

December 30, 2021

Priscilla Kittles  
U.S. Economic Development Administration  
401 West Peachtree Street, NW  
Suite 1820  
Atlanta, GA 30308

RE: Three Rivers Planning and Development District  
2021 CEDS update (ED16ATL3020017)

Dr. Ms. Kittles,

Enclosed is the 2021 update to the Three Rivers Planning & Development District (TRPDD) Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The yearly report was presented to our Board of Directors on December 20 and was approved. TRPDD does not require a resolution to be passed with each update. The enclosed update along with previous years and the original plan can be found on the Three Rivers' website at [www.trpdd.com/ceds](http://www.trpdd.com/ceds).

As always, Three Rivers would like to thank the U.S. Economic Development Administration for a wonderful partnership.

Sincerely,



Vernon R. Kelley, III  
Executive Director

**Three Rivers Planning & Development District serves as the fiscal and administrative agency for:**

Three Rivers Solid Waste Management Authority  
Three Rivers Area Agency on Aging (AAA)  
Three Rivers CDE, Inc.  
IMR, LLC

Three Rivers Community Investment, Inc.  
The Mississippi Partnership for Workforce Development  
GM&O Rails-to-Trails Recreational District of North Mississippi

Three Rivers Local Development Company, Inc.  
Mississippi Access to Care (MAC)  
Enhance Mississippi, LLC  
The PUL Alliance

# THREE RIVERS PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

FY 2021 CEDS ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION



EDA INVESTMENT NUMBER: ED16ATL3020017

SUBMITTED DECEMBER X, 2021

Three Rivers Planning & Development District  
Post Office Box 690  
75 South Main Street  
Pontotoc, MS 38863-0690  
Telephone: (662) 489-2415  
Fax: (662) 489-6815  
Point of Contact: Cristen Bland  
Email: [cbland@trpdd.com](mailto:cbland@trpdd.com)

In carrying out its designated purpose, Three Rivers Planning and Development District (TRPDD) promotes, administers, and interprets a variety of programs that fall under the jurisdiction of several state and federal agencies. Throughout FY 2021, TRPDD has worked with its numerous partners to implement the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the region.

Listed below are the vital projects from the current Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for TRPDD:

1. Regional Infrastructure Enhancement Initiative
2. Regional Economic Growth & Diversification Initiative
3. Regional Capacity Development Initiative

There are no changes in the technical components of the CEDS as part of this year's performance review. The following narrative provides information related to CEDS implementation between October 1, 2020 and September 30, 2021.

## REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE INITIATIVE

As stated in the CEDS, regional infrastructure is vital to economic development activities in TRPDD. The regional infrastructure initiative seeks to improve infrastructure within the eight-county region in an effort to facilitate job retention and creation as well as significant private investment. The initiative involves analyzing current and future infrastructure needs, securing funding for necessary projects, and implementing worthwhile measures and activities in order to promote further economic growth and development at the local and regional levels.

Since October 1, 2020, TRPDD's Economic & Community Development Division helped local governments and other entities in its eight-county region secure over \$9.8 million in grant funding and loans for infrastructure-related projects. The aforementioned grant funding helped leverage more than \$1.6 million in additional investment from the public and private sectors as well as retaining 34 jobs as well as creating more than 125 new jobs.

Furthermore, Three Rivers prepared Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Public Facilities grants for eight municipalities. The Town of Plantersville was awarded \$450,000 for sewer lagoon improvements. The Town of Shannon was awarded \$450,000 for the expansion of their natural gas line. The towns of Calhoun City (\$449,835), Ecu (\$450,000), Guntown (\$450,000), and Pontotoc were all made awards for improvements for their sewer systems. The Town of Pittsboro was awarded \$450,000 to make improvements to their water system. The Town of Woodland was awarded \$450,000 to make Americans with Disabilities Act improvements to their health clinic. Along with the CDBG Public Facilities grants, Three Rivers was able to help secure a CDBG Economic Development grant. The grant was awarded to Union County (\$1,500,000) to help make improvements to Fusion Furniture's building and will retain 34 jobs while creating 125 new ones.

