836,834	100%
Less Than 9th Grade	1,981	1.5%	10,923,030	4.9%
9th to 12th, No Diploma	5,461	4.0%	14,639,650	6.6%
High School Graduate (incl. equiv.)	40,488	30.0%	59,421,419	26.7%
Some College, No Degree	32,448	24.0%	45,242,162	20.3%
Associate Degree	12,312	9.1%	19,254,254	8.6%
Bachelor's Degree	29,275	21.7%	45,034,610	20.2%
Graduate or Professional Degree	13,163	9.7%	28,321,709	12.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, latest 5-Year Estimates



Culture/History

One of the most distinguishing characteristics of the BRCD region from other regions is the history and culture of the two Indian reservations: Crow and Northern Cheyenne. Most of Big Horn County's land area consists of these two reservations.

About 50 percent of the Crow tribe's approximately 14,000 enrolled members live on or near the reservation. This tribe was called "Apsáalooke," which means "children of the large-beaked bird." White men later misinterpreted the word as "crow." Chief

Plenty Coups was the last chief to gain that status in the traditional Crow manner. He lived until 1932, leaving his land and home as a state park for all people to enjoy.

- The Crow Indian Reservation, headquartered in Crow Agency, is the largest reservation in Montana, encompassing approximately 2.2 million acres.
- 50% of the tribe speaks Crow
- The reservation's economy is derived from the rich resources of the Tribe's land, which is used directly to support livestock and other operations.
- The tribe's annual celebrations include Crow Native Days in June, Valley of the Chiefs Powwow over July 4th, Crow Fair and Rodeo in August, and Chief Plenty Coups Day of Honor over Labor Day weekend.

Found at <https://www.plentydoorscdc.org/about-us>

The Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation is located in present-day southeastern Montana and is approximately 444,000 acres in size with 99% tribal ownership. The tribe has over 12,000 enrolled tribal members with about 6,000 residing on the reservation. Major employers include the local schools, the federal government, tribal government, power companies, and construction companies. The education system, farming, ranching and small businesses contribute to the economy. There are two major points of interest located on the reservation: Chief Two Moons Monument and Chief Dull Knife College.

Found at [Northern Cheyenne Tribe Homepage \(cheyennenation.com\)](http://NorthernCheyenneTribeHomepage(cheyennenation.com))

Environment

Montana, with an area of 146,316 square miles, is the fourth largest state in the nation with large climatic variations and geographic diversity. The area is bounded to the north and east by wide-open prairies and to the west by the spectacular Beartooth Mountains. The southern boundary of the District is the Wyoming state border and the Pryor Mountains. Elevations within the District range from 12,799 feet above sea level to less than 3,000 feet, which contributes to a wide range of climates, plant and animal species, and land use.

Severe storms of several types can occur, but the most troublesome are hailstorms, which cause crop and property damage averaging about \$5 million annually. This is not unusually large for an area of 146,316 square miles; however, their occurrence

is limited mainly to July and August, infrequently in June and September. Most years, in the mid-to-late summer, the region experiences smoke from wildfires from both in-state fires, those on the west coast and in Canada. Due to droughts becoming more prevalent in recent years, the likelihood of wildfires has increased in the BRCD region. To read more about the economic and health impacts of the changing environment, visit the Greater Yellowstone Climate Assessment. [Home | Greater Yellowstone Climate Assessment \(gyclimate.org\)](#)

Transportation

When viewed from a regional perspective, the District is in a prime location thanks to the following assets:

- Road Access: Approximately centered between Denver and Calgary, and Minneapolis and Seattle, the Beartooth region is in a great location for transportation logistics, warehousing, and distribution center activity.
 - Interstate 94 serves the Beartooth District traveling eastward to Bismarck, ND and eventually the Twin Cities.
 - Interstate 90 enters Montana from the south and serves as a major connector for over-the-road transport of freight from the Midwest and Southern tier states to the Pacific Northwest.
 - The state highway system radiates out of Billings in all directions. Significant routes that terminate in or near Billings include Highways 3 and 87 carrying trade to the north, and Highway 212, which originates in Minnesota, runs past Mount Rushmore, and ends near Yellowstone National Park. Portions of Highway 212 have had many fatal crashes, leading to changes in speed limits and additions of passing lanes.
 - <https://apnews.com/article/9e58999d7ebe448c9272c588534e0098> 2019 article discusses the lowering of the speed limit through Big Horn County and 3 others to reduce crashes. It was known as the “deadliest highway in Montana.”
 - Secondary highways that provide impact to local economies include Highway 310 into Lovell, Wyoming, and Highway 191 from Big Timber to Harlowton.
- Air Access: Billings Logan International Airport services the passenger and freight needs for eastern Montana and Northern Wyoming.
 - The city-owned and -operated airport is classified as a small air traffic hub by the Federal Aviation Administration.
 - Over the years, the original site of 500 acres expanded to the current 2,300 acres. The airport is located just five minutes from downtown.

- Drop-off point for much of the Montana tourist trade as well as for commercial airfreight and business travel.
 - The region draws tourists from around the world during the summer months with travel routes through the area providing access to the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness area, Yellowstone National Park, and the Little Bighorn Battlefield.
- Statistics for Logan International Airport: <https://www.flybillings.com/651/Statistics>



- Rail Access: Rail service to and from the area is provided by the Montana Rail Link and Burlington Northern-Santa Fe lines.*
 - BNSF has an intermodal hub located in downtown Billings and serves rail traffic to the south.
 - MRL serves as a regional railroad that links southern and western Montana to the nation's rail system. MRL operates a train-switching yard, an important bridge traffic facility for the region, and an equipment repair facility in Laurel that employs over 300 people.
 - The District is positioned as a gateway to the Pacific Ocean ports for goods from the upper Midwest. Refer to the intermodal map below.
- * As of this writing, MRL is in the process of being taken over by BNSF.



- Passenger Rail: In 2020, the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority began working to bring inter-city, long-distance service back to southern Montana. As of July 2022, two counties in the Beartooth District (Carbon and Stillwater) have joined the Authority.
 - <https://www.stillwatercountynews.com/content/county-jumps-aboard>
 - FAQs: <https://www.bigskyrail.org/faqs>



- Recreation Areas: There are large expanses of roadless, congressionally-designated wilderness areas in the region, much of which is available for recreational activities. Provide unique access to vast expanses of remote, undeveloped territory that fuels the tourism industry.
 - 7 Montana State Parks: Greycliff Prairie Dog Town State Park, Cooney Reservoir State Park, Chief Plenty Coups State Park, Lake Elmo State Park, Pictograph Cave State Park, Rosebud Battlefield State Park, & Tongue River Reservoir State Park
 - US Forest Service managed land: Custer Gallatin National Forest & Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness
 - National Park: Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area
 - Mountain Ranges: Crazy Mountains, Beartooth Mountains, Pryor Mountains, Bull Mountains, Bighorn Mountains, & Wolf Mountains
 - Wildlife Refuges: Hailstone National Wildlife Refuge & Grass Lake National Wildlife Refuge
 - BLM Sites: Acton Recreation Area, Sundance Lodge, Four Dances Natural Area, & Pompey's Pillar National Monument

The Custer Gallatin National Forest stretches across seven ranger districts and encompasses 3.1 million acres. Two of the seven districts serve the BRCD region: the Beartooth Ranger District and the Yellowstone Ranger District.

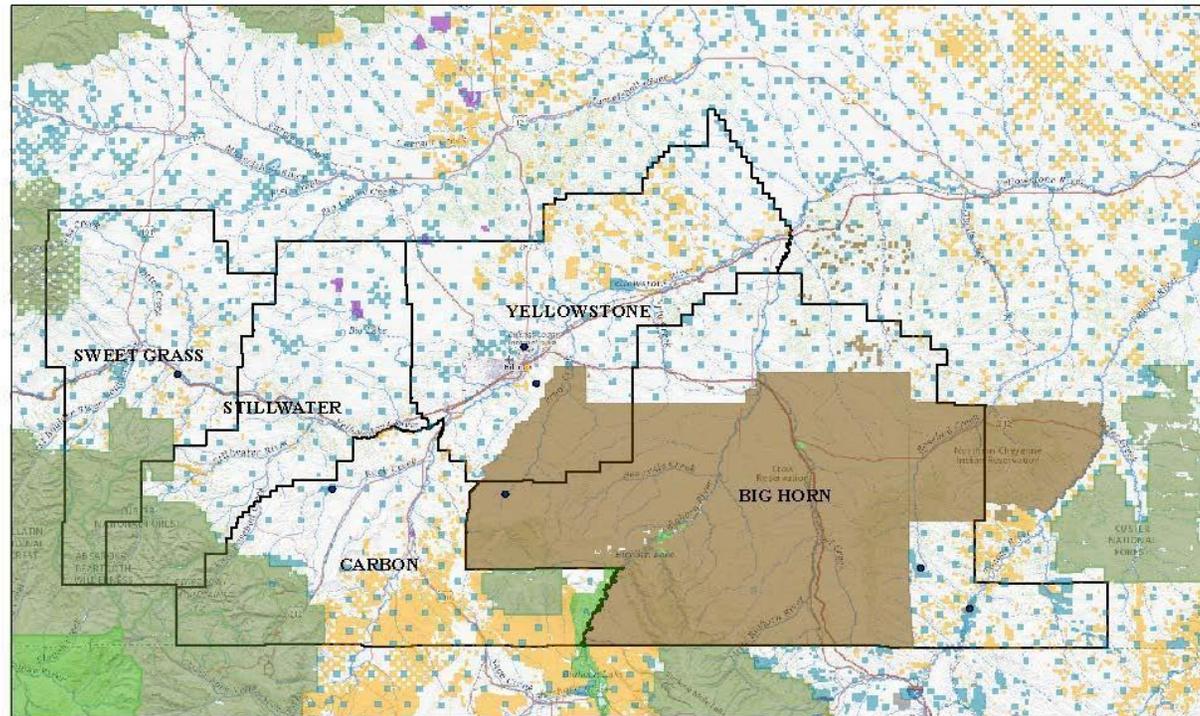
- The Beartooth Ranger District includes the Beartooth and Pryor Mountain Ranges which are throughout Carbon, Stillwater, and Sweet Grass County. The Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness makes up 65% of the Beartooth Unit.
- The Yellowstone Ranger District covers a large portion of the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness, the eastern half of the Gallatin Range, and the Crazy Mountain Range.

The Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area is a national recreation area composed of over 70,000 acres and straddles the border of Montana and Wyoming. Big Horn County holds one of the visitor centers for the area in



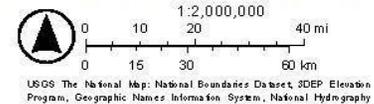
Fort Smith. The biggest asset for the area is the Bighorn Canyon which extends for 55 miles and harbors the Bighorn Lake that was created by the Yellowtail Dam.

