



# 2022-2027 Economic Development Strategic Action Plan



Wasco County Economic Development Commission





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## SPECIAL THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING:

### Wasco County Board of County Commissioners

- Scott Hege
- Steve Kramer
- Kathy Schwartz

### EDC Members

- Position 1 – Northern: Brian McCormick
- Position 2 – Central: Tonya Brumley
- Position 3 – Southern: Amy McNamee
- Position 4-Port Of The Dalles: Jennifer Toepke
- Position 5-City Of The Dalles: Rich Mays
- Position 6-Chambers Of Commerce: Lisa Farquharson
- Position 7-At Large (Agriculture-Wheat, Cattle): Bob Krein
- Position 8-At Large (Agriculture-Fruit Growers): Megan Thompson
- Position 9-At Large: Fritz Ellett
- Position 10-At Large: Nan Wimmers
- Position 11-At Large (Utilities): Justin Brock

### EDC Staff

Carrie Pipinich, Mid-Columbia Economic Development District



# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION OVERVIEW

The Wasco County Economic Development Commission is a County appointed Commission that works for an economically robust Wasco County. The EDC is a representative body made up of 11 Commissioners, each of whom represents a different constituency geographically and from key industries.

The EDC acts as the economic development arm of Wasco County. Its activities focus on job creation, supporting foundational infrastructure to create economic opportunity, and increasing capacity throughout the County. The EDC is directly responsible for the following activities:

1. **Information Source:** Keeping the Board of County Commissioners and partners apprised of economic development activity, opportunities, and needs throughout the County.
2. **Community Capacity Building:** Collaborating with, and providing technical assistance to, local entities to accomplish projects focused on the above outcomes and to bring further investment into Wasco County.
3. **Leadership:** Providing leadership on countywide economic and long-term development efforts.

To fulfill this role, the EDC meets quarterly with working groups focused on moving specific projects or topic areas coming together in the interim and staff supported actions.



# STRATEGY AND PROCESS

This plan is intended to guide the work done by the Wasco County Economic Development Commission in the coming five years. It provides an overview of the EDC's vision for Wasco County supported by the County's demographic and economic profiles and an assets-strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-and-threats analysis. The information provided builds on work done at the regional level and seeks to align the EDC's efforts with the regional strategy where relevant to leverage additional capacity. These foundations provided the framework for the specific goals and strategies developed as well as directed the formation of the EDC's action plan for the coming year.



In order to draft this economic development strategy and its accompanying action plan, the Economic Development Commission moved through a nine-month process started in June of 2021. At each EDC meeting a specific portion of the material for the plan was reviewed and input provided by the EDC Commissioners (detailed to the right). A committee was formed around each goal area to refine strategies and develop actions.

The full strategy and action plan was adopted by the EDC in March of 2022. It will provide a clear framework for the EDC for the coming five years with minor annual updates incorporated into the action plan to reflect current activities and any significant changes to the economic development landscape.

## PROCESS OVERVIEW

**JUNE 2021:** REVIEW EDC'S CURRENT ROLE, DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC TRENDS, ASSET MAPPING, AND SWOT.

**SEPTEMBER 2021:** MISSION, VISION AND GOALS

**DECEMBER 2021:** COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT PROJECT PRIORITIZATION, STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT, COMMITTEE FORMATION.

**JANUARY TO FEBRUARY 2022:** COMMITTEES, EDC LEADERSHIP, AND STAFF DEVELOPED ANNUAL ACTION PLANS BASED ON MISSION, VISION, AND STRATEGIES.

**MARCH 2022:** EDC ADOPTS DRAFT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

# DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC TRENDS

Wasco County is one of Oregon's oldest counties, established in 1854 by the Oregon Territorial Legislature. The county seat is the City of The Dalles with other incorporated cities including Antelope, Dufur, Maupin, Mosier and Shaniko. The County is approximately 2,392 square miles with approximately 59% held in private ownership, 25% in Tribal lands, and the remaining in a variety of public ownerships with the largest being US Forest Service land. The County is bounded by the Columbia River to the North, the Deschutes to the East and the Mt Hood National Forest on the West.

