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**Purchase Area Development District
Disaster Resiliency Plan
Resolution**

WHEREAS, the Purchase Area Development District is one of fifteen Area Development Districts within the Commonwealth of Kentucky; and

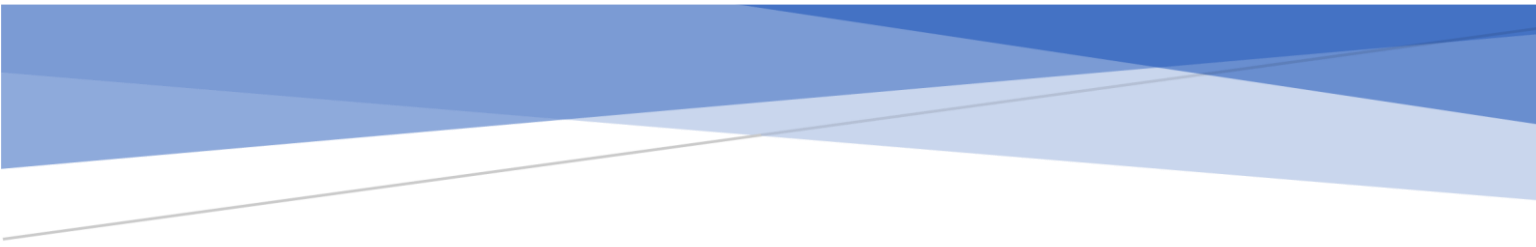
WHEREAS, the Kentucky Area Development Districts in coordination with the Department for Local Government and the Economic Development Administration, engaged in a Commonwealth-wide community based, strategic planning process; and

WHEREAS, the Purchase Area Development District completed a Disaster Resiliency Plan; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Purchase Area Development District Board of Directors adopt the Fiscal Year 2022 Purchase Disaster Resiliency Plan.

 10/24/2022
Kenny Wilson, Chairman

 10/24/2022
Todd Cooper, Secretary



DISASTER RESILIENCY PLAN

Purchase Area Development District

Disaster Resiliency Plan

In response to COVID-19, a disaster resiliency plan is in process for the area of hazard mitigation. Hazard mitigation is continuous action to reduce or eliminate the long-term risk to human life and property from hazards. The Disaster Resiliency Plan (DRP) was created by the Purchase Area Development District (PADD) to address the recovery and resiliency efforts that can help the region withstand and avoid future economic shocks. This project was made possible by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) and a Joint Funding Agreement with the Department for Local Government (DLG); and funded by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act).

The purpose is to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the coronavirus pandemic and assist with the resulting economic injury that occurred due to the virus. The COVID-19 pandemic was addressed in the 2020 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and the 2023 Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) update where it was listed as a threat to the region, and this Disaster Resiliency Plan is supplemental to that update. The CEDS mentioned some of the impacts COVID had on many aspects of life in the region, but this plan will go into more detail. This plan also addresses short-term and long-term approaches to rebuild resilient and sustainable communities throughout the PADD region.

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Executive Summary

The Purchase Area Development District represents an eight-county region in western Kentucky serving as the focal point of federal, state, and local partnership for enhancing the quality of life in the region. PADD has received funding as a part of COVID-19 relief for the creation of this plan. This plan will be tied to the Regional CEDS and HMP and will work to address the economic impacts of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

At the present moment the COVID-19 pandemic continues to have an ever-changing impact on health, economic, and social in the PADD region. As a response to the pandemic, this document assesses the broad impacts the pandemic has had on the region and the way it has changed it. It addresses strategies, plans, and funding options to mitigate the effects of the pandemic.

This document sets out to gather public input on the effects of the pandemic. Surveys were sent to community members from various sectors (educators, first responders, public health directors, economic developers, and local officials) that represent the area. The input from these sectors helped develop an analysis of the overall effect of the pandemic on the region. Each sector was questioned about the pandemic's effect on their organization and operations and in what types of assistance they need to help combat the ill-effects of the pandemic. Specifically:

- Educators had to learn more creative ways to host virtual learning, although many had issues with home connectivity and parent/student participation.
- Public Health Directors had to handle staffing and PPE supply issues while adhering to the COVID-19 safety guidelines.
- Economic Developers navigated temporary and permanent business closures, manufacturing slowdowns, and supply chain issues.
- Local Officials managed telecommuting issues while having to cut services and adjust financial budgets.