TRPDD also helped secure almost \$1.45 million in Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) funds for various infrastructure projects across the area. One of the projects funded through ARC is for the addition of new water and sewer lines to the Pontotoc County Industrial Park at Magee Drive. An elevated water tank also will be built with this project. ARC also allocated additional funds to two previously awarded projects. One of those was for road improvements for Ashley Furniture Industries and the second was to the City of Baldwin – an EDA funded project – for their natural gas line expansion. Both projects had to accept bids that were over original budgets due to supply shortages because of COVID-19. Additional ARC funds were granted to help alleviate the stress the overages caused for each project.

A comprehensive list of grant/loan awards for FY 2021 is included as an addendum to this report. The aforementioned infrastructure projects are included within the spreadsheet along with any non-infrastructure projects awarded between 10/1/20 and 9/30/21.

## REGIONAL ECONOMIC GROWTH & DIVERSIFICATION INITIATIVE

The regional economic growth and diversification initiative seeks to strengthen and diversify the regional economic base. The focus of this particular initiative is driven more on overall economic growth and diversification rather than infrastructure and capacity development. The initiative seeks to implement programs and activities aimed at strengthening and diversifying the local and regional economies, especially within new and emerging sectors focused on high-skill, high-tech occupations. Entrepreneurship, research, and innovation are hallmarks of this vital project as TRPDD and others seek to advance regional employment and income.

Toyota Motor Manufacturing Mississippi, Inc. (TMMMI) and its suppliers as well as other non-automotive companies have helped offset job losses that occurred due to globalization and the various economic troubles that have plagued the U.S. in recent years. The region stands ready for potential re-shoring opportunities and other positive economic impacts as companies seek to expand their existing operations or locate within the region. TMMMI as well as other companies requiring higher skills and paying increased wages have helped diversify the regional economic base and have fostered positive impacts that will be felt for years to come.

In addition to providing grant writing and administration services on numerous economic and community development projects throughout the region, TRPDD also serves as the controlling entity for Three Rivers CDE, Inc. (TRCDE), which is a certified community development entity (CDE). These allocations will be used to target programs in distressed areas by infusing capital into eligible Census tracts.

Three Rivers also continues to learn about Opportunity Zones and look for projects to take full advantage of the program.

The EDA-funded business incubators within the region continue to promote small business and entrepreneurial growth. The Oxford Enterprise Center and the Renasant Center for IDEAs offer quality business incubation programs and the Community Development Foundation continues to market available space constructed as part of Phase II of the Center for IDEAs project. The new

Phase II facility in Tupelo's Fairpark District serves as a key regional resource and has provided much-needed office and conference space as well as the added incubator space noted above.

TRPDD's loan division provides a selection of small business loan programs available to start-up and expanding businesses in an effort to promote economic development. Between 10/1/20 and 9/30/21, TRPDD approved and closed a total of 29 loans through its loan programs. The 29 loans totaled \$6,939,950 and will help to improve public infrastructure and provide short- and long-term financing in several communities.

Three Rivers was also awarded \$3,630,000 through EDA CARES Act funds to extend a lifeline to major employers in the regions so they might alleviate the detrimental impacts of the pandemic and plan for changes that will enable them to withstand future shocks. As of November 2021, only \$100,000 remains uncommitted.

Three Rivers also was awarded \$4,500,000 through EDA CARES Act competitive round of funding, through November 2021, \$2,944,758 has been closed or committed to area employers.

Three Rivers Planning and Development District (TRPDD) has received a \$600,000 Brownfield Coalition Assessment Grant from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to serve three coalition communities, the City of New Albany, the City of Pontotoc, and the City of Tupelo, as well as the larger Three Rivers footprint. With these funds, we are able to conduct required environmental assessments on properties suspected of having some level of environmental contamination, thus clearing properties for sale and reuse when owners may not be financially able to do so and thus, develop the property and contribute to the community through redevelopment of the property. Cleanup and redevelopment of brownfield properties lead to 5% to 15% increase in property value for properties that are up to 3/4 mile from the site, recoup public investment within about three years, lead to increases in local tax revenue, and protect farms and countryside from sprawl development.