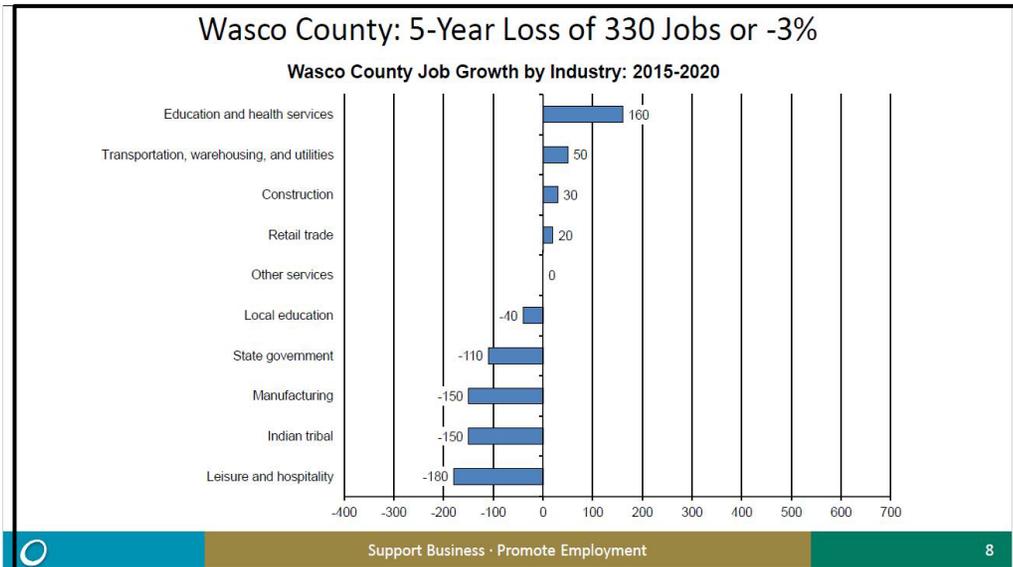
The Dalles area holds the majority of the County's population with approximately 16,000 of the almost 26,670 residents in the County. Wasco County's population has grown at a rate of approximately 5% since 2010, whereas Oregon has grown 10% in the same period. This is almost double the 2.2% growth from 2010 to 2015, but not close to the significant growth rate in The Dalles. Wasco County's population has a smaller percentage of younger residents and a larger percentage of residents over 65 than Oregon as a whole or The Dalles. In addition to this shifting age distribution, Wasco County's Latinx population has grown significantly over the last few decades with its percentage increasing from 9.3% in 2000 to 19.2% in 2019. These shifts will impact required services, the types of businesses in demand, and workforce skills needed in the coming years.

Educational attainment can be an important indicator for workforce skills. For those over 25 in Wasco County, 19.6% of the population has a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 32% nationally and 33.7% in Oregon. Median income increases and poverty rate decreases as educational attainment rises locally as well as nationally as education impacts the types of jobs available to residents.

Prior to COVID-19, median household income in Wasco County grew to \$53,105 in 2019 from \$43,422 in 2015. Approximately 12% of residents remained in poverty despite overall income growth. This is a significant decrease from the poverty rate in 2015 at 17%. Per capita, the income for 2019 was \$27,445, which is lower than Oregon as a whole (\$33,763). These shifting demographics could reflect a variety of factors. These could include job growth in the County, wealthier retirees moving into the area, or increases in housing costs pushing lower income residents into outlying communities.



The main driver of Wasco County’s economy remains agricultural production. The County produced almost \$96 million in agricultural products sold, with most of this being in crop sales and 15% in livestock sales reported for the 2017 Census of Agriculture. The main products include a variety of types of wheat, sweet cherries, and forage. Wasco County remains a leader in production for both dryland wheat and sweet cherries.



Wasco County’s non-farm economy is still recovering from the pandemic. From 2015-2020, Wasco County lost 3% jobs, most of which were in the leisure and hospitality, a sector that had experienced large gains in 2015. As of May 2021, Wasco County has regained 68% of the jobs lost at the onset of the pandemic, according to the Oregon Employment Department. Despite this, job gains have started to slow compared to the beginning of the year due to labor shortages, particularly for the in-person service jobs. The largest industries for the county continue to be education and health services, trade, transportation, and utilities, and local government employment. Total payroll in Wasco County for 2020 came to almost \$511 million from \$453 million in 2016. Only about 60% of the jobs in Wasco County are held by in-county workers, with more workers leaving

the county for employment in 2019 than both working and living within the County. Commuters head in many directions, with the largest concentrations to Portland and Hood River.

In addition to recovering jobs and income during the pandemic, the real estate market has seen the value of homes increase significantly in the past few years, which has led to housing shortages for middle to low-income workers and will have serious implications for the economy moving forward. Supply chain issues for commodities like lumber has also impacted housing prices and construction.

These indicators point toward a recovering economy, with some significant challenges around addressing income inequality, providing housing for the local workforce, and supporting a growing region.

# SWOT ANALYSIS

The EDC developed an assets-strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-threats analysis. This analysis provides an opportunity to think of the broader landscape impacting the EDC’s work in economic development. It also allows for consideration of key partnerships to engage with in support of efforts that align with the EDC’s vision for the community that might be outside of its mission.