The input from these groups and individuals helped develop an analysis of the overall effect of the pandemic on the region. It revealed the ways that the pandemic has and has not changed the various areas of life and allowed for the representatives to give input about how to best move forward. Research was conducted to supplement the input received from stakeholders to further understand the impact the pandemic has had on the region and the ways things have changed.

Ten categories are analyzed: Economy, Business and Industry, Workforce, Education, Healthcare, Tourism, Government, Community Services and Events, Transportation, and Infrastructure. Recovery strategies are short-term changes and actions to help with the immediate improvement, such as CARES Act projects. The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) focuses on resiliency. Resiliency strategies are long-term changes and actions to lessen the impact of future pandemics or other disasters.

Hazard Specific Plan:

- Conduct risk assessments to evaluate where populations, infrastructure, and essential facilities are vulnerable to hazards.
- Engage local, state and federal partners in what are the most efficient and effective strategies to combat current hazards and vulnerabilities.
- Provide technical assistance and training to encourage local partners to implement strategies.
- Develop a long-term prevention plan for future COVID-19 related/similar disasters.

The plan then lays out the various funding options available to the region. They include the Coronavirus Relief Fund for Local Governments, FEMA Public Assistance Program, Small Business Administration Programs, USDA COVID-19 Federal Resources, COVID-19 Business Relief Program, and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). A resource directory and a summary of these programs is in this document.

Introduction

In December of 2019, an unfamiliar respiratory disease began infecting residents in Wuhan, China. By January 2020 it had become apparent there had been an outbreak of a novel coronavirus strain in China. The World Health Organization officially recognized the outbreak and the virus began spreading to other countries. It quickly became clear that that the coronavirus strain, officially SARS-CoV-2 and colloquially COVID-19, was on the path to becoming a pandemic. A pandemic is a disease outbreak that has a reach across the globe, affecting a significant population.

On January 21st the United States recorded its first case of the virus and on February 13th the United States had recorded its 15th confirmed case of the virus; this is the same date the director of the CDC warned of imminent community transmission that will linger beyond the current season. On February 26th the first case of local transmission was reported in the United States and three days later the first reported death from the virus in the United States was confirmed. As the virus continued to spread across the United States and the effects upon the national economy became known, Kentucky reported its first confirmed case of the virus on March 6th. Below, Figure 1 shows the seven day average of reported cases since February 2020 and Figure 2 shows the seven day average of reported cases since April 2020.