Recreation opportunities Big Horn, Carbon, Stillwater, Sweet Grass and Yellowstone Counties



7/15/2022

- Montana State Parks - Points
- State Land
- Federal Land
- BIA
- BLM
- DOD
- FWS
- USFS
- NPS
- County Boundaries - County



Map Source: Beartooth Ranger District, 2022

Industry Sectors

The following industry sectors (concentrations of related industries that share markets, suppliers, and worker skills) are significant to the success of the District's region. These industry clusters offer the region competitive strengths, assets, and advantages in the global economy and can be positioned for increased investment and growth.



Photo Credit: Patty Molinaro Hooker

Agriculture

The agricultural sector continues to remain a steady industry in the area despite the potential threats noted in the SWOT analysis. Agriculture in the BRCD region includes livestock, dryland and irrigated farming, pulse crops, oil seeds and small grains. The main threats affecting this sector are the lack of agricultural succession, natural disasters and workforce. Water supplies are usually sufficient for numerous irrigation projects, but drought has been a problem in recent years which increases the likelihood of wildfires. Irrigated crops that do well are potatoes, sugar beets, sorghums, alfalfa, and many varieties of grain. Smaller quantities of other hardy crops are grown under irrigation. Wide-open areas of rangeland provide excellent quality grass for an extensive livestock industry. Between livestock and other agriculture, Montana has developed into an

important food supply state. However, wages in this industry are relatively low for the workforce, which presents an opportunity for expanded value-added activities and for Ag Tech activities. Governor Gianforte recently toured the new Blue Creek Marbled Beef facility, a prime example in the BRCD region of these value-added opportunities. He stated, "Plants like this are going to allow us to control the supply chain again." Please read the full article from the Western Ag Network: [New Montana Meat Processing Facility a Win-Win for Ranchers and Consumers \(westernagnetwork.com\)](https://westernagnetwork.com).

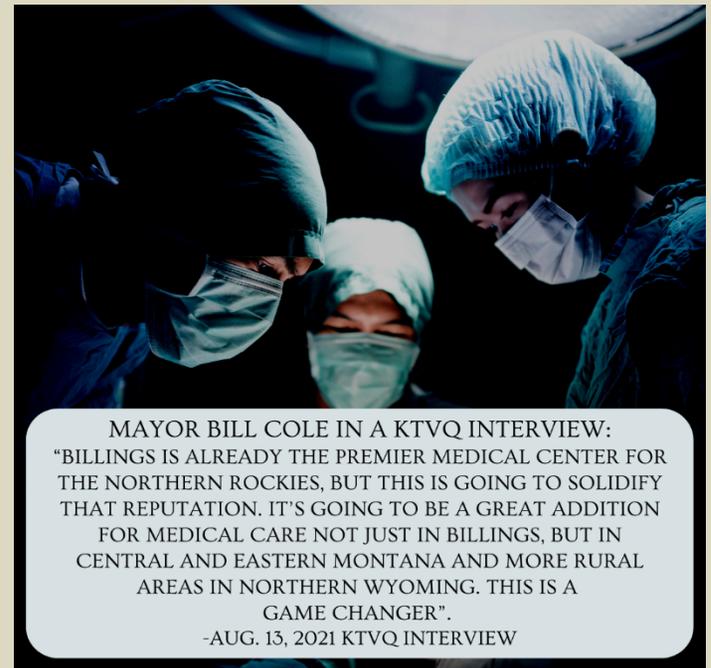
Mining & Energy

Mining activity is and has been prevalent in the region. Coal is actively mined in Big Horn County and mining operations in Sweet Grass and Stillwater Counties extract gold and platinum group metals. The companies holding leases in these areas have effective reclamation programs and meet, or exceed air and water quality standards. An example of these efforts at the Absaloka Mine is located here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4QPhA1fP8I> Wildlife conservation is an additional piece of their environmental efforts, as seen with Sibanye-Stillwater Mine here: <https://youtu.be/MNtyWQhS4Qw> The mining industry in Big Horn County is most at risk with renewable energy sources becoming more of a focus. Recent coal mine closures have had an adverse effect on the County's revenue as well as available jobs.

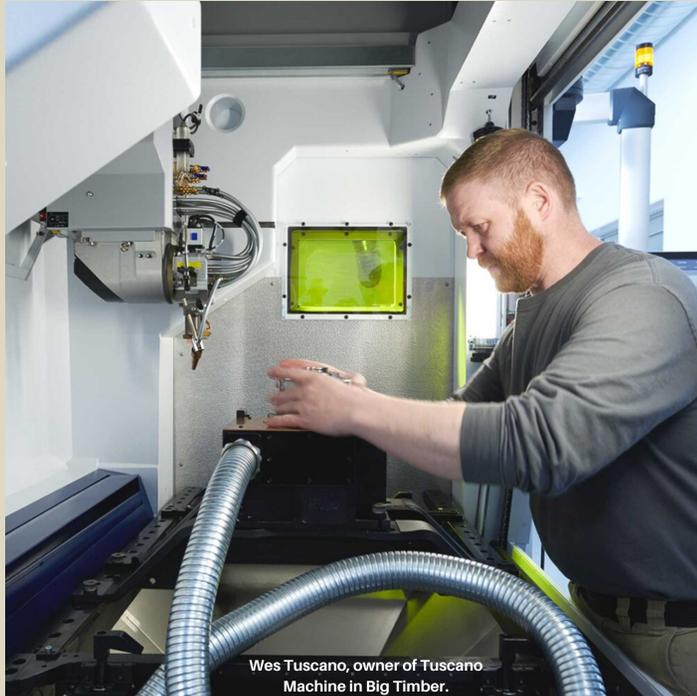
The Beartooth RC&D region has potential for incorporating more renewable and sustainable energy production. According to the 2018 MSU Status of Wind Energy in Montana Report, 45% of Montana's produced energy is from renewable energy; 7.5% from wind energy. The active wind projects in the BRCD region are Big Timber Wind, Pryor Mountain Wind, and Stillwater Wind. Stillwater County has recently approved a new wind farm project that will incorporate large lithium-ion batteries for storing energy which is a new concept for Montana. The unique utilization of the technologies will help address the inconsistency of wind energy and create a steady output. To read more about this project, please read: [Company gets OK for wind farm and storage facility in central Montana \(montanafreepress.org\)](http://montanafreepress.org) .

Healthcare & Social Services

Health, education, and social services provide employment for a large segment of the population in the BRCD region. Yellowstone County accounted for the highest percentage of jobs in this industry (17.8%) most likely due to its high population and close proximity to higher education opportunities. The City of Billings is the most populous in the state, the only one with a population of more than 100,000, and the largest metropolitan area in over 500 miles. These factors allow for a reasonable range of cultural activities, medical facilities, and educational facilities, all within a 60-90 minute drive of the balance of the region.



An exciting new addition to the region's healthcare is the upcoming Rocky Vista University on Billings' West End. When completed, RVU will be Montana's first medical school and be a key contributor to the area's medical pipeline. Read more about the project here: <https://www.ktvq.com/news/local-news/leaders-of-new-billings-medical-school-outline-plans-for-2023-opening>



Construction & Manufacturing

Manufacturing and Construction sectors continue to be some of the main contributors to the economy as they expand in the BRCD region. In Yellowstone (6.7%) and Sweet Grass County (6.6%), construction accounts for one of the top sectors which can be attributed to the competitive wages. In Sweet Grass and Stillwater County, manufacturing accounts for one of the top sectors. According to data provided by the Montana Manufacturing Extension Center's data dashboard, Montana's manufacturing sector continues to grow even more than the United States in comparison. Click here to examine the dashboard: [Montana Manufacturing Data Dashboard \(creconline.org\)](https://creconline.org)

The manufacturing sector has been developing at a rapid pace in the areas of entrepreneurship and innovation from all of the technology improvements and the rapidly changing economic environment. One prime example that promotes combining these two areas is Tuscano Machine in Sweet Grass County. Their services include Swiss Lathe manufacturing, laser marking and etching, vertical milling, metal bending, laser cutting and welding, Wire EDM, prototyping, and additive manufacturing for metal and polymer. Tuscano Machine was awarded the 2021 Startup of the Year award by the Montana Department of Commerce. Demonstrating response and resiliency in the pandemic, Tuscano designed, produced, and donated plastic masks for hospitals in dire need. In addition, they have bridged the education-manufacturing gap by creating a successful apprenticeship program. <https://www.tuscanomachine.com/>

Tourism

Native American and Western Frontier heritage are important components of the regional culture. These two elements, combined with outdoor recreation and access to Yellowstone Park, are the primary drivers of the region's healthy tourism industry. Tourism is also a product of the region's landscape, including Red Lodge Mountain ski area and the Big Horn River, a blue ribbon trout fishery. Red Lodge, in Carbon County, is a gateway community to Yellowstone National Park via the scenic Beartooth Highway, called "the most beautiful drive in America" by the late CBS correspondent Charles Kuralt. Red Lodge has become such a destination in its own right that it was awarded the Tourism Destination of the Year Award at the 2022 Governor's Conference on Tourism and Recreation.

Montana's highest mountain, Granite Peak, with an elevation of 12,799 is located in the Beartooth Mountain Range. The Pryor Mountains, in the southeast corner of the District, are a mixture of arid red desert, high Douglas fir forests, and subalpine meadows. The Big Horn Mountains come up from Wyoming into the southern part of Big Horn County, and Yellowtail Dam is a popular recreation and tourism area. The Crazy Mountains, in the northwest corner of Sweet Grass County, are almost completely surrounded by private lands, making most of the range inaccessible. Interstate 90 intersects the upper half of the region and a spider web of state roads that are almost as numerous as Montana's rivers connect with every corner and natural wonder in the region. Camping areas as well as lodges and other accommodations are salted throughout Montana's south-central area, making it a prime vacation destination. See Appendix ____ for tourism data on the region's five counties or see this website for data: [Tourism Research - Brand MT](#)

Economic Factors

Supply Chain

The Beartooth region economy consists of agriculture, mining, and construction which all require a large and consistent supply chain to transport products. The rural nature of the region and the relatively low concentrations of industry clusters are not conducive to strong industry supply chains. Local and regional businesses would benefit from the development and/or enhancement of these networks, if feasible. A recent effort, led by Stillwater County Economic Development and the Sweet Grass Chamber, is underway with the Sibanye-Stillwater mine to connect their significant purchasing needs to local and regional suppliers.

The recent pandemic brought to light weaknesses especially in meat-processing capacity, and the Beartooth region responded. From 2020 to 2022, seven meat processors have begun or expanded their business in our region, part of a statewide effort that has seen a 50% increase in meat processing. The successful addition of these plants has greatly improved our region's resiliency for future state and nationwide emergencies.

Land Use

State and local governments cannot tax federally-owned lands the way they would if the land were privately owned. Of the approximately 8.4 million acres in the Beartooth region, 4.4 million are privately owned, limiting the tax base and in some instances the ability to grow.