	Strengths/Assets	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Natural Resources	<b>Natural Resources and Climate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natural Resource Base</li> </ul>	<b>Management Resources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decreasing budgets for natural resource management</li> </ul>	<b>Leverage Natural Assets</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wood and Forestry Products Innovation</li> <li>Renewable Energy</li> <li>Fishing Industry</li> <li>Active Forest Collaborative</li> </ul>	<b>Natural Disasters/Hazards</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>COVID-19 challenges – (workforce, mental health, income inequality,)</li> <li>Wildfire, ice storms and other natural disasters</li> <li>Aging emergency response systems</li> </ul>
Agriculture	<b>Agricultural Foundation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nationally known agricultural region (cherry, wheat)</li> <li>Strong agricultural heritage and expertise</li> <li>Management of water resources</li> </ul>	<b>Changes in Agricultural Landscape</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Average age of farmers continues to rise</li> <li>Difficult to find needed labor</li> <li>Unpermitted events and other activities on ag land can cause conflicts with current uses</li> </ul>	<b>Diversification Ag and Ag Tech</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Value-Add and Food Processing Sector</li> <li>New specialty crops in areas with water resources to support them</li> <li>Growing ag/tech partnerships</li> <li>Appropriate agritourism</li> </ul>	<b>Water Access, Regulations, Markets</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drought impacts</li> <li>Water access issues</li> <li>Aquifer concerns</li> <li>Major fluctuations in commodity pricing</li> </ul>
Demographic Shifts	<b>Culture</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10,000+ years of Indigenous Culture</li> <li>Increased diversity</li> <li>Strong sense of community</li> </ul>	<b>Demographics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aging population</li> <li>High poverty rate</li> <li>Disparities between communities</li> <li>Planning for increased community capacity</li> </ul>	<b>Increasing Diversity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Growing Hispanic/Latino population</li> <li>Retirees bringing in experience, perspective, and capacity</li> </ul>	<b>Impacts of Continued Population Growth</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pressure on housing prices</li> </ul>

	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Infrastructure	<b>Infrastructure</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Abundant, clean power</li> <li>Telecommunication and broadband capacity</li> <li>Dog River Pipeline</li> <li>Infrastructure for small manufacturers</li> </ul>	<b>Infrastructure</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small systems with significant maintenance burdens</li> <li>Aging basic infrastructure</li> <li>Broadband limited in areas</li> <li>Energy capacity challenges</li> </ul>	<b>Connectivity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Market and use the increased high speed fiber optics</li> <li>Significant federal investment in broadband accessibility, basic infrastructure</li> </ul>	<b>Infrastructure Limitations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water/Wastewater capacity challenges</li> <li>Limited existing buildings and industrial land</li> </ul>
Business Development	<b>Diverse Industry Sectors and Growing Business Sectors</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diverse industries</li> <li>Growing regional industry sectors (tech, value added ag, manufacturing, healthcare)</li> </ul>	<b>Lack of Business Expansion Space</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No large lot industrial land available</li> <li>Many commercial and light industrial spaces need investment for occupation</li> </ul>	<b>Focus on Local</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Available commercial and light industrial spaces</li> <li>Improved business resilience resources and connected support systems</li> <li>Supply chain development</li> </ul>	<b>Industry Diversification</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recovery for small businesses</li> <li>Loss of any major employer</li> <li>Concentration risk</li> </ul>
Workforce	<b>Human Capital</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diverse skill sets in the area</li> <li>Unique educational programs supported by businesses</li> <li>New Advanced Skills Center at CGCC</li> </ul>	<b>Education, Skilled Workforce</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to advanced degrees</li> <li>Childcare access/affordability</li> <li>Limited Skilled Labor</li> <li>Necessity of continually evolving CTE educational opportunities to fill jobs</li> </ul>	<b>Business/Workforce development</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>skill up residents to meet company needs</li> <li>Attract human and business talent based on quality of life and remote work opportunities</li> </ul>	<b>Education Quality/ Opportunity and Workforce</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Labor shortages</li> <li>Statewide educational system challenges</li> <li>Meeting employers needs today and in the future</li> </ul>
Housing	<b>Relative Affordability for Housing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compared to housing throughout the Gorge, Wasco County remains relatively less expensive</li> <li>Updated housing plans, development ordinances</li> </ul>	<b>Insufficient Housing Stock</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Insufficient attainable housing for local employees</li> <li>Aging housing stock</li> </ul>	<b>Housing Rehabilitation + Infill</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vertical Housing Zone in The Dalles</li> <li>Additional capacity for housing created through zoning</li> </ul>	<b>Housing Shortage Impacts</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Availability/ affordability reduces ability to attract/retain workers</li> <li>Increasing homeless population with limited resources to address needs</li> <li>Increasing costs of building materials</li> </ul>