Figure 1

United States Seven Day Average of Reported Cases Since February of 2020

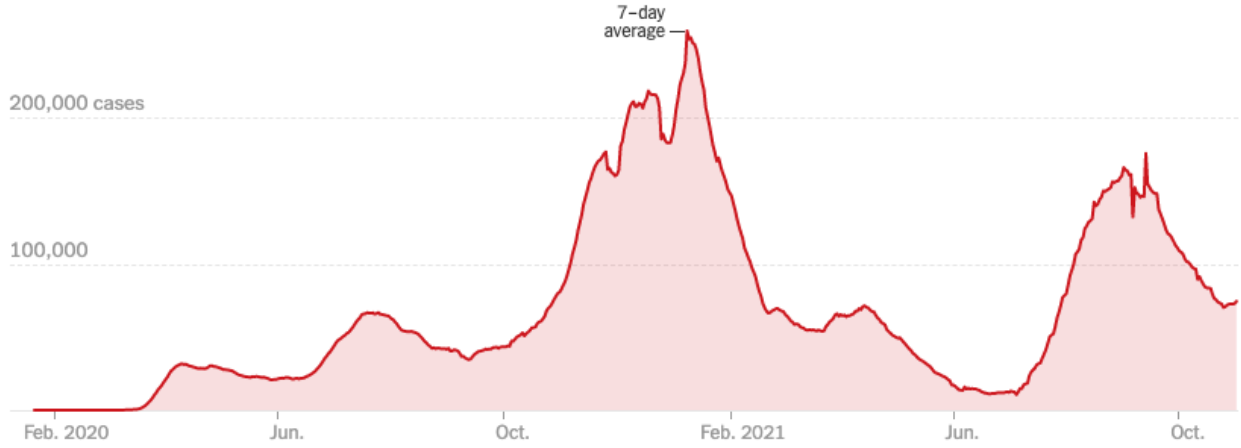
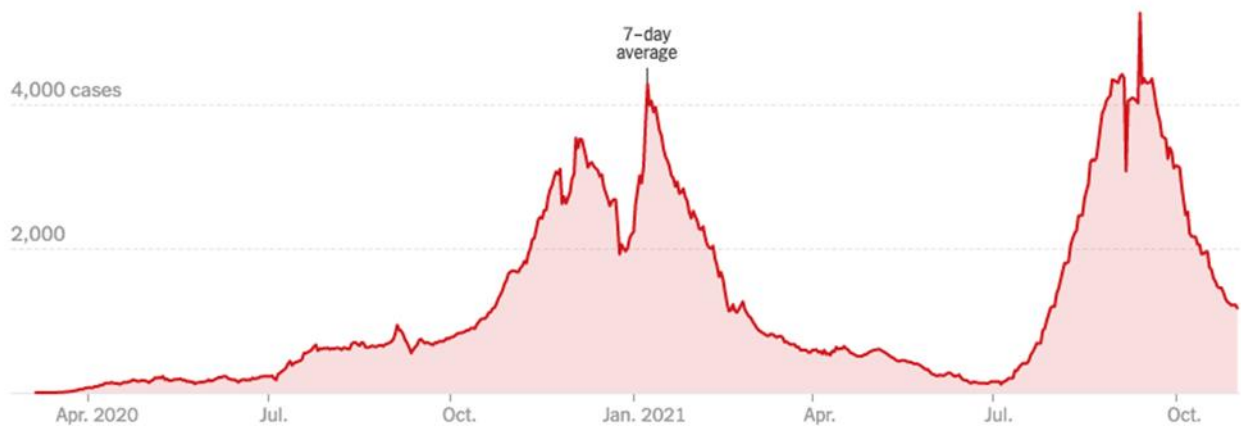


Figure 2

Kentucky Seven Day Average of Reported Cases Since April of 2020



The United States and the Commonwealth of Kentucky have declared states of emergencies, witnessed increases in COVID-19 cases and deaths, and have experienced economic downturns since the beginning of the pandemic. Kentucky's Governor, Andy Beshear has implemented rules and procedures aimed to limit the impact of the coronavirus and its economic impact. Newly created government programs sought to alleviate the effects of the pandemic through policies and funding sources such as the \$2 trillion CARES Act. At the time of this report, the Coronavirus pandemic continues to rage, infecting millions and ravaging businesses and communities across the country.

The CARES Act provided \$1.5 billion to the US Economic Development Administration (EDA) of which \$1.467 billion is intended for grants via the Economic Adjustment Assistance Program. These funds "will support a wide range of non-construction and construction activities in communities across the country experiencing severe economic dislocations brought about by coronavirus." Example activities include economic recovery planning, preparing resiliency plans, entrepreneurship activities, and the construction of public facilities that support economic recovery.

On August 12th, Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear announced that the Department of Local Government (DLG) was awarded \$6 million in CARES Act funding through the EDA to be split evenly among Kentucky's 15 Area Development Districts. Each ADD received approximately \$392,000 and the remaining 1% goes to DLG for their administrative cost.