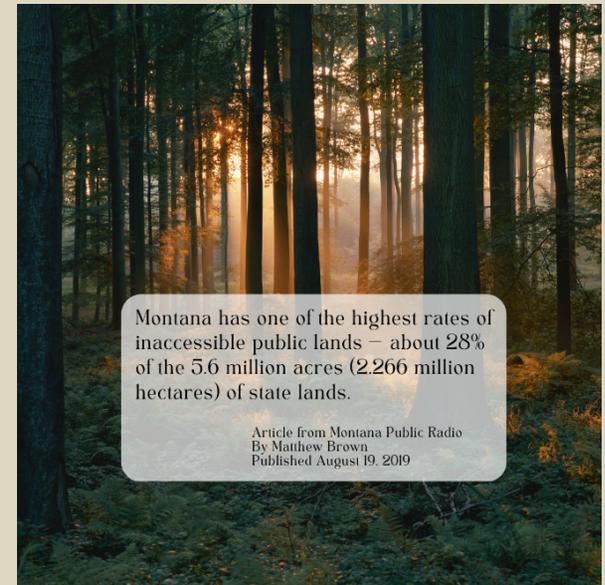
Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT), Forest Service Revenue Sharing, and Bureau of Land Management Revenue Sharing contribute a significant source of revenue to the counties in this region, as represented below. (Include Image)

Public lands provide recreational, environmental, and lifestyle amenities that have increasingly been shown to contribute to population growth and economic development. Public land access is important to people who can choose where to live and work and for businesses that do not have location restraints. Employers now use public land amenities as a means to attract and retain a talented workforce.

A report released by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis highlights the role that the pandemic played on Montana's outdoor recreation economy and how it remained the centerpiece. According to the 2020 report, outdoor recreation accounted for 4.3% of Montana's GDP and added \$2.2 billion to the economy. [orsa1121.pdf \(bea.gov\)](#)

An October 2018 report by Headwaters Economics highlights the role of Montana's outdoor recreation economy and the connection to public lands to strengthen community well-being and offer a competitive advantage to help attract and retain businesses, families, and visitors.

Source: <https://headwaterseconomics.org/economic-development/trends-performance/montana-outdoor-recreation/>



Access to public lands is an ongoing concern throughout Montana. The Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership and onX, a Montana-based land data company, put out a 2019 report on state-owned parcels lacking public access. The report showed that Montana has over 1 million acres of state land that is surrounded by private property, making it inaccessible to the public. More information can be read in an article from Montana Public Radio: <https://www.mtpr.org/montana-news/2019-08-19/report-6-million-acres-of-state-lands-in-west-inaccessible>. The full report can be found at https://www.onxmaps.com/pdf/PublicLands_Report_2019.pdf.

Opportunity Zones

Opportunity Zones are an economic development tool—that is, they are designed to spur economic development and job creation in distressed communities. These areas are located within an economically distressed census tract where new investments, under certain conditions, may be eligible for preferential tax treatment. Opportunity Zones are designed to spur economic development by providing tax benefits to investors, and this investment can be layered with other funding sources, increasing the impact to the region. The Beartooth region contains three certified zones: Downtown Billings, Red Lodge, and Crow Agency.



Tax Increment Financing

Tax increment financing (TIF) is a state-authorized, locally-driven funding mechanism that allows cities and counties to direct property tax dollars that accrue from new development, within a specifically designated district, to community and economic development activities within that district over a specific amount of time. This mechanism does not increase property taxes, but affects the way the incremental increases in taxes are distributed.

TIF may be used in Urban Renewal Districts (URDs) and Targeted Economic Development Districts (TEDDs). Allowable uses of funds include land acquisition, rehabilitation and renovation activities, demolition and removal of structures, and general

redevelopment activities, including planning. Yellowstone County, Laurel, Billings, Red Lodge, and Hardin all contain TIF Districts.

Additional Factors

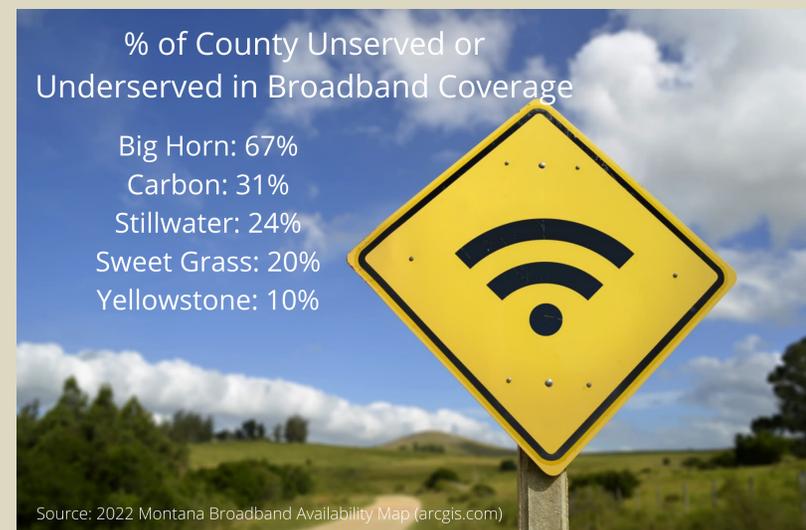
Housing

An influx of out-of-state migrants and soaring housing prices have contributed to a workforce housing crisis in the region. Factors impacting this include age and condition of existing housing stock; variety of housing options; lack of senior housing; long-term rental units being used for short-term rentals; construction costs; and disparity in housing, especially in resort and second-home areas. Red Lodge (Carbon County) and Big Timber (Sweet Grass County) are the areas of the region most impacted by the resort and second-home markets. For more information about the migration happening in Montana, please read MSU Extension's Movers Study Report 2021: [Montana Newcomers Study 2021 Report \(msuextension.org\)](https://msuextension.org/2021/08/10/montana-newcomers-study-2021-report/)

Lack of workforce housing is a factor in attracting and retaining employees, and this is especially true for service workers, public employees, teachers, and health care support staff. These job positions are key to the everyday function of a community, but often these workers are not able to live in the community whose tax base supports their income. For a more in-depth analysis on this issue, please examine the BRCD Regional Housing Study that also recommends different site implementations for each county: [e34482_cf0e598c2a814c60940344141fbef2bf.pdf \(beartooth.org\)](https://www.brcd.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/e34482_cf0e598c2a814c60940344141fbef2bf.pdf)

Broadband

Throughout the BRCD region, broadband and telecommunication availability continues to progress. As identified in the SWOT, broadband coverage tends to be a weakness for the area due to the vast, rural landscape which is a large majority of the BRCD region. Improving broadband coverage also coincides with the identified opportunity in the SWOT of better planning for future growth. The city leading in planning for growth, Billings, will be the first city to



build a fiber network due to its partnership with TDS Telecom. It will be a slow process to expand fiber optics in the remaining areas of the region, but the internet speeds will be faster and more reliable. State and federal programs such as the USDA Reconnect Program and the ConnectMT Challenge have been created to help equalize broadband opportunities to underserved or unserved areas. For many of the industry sectors and small businesses in the region, these faster speeds and better coverage will help improve operation efficiency and their regional competitiveness. The current broadband availability and coverage can be viewed on the state broadband coverage map: [2022 Montana Broadband Availability Map \(arcgis.com\)](https://arcgis.com)

[Montana Internet Service Providers: Availability & Coverage - BroadbandNow](#)

Childcare

Similar to housing and broadband, childcare availability is inadequate compared to the demand throughout the BRCD region and heavily affects the workforce. Access to stable, quality childcare helps parents improve their labor productivity by increasing work hours, missing fewer work days, and pursuing further education. According to the BBER 2021 Annual Report, “inadequate child care costs Montana families \$145 million each year; causes Montana businesses to lose \$54 million each year; and causes Montana taxpayers to lose \$32 million each year.” To read more about the impacts of childcare, visit the [2021 Annual Report \(umt.edu\)](#).

Natural Disasters

As a state, Montana experiences a broad array of natural disasters that are primarily influenced by the extreme weather. The most common natural disasters in the BRCD region include wildfires, earthquakes, floods, blizzards, tornadoes, hailstorms, and invasive species. The most recent natural disaster to devastate the area was the flood in June 2022 that impacted Stillwater and Carbon Counties. This flood was first called a 500-year flood and then even a 1,000-year flood due to the severity and the widespread area impacted. The strong collaboration efforts between entities and helpful resources like FEMA and the National Forest Service have strongly contributed to the recovery process and demonstrate the resilient attitude of the region.

<http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/water/operations/floodplain-management/carbon>

<https://montanafreepress.org/2022/06/14/record-yellowstone-flooding-damages-roads-bridges/>

Resilience

The Beartooth RC&D region has experienced many natural disasters from flooding to oil spills to fire and mudslides. All have had varying degrees of negative impact on the region's economy. The region has also experienced downturns in agriculture and the extraction industry, especially the recent changes in the coal industry and the flooding damage to the operations of the Sibanye-Stillwater Mine. It is becoming more clear that regional economic prosperity is linked to an area's ability to prevent, withstand, and recover from stress to its economic base. Establishing economic resilience in a local or regional economy requires the ability to anticipate risk, evaluate how that risk can affect key economic assets, and build a responsive capacity. For more preparation and building resilience in the region, the tools below can provide further helpful guidance, but they require action to be effective:

https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2019-07/documents/regional_resilience_toolkit.pdf

https://comdev.mt.gov/_shared/MRCI/docs/MontanaResiliencyFramework.pdf

SWOT Analysis



Strengths

- Quality of life and place
- Agriculture
- Tourism
- Entrepreneurship
- Embracing technology/virtual learning/remote work
- Business-friendly tax structure
- Access to rural healthcare in 4 counties
- Online education access & opportunities
- Rural-urban interdependency
- Transportation infrastructure (road, air, rail)
- Outdoor recreation

Weaknesses

- Aging infrastructure/lack of new development
- Broadband coverage
- Distance to markets
- Housing availability & affordability
- Access to healthcare on Crow Reservation
- Shortage of long-term planning efforts
- Public safety
- Cultural diversification
- Lack of coordination/competing priorities between local, state & federal government
- Childcare

Opportunities

- Influx of new residents
- Infrastructure development
- Opportunity Zone investment
- Value-added agriculture & agricultural diversification
- Tourism development, especially heritage tourism
- Expand mental health services
- Natural resource development
- Develop & diversify industry sectors, including manufacturing
- Employer & employee training, recruitment, & retention
- Business-education connection
- Better planning for future growth
- Placemaking

Threats

- Workforce: Aging workforce, limited pipeline, new worker recruitment, lack of training, & external migration of young people
- Inflation
- Lack of agricultural succession
- Natural resource regulation & pressure to reduce fossil fuel usage, potentially causing higher base load costs for industry & reducing tax revenue
- Reductions in revenue for local and state governing bodies
- Wage gap & area affordability
- Natural disasters

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Goal Areas: Following are the Goal Areas of Beartooth Economic Development District in order of priority:

Goal Area 1: Workforce Development

1. Learn, understand, and address the needs of area employers and employees.
 - a. Monitor employers and worker training programs to ensure they provide the skill sets needed for available employment (AccelerateMT).
 - b. Create a regional working group to market current business needs and desired targeted industries for future expansion.
 - c. Continue existing business expansion programs and annually meet with local employers to discuss business needs and concerns.
 - d. Understand and incorporate underlying factors influencing workforce development such as housing options and the shortage of reliable, affordable childcare into planning and implementation activities.
 - e. Learn from and stay informed as to the activities, priorities, and tools available from BillingsWorks and the Department of Labor & Industry.
 - f. *Determine the capacity for rural areas to support the creation of a local workforce council, committee or program with local leadership. (Rural BEAR- move??)*

2. Improve communication and collaboration with regional stakeholders to increase the alignment of education, industry, and workforce development.
 - a. Promote educational opportunities in the region, especially the trade programs.
 - b. Encourage area school districts to integrate Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) into educational programs.
 - c. Establish a direct conduit between industries and potential workers by marketing internships and apprenticeships at local education institutions and job fairs.
 - d. Build and expand training programs that are focused on work-based learning to create a more resilient worker pipeline.
 - e. Participate in working groups, meetings, and training opportunities to align these efforts with available jobs.