	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Transportation	<b>Availability of Transportation Systems/Modes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hub for region</li> <li>Many modes (Highways, Airports, Rail Service, River)</li> <li>Proximity to Portland, major markets</li> </ul>	<b>Transportation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gaps in transportation options</li> <li>Capacity of roads, airports, rail, etc.</li> </ul>	<b>Address Public Transportation + Multi-Modal Needs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further Development of Columbia Gorge Regional Airport</li> <li>Expanding fixed routes and regional transit connections</li> </ul>	<b>Maintaining and Enhancing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Severely limited resources for maintaining transportation infrastructure</li> </ul>
Regulatory and Legislative	<b>Advocates for Wasco County and the Region</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Dalles Outreach Team</li> <li>Regional Solutions</li> <li>Relationships with state and federal agency partners</li> <li>Strong collaboration</li> </ul>	<b>Regulatory Environment:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Scenic Area creates an additional layer of regulation</li> <li>Complex and varying land use requirements can be challenging to understand</li> </ul>	<b>Legislative Engagement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State/Federal resources for COVID-19 recovery</li> <li>Strong relationships with federal legislative delegation</li> <li>Increasing engagement with State legislative delegation</li> </ul>	<b>Funding</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uncertainty about federal resource allocation and competitive nature of funding</li> <li>Shrinking local government budgets for some</li> </ul>
Tourism and Recreation	<b>Scenic Beauty, Recreation, Brand and Tourism Industry</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Four Season Recreation (hiking, biking, snow sports, fishing, etc)</li> <li>Tourism destinations throughout Wasco County</li> <li>Natural landscape diversity</li> </ul>	<b>Variation in Tourism Impacts</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No comprehensive approach to tourism planning throughout the County</li> <li>Concern about impacts on voluntary emergency services</li> </ul>	<b>Expanding Tourism</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing year-round opportunities</li> <li>Leverage new Deschutes Rim Athletic Complex</li> <li>Increase small business planning to leverage tourism influx to support operations</li> </ul>	<b>Tourism Challenges</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seasonality can be challenging for communities and businesses</li> <li>Changes in natural resources (fisheries, forest, etc) impact visitor experience</li> </ul>
EDC	<b>EDC Relationships, Reputation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive momentum</li> <li>Strong relationships with many communities and organizations</li> <li>Support from Wasco County BOCC and staff</li> <li>Access to funding sources</li> <li>Diverse knowledge base</li> </ul>	<b>EDC Capacity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited capacity/staff time</li> <li>Low profile for the work accomplished</li> </ul>	<b>EDC Accomplishments, Assets</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further leverage EDC Commissioners as resource</li> <li>Improve tracking of outcomes and better share accomplishments</li> <li>Further develop approach to fulfilling leadership role</li> </ul>	<b>EDC Stability</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual funding cycle tied to County budgeting process</li> <li>Explore diversification of funding for activities</li> </ul>

## Mission

The EDC collaborates with and supports partners and local communities to cultivate sustainable economic and business development in Wasco County.



## Vision

Wasco County and its communities should be economically robust, livable, and continue to enhance strong rural character.



### Robust Infrastructure:

Support communities throughout Wasco County in efforts to provide adequate infrastructure to enhance community livability and economic opportunity.

### Community Capacity:

Work with local partners to provide meaningful technical assistance, bring in additional resources, and complete projects that enhance their community's capacity for appropriate economic development

# Goals

### Information Source and Advocacy:

Ensure the Board of County Commissioners, partners, funders, and companies have up-to-date information on economic conditions, activities, and projects that support a resilient local economy in Wasco County.

### Vibrant and Diverse Local Economy:

Develop and implement short- and long-term strategies that build and diversify the economy in Wasco County and its communities.

### Strong and Sustainable EDC:

Strengthen relationships with partners, diversify funding streams, and provide professional, effective services to communities and businesses in Wasco County.

# STRATEGIES

This plan below provides the EDC's roadmap for moving toward its vision of strong, livable communities with robust economies throughout Wasco County. It is organized by goal area. Strategies and actions will continue to evolve as progress is made or in reaction to changing conditions and resources.

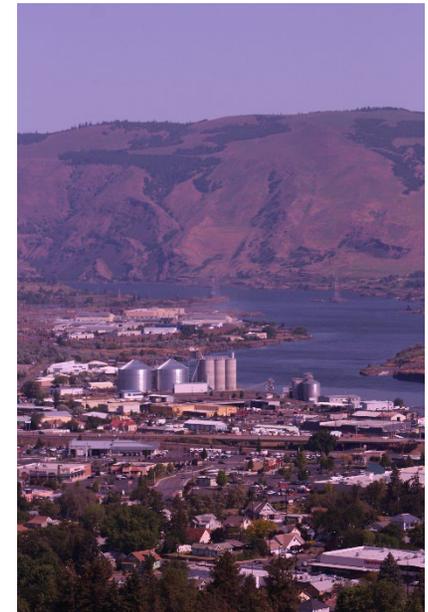
## **GOAL: VIBRANT AND DIVERSE LOCAL ECONOMY. DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT SHORT-AND LONG-TERM STRATEGIES THAT BUILD AND DIVERSIFY THE ECONOMY IN WASCO COUNTY AND ITS COMMUNITIES.**