The Purchase Area Development District is using a portion of these funds to create a Disaster Resiliency/Economic Recovery document to compile relevant data, analysis, and stakeholder input about the areas of life in the region most affected by the pandemic. The results will be formulated into a plan that will serve as a guideline for the region's economic recovery and overall resilience against the Coronavirus pandemic.

Table 1

COVID-19 Pandemic: Relevant Events and Dates

March 6 th , 2020	oFirst confirmed case of COVID-19 Reported in Kentucky.
March 10 th , 2020	• Visitors limited at long-term care facilities and state prisons
March 13 th , 2020	oSenior centers recommended to close.
March 16 th , 2020	oSchools cease in-person instruction. oExecutive order limits restaurant and bar services to drive-through, curbside, or pickup service only. oPrimary elections in Kentucky postponed 35 days, to June 23 rd , 2020.
March 17 th , 2020	oClosed all public-facing buildings to in-person services.
March 23 rd , 2020	oAll non-essential businesses closed to in-person service.
April 27 th , 2020	oBenchmarks established by the state that when met, will trigger business and other reopening's.
July, 2020	oStatewide mask mandate implemented. oBusiness and capacity restrictions began to be put in place again.
August 11 th , 2020	oGovernor Beshear request schools postpone return to in-person instruction until September 28 th . Instruction would continue to change between in in-person and distance for the remainder of the year.
November 23 rd , 2020	oNew restrictions on business capacity put in place.
December 14 th , 2020	oFirst Kentuckians receive a COVID-19 vaccine.
March 11 th , 2021	oKentucky reaches a 25% vaccination rate, with over 567 vaccination sites are open in the state.
May, 2021	oCapacity restrictions start to be eased in the state.
June 11 th , 2021	oState ends mask requirement, social distancing requirements, and all capacity restrictions.
July, 2021	oAs cases began to rise again, Governor Beshear orders masked to be worn in all state buildings and in Kentucky schools.

Multijurisdictional Planning

The PADD is an Economic Development District operating under the United States Economic Development Administration (EDA). This Disaster Resiliency Plan has the full intention to serve all 80 cities within the 8 counties represented by the PADD. By gathering data from Ballard, Calloway, Carlisle, Fulton, Graves, Hickman, Marshall and McCracken counties, each plays a pivotal role in this region and can overcome any unexcepted disasters collectively.

With specified surveys for local government, educational institutions, first responders, public health, and economic developers' insight on the impact of the pandemic was obtained. Each jurisdiction also provided solutions and preventative measures specifically for their county and across jurisdiction. These organizations represent the multiple areas of life in the region that are being analyzed in this plan. They were asked about how the pandemic has affected the areas of life they operate in and represent and if they have any recommendations about how to respond to the affects. The organizations represented multiple areas of life and, as such, surveys tailored to those areas were sent to each of them. They were questioned about the pandemic's effect on their organization, operations, and what types of assistance they need to help combat the ill effects of the pandemic.

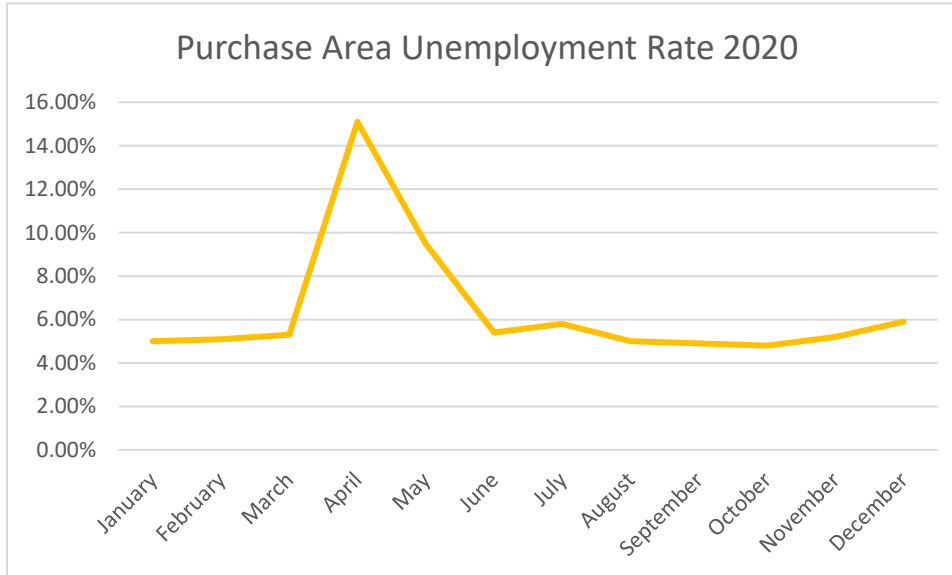
Starting January 2021, Kentucky's ADDs met on monthly video calls to share best practices, challenges, and insight regarding the creation of this plan. PADD staff worked with elected officials to identify local community needs and met with the local Hazard Mitigation Planning teams starting Spring 2022 to learn how communities adapted during the pandemic and discuss mitigation plans for the future.