Goal Area 2: Infrastructure Development

1. Support public, tribal, and private sector entities in the completion of infrastructure projects.
 - a. Assist municipalities with water/sewer replacements, improvements and expansions.(Minimum Allocation-ARPA)
 - b. Improve transportation access and explore alternative modes of transportation.(Big Sky Passenger Railway)
 - c. Help public and private entities in redevelopment of property, such as planning, identification of resources, and implementation.
 - d. Provide assistance with citizen education, communication, and public meeting facilitation in the completion of infrastructure projects.
 - e. Expand access to broadband, especially in underserved areas.
 - f. Assist public, tribal and private entities in assessing energy output and strategizing to make it more efficient. (C-PACE district)

2. Support public, tribal, and private sector entities in the development of commercial infrastructure.
 - a. Assist in the identification, evaluation, and potential cleanup of Brownfield sites.
 - b. Encourage Opportunity Zone commercial investment.
 - c. Research and address commercial infrastructure needs for operations and improvements.

3. Support public, tribal, and private sector entities in the assessment and development of workforce housing.
 - a. Assist communities in identifying and accessing resources and tools that improve the quality of existing housing and the development of workforce housing.
 - b. Ensure that city codes allow for and encourage affordable housing options.
 - c. Provide technical assistance and facilitate planning efforts to assess needs, identify gaps, and develop a plan of action that encourages the development of new housing or redevelopment of existing housing stock.
 - d. Develop appropriate workforce housing solutions and educate individuals on homeownership.
 - e. Communicate with housing resource partners and stay informed about workforce housing activities in Montana and other rural areas.

Goal Area 3: Economic Growth & Resiliency

1. Support and generate activities that will lead to an increase in the capacity and diversity of the regional economy to produce goods and services.

- a. Introduce businesses to new markets.
 - b. Support activities that increase the growth rate and revenue of area businesses.
 - c. Assist communities with assessment, facilitation, and planning efforts that lead to the development of an economic diversification plan, especially those areas with heavy reliance on a single industry.
2. Develop Steady-State initiatives to create resiliency and bolster long-term economic durability.
 - a. Support job creation, private investment attraction, and advances in technology and broadband that strengthen existing trade sectors.
 - b. Adopt a Patent and Trademark Research Center model at the Billings Library to assist entrepreneurs and innovators.
 - c. Continue supporting new and existing collaborative broadband initiatives and utility needs.
 - d. Assist communities and partners with business planning initiatives that address resiliency and post-disruption recovery.
 - e. Monitor and report positive and negative economic trends impacting growth, supply chains, and development.
3. Engage the region's networks in Responsive initiatives to collaborate on existing and potential future challenges.
 - a. Continue to expand local meat-processing initiatives.
 - b. Strengthen broadband for rural areas.
 - c. Support and assist municipalities in their adoption or update of hazard mitigation plans, utilizing tools such as those found at <https://des.mt.gov/>.
 - d. Assist in establishing a process for regular communication and updating of business community needs as they relate to disaster recovery.

Goal Area 4: Business Development & Entrepreneurship

1. Support local and regional activities that elevate entrepreneurship and innovation of new and existing businesses.
 - a. Provide assistance to businesses in transitioning processes such as succession and changing of ownership.

- b. Provide technical assistance, mentorship, training, and education to small businesses and ag-related business owners.
 - c. Partner with the local Small Business Development Center (SBDC), the MT Department of Commerce, Montana Manufacturing Extension Center (MMEC), local economic development specialists, Job Service personnel, and local institutions of higher education to offer assistance to businesses and provide access to these important programs.
 - d. Support and enhance existing industry clusters through technical assistance, research, and leveraging available resources.
 - e. Assist agriculture-related and value-added businesses that utilize locally grown crops in accessing state and federal funding opportunities, as one of Montana's nine Food and Ag Development Centers.
 - f. Support cooperative business development in the region
2. Provide access to capital and funding mechanisms, including a regional RLF, to qualified existing and new businesses.
 - a. Create a funding spreadsheet with critical deadlines and application strategies to assist clients in applying for grants.
 - b. Develop a network of lenders and investors to provide start-up capital for new businesses and entrepreneurs.
 - c. Expand Beartooth's Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Program.
 - d. Provide financial literacy education to new and existing businesses.
 - e. Maintain the Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) by conducting technical assistance visits and providing planning assistance to business clients.
3. Support local and regional business recruitment and outreach activities.
 - a. Create incentives that encourage businesses to stay in our region.
 - b. Recruit new businesses from targeted industries that complement the region's economic base.
 - c. Partner with organizations to provide a business toolkit for new entrepreneurs and encourage experienced business owners to educate local leaders, investors, and potential entrepreneurs in navigating the start-up process.
 - d. Work with existing businesses to determine value chains and identify businesses to target for recruitment or startup.
 - e. Assist partners in the development and distribution of recruitment materials.

Goal Area 5: Quality of Life

1. Assist public, tribal, and private sector entities in the planning and completion of strategic projects for placemaking, arts & culture, and outdoor recreation.
 - a. Support and organize family-oriented cultural events.(Focus on Crow Days for resiliency piece)
 - b. Encourage and partner with community development groups.(Joliet Beautification Committee)
 - c. Increase wayfinding/interpretive signage to promote outdoor recreation and heritage tourism opportunities.
 - d. Seek funding to enhance educational opportunities and develop more responsible tourism.
 - e. Assist communities and organizations with the identification of resources for placemaking projects.

2. Assist public, tribal, and private sector entities to achieve responsible natural resource development.
 - a. Increase understanding and awareness for how outdoor recreation, public access, and natural resource management all tie together.
 - b. Conduct a coal impact study for counties impacted by coal mine closures.
 - c. Support the development of renewable energy projects and monitor activity and progress in the region.
 - d. Continue to provide technical assistance and support to fuels mitigation initiatives.
 - e. Collaborate on projects involving natural resource development and provide facilitation and liaison services.

3. Promote equity in access to mental healthcare, healthy food, safe water, and lifestyle choices.
 - a. Bolster student and adult engagement activities that encourage a healthy lifestyle.
 - b. Improve convenient mental health services to improve accessibility to students and adults.
 - c. Support and assist in the implementation of recreation activities, including creation and maintenance of indoor and outdoor facilities.
 - d. Develop statewide promotional materials on local beef that is produced and processed in Montana and provide a list of local beef retailers to area school districts.
 - e. Collaborate with communities to improve access to affordable, healthy foods in food deserts. Related info:
<https://dphhs.mt.gov/assets/publichealth/SchoolHealth/ERMStrategicPlan.pdf>

4. Provide equitable access to childcare and quality education.

- a. Create or update local policies and utilize State and Federal funding such as Safe Routes to School to improve pedestrian safety and accessibility for school children.
- b. OPI Literacy grant and similar funding. Literacy counselor, professional contractor, training for staff, updated materials, better methods.
- c. Conduct a feasibility study on childcare, preschool, or after-school program needs in the area.
- d. Support school programs that improve students' soft skills and job readiness.
- e. Educate business owners on possibilities for in-house daycare.

Goal Area 6: Policy-Leadership-Capacity

1. Develop and promote programs that lead to partnerships and capacity-building activities throughout the service region.
 - a. Collaborate with local development organizations and increase communication on projects.
 - b. Develop and/or promote web-based capacity-building training resources.
 - c. Promote regional communication and awareness of economic development- related issues through bi-monthly Board of Directors meetings, press releases, regular updates of website and Facebook page, Board/community reports, success stories, and organizational outreach activities to promote program activities.
 - d. Strengthen and enhance Beartooth RC&D's ability to provide programs and services on a regional basis that augment local community efforts through coordination, facilitation, and education in the following areas:
 - Revolving Loan Fund
 - Montana Certified Regional Development Corporation (CRDC)
 - Economic Development District (EDD)
 - Montana Food and Ag Development Center (FADC)
 - Montana Main Street Program
 - Business Planning/Technical Assistance (with Small Business Development Center)
 - Manufacturing Assistance (with Montana Extension Center)
2. Build a succession of leadership: create local leadership development processes & define people with skills and abilities to grow into leadership roles in business, education, and nonprofit organizations.
 - a. Promote leadership programs such as Leadership Montana.

- b. Encourage and support participation in the Montana Economic Development Association's Community Review program to spur citizen involvement in community-identified projects for community and economic development activities.
3. Support the creation and timely revision of public policy planning materials.
 - a. Update public policy planning documents more than five years old, such as:
 - Growth Policy Plans
 - Downtown Master Plans
 - Capital Improvement Plans
 - Overall Economic Development Plan
 - Zoning Ordinances
 - Annexation Policies
 - Housing Assessments
 - b. Promote the integration of economic development activities with all appropriate local and regional plans.
 - c. Provide assistance to local governments to secure funding and/or revision of public planning documents.