In combination with other funding sources such as the Mississippi Economic Redevelopment Act, Mississippi Brownfields Voluntary Cleanup and Redevelopment Incentives Act, Mississippi Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program, Mississippi Department of Revenue Business Incentive Tax Credits, and others, this program can create a mechanism for the mitigation or removal of the risk of exposure to contaminants, eliminating any further impact to human health and the environment. By decreasing overall environmental risk, the region can respond to adverse health outcomes by improving access to greenspace and healthy living and establish development which is key to retaining a young, diverse, and educated population. Employment opportunities on redeveloped sites will create a multiplier effect of increased investment, reduced commuting time, and green recreational use that reduces overall emissions and exposure.

## REGIONAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

The regional capacity development initiative focuses on education, workforce training, and quality of life measures such as health care, housing, public transit, culture, and recreation. The initiative seeks to improve regional capacities by advancing high-quality educational measures

and training programs, especially within emerging economic sectors, as well as improving the availability of quality health care, housing, public transportation, and cultural opportunities. Innovation is a primary component of this initiative as stakeholders strive to enhance the regional knowledge and talent bases by implementing new techniques and programs aimed at improving regional education and training capabilities.

TRPDD, the Create Foundation, and several other organizations in northeast Mississippi have been spearheading efforts to improve the region's educational attainment. Positive steps have been made and it is hoped this initiative's success will be evident via increased educational attainment throughout the region in the coming years.

TRPDD is particularly proud of its tuition assistance program (TAP) that allows graduating high school seniors to receive tuition assistance for four regular semesters at a community college. The ten-year, \$250,000.00 commitment from Three Rivers was completed in FY 2019. TAP required a public/private match equal to the lesser of 4:1 or the equivalent of what one mill would produce in the participating county. TAP is administered by TRPDD at no cost to the participating counties. Each county located within TRPDD either participates in TRPDD's TAP or has a locally-established tuition assistance program.

During the reporting period, TRPDD continued in its role as the fiscal/administrative agent of The Mississippi Partnership, a 27-county workforce area designated to carry out the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014. One-stop centers have been established throughout the referenced workforce area to provide services to adults and dislocated workers. At the centers, eligible individuals receive appropriate services such as case management, counseling, and training to assist them in obtaining employment and local employers benefit because the facilities help them find suitable workers.

In addition to the aforementioned adult services, various program providers in The Mississippi Partnership's 27 counties serve economically disadvantaged youth with one or more additional barriers. Youth activities include tutoring, paid internship opportunities, adult mentoring, occupational skills training, and follow-up services.

In July 2020 MS House Bill 1795 was passed and deemed Three Rivers Planning & Development District as the administrative and fiscal agent for \$16,594,154 CARES Act funds for the purpose of helping the local community colleges meet needs arising as a result of COVID-19 pandemic. Three Rivers distributed these funds to East Mississippi, Itawamba, Northeast Mississippi, and Northwest Mississippi Community Colleges for the purpose of purchasing equipment necessary to increase the capacity to support training programs in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and to provide short-term training for individuals who have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. At the writing of this report, the community colleges have obligated \$8,910,186 to increase their training capacity and \$410,492 to provide short-term training to 385 individuals affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. All of these funds must be spent by December 30, 2020.

In July 2020 MS House Bill 1795 was passed and deemed Three Rivers Planning & Development District through the Mississippi Partnership Workforce Investment Area was

designated as the administrative and fiscal agent for \$17,994,072 CARES Act funds for the purpose of helping local community colleges meet needs arising as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Three Rivers distributed these funds to East Mississippi, Itawamba, Northeast Mississippi, and Northwest Mississippi Community Colleges for the purpose of purchasing equipment necessary to increase the capacity to support training programs as well as provide short-term training for individuals who have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The community colleges obligated \$13,711,348 to increase their training capacity and \$1,032,788 to provide short-term training to 385 individuals. These funds had an obligation deadline of December 30, 2020. Due to supply chain issues, the community colleges were not able to use all of the funds set aside and deobligated the unspent funds.