In addition, PADD staff played a significant role in the drafting and research process of this plan. The staff has a broad range of knowledge, skills, and abilities that contributed to the plan. Staff lead community outreach, research, and plan drafting.

The Pandemic's Effect of Areas of Life

ECONOMY

Figure 3



Prior to the pandemic, the Purchase Region was flourishing economically. In January 2020, the region's unemployment rate sat slightly above national average at 5.0 %. By April, the unemployment rate rose to 15.1 %, as businesses and industries began to shut down due to national and state mandates. Fortunately, toward the end of 2020 the unemployment rate decreased to 5.9 % as businesses began to resume daily operations. Similar to other parts of the state and the nation, the pandemic has had an overall detrimental effect on the regional economy. Various local businesses and industries in the region have experienced temporary shutdowns, temporary slowdowns, or even permanent closures due to pandemic related restrictions and consumer behavior.

A major economic concern for the Purchase Region would be the impact of lost wages for workers in the region. With businesses slowing down operations or shutting down for periods of time, there was a fear of less money in the pockets of citizens. Average weekly wages appeared to increase an average of by 5.5% in the second quarter of 2020 (the height of pandemic related shutdowns), when compared to the second quarter of 2019. From the most recent data available (2021 Quarter 4), weekly wages were up 1.9% when compared to Q4 of 2020. (U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics) <https://data.bls.gov/maps/cew/KY>.

The economic indicator, consumer spending, also offers additional insights to how the economy has fared during the course of the pandemic. Consumer spending is the amount of money spent at businesses in an area. The amount of consumer spending reflected the changes in business

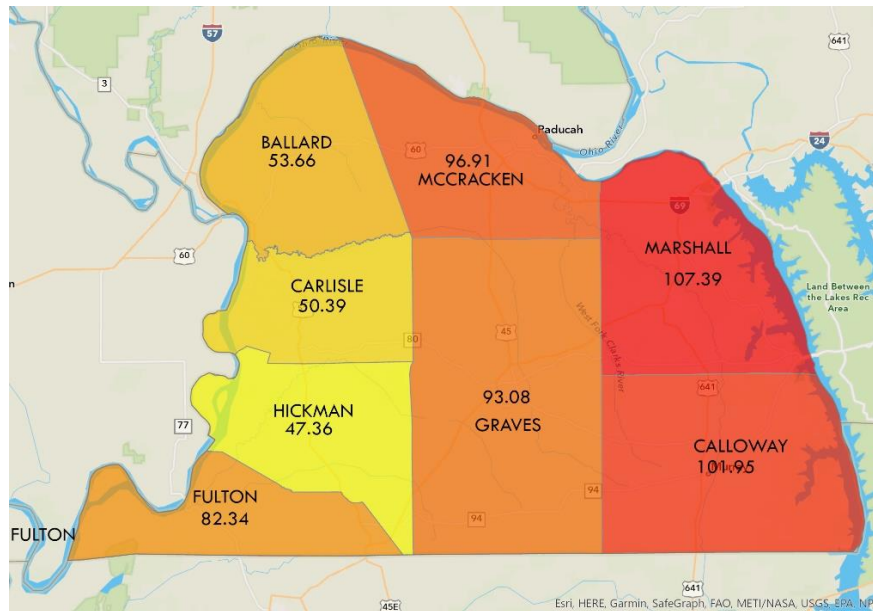
closings and openings in the state. In March of 2020 consumer spending was down nearly 27% after stay-at-home advisement were initially recommended. Over the next several months, consumer spending ebbed and flowed in relation to case numbers and business closings and openings. Now, months after the last official business constraints were lifted, consumer spending is up over 17% since before the pandemic, but still 7% less than the national average.

