

# ***Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2019***

## Executive Summary

What is the Old Colony Planning Council Economic Development District?

The Old Colony Planning Council Economic Development District (OCPC EDD) consists of the seventeen communities of the Old Colony Planning Council. They include the City of Brockton and the towns of Abington, Avon, Bridgewater, Duxbury, East Bridgewater, Easton, Halifax, Hanover, Hanson, Kingston, Pembroke, Plymouth, Plympton, Stoughton, West Bridgewater and Whitman. The Town of Easton is in Bristol County and the Towns of Avon and Stoughton are in Norfolk County. The rest of the communities are in Plymouth County.

What is a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)?

The intention of The Old Colony Planning Council Economic Development District Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Program is to create an economic development guideline for the District.

The mission of the federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) “is to lead the federal economic development agenda by promoting innovation and competitiveness, preparing American regions for growth and success in the worldwide economy.”

Why is the CEDS program necessary?

In order for a region to participate in funding opportunities offered by the EDA, a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Program must be implemented. The Old Colony Planning Council (OCPC) is the agency responsible for supporting the CEDS Program in our region. EDA regulations require that the CEDS Program create a written plan that analyzes the regional economy and serves as a guide for establishing and implementing regional goals and objectives, and identifying investment priorities to meet those goals and objectives.

The OCPC Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy is crafted with feedback from the OCPC CEDS Committee, the OCPC Executive Committee and the general public. In order to receive feedback from the general public the draft CEDS chapters are posted on the OCPC website and distributed to a wide range of community officials.

## **A. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The average annual unemployment rate for the region for the year 2018 was 3.4%. The average unemployment rate for the City of Brockton in 2018 was 4.6%, the highest in the District. The annual unemployment rate for the state of Massachusetts in 2018 was 3.5%. The 2017 Unemployment Rate (5-Year ACS) for the City of Brockton was 8.8% versus

the U.S. rate for the same time period of 6.6%. There are pockets of distress in the region, and there has been a continuing shift from higher paying manufacturing employment to a more service and retail-based economy.

The District's economic strategy, as expressed by the goals, objectives, action plan and recommended economic development projects found in this report, focuses primarily on those pockets of distress that have lagged behind the state and abutting regions.

The District's experience is best summarized by the following findings of the Old Colony Planning Council Economic Development District Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee (OCPC EDD CEDS) as a result of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) process.

- 1. OUR AREA HAS NOT HAD A COMPLETE RECOVERY FROM THE MOST RECENT ECONOMIC DOWNTURN.** The City of Brockton continues to have the highest yearly average unemployment rates in the region. Agriculture dependant communities such as Plympton have suffered job losses due to the decline of the cranberry industry. The City of Brockton has the highest home foreclosure rates in Massachusetts. The planned closure of the Entergy Pilgrim Nuclear Power Plant in Plymouth will result in a loss of many well-paying skilled jobs as well as an important source of electrical generating capacity in our region.
- 2. THE DISTRICT'S ECONOMY HAS SHIFTED OVER THE YEARS SO THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY MUST SHIFT ACCORDINGLY.** In recent years' wholesale and retail trade and the service sector have grown dramatically in terms of regional employment while the manufacturing and agricultural sectors continue to decline. These changes mean that local and regional economic development strategies must continue to be reviewed.
- 3. THE ROLE OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS IN THE REGION MUST EVOLVE AND ADAPT TO CHANGING TIMES.** OCPC's role must focus on building and strengthening regional partnerships among all parties involved in economic development. Links between education and training, financing, site development and promotion, quality of life, and economic resiliency issues deserve equal consideration.
- 4. EDUCATION AND JOB TRAINING IS OUR MOST IMPORTANT NEED.** Job training to meet the needs of present and future employers must be an essential part of the regional economic development strategy.
- 5. SMALL BUSINESSES REMAIN THE FOUNDATION OF THE REGIONAL ECONOMY.** Over two-thirds of the businesses in the District have ten employees or less. The regional economic development strategy must recognize the needs of those businesses and seek to meet them.