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Objectives/ Strategies	Performance Measure	Implementation Partners (bold = lead agency)	Time Frame Short (1-3 years) Mid (3-5 years) Long (5+ years)	SWOT Item Addressed
Workforce Development				
Monitor employers and worker training programs	post-training surveys unemployment rates	AccelerateMT , Local/regional employers, MT Dept of Labor & Industry , MT World Trade Center, BRCDCD	Mid	Workforce training, recruitment, & retention (opportunity)
Regional Working Group	creation of group annual report of activity	Local/regional employers, LDOs, Cities, Counties, BRCDCD	Mid	Better planning for future growth (opportunity)
Business expansion Programs	number of programs offered number of clients served through programs	LDOs , Cities, Counties, BRCDCD	Short	Opportunity Zone investment (opportunities); tourism development (opportunity); workforce(limited pipeline, lack of training)(threat)
Local Workforce Council	number of groups created	Local employers, Cities, Counties, LDOs	Long	Workforce training, recruitment, & retention (opportunity)
Infrastructure Development				

Water/sewer replacements	Number of projects	Cities, Counties , LDOs, MDOC	Mid	Aging Infrastructure (weakness); infrastructure development (opportunity)
Improve transportation access	Number of projects; safety of roads	Cities, Counties, MDOT, BSPRA	Mid	Public safety (weakness); infrastructure development (opportunity)
Assess and Clean up Brownfields sites	Number of sites assessed; number of sites cleaned up	DEQ, EPA, MDOC, Cities, and Counties, LDOs, BRCD, BSED	Short	Aging infrastructure (weakness)
Planning Projects	Number of projects; private/public investment (dollar amounts)	Cities, Counties , LDOs, EDA, Businesses	Short	Shortage of long-term planning efforts (weakness)
Opportunity Zone commercial investment	Number of projects per year; private investment in each zone	MDOC, qualified Opportunity Funds, private developers	Long	Opportunity zone investment (opportunity)
Workforce Housing Development	Number of new homes built/rehabbed; increased number of owner/renter-occupied housing units	Cities, Counties, NeighborWorks, HRDC, LDOs, Community Foundations	Long	Housing availability & affordability (weakness); wage gap & area affordability (threat)
Economic Growth & Resilience				
Introduce businesses to new markets	Number of clients/businesses assisted	MT World Trade Center, Local/regional/state employers, MT PTAC	Mid	Develop and diversify industry sectors (opportunity)

Formal Diversification plan for Big Horn County and Crow Reservation	Complete plan and ready to implement; number of new businesses	Cities, Counties , LDOs, Tribes , Little Bighorn College, BRCD	Mid	Natural resource regulation & pressure to reduce fossil fuel usage (threat); natural resource development (opportunity)
Patent and Trademark Research Center	Launch of center; number of clients served annually after launch; number of patent applications after launch	Billings Library , BSED, SBDC, LDOs, BRCD	Mid	Business-education connection (opportunity)
Monitor and report positive or negative economic trends	Annual report to stakeholders	BRCD , BSED, Cities, Counties, SBDC, LDOs	Ongoing	Better planning for future growth (opportunity); inflation (threat); wage gap & area affordability (threat)
Expand meat processing	Number of new facilities; production activity	Local meat producers , MT Dept of Ag, FADC	Short-Mid	Distance to markets (weakness); agriculture (strength)
Strengthen broadband	Number of homes with new or improved services	MDOA, service providers , MT Telecommunications Association, USDA, LDOs, Cities, Counties	Ongoing	Broadband coverage (weakness)
Adoption/update of hazard mitigation plans	Creation or update to plan	Cities, Counties, DNRC, DES	Short	Natural disasters (threat)
Business Development				

Technical assistance/training to new and existing businesses	Number of clients/businesses assisted; number of trainings promoted/provided; investments in projects	LDOs, Local/regional employers, SBDC, BRCD, BSED	Ongoing	entrepreneurship (strength); business-education connection (opportunity)
Assist agriculture-related businesses and projects	Number of agriculture clients/businesses assisted; number of projects; investments in projects	LDOS, Local/regional employers, FADC , MDOA	Ongoing	Value-added agriculture & agricultural diversification; agriculture (strength)
Funding options spreadsheet for businesses	Creation of spreadsheet; number of clients assisted with applications	BRCD , SBDC, BSED, LDOs	Short	Diversify industry sectors (opportunity)
Expand Beartooth RLF Program	Annual report of activity	State, EDA, SSBCI, BRCD RLF Board , Bank Partners	Ongoing	Lack of new development (weakness); infrastructure development (opportunity)
Recruit new businesses	Number of new businesses	Business owners, Chambers, LDOs , BRCD	Ongoing	Influx of new residents (opportunity); rural-urban interdependency (strength)
Business outreach activities	Number of businesses reached	Business owners, Chambers, LDOs , SBDC, BRCD, BSED	Short-Long	Distance to markets (weakness)
Business start-up toolkit	Number of clients/businesses assisted	LDOS, Local/regional employers, SBDC, BSED ,	Short	Entrepreneurship (strength)

		BRC		
Recruitment materials	Number of materials promoted; number of new employees/businesses attracted	BSED, SBDC, MDOC, BRC, LDOs	Short	Tourism development (opportunity)
Quality of Life				
Strategic Projects for placemaking, arts & culture, and outdoor recreation	Number of projects; number of communities impacted	Cities, Counties, Community Foundations, LDOs	Short-Long	Placemaking (opportunity)
Outdoor Recreation/ Heritage tourism promotion	Report of tourism activity; number of projects; number of communities impacted	Cities, Counties, MDOC, LDOs , BSED, BRC, Chamber	Mid	Outdoor recreation (strength); Tourism development (opportunity)
Coal Impact Study	Creation of study	Cities, Counties, LDOs, BRC	Short	Natural resource regulation & pressure to reduce fossil fuel usage (threat)
Natural Resource Development Projects	Number of projects including renewable energy; number of communities impacted	Cities, Counties, Mines, Energy companies	Long	Natural resource development (opportunity)
Encourage community development groups	Number of groups served; number of communities assisted	Community Foundations, LDOs , Cities, Counties, MDOC	Ongoing	Quality of life and place (strength)
Feasibility study for childcare	Creation of study	Cities, Counties, Local/Regional employers, LDOs	Short-Mid	Childcare (weakness)

Student/Adult mental health care programs in school and workplace	Number of programs offered; number of communities impacted	Local/regional employees, medical personnel, schools , community foundations, OPI, DLI	Mid	Expand mental health services (opportunity)
Policy-Leadership-Capacity				
Develop/Promote training resources	Number of programs offered per year; number of attendees	LDOs , BSED, SBDC , BRCD, Local/regional businesses	Short	Workforce training, recruitment, & retention (opportunity)
Creation and revision of public planning policy	Number of planning documents updated each year; funding secured for updates	Cities, Counties, Planning Offices , LDOs	Ongoing	Better planning for future growth (opportunity); shortage of long-term planning efforts (weakness)
Local/County/State Leadership Program	Number of programs offered per year	Cities, Counties, LDOs , Community Foundations	Short	Business-education connection (opportunity)
Priority by Color:				
Green - High Orange - Medium Yellow - Low				

IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS KEY

BSED- Big Sky Economic Development

BHC- Big Horn County

DLI- Department of Labor and Industry

EIG- Economic Innovation Group

FADC-Food and Ag Development Center

GOED-Governor's Office of Economic Development

LDO-Local Development Organization

LWCF- Montana Land Water Conservation Fund

MBOH- Montana Board of Housing

MCDC- Montana Cooperative Development Center

MDAG- Montana Department of Agriculture

MDOA-Montana Department of Administration

MDOC- Montana Department of Commerce

MEDA-Montana Economic Developers Association

MFFA- Montana Facility Finance Authority

MTCF- Montana Community Foundation

NaCo-National Association of Counties

NADC- Native American Development Corporation

NADO- National Association Development Organizations

RLACF-Red Lodge Area Community Foundation

SBDC- Small Business Development Center

SCED- Stillwater County Economic Development

SGC- Sweet Grass Chamber of Commerce

TED- Tribal Economic Development

APPENDIX A: Beartooth RC&D Board Roster (as of July 2022)

<i>Voting Membership representing</i>	<i>Director Name</i>	<i>Start Date</i>
County Commissions		
Big Horn County Commission	Sidney Fitzpatrick	2009
Carbon County Commission	Scott Miller	2021
Sweet Grass County Commission	Melanie Roe	2019
Stillwater County Commission	Steve Riveland	2020
Yellowstone County Commission	Don Jones	2019
Conservation Districts		
Big Horn Conservation District	Dan Lowe	1993
Carbon Conservation District	Clinton Giesick	2016
Stillwater Conservation District	Bob VanOosten	1977
Sweet Grass Conservation District	Chris Mehus	2016
Yellowstone Conservation District	Barb Wagner	2018
Tribal Government		
Crow Nation	Vacant/pending new appointment	
Municipalities		
City of Big Timber	Page Diringman	2010
City of Billings	Danny Choriki	2022
City of Columbus	Patty Sundberg	2018
City of Red Lodge	Brent Moore	2022
City of Hardin	Clayton Greer	2014
City of Laurel	Marvin Carter	1992
Town of Joliet	Bonnie Gray	2022
Town of Bridger	Vacant/pending new appointment	
Special Authorities		
Big Sky Economic Development Authority	Lorene Hintz	2018
Two Rivers Authority	Jeff McDowell	2009
Special Appointments		
Sibanye-Stillwater Mine	Randy Weimer	2017
Montana Family Pharmacies	Marissa Hauge	2019
First Interstate Bank of Hardin	Holly Higgins	2014
Billings Job Service	Ryan Van Ballegooven (Chair)	2013
Sweet Grass Chamber of Commerce	Raymond Porter	2021
Laurel City Area	Heidi Sparks	2020
Non-Voting Members (Ex Officio)		
US Senator Steve Daines' Office	John Durrall	
US Senator Jon Tester's Office	Molly Bell / Maddie Alpert	
US Rep Matt Rosendale's Office	Casey Collins	
MT Dept. of Labor and Industries	Liz Ching	
Stillwater Economic Development Office	Stephanie Ray	2020
City College at MSUB	Vacant/pending new appointment	
Beartooth Staff		
Economic Development Director	Jacy Head	2021
Finance and RLF Director	Nan Knight	2021
Executive Director/Food & Ag Program Director	Joel Bertolino	2007
Operations Support Specialist	Myrna Lastusky	2020

APPENDIX B: National Economic Resilience Data Explorer

National Economic Resilience Data Explorer

Economic Development District Edition

About the Tool

The National Economic Resilience Data Explorer (NERDE) Economic Development District (EDD) Edition is intended to assist a wide variety of users with local economic recovery and resilience analysis needs. These data also help inform communities on the types of "special need" that may indicate eligibility for EDA assistance. This tool is not a definitive source for such eligibility. Please contact your EDA Economic Development Representative (EDR) to determine eligibility. To request assistance or to provide feedback, please contact npac@ianl.gov or rmta@eda.gov. Data are accurate as of 3/30/2022.

State
Montana

EDD Name

Beartooth Resource Conservation & Development Area, Inc.

Home

Home returns you to this page.

Key Indicators

Key Indicators takes you to a sheet that highlights special need and economic distress indicator criteria. This includes persistent poverty, rurality, and more.

Demographics

Demographics allows users to view the distribution of demographic attributes across the selected EDD, and within the composite counties.

Workforce

The **Workforce** tab provides users with unique insights into labor force participation and unemployment within the EDD and at the county level.

Economy

The **Economy** section contains information about GDP and employment concentration by industry, as well as GDP growth rate across multiple sectors.

Industry

Industry tells the story of industry concentration within an EDD. Users may analyze employment, establishment, and wages through the provided location quotient information.

Risk & Resilience

Risk and Resilience provides users with information about community risk and resilience indicators, as well as hazard ratings for each county.

COVID-19

The COVID-19 page highlights COVID-19's impacts on EDDs, counties, and states.

National Economic Resilience Data Explorer, Economic Development District Edition

Home [Key Indicators](#) Demographics Workforce Local Economy Industry Risk & Resilience COVID-19

Please select an Economic Development District (EDD) from the dropdown menus to filter the dashboard.

State

EDD Name

Special Need Indicators

Is there a high concentration of coal sector jobs in any counties in the EDD?