### **Strategy: Create a strong, connected support system for businesses that can help community members start and grow companies.**

- Work with partners to ensure information about business resources, incentives, and financing is readily available to those looking to start or grow a business in Wasco County. Maintain up to date business development guides for interested communities around the County. Note: suggested update 2023.
- Support businesses in connecting with resources to site or grow their firms.
- Continue to serve as Wasco County's representative with the Brownfield Coalition grant to support reducing barriers to development in Wasco County.
- Engage with service providers, communities and local businesses to identify and address key business needs throughout Wasco County. Complete interviews with businesses in the County to better understand needs. (Grant Resource: Business Oregon Rural Opportunity Initiative)
- Work with partners (Chambers, Port, SBDC, MCEDD) to host Pub Talk type networking events and other programming identified through the interviews to create a strong community around entrepreneurship. (Grant Resource: Oregon Community Foundation Thriving Entrepreneurs Grant)

### **Strategy: Support development of key industry clusters in Wasco County that leverage strengths in the County and region.**

- Work with the Port, Community College, local chambers, regional industry associations, and other partners to identify and develop next steps from the Wasco County Innovation Strategy developed with Center on Rural Innovation. Ensure engagement with traditional as well as new sectors. (Grant Resource: Business Oregon Rural Opportunity Initiative)



**Strategy: Work with partners to support connecting workforce, education and training opportunities to employer identified skills.**

- Complete interviews with businesses in the County to better understand needs.
- Explore opportunities to support partners in hosting career or job fairs.

**GOAL: ROBUST INFRASTRUCTURE. SUPPORT COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT WASCO COUNTY IN EFFORTS TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE TO ENHANCE COMMUNITY LIVABILITY AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY.**

**Water/Wastewater Strategy: Work with communities and partners to address water and wastewater system constraints to community and economic development.**

- Continue to host training sessions like the Infrastructure Planning and Finance Workshop held in partnership with RCAC in 2021 that increase local capacity for infrastructure project development. Connect local systems to existing training opportunities.
- Host a mock one stop where local systems can familiarize themselves with the process.
- As capacity allows, provide technical assistance to water and wastewater systems in the county to increase access to funding and move planning and projects forward.
- Build an inventory of system conditions within the county to understand current conditions and needs. Connect systems to resources that can support addressing challenges.

**Broadband Strategy: Form and support a Wasco County Broadband Action Team (BAT) with representatives from organizations and communities around the region to support closing the digital divide.**



- Work with the BAT to support a gaps analysis leveraging the Faster Broadband Oregon mapping project as well as a local survey and interviews with key stakeholders. This will focus on infrastructure gaps but also explore opportunities to support enhanced utilization.
- Identify robust next steps from information gathered through this effort and begin implementing them with relevant partners.

**Broadband Strategy: Collaborate with public and private sector partners to address middle and last mile telecommunications infrastructure gaps and increase redundancy in communications networks.**

- Share information on grant resources available through State and Federal programs with public and private sector stakeholders interested in improving broadband access and utilization in Wasco County. Where appropriate, support applications that meet a community identified need.

- Engage with Q-Life’s efforts to grow middle mile or last mile infrastructure to close access gaps.
- Support the Cascadia East Interconnection project to build more resilience into local networks.
- Identify opportunities to leverage “dig once” efforts to support reducing the cost of broadband infrastructure deployments in the County.

**Business Development Infrastructure Strategy: Support development of other business infrastructure. For example, transportation, housing, childcare, and community livability.**

- Engage with CGCC’s Childcare Center feasibility work, the Four River’s Early Learning Hub’s study around innovative models for childcare, and support next steps from each.
- Track housing market data and share with decision makers.
- As appropriate, support communities in accessing resources to plan for housing and make necessary code amendments to support meeting housing needs.
- Participate in local and regional discussions on housing strategy representing economic development interests in Wasco County.
- With the next update of the Business Siting Guides, explore interest in creating a housing development guide.

**GOAL: COMMUNITY CAPACITY. WORK WITH LOCAL PARTNERS TO PROVIDE MEANINGFUL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, BRING IN ADDITIONAL RESOURCES, AND COMPLETE PROJECTS THAT ENHANCE THEIR COMMUNITY’S CAPACITY FOR APPROPRIATE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.**

**Strategy: Work with local communities to build their capacity for developing and implementing priority projects that align with the EDC’s vision and goals.**

- Identify partners within each community to support in developing additional capacity. Connect across communities where there are similar issues.
- Develop resources for shared issues, e.g. a communication plan example for infrastructure projects. Identify these opportunities through engagement with communities.
- Identify and share resources to support capacity building, like opportunities for board training, HR resources like the BOLI Technical Assistance services, etc.