6. **TRANSPORTATION PLANNING IS SIGNIFICANT TO THE ECONOMY OF THE REGION AND GOOD PLANNING IS ESSENTIAL.** Highway, rail, public transit and airport improvements will ease the mobility of people and goods and further regional economic growth.
7. **INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS ARE CRUCIAL TO THE REGION.** Wastewater, sewer, waste disposal, transportation and telecommunication-technology related improvements are vital to the present and future economic health of the region.
8. **ECONOMIC RESILIENCY IS IMPORTANT TO THE REGION.** This is an area's ability to withstand, prevent or quickly recover from major disruptions to its underlying economic base.
9. **HOMELESSNESS IN THE REGION, PARTICULARLY IN THE CITY OF BROCKTON AND THE TOWN OF PLYMOUTH IS AN ISSUE THAT HAS GROWN IN THE PAST DECADE AND ONE THAT IF LEFT UNCHECKED WILL IMPACT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY AS WELL.** It is an issue that can and should be addressed in part by economic development programs.
10. **THE OPIOD CRISIS IS BEING ADDRESSED.** In 2008 the City of Brockton in partnership with High Point Treatment Center was awarded the MassCALL2 grant with the primary objective of saving the lives of those in the community of Brockton suffering from opiate addiction and to create awareness about opioid overdose prevention. Today, the coalition has expanded to become part of the Brockton Area Prevention Collaborative, encompassing the towns of Bridgewater, Brockton, East Bridgewater, Hanson, Whitman and the non-district town of Rockland as a regional approach.
11. **SUPPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES THAT HELP TO RETAIN, EXPAND, OR DIVERSIFY THE REGION'S BUSINESSES.** Target recruitment activities toward businesses that provide family wage jobs.
12. **FOSTER A POSITIVE BUSINESS CLIMATE** by encouraging region-wide and statewide collaboration amongst business, government, education, labor, military, workforce development, and other nonprofit organizations.
13. **SUPPORT ESTABLISHED AND EMERGING INDUSTRY CLUSTERS** that export goods and services, import capital, and have growth potential.
14. **LEVERAGE THE REGION'S POSITION AS A GATEWAY** by supporting businesses, ports, and agencies involved in trade activities.

15. **FOSTER A SUPPORTATIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR BUSINESS STARTUPS**, small businesses and locally owned businesses to help them continue to prosper.
16. **ENSURE THE EFFICIENT FLOW OF PEOPLE, GOODS, SERVICES, AND INFORMATION** in and through the region with infrastructure investments, particularly in and connecting designated centers, to meet the distinctive needs of a regional economy.
17. **ENCOURAGE THE PRIVATE, PUBLIC, AND NONPROFIT SECTORS TO INCORPORATE ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY** into their practices.

**B. FACTS ABOUT THE OLD COLONY PLANNING COUNCIL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT (EDD)**

- Population – Between the 2000 and 2010 Census, the region had a higher population growth rate than the state. (3.8% vs. 3.1%). During this period, the six communities that showed the greatest percentage of growth were Abington (9.45%), Plymouth (9.22%), and Hanson (7.52%) Kingston (7.21%) and Plympton (6.94%).
- Agriculture - The OCPC EDD is home to one of the largest cranberry producing areas in the country.
- Zoning – All of the EDD’s communities have zoning, with bylaws constructed around residential, commercial and industrial categories. Almost ninety percent of the district’s land is zoned for residential use, with higher densities permitted in the City of Brockton.
- Transportation – The region is served by a network of highways and local roads as well as three commuter railroad lines: the Boston to Plymouth/Kingston rail line, the Boston to Middleboro line and the Stoughton branch. The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) provides commuter rail service on all three lines, serving 9 of 17 OCPC communities. CSX Transportation provides freight service on the Middleboro line and the Stoughton branch.
- The Brockton Area Transit Authority (BAT), Greater Attleboro Regional Transit Authority (GATRA), Plymouth and Boston Street Railway and the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) provide regional bus service. BAT’s modified “pulse” system with most routes departing from a downtown terminal makes Brockton the most transit-accessible point in the region.

- Inter Regional bus service is offered by private companies. Most of this is orientated to Boston.
- Major trucking firms serve the region. Most firms serve Massachusetts and other New England states.
- Water transportation is available through the modern, well-equipped Port of Boston operated by the Massachusetts Port Authority (MASSPORT). Service is also available from Plymouth to the Cape and islands
- Air transportation is available at General Edward Lawrence Logan International Airport in Boston and at the Plymouth and Hanson airports in the District. Logan provides extensive passenger service, airfreight service and general aviation facilities. Plymouth Airport provides fixed base services accommodating aircraft used for business, recreation and public safety. The Massachusetts State Police uses this airport as the headquarters of their air wing. The airport is home to twenty-seven aviation orientated private businesses employing more than 230 persons. Cranland Airport in Hanson is a seasonal airport that is used by recreational aircraft.
- Recreation – The OCPC EDD has many recreation areas including three state parks and forests (Ames Nowell State Park in Abington, Borderland State Park in Easton and Myles Standish State Forest in Plymouth), 20 golf courses, and two amateur/collegiate baseball teams (the Brockton Rox and the Plymouth Pilgrims). Many district communities sponsor active recreation programs for adults and children.
- Museums and Cultural Attractions – The district has many cultural attractions including the Brockton Historical Society Museums, the Fuller Craft Museum in the Brockton Symphony Orchestra, Campanelli Stadium, all in Brockton, the Children’s Museum in Easton, the Shovel Town Cultural District in Easton, Plymouth Philharmonic Orchestra, Plimouth Plantation, Plymouth Rock, Pilgrim Hall and Mayflower II all in Plymouth. Many district communities have local historical societies.
- Early History – The district is a site of Native American history and culture. The Wampanoag Indian Tribe occupied this land long before the Pilgrims landed here in 1620 and evidence of this civilization can be found throughout the district.
- In 2010, the OCPC EDD exceeded the state percentage of the population that has completed high school (92.6% versus 89%). In 2010 however, only two District communities, the towns of Duxbury and Easton exceeded the state average of those who have completed four years of college.