No

Is there a nuclear power plant located in any counties in the EDD?

No

Are any of the counties in the EDD in a state of persistent poverty?

Yes

Are most counties in the EDD urban or rural?

Mostly Urban

Are any counties in the EDD adjacent to any Federally Recognized Tribal Lands?

No

Economic Distress Indicators

EDD Unemployment Rate
2.10%

The selected EDD's average unemployment rate for the most recent available reports is 2.10%.

EDD Labor Force Participation Rate
60.65%

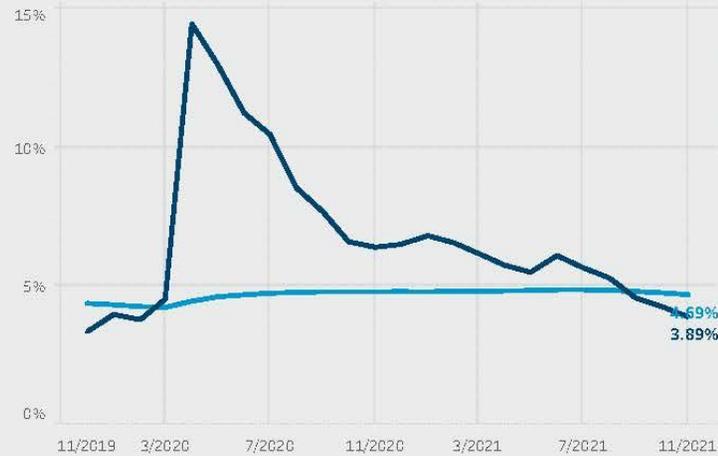
The selected EDD's average labor force participation rate for the most recent available reports is 60.65%.

National Labor Force Participation Rate
62.69%

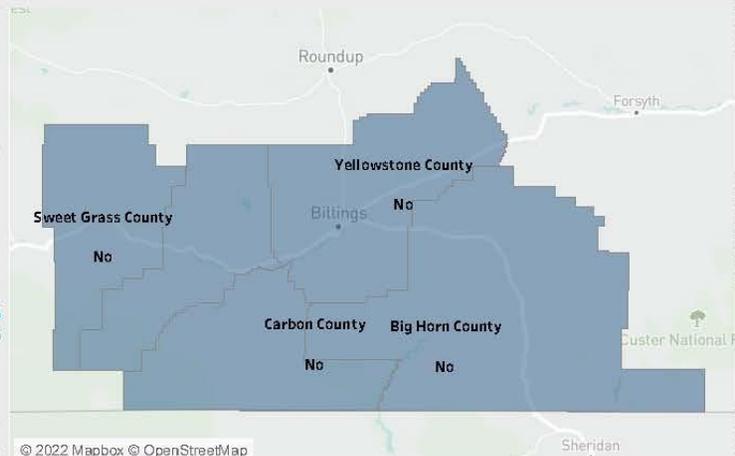
The selected national average labor force participation rate for the most recent available reports is 62.69%.

24-Month Unemployment

National Average in Light Blue, EDD in Dark Blue



Please select an Attribute to populate the view:
Are there nuclear power plants present?



Tribal lands data are from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and opportunity zone data come from Housing and Urban Development. Nuclear plant data are provided by the Nuclear Decommissioning Collaborative, while coal data were sourced from the *Initial Report to the President on Empowering Workers Through Revitalizing Energy Communities*, National Energy Technology Laboratory, April 2021. Disaster declaration data come from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The Residential Internet Access Index (IAI) is generated by Argonne National Laboratory. County level IAI values are representative of a "typical" census tract within the county. National values represent a "typical" tract, nationally. The Innovation Index is provided by StateAmerica, a service of the Indiana Business Research Center at Indiana University's Kelley School of Business.



National Economic Resilience Data Explorer, Economic Development District Edition

Home Key Indicators Demographics Workforce Local Economy Industry Risk & Resilience **COVID-19**

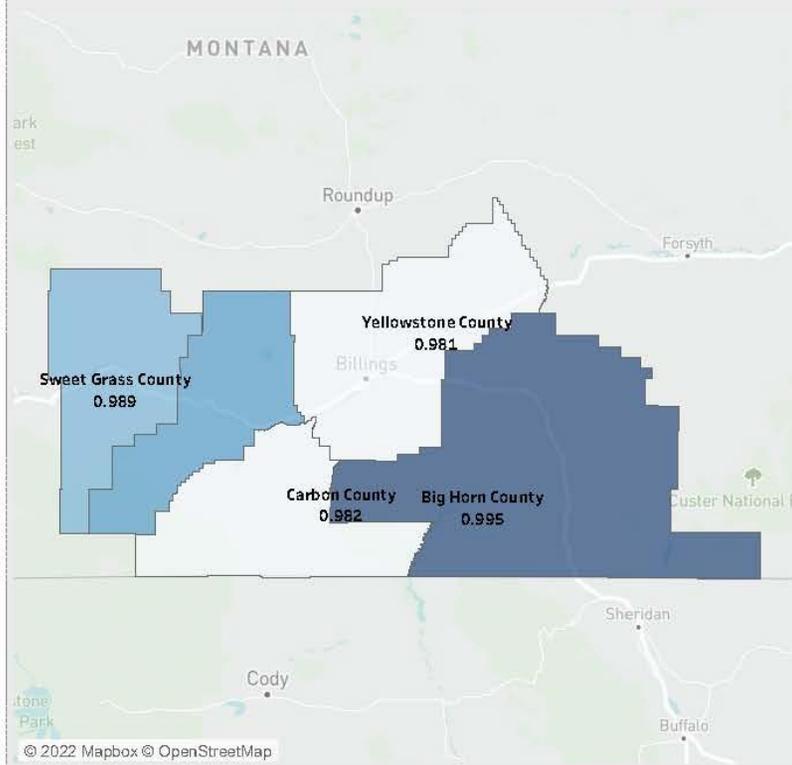
Please select an Economic Development District (EDD) from the dropdown menus to filter the dashboard.

State

EDD Name

County Economic Impact Index (CEII) and Local Government Revenue Vulnerability Index (LGRVI) Viewer

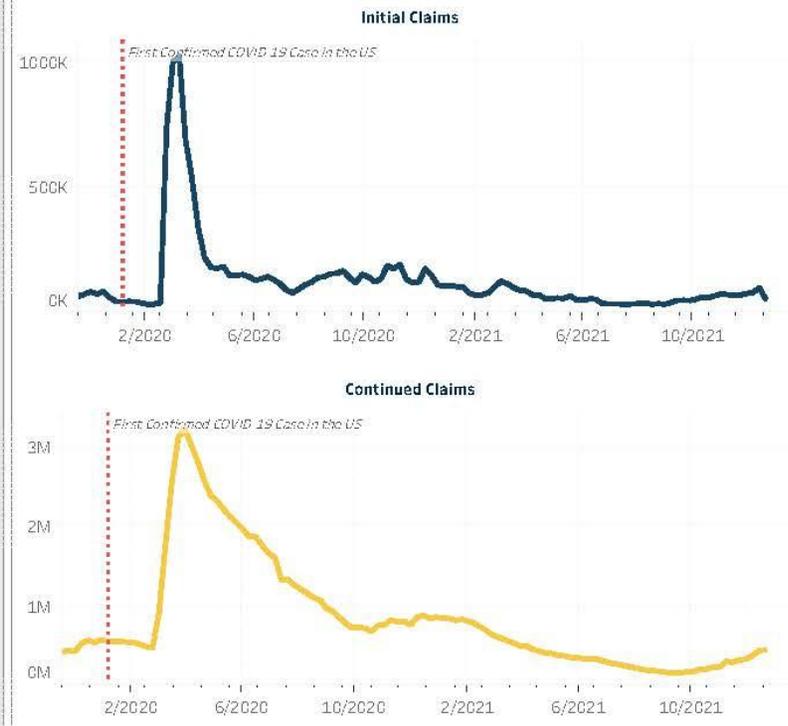
Please select an Attribute to populate the view:
LGRVI



State Government Revenue Vulnerability Index (SGRVI)

0.970

State Weekly Unemployment Claims (State Indicates Selected EDD's Respective State)



The State Government Revenue Vulnerability Index (SGRVI), the County Economic Impact Index (CEII), and the Local Government Revenue Vulnerability Index (LGRVI) were developed by Argonne National Laboratory. The CEII estimates the change in overall county level economic activity during the COVID-19 pandemic relative to January 2020. Specifically, it quantifies the estimated change in county Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as compared to a January 2020 baseline. Top five industries by value added are also derived from the CEII. The SGRVI and LGRVI measure the vulnerability of government revenues by estimating monthly changes relative to a January 2020 baseline. State weekly unemployment rates are captured by the U.S. Department of Labor.