**Strategy: Provide or facilitate training as needed to increase organizational capacity for economic development.**

- Support a grant writing training in Spring of 2022.
- Develop info for ongoing business grant and assistance resources to share with communities and businesses.
- Connect partners with training resources from other agencies, e.g. RCAC, LOC, etc.

**GOAL: INFORMATION SOURCE AND ADVOCACY. ENSURE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, PARTNERS, FUNDERS, AND COMPANIES HAVE UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION ON ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, ACTIVITIES, AND PROJECTS THAT SUPPORT A RESILIENT LOCAL ECONOMY IN WASCO COUNTY AND INCREASE INVESTMENT IN ITS COMMUNITIES.**

**Strategy: Gather information on economic development related projects and strategies from throughout Wasco County.**

- Complete the Community Enhancement Project process annually.

**Strategy: Maintain up-to-date information on economic and demographic trends, land availability, and major employers.**

- Develop a cycle for updating major items with one occurring annually: major employers, land/building availability, business development guides, strategic action plan, etc. Focus for this year: Explore Land availability resources.

**Strategy: Develop a strong web presence focused on business and economic development that highlights key business resources and opportunities as well as shares EDC activities in a meaningful way.**

- Review and update the EDC’s webpage. Support more connections with Chamber and partners’ web presence to ensure consistent information is being shared with businesses.
- Explore opportunities to connect with and support content with partners around business resources.

**Strategy: Support communities in connecting with their State and Federal elected officials to talk about community priorities, projects and funding needs.**

- Share information on who elected officials are to support further engagement.
- Explore annual engagement with the State and Federal delegations around the annual Community Enhancement Project list and priority issues to better share our community’s successes and needs. Share these locally as well.
- Engaging with local leaders about processes for starting or growing a business in Wasco County and work with partners to be a conduit for feedback from businesses on these processes.



## **GOAL: STRONG AND SUSTAINABLE EDC. STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARTNERS, DIVERSIFY FUNDING STREAMS, AND PROVIDE EFFECTIVE SERVICES TO COMMUNITIES AND BUSINESSES IN WASCO COUNTY.**

### **Strategy: Explore diversification of funding streams to support the EDC's efforts.**

- Continue to seek grant funding to expand services in program areas where there are resources available to develop new programming (e.g. Rural Opportunity Initiative grant funding for entrepreneurship system development and programming). Engage with partners to develop these opportunities to ensure alignment and collaboration.
- Where efforts are successful, work to develop sustainable funding resources to maintain grant funded programming.

### **Strategy: Maintain and implement a long-term economic development strategy as well as intentional annual work plans to guide the EDC's activities.**

### **Strategy: Create measurements and track outcomes for the EDC's work.**

- Develop measurements to track over time to better understand and communicate the EDC's impact.

### **Strategy: Connect the EDC's work to strategies grounded in community economic development best practices.**

- When opportunities arise, participate in conferences and trainings focused on enhancing staff knowledge and sharing resources with the Commission to enhance capacity.



# 2022 COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT PROJECTS

Each year the Wasco County EDC gathers information about key community economic development projects and activities throughout Wasco County. The EDC then develops a project prioritization ranking and presents it to the Board of County Commissioners for acknowledgement.

Prioritization is then annually incorporated into this Strategic Action Plan for the EDC and included in the Mid-Columbia's regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) which further highlights projects with regional significance. These documents can be used by project proponents to show local support when seeking funding sources.

## PRIORITIZATION CRITERIA

1. ADDRESS SPECIFIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE OR OPPORTUNITIES
2. CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE FOCUS
3. READINESS TO PROCEED
4. IMPACT OF INCLUSION IN RANKING PROCESS.

In 2022, Wasco County EDC prioritized the 35 new or ongoing projects submitted by 22 entities into the list below. The EDC ranks the top 10 projects and includes the others un-ranked in Attachment A. This list was acknowledged by the Wasco County Board of Commissioners at their January

5, 2022 meeting and will be incorporated into the CEDs at MCEDD's March 17, 2022 Board Meeting.

1. City of The Dalles- Dog River Pipeline
2. White River Health District-Deschutes Rim Health Clinic Expansion
3. City of Mosier-Joint Use Facility
4. City of Dufur-Drinking Water System Improvements
5. Q-Life Cascadia East Interconnection and Colocation Facility
6. Columbia Gorge Community College-Child Care Center
7. Maupin Area Chamber of Commerce-Deschutes Rim Athletic Complex
8. Northern Wasco County Park and Recreation District-Sorosis Park Redevelopment
9. Q-Life-South Wasco County Fiber Expansion
10. Wy'East Resource Conservation and Development – Dufur Rural Innovation Hub

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3. READINESS TO PROCEED
4. IMPACT OF INCLUSION IN RANKING PROCESS.