As noted in previous CEDS Annual Performance Reports, EDA's investment in Itawamba Community College's WIN Manufacturing Solutions Center has helped northeast Mississippi become a prime location for industrial growth and development. EDA's financial participation has enabled Itawamba Community College to provide enhanced workforce development training and assistance within a preeminent one-stop workforce development center. The WIN Manufacturing Solutions Center will play a vital role as TRPDD and its multitude of partners promote regional growth and development initiatives moving forward.

Finally, TRPDD's Community and Economic Development Division works hand-in-hand with local governments, non-profit organizations, and other entities to secure funding for worthwhile community development projects aimed at enhancing quality of life throughout the region. The Division coordinates federal, state, and local funds to implement initiatives that benefit local communities as well as the region as a whole.

## ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

The concept of economic resilience is a common theme throughout TRPDD's CEDS as the organization and its economic development partners seek to enhance the region's ability to avoid, withstand, and recover from economic shifts and natural disasters. Sustainable growth and development practices are key components in planning initiatives throughout the region and the CEDS offers similar integration and plan consistency at the local, state, and federal levels. TRPDD's CEDS is consistent with planning mechanisms such as hazard mitigation plans and local comprehensive plans as well as local and state workforce investment strategies, which seek to increase the regional knowledge and skills bases to facilitate growth in new and emerging sectors.

As noted in the SWOT analysis, turbulent economic conditions at the national and international levels also play a significant role in the regional economy, which is evident by the increased unemployment that occurred during the most recent recession. Businesses throughout the region operate within a global marketplace and TRPDD is not immune to domestic and foreign issues well outside of northeast Mississippi. The region must seek to become more resilient to national and global economic issues in order to reduce the negative impacts said problems have on local and regional economies.

The three goals identified in TRPDD's CEDS go hand-in-hand with the concept of improving economic resilience as they seek to enhance development and enhance the regional infrastructure to increase economic competitiveness (Goal 1), increase regional job opportunities and income through economic diversification, increased competitiveness, enhanced entrepreneurship, etc. (Goal 2), and strengthen the capacity of the region to compete in the global economy through enhanced workforce skills, increased educational attainment, etc. (Goal 3). Economic resilience has been a critical component in TRPDD's CEDS for several years and will continue to be a key element in future CEDS cycles as TRPDD and the CEDS Committee seek to address the region's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

TRPDD was awarded an EDA CARES Act Supplemental Planning Grant, the performance period of which is two (2) years, beginning July 1, 2020. This \$400,000.00 award enables TRPDD to prevent, prepare for, and respond to economic injury to the region resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. TRPDD is utilizing this grant to expand organizational capacity and convene stakeholders for the purpose of managing the economic disaster and collaboratively increase regional resiliency.

TRPDD has hired a disaster recovery coordinator to serve as the regional point person for local experts and assist in monitoring changes in the area economy, identify development opportunities, and support partners in recovery efforts. Additionally, TRPDD has subcontracted with nine (9) economic development organizations to serve as economic recovery coordinators. These subcontracted organizations collectively represent all counties in the district and have a track record of success in their communities. These organizations will share local trends and data with TRPDD and one another, pass along useful information to constituents, and meet as a group regularly to discuss best practices. Four meetings were held during FY 2021. A total of seven formal meetings have taken place since the beginning of the period of performance, along with ongoing project specific meetings. Topics covered in these meetings include: what data reported since the beginning of the pandemic indicates about the status of the regional recovery; federal and state loan programs that could benefit communities during this disaster; opportunities to help retailers adjust their marketing for this moment; and how economic development organizations can help resolve obstacles businesses have faced when trying to access government assistance. These meetings have produced information and guidance that TRPDD can use to prioritize projects and guide efforts to build resiliency.