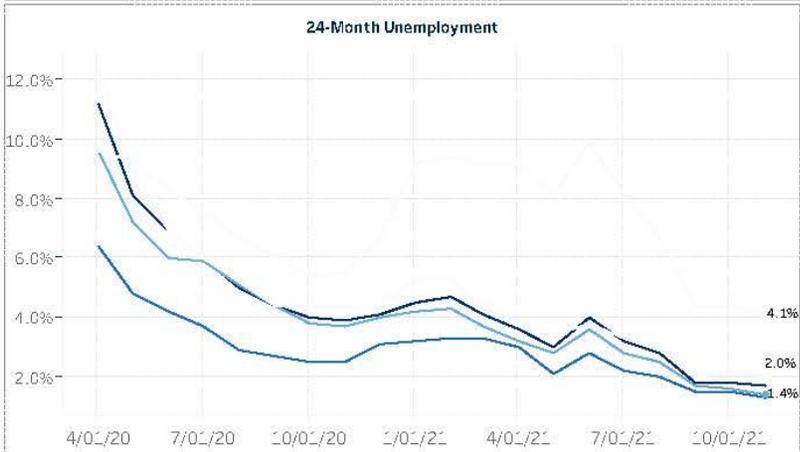
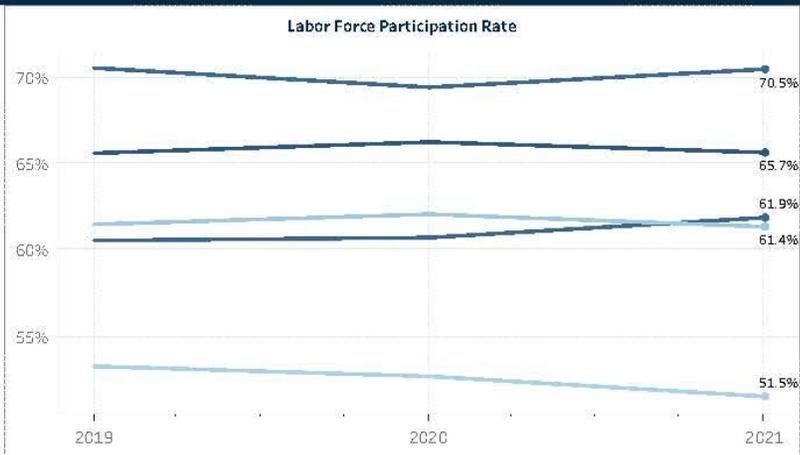
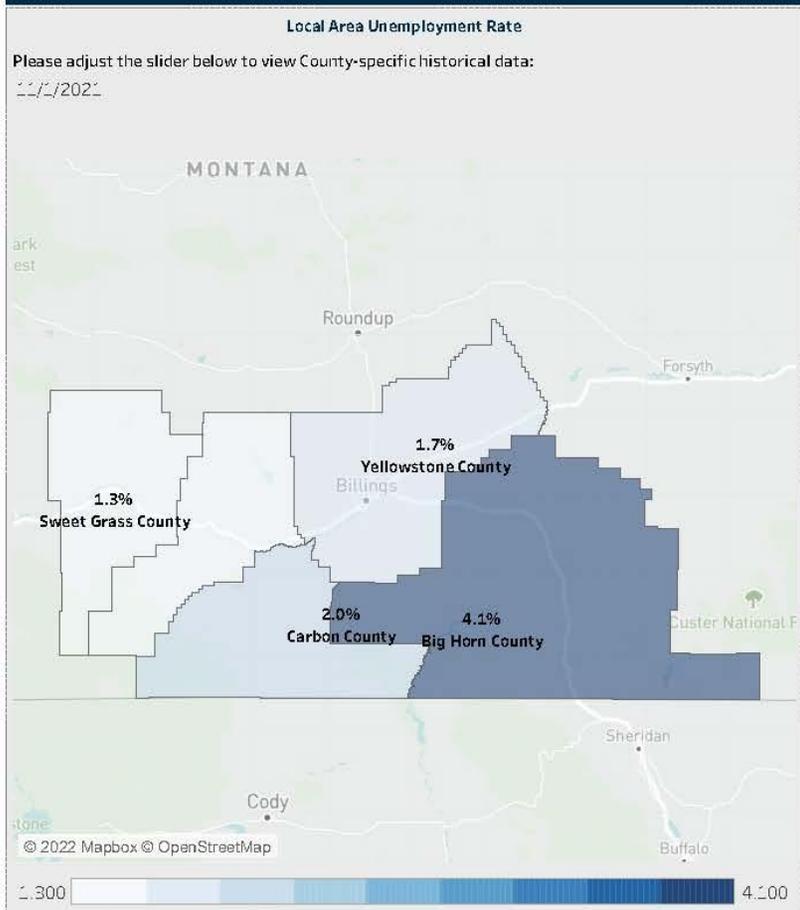
National Economic Resilience Data Explorer, Economic Development District Edition

Home Key Indicators Demographics **Workforce** Local Economy Industry Risk & Resilience COVID-19

Please select an Economic Development District (EDD) from the dropdown menus to filter the dashboard.

State

EDD Name



National unemployment data are collected by the Current Population Survey. Labor force data are collected by the Local Area Unemployment Statistics program. Both data sets are reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.



National Economic Resilience Data Explorer, Economic Development District Edition

Home Key Indicators Demographics Workforce **Local Economy** Industry Risk & Resilience COVID-19

Please select an Economic Development District (EDD) from the dropdown menus to filter the dashboard.

State

EDD Name

Please select an Attribute to populate the view:

GDP (Thousands of Dollars)

Top 5 Industries by Attribute



Please select a County to populate the view:

All

Top 5 Industries by Attribute

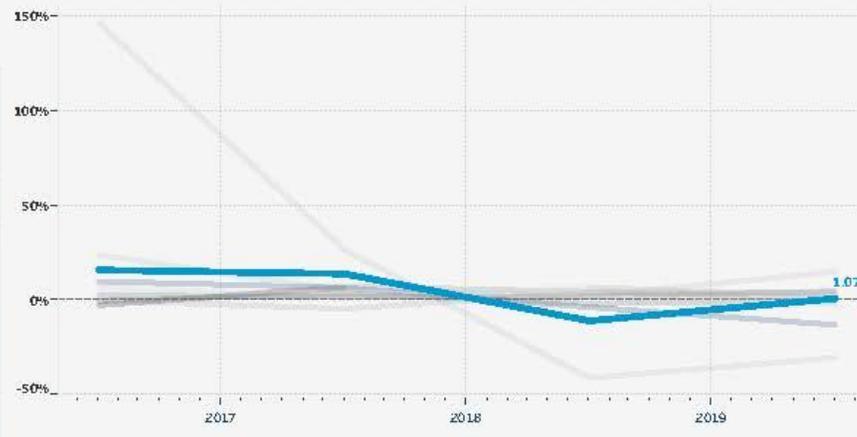
Only industries with an average LG value of 1 or greater will appear.



Top Industry GDP Change

Attribute	2017	2018	2019	2020
Construction	-2.4%	6.8%		
Finance and insurance			7.0%	2.7%
Government and government enterprises	2.7%	1.8%	2.2%	4.9%
Health care and social assistance	7.7%	1.4%	5.6%	-2.1%
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	23.9%	5.2%	2.5%	15.2%
Nondurable goods manufacturing	146.1%	26.7%	-40.7%	-30.1%
Professional, scientific, and technical services	-0.1%	3.6%	-1.6%	-0.1%
Real estate and rental and leasing	5.0%	2.6%	7.1%	0.9%
Retail trade	0.0%	-4.2%	4.2%	4.0%
Transportation and warehousing	10.1%	6.8%	-3.5%	-12.8%
Wholesale trade	-2.5%	7.5%	4.6%	1.1%

Average Industry Annual Growth Rate, Last 3 Years



Industry code data is provided by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. Data is broken into two-digit NAICS codes and three-digit NAICS codes. Information about NAICS codes can be found on the U.S. Census Bureau website. BLS values indicate that data was not provided to avoid the disclosure of confidential information; estimates are included in high-level totals. The BLS data is provided at the county level. Statistics for the county and county jurisdiction is an independent of one another (i.e., Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, Arkansas, and Mississippi listed separately from the county numbers, whereas statistics of small counties are included with the county numbers). If you have any questions, please select the adjacent county to populate the local economy statistics.



National Economic Resilience Data Explorer, Economic Development District Edition

Home

Key Indicators

Demographics

Workforce

Local Economy

Industry

Risk & Resilience

COVID-19

Please select an Economic Development District (EDD) from the dropdown menus to filter the dashboard.

State

EDD Name

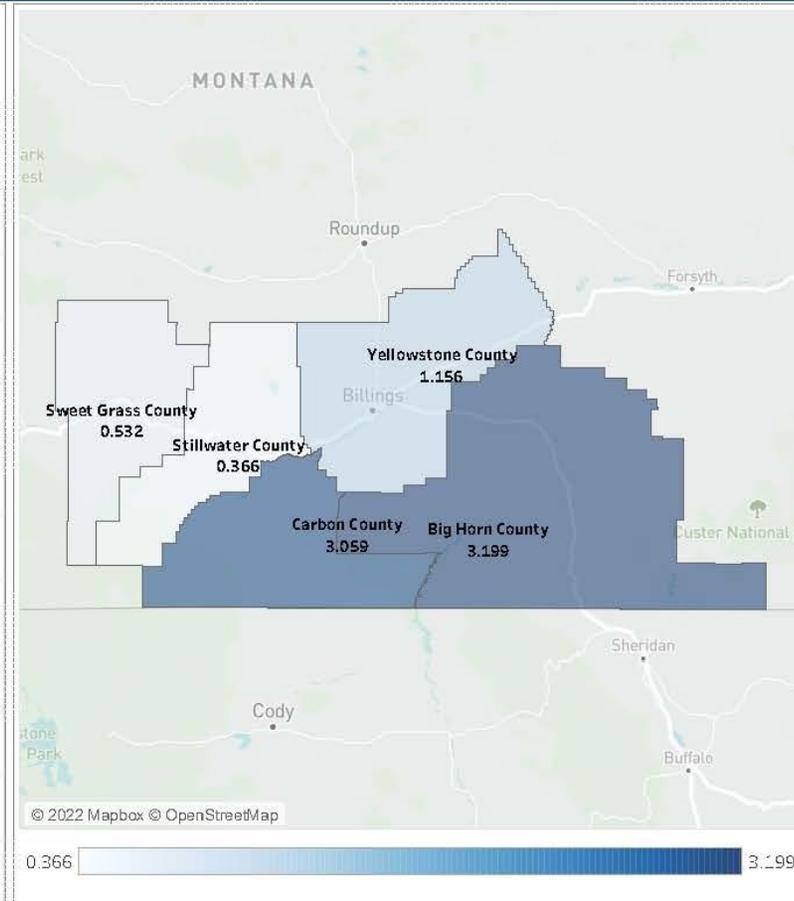
Location Quotient

Values are indicative of the average sectoral location quotient across the EDD.

Please select an Attribute to populate the view:

Annual Wages

Industry/NAICS Code	Value
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction (21)	17.19
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (11)	8.98
Arts, entertainment, and recreation (71)	3.52
Utilities (22)	3.21
Accommodation and food services (72)	1.96
Wholesale trade (42)	1.53
Retail trade (44-45)	1.44
Health care and social assistance (62)	1.39
Other services, except public administration (81)	1.35
Transportation and warehousing (48-49)	1.32
Construction (23)	1.32



Location Quotient (LQ) is a measure of industry concentration in a given location, displayed as a ratio of the distribution of wages, establishments, and employment in a geographic area as compared to the distribution of those fields in that industry nationally. If an LQ value is above 1.0, then it indicates that the industry makes up a greater share locally than it does nationally. This section shows the top industries within the EDD by their associated LQ value. EDD LQ values have been calculated by aggregating and averaging LQ values within each LQ, for each respective category (i.e., employment, wages, industries).