For our 2023 list, Wasco County EDC prioritized the 55 new or ongoing projects submitted by 26 entities into the list below. The EDC ranks the top 10 projects and includes the others un-ranked in Attachment A. This list was acknowledged by the Wasco County Board of Commissioners at their January

28, 2023 meeting and will be incorporated into the region's

CEDs at Mid-Columbia Economic Development District's March 16, 2023 Board Meeting.

1. Columbia Gorge Community College-Child Care Center
2. Q-Life Cascadia East Interconnection and Colocation Facility
3. City of Mosier-Joint Use Facility
4. City of Maupin-Drinking Water System Improvements
5. City of Dufur-Drinking Water System Improvements
6. City of The Dalles, Klickitat County, CGCC-Aviation Maintenance Training Hangar and Industrial Land Improvements
7. Wy'East Resource Conservation and Development – Dufur Rural Innovation Hub
8. Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District-Fifteenmile Managed Underground Water Storage
9. Northern Wasco County Park and Recreation District-Sorosis Park Redevelopment Phase 2
10. Pine Grove Water District-Pine Grove Water Source Improvements

**Attachment A:  
Wasco County 2023 Community Enhancement Projects**

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Project Sponsor</i>	<i>Project</i>
1	<b>Columbia Gorge Community College</b>	<b><u>Columbia Gorge Childcare Center (CGCC):</u></b> There continues to be a serious shortage of qualified childcare. CGCC completed a feasibility study as the first step in developing a public childcare center and to improve workforce training available to childcare providers. CGCC is working with local partners for both potential locations and ongoing engagement. They are also increasing the size of the proposed center to 200 slots to reduce the subsidy needed based on economies of scale. CGCC has approximately \$1.75 million in ARPA funds allocated by the State for this project and will likely seek additional resources if the project is able to move forward.
2	<b>Q-Life</b>	<b><u>Cascades East Interconnection Colocation Facility +Fiber Expansion:</u></b> In the Northwest, major colocation points are in areas threatened by the Cascadia Subduction. This would mean that the internet was largely inaccessible in the event of a subduction event. Q-life is developing an improved colocation facility in The Dalles where providers and emergency communications networks can meet and access scalable communication paths. They completed initial designs for the facility with a cost estimate of approximately \$1 million. Additionally, Q-Life is working to ensure that communities across the County are connected via fiber to support strong last mile connection opportunities.
3	<b>City of Mosier</b>	<b><u>Joint Use Facility:</u></b> The City of Mosier and the Mosier Fire District are partnering to develop a joint use facility that will include a City Hall, Fire Hall, and multipurpose community space in downtown Mosier on the North side of Highway 30. The building will house a fire station, city hall offices, and community meeting center. In addition to these core functions, the approximately 10,000 sf building will include a kitchen, restrooms, public works garage, storage, outdoor plaza, and parking. The estimated total project has escalated to \$8.4 million with rising costs. They anticipate needing an additional \$1.2 million and are still aiming to break ground in 2023.
4	<b>City of Maupin</b>	<b><u>Water System Improvements:</u></b> The City’s water source is a spring that feeds into the system with a single, above ground 6” pipe that is 40 years old, failing and vulnerable to natural hazards. Additionally, the City needs to update and resurface its reservoir and infrastructure in East Maupin to increase fire flows and open up additional land for development. Cost estimate for these improvements is approximately \$10 million.
5	<b>City of Dufur</b>	<b><u>Drinking Water System Improvements:</u></b> The City of Dufur currently gets fresh drinking water from a well that is not sufficient to support their community. To acquire adequate drinking water for community members the City will need to drill a new well, build sufficient water storage and construct a dedicated waterline. In addition, the city will be assessing the state of the current fresh water well and addressing what usage options are available. The cost estimate is \$5 million.

6	City of The Dalles, Klickitat County, CGCC	<b><u>Aviation Maintenance Training Hangar (CGCC, City of The Dalles, Klickitat County):</u></b> City of The Dalles and Klickitat County are co-applicants for a successful \$2.8 million EDA funding request to match a \$700,000 local commitment to support college training program hangar and industrial park development at Columbia Gorge Regional Airport. Cost escalation since EDA proposal was submitted two and a half years ago has resulted in a projected shortfall of \$1.9 million however. Klickitat County is seeking \$500,000 grant from Washington State Department of Commerce with Sen. Murray's office encouraging a congressionally directed spending request to resolve the balance as well as additional resources.
7	Wy'East Resource Conservation and Development	<b><u>Dufur Rural Innovation (DRI) Hub:</u></b> Wy'East RC&D has partnered with Bonneville Environmental Foundation, Forth, and Sustainable NW to establish the Dufur Rural Innovation (DRI) Hub. The DRI Hub will promote the use of electric farming equipment and vehicles in the area to support innovative agricultural practices. The Hub partners have received a congressionally directed spending allocation but are continuing to seek the final match to allow them to access the full \$1.5 million in federal funding. The estimated funding needed is \$200,000- \$500,000.
8	Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District	<b><u>Fifteenmile Managed Underground Water Storage:</u></b> Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District is looking at creating a managed underground water storage facility to counter the low stream flows and summer high temperatures in the Fifteenmile watershed. The District is moving forward with construction drawings and the current estimated build out costs at \$1 million to \$1.2 million.
9	Northern Wasco County Park and Recreation District	<b><u>Sorosis Park Redevelopment-Phase 2:</u></b> After the removal of the mature pine trees at the park, NWCPRD is planning significant improvements to the space to meet current and future needs. The next phase of this plan is to replace Tree Top Playground with a new play structure and additional shade structures around it. Estimated cost for the project is between \$700,000 and \$900,000 for this project with \$200,000 in local matching funds already identified.
10	Pine Grove Water District	<b><u>Pine Grove Water Source Development:</u></b> The Water District is moving through the process to seek funding for developing a new water resource to support this community in having a more resilient system that improves necessary fire flows in this fire prone area of the county. Total project cost is estimated at \$2.26 million.