## PUBLIC/PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION

The development of TRPDD's EDA-approved CEDS was a collaborative effort involving both the public and private sectors. Similarly, CEDS implementation involves coordination between TRPDD and other economic development stakeholders as they seek to implement the strategies identified to promote significant job creation and private investment throughout the region. Public and private sector representatives from throughout the region understand the importance of a collaborative economic development approach and have helped implement several successful strategies and initiatives over the years.



TRPDD communicates with its economic development partners on a continual basis in order to learn more about regional needs and projects. The communication yields immeasurable benefits and the interactions provide excellent forums for innovative ideas and strategies. TRPDD partners with local governments, economic development organizations, businesses, institutions of higher learning, and various other entities to promote positive regional outcomes and the organization's collaborative approach continued throughout FY 2021.

TRPDD's 11-member CEDS strategy committee provides a wealth of knowledge regarding the state of the region and their continuous participation is vital to CEDS implementation. The committee members work in the trenches to foster positive economic outcomes every single day and their collective knowledge and experience are vital in regards to measuring the region's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The committee interacts with the public and private sectors on a continual basis in order to address regional economic development issues and their vast networks enable them to provide firsthand knowledge of where the region stands as well as what direction it needs to go in order to remain competitive in the global marketplace.

TRPDD will continue to seek participation from the public and private sectors throughout the five-year CEDS cycle. TRPDD has been a proponent of collaborative economic development for years and partners with the public and private sectors in order to promote positive economic impacts within its eight-county region. Since the submission of the CEDS in 2017, TRPDD and the CEDS Committee have partnered with the public and private sectors to implement the strategies and initiatives identified within the document. The collaborative approach has been vital and continued participation will be vital in order to facilitate regional growth opportunities.

The CEDS Committee has determined changes to the technical components of the CEDS are not necessary at this time. However, TRPDD and the CEDS Committee will continue to facilitate participation from the public and private sectors throughout the remainder of the five-year implementation period in order to ensure the document remains viable. If technical changes are deemed necessary prior to the approval of a new CEDS in 2021, TRPDD and the CEDS Committee will make certain the applicable EDA rules and regulations are followed.

Please note TRPDD has created a page on its website for the CEDS and provides visitors contact information in case anyone has any questions or comments related to the document. The page enables the CEDS to be viewed at any time and helps facilitate continued involvement by the public and private sectors.