National Economic Resilience Data Explorer, Economic Development District Edition

Home

Key Indicators

Demographics

Workforce

Local Economy

Industry

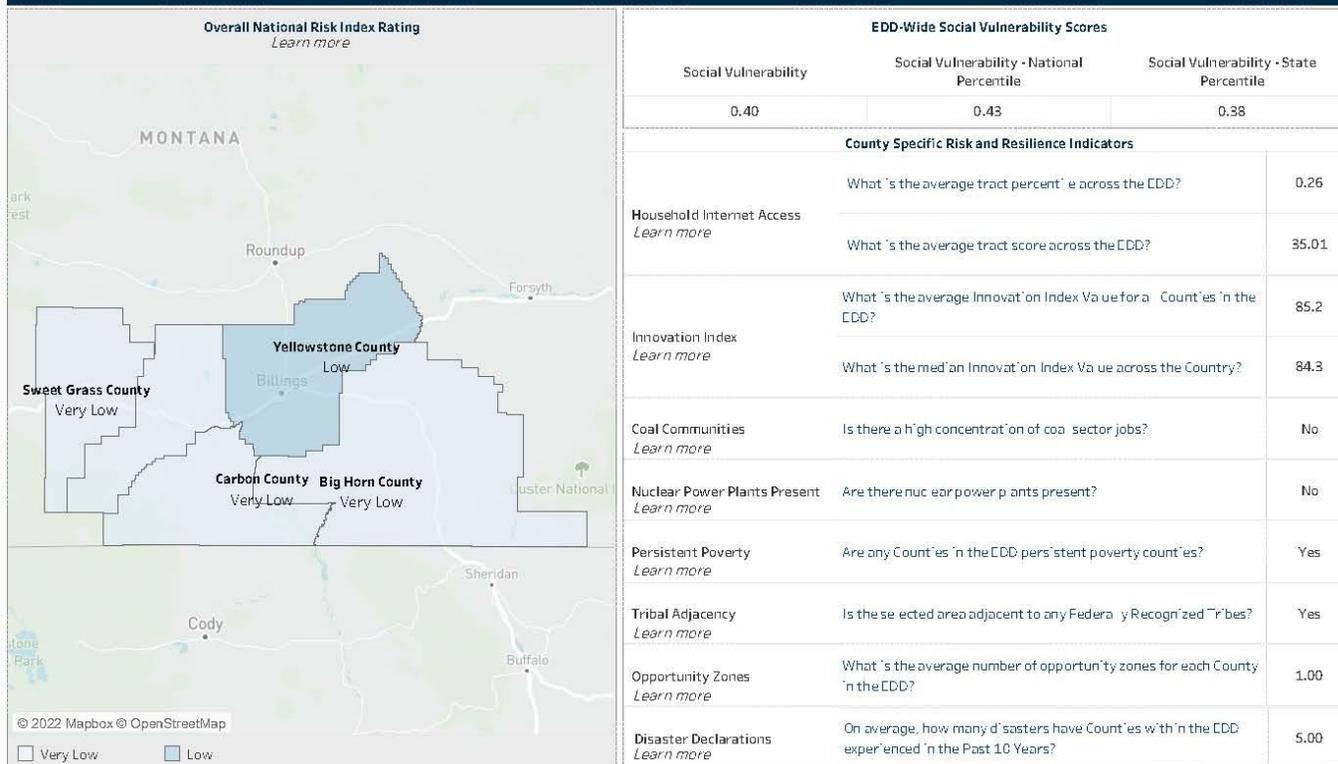
Risk & Resilience

COVID-19

Please select an Economic Development District (EDD) from the dropdown menus to filter the dashboard.

State

EDD Name



Data is provided by FEMA's National Risk Index (NRI). The NRI is an online mapping application that identifies communities that are most at risk to 19 natural hazards. For the sake of this dashboard, hazards have been filtered to Tornadoes, Riverine Flooding, Lightning, Hurricanes, and Winter Weather. Data has not been aggregated at the EDD level. However, data for all counties within a selected EDD is provided.



Source: <https://www.anl.gov/dis/nerde-economic-development-district-dashboards> Argonne National Laboratory (anl.gov)

APPENDIX C: POPULATION ESTIMATES BY AGE IN 2020

Big Horn County, Montana

Population Estimates by Age in 2020	Number	Rank in U.S.	Pct Dist.	Pct Dist. in U.S.
Preschool (0 to 4)	1,132	1,806	8.5%	6.0%
School Age (5 to 17)	3,349	1,789	25.2%	16.4%
College Age (18 to 24)	1,276	2,000	9.6%	9.3%
Young Adult (25 to 44)	2,954	2,224	22.2%	26.6%
Older Adult (45 to 64)	2,907	2,355	21.9%	25.6%
Older (65 plus)	1,684	2,559	12.7%	16.0%
Median Age	31.4	3,040		Median Age = 38.2

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; Median age calculated by the IBRC.

Carbon County, Montana

Population Estimates by Age in 2020	Number	Rank in U.S.	Pct Dist.	Pct Dist. in U.S.
Preschool (0 to 4)	379	2,672	3.5%	6.0%
School Age (5 to 17)	1,524	2,468	14.3%	16.4%
College Age (18 to 24)	573	2,593	5.4%	9.3%
Young Adult (25 to 44)	2,155	2,450	20.2%	26.6%
Older Adult (45 to 64)	3,318	2,264	31.0%	25.6%
Older (65 plus)	2,740	2,169	25.6%	16.0%
Median Age	51.1	159		Median Age = 38.2

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; Median age calculated by the IBRC.

Stillwater County, Montana

Population Estimates by Age in 2020	Number	Rank in U.S.	Pct Dist.	Pct Dist. in U.S.
Preschool (0 to 4)	418	2,603	4.4%	6.0%
School Age (5 to 17)	1,629	2,420	17.0%	16.4%
College Age (18 to 24)	678	2,484	7.1%	9.3%
Young Adult (25 to 44)	1,766	2,594	18.5%	26.6%
Older Adult (45 to 64)	2,882	2,360	30.1%	25.6%
Older (65 plus)	2,189	2,350	22.9%	16.0%
Median Age	47.5	392		Median Age = 38.2

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; Median age calculated by the IBRC.

Sweet Grass County, Montana

Population Estimates by Age in 2020	Number	Rank in U.S.	Pct Dist.	Pct Dist. in U.S.
Preschool (0 to 4)	195	2,923	5.3%	6.0%
School Age (5 to 17)	568	2,922	15.5%	16.4%
College Age (18 to 24)	277	2,897	7.5%	9.3%
Young Adult (25 to 44)	731	2,928	19.9%	26.6%
Older Adult (45 to 64)	888	2,940	24.2%	25.6%
Older (65 plus)	1,017	2,823	27.7%	16.0%
Median Age	46.8	469		Median Age = 38.2

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; Median age calculated by the IBRC.

Yellowstone County, Montana

Population Estimates by Age in 2020	Number	Rank in U.S.	Pct Dist.	Pct Dist. in U.S.
Preschool (0 to 4)	9,848	386	6.1%	6.0%
School Age (5 to 17)	27,713	395	17.3%	16.4%
College Age (18 to 24)	12,932	480	8.1%	9.3%
Young Adult (25 to 44)	42,457	391	26.5%	26.6%
Older Adult (45 to 64)	40,123	424	25.0%	25.6%
Older (65 plus)	27,317	398	17.0%	16.0%
Median Age	38.7	2,268		Median Age = 38.2

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; Median age calculated by the IBRC.

APPENDIX D

Partner Agencies and Other Area Resources

A sampling of the many great organizations in our region



Big Sky Economic Development (BSED): <https://bigskyeconomicdevelopment.org/#>

Big Sky Economic Development (BSED) is a public-private partnership. The Big Sky Economic Development Authority (EDA), the public agency, evolved from the Montana TradePort Authority launched in 1989 by the Yellowstone County Board of Commissioners. Big Sky Economic Development Corporation (EDC), the private business side, was started in 2002. Over 145 of the county's top businesses are member-investor partners in the EDC. Together, the organization's mission is to sustain and grow Yellowstone County's vibrant economy and outstanding quality of life, by providing leadership and resources for business creation, expansion, retention, new business recruitment and community development.



Columbus Community Foundation: <https://columbuscommunityfoundation.org/>

The Columbus Community Foundation's mission is "To cultivate a culture of giving so the Columbus community can flourish." We strive to fulfill our mission by promoting gift-giving, by investing in programs that improve the quality of life in the Columbus Community, and by building an endowment that will sustain that passion forever.



Downtown Billings Alliance (DBA): <https://downtownbillings.com/>

Nowhere identifies and unites the cultural, economic, and elemental values of a city like it's downtown. Made up of the businesses, creatives, and leaders that populate Montana's largest city, the Downtown Billings Alliance works each day to make Billings into a place ripe for economic and civic opportunities. Their active programs include urban renewal efforts, safety initiatives, and downtown business spotlights designed to lure curious citizens back into the city's central core.

Many Arrows Community Development: Contact Miriam Smith, Box 68, Pryor, MT 59066; 720-273-6697; miriam.smith@a-resource.com
The mission of the Aluut'ala'ahu' (Many Arrows) Community Development Corporation is to establish and maintain programs, service, and projects which increase the quality of life for the people of the Arrow Creek District and the Town of Pryor, especially low to moderate income persons and households. The Arrow Creek Community Development Corporation will make all reasonable efforts to help stimulate private and public investment in the Arrow Creek community which to positively enhance the District's economic, community, and social

development and opportunities for future development. In the furtherance of these goals, the Aluut'ala'ahu' (Many Arrows) Community Development Corporation will partner with community stakeholders, including but not limited to individual residents, Crow tribal entities, and local, state and federal government and local businesses.



Personal, timely advice on contracting with the government.

Montana Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC): <https://www.montanaptac.org/>

Montana PTAC provides *personal, timely advice on contracting with the government*. Selling to the government – or subcontracting to prime contractors – can be good for your business. But understanding, finding, and pursuing opportunities can be challenging. Montana PTAC advisors are ready to help you meet those challenges. We give you tools you can use to do business with federal, state and local agencies.



Plenty Doors CDC: www.plentydoorscdc.org Plenty Doors Community Development Corporation is a Native-led 501c3 nonprofit organization on the Crow Indian Reservation. Established in 2018, we intend to strengthen the Crow community through business, entrepreneurship, and community development. Plenty Doors is devoted to creating thriving communities through a strong diverse economy while preserving the unique cultural and environmental qualities of our community.



Red Lodge Area Community Foundation (RLACF): [Home - The Red Lodge Area Community Foundation \(rlacf.org\)](http://rlacf.org)

The RLACF mission is “Connecting people and building community by catalyzing change and sharing resources to build a strong, vibrant, resilient, inclusive community.” Their four main program areas are:

- Connected Youth
- Robust Arts & Culture
- Resilient Community
- Thriving Nonprofits



Rock31: <https://rock31.org/> Rock31 is the region’s next generation of entrepreneur and business-building strategies. We connect entrepreneurs to peers and mentors and offer informal encounters where these innovators, inventors, small-business owners and successful business leaders collaborate to make things happen.

We work to solve problems, remove obstacles and clear a path to market. We educate entrepreneurs and guide them through the development process. We offer co-work opportunities with programmed virtual and physical space co-located with technical assistance, resources, technology, and equipment.



Small Business Development Center (SBDC): <https://sbdc.mt.gov/>

For an individual that is looking to start a new business or expand their existing business, the SBDC network is the best place to start. The SBDC network supports ten regional centers across the state, focusing on free one-on-one counseling and low cost training in areas such as financial analysis, business planning, strategic planning, loan packaging, financial projections and market research to help small businesses achieve their goals of growth, innovation and success.



Sweet Grass Community Foundation: <https://sweetgrasscommunityfoundation.org/>

SGCF's mission is to "Build relationships and manage funds to focus, strengthen, and advance our community." They have several granting programs that are available to nonprofits and projects throughout the year, project funds that assist short-term community projects to accomplish their goals, and a fiscal sponsorship program that provides administration and support for start-up nonprofits to gain a strong

foundation before gaining their own nonprofit status.



Veterans Business Outreach Center: <https://bigskyvboc.org/>

If you are an aspiring entrepreneur or small business owner in Montana, Wyoming or Utah seeking to start, purchase, or grow your business, the Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC) Program is your one-stop shop and can assist you by providing transition assistance programs, training, workshops, business tools and resources, and more.