**Priority Issues:**

- **Issue: Developable Land.** As communities across the County continue to develop what land is available and ready for investment, there is a need to focus on ensuring that areas within urban growth boundaries, urban area boundaries, or appropriate rural centers are ready for development. The City of The Dalles, Port, and EDC are collaborating on a Brownfield Assessment Program with funding from EPA to support property owners in understanding redevelopment challenges and opportunities and MCEDD has sought additional funding for

this program to continue after the initial grant is complete. Additionally, there is work being done in several communities focused on code and infrastructure updates that will allow for appropriate, additional development. As this development occurs and reduces the inventory of vacant or underutilized land, other next steps will be proactively explored with partners. Critical to this effort, the City of The Dalles is restarting discussions about a plan for the west side of the community and will be seeking to scope and find resources for this planning effort that will support thoughtful commercial, industrial, and residential development within The Dalles.

- **Issue: Columbia Gorge Childcare.** There continues to be a shortage of qualified, affordable childcare in the Columbia Gorge region, particularly in The Dalles and Wasco County. CGCC completed a feasibility study would be the first step in this process to identify potential partners, the physical scope, regulatory requirements, operational costs, and capital construction sources for a childcare center in The Dalles. The SBDC is also partnering with Child Care Partners to explore supporting childcare providers in key business planning efforts to make them more sustainable. These conversations and supports to grow childcare accessibility are critical to ensuring workforce participation from families.
- **Issue: Housing.** Housing prices have continued to be unaffordable for many in Wasco County. We have consistently heard from employers and real estate professionals that the challenges in access and affordability for residents and potential employees seeking to come to Wasco County have hindered businesses’ ability to grow. Better understanding this need and supporting community partners in opportunities to address it will impact access to a robust workforce moving forward.
- **Issue: Broadband.** Continued engagement around gaps in broadband service availability for communities across Wasco County and additional focus on funding resources at the State and Federal level will provide opportunities for shovel ready projects in the next few years. Continuing to focus on creative strategies to address access needs will support diverse businesses, educational access, and many more key services to create vibrant communities.

**Additional Projects Not Ranked:**

Wasco County	Kramer Field Complex
Port of The Dalles	Marina Dock Replacement
Port of The Dalles	Land Acquisition Fund
Mid-Columbia Medical Center	New Hospital Campus
The Dalles Art Center	Downtown Pocket Park
Tooley Water District	Tooley Well Repair or Replacement
City of The Dalles	Westside Area Plan
City of The Dalles	Safe Routes to School Sidewalk
City of The Dalles	Improv Getchel Building
Dufur School District	Ranger Tech-CTE Program
Dufur School District	School Based Health Center

City of Dufur	Streetscape Improvements
City of Dufur	Ambulance Replacement
Wasco County SWCD	Fish monitoring and irrigation loss incentives
City of Maupin	Maupin City Park Boat Ramp Remodel
City of Maupin	Wastewater Treatment Plant Redevelopment
City of Maupin	West Reservoir
City of Maupin	Legion Hall Improvements
City of Maupin	River Transit
City of Maupin	West Maupin Street Expansion Plan
City of Maupin	Mountain Fir Park Improvements
City of Maupin	White Water Park
Mosier Community School	School Renovation and Expansion
City of Mosier	Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvements
City of Mosier	Streetscape Improvements
City of Mosier	Emergency Well Replacement
Main Street Mosier	Skate Park Development
Wamic Water & Sanitary Authority	Wamic Wastewater System Replacement
Wasco Co SWCD + Juniper Flats Fire District	Fire Prevention and Protection
Tygh School Community Center	Building Improvements
Wasco County Fairboard	Facility Master Plan
Wamic Water & Sanitary Authority	Well # 1 Improvements Watershed
Wasco County SWCD	Assessments Countywide
White River Health District	Health Care Campus Improvements