# ADDENDUM

APPLICANT	PROJECT CATEGORY	PROJECT NAME / DESC.	FUNDING SOURCE(S)	GRANT AMOUNT	LOAN AMOUNT	COMPANY INVESTMENT	LOCAL INVESTMENT	OTHER INVESTMENT	TOTAL PROJECT COST	JOBS CREATED	JOBS RETAINED
Pontotoc County	Site / Road Improvements	SAAW 2018	ARC	\$ 999,900.00			\$ 350,000.00	\$ 650,000.00	\$ 1,999,900.00		
Bruce	Equipment	Police Camera	USDA RD	\$ 19,740.00			\$ 6,580.00		\$ 26,320.00		
Verona	Vehicle	Dump Truck	USDA RD	\$ 50,000.00			\$ 36,500.00		\$ 86,500.00		
Itawamba Rail Auth	Rail Improvments		MDOT	\$ 297,000.00			\$ 3,000.00		\$ 300,000.00		
TRPDD	RLF	CARES ACT Competititve	EDA	\$ 4,500,000.00					\$ 4,500,000.00		
Vardaman	Equipment	Fire PPE	USDA RD	\$ 27,721.53			\$ 9,240.51		\$ 36,962.04		
Lafayette County	Site Prep / Equipment	Shooting Range	LWCF	\$ 227,550.00			\$ 227,550.00		\$ 445,101.00		
Plantersville	Sewer	Lagoon	CDBG PF	\$ 450,000.00					\$ 450,000.00		
Shannon	Gas Improvments	Gas System expansion	CDBG PF	\$ 450,000.00					\$ 450,000.00		
Houston	Vehicles	Fire CV Police	USDA RD	\$ 50,000.00			\$ 51,585.61		\$ 101,585.61		
Ecru	Sewer	Sewer	CDBG PF	\$ 450,000.00					\$ 450,000.00		
Guntown	Sewer	Sewer	CDBG PF	\$ 450,000.00					\$ 450,000.00		
Pittsboro	Water	Water	CDBG PF	\$ 450,000.00					\$ 450,000.00		
Union County	Public Building	Fusion Furniture	CDBG	\$ 1,500,000.00		\$ 1,700,000.00	\$ 150,000.00		\$ 3,672,000.00	125	34
VIP Luxury Seating	Equipment / Retrofit	VIP Investment	ACE	\$ 150,000.00		\$ 180,000.00			\$ 330,000.00	100	
Aberdeen	Recreation	Recreation	CAPLOAN		\$ 250,000.00				\$ 250,000.00		
Aberdeen	Public Building	Holley Roof / New Business	SMLPC	\$ 119,996.00			\$ 29,998.00		\$ 149,994.00		
Aberdeen	Vehicles	Police Car	USDA	\$ 13,400.00					\$ 13,400.00		
Pontotoc County	Site Improvements	Extension Office	SMLPC	\$ 93,782.40			\$ 23,445.60		\$ 117,228.00		
Houston	Public Building	Shannon Building	SMLPC	\$ 144,000.00			\$ 36,000.00		\$ 180,000.00		
Fulton	Sidewalks	Sidewalk Improvements	SMLPC	\$ 142,080.00			\$ 35,520.00		\$ 177,600.00		
Algoma	Road Improvements	Downtown Improvements	SMLPC	\$ 150,000.00			\$ 26,100.00		\$ 176,100.00		
Vardaman	Road Improvements	Douglass Circle	SMLPC	\$ 100,000.00			\$ 10,000.00		\$ 110,000.00		
Houston	Equipment	Tractor / Bushog	USDA	\$ 48,840.00			\$ 39,960.00		\$ 88,000.00		
Pontotoc	Public Building	Courthouse	MDAH	\$ 239,753.00			\$ 47,950.60		\$ 287,703.60		
ICC	Workforce / Tech		ARC	\$ 200,000.00			\$ 254,764.00		\$ 454,764.00		
Lee County	Rail /Water	Ashley additional	DIP	\$ 250,000.00		*	*		\$ 250,000.00	*	
Lee County	Equipment	District 4 Fire Equipment	USDA	\$ 50,000.00			\$ 25,780.00		\$ 75,780.00		
TRSWMA	Planning	Solid Waste Plan update	MDEQ	\$ 45,000.00			\$ 45,000.00		\$ 90,000.00		
Itawamba Rail Auth	Rail Improvments	Rail Improvements	MDOT	\$ 396,000.00			\$ 4,000.00		\$ 400,000.00		
Woodland	Health	Clinic ADA Improvements	CDBG PF	\$ 450,000.00					\$ 450,000.00		
Pontotoc	Sewer	Unserved Sewer	CDBG PF	\$ 600,000.00			*		\$ 600,000.00		
Pontotoc	Sewer	Unserved Sewer	CAPLOAN		\$ 884,259.00		*		\$ 884,259.00		
Calhoun City	Sewer	Sewer Improvements	CDBG	\$ 449,835.00					\$ 449,835.00		
Aberdeen	Vehicles	Police Cars	USDA	\$ 26,800.00					\$ 26,800.00		
Pontotoc County	Road	Ashley T Todd Additional	ARC	\$ 47,272.00			\$ 47,272.00		\$ 94,544.00		
Baldwyn	Gas Improvments	Baldwyn Gas Additional	ARC	\$ 400,000.00					\$ 400,000.00		
Pontotoc County	Road	Ashley T Todd Additional	MDOT	\$ 60,000.00			*		\$ 60,000.00		
Aberdeen	Equipment	Radios / Body Cameras	MS Homeland Security	\$ 102,620.00					\$ 102,620.00		