<https://tracktherecovery.org/>

In May 2020, research company Chmura released data detailing the economic vulnerability index across Kentucky counties. This index measures how the COVID-19 pandemic could negatively impact a county's employment due to industry mix. The national average of 100 is used as the baseline. Numbers below 100 demonstrate lower vulnerability, and numbers above 100 demonstrate higher vulnerability.

Figure 4

Economic Vulnerability Index



Six of the eight counties in the region were expected to do better than the national average. Marshall and Calloway County were expected to be slightly more impacted by the pandemic.

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

The Purchase Region has a diverse range of businesses and industry present. They include industries such as Arkema (Calvert City), Aero Source H(Kevil), Kayser (Fulton) and Centrifugal Technologies(Hickory) The region also has a number of restaurants, shops, and recreation and entertainment related businesses.

Here is a list of a few notable attractions:

- Purple Toad Winery, Paducah
- Hazel Antique District, Hazel
- Yeiser Art Center, Paducah
- Murray State University, Murray
- Market House, Paducah

Survey results reveal that groups with an interest in local business and industry believe the pandemic has had a very significant impact on this area of life. Respondents agreed overwhelmingly that factory and manufacturing slowdowns are an aspect of the pandemic in their communities and noted that temporary and permanent business closures have affected their communities. They additionally noted that supply chain issues and insufficient numbers of employees have affected the operations of businesses in their communities.

Meanwhile, restaurants and small businesses have had their share of troubles during the course of the pandemic. Locally owned businesses had to create systems for online ordering to have any hope of surviving pandemic impacts. Some created new websites or adapted their existing website to better suit ordering needs. Business and capacity restrictions have obviously led to less income for these businesses. For example, a restaurant would have gone weeks without being able to service customers and would go weeks at a time with a limited number of customers they are allowed to serve. Other than this, local businesses were limited by supply chain issues and not being able to find a sufficient number of workers.

There are a few contending reasons for the downturn in business and industry in the region. The government related shutdowns are a major reason businesses such as restaurants/bars, non-essential retail stores, and other non-essential services were forced to close in-person services due to the spread of the virus. The decreases in revenue forced businesses to close and/or lay off employees. Meanwhile, consumer spending habits affected the income of businesses and the level of production of industries in the region, leading to their own income issues and need for production slowdowns and subsequent layoffs.

Recommendations from surveyed stakeholders included the need to reevaluate unemployment benefits and getting individuals back into the workforce. Virtual training sessions for potential employees was one perceived solution. Additionally, there were opinions about the need for technology and logistics to support virtual shopping at businesses.

WORKFORCE

The status of the workforce in the region has been greatly affected by the pandemic. In March and April of 2020, Kentucky, along with several other states, implemented “stay-at-home” orders as the pandemic started to spread. Essentially this closed major components of the economy. Essential businesses such as food and agriculture, energy, and healthcare were allowed to remain open while industries such as recreation, entertainment, and restaurants were under restrictions. By late June, all states were in different phases of reopening.

A report from the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce in December of 2021 analyzed the state's labor market, which has been a key concern and challenge for Kentucky employers. The report indicated an uptick in Kentuckians returning to, or joining the workforce. After a steady exodus of workers in the first half of 2021, the second half of 2021 saw somewhat of a rebound. It hasn't been nearly enough for employers to meet the staffing levels required by the high levels of demand for goods and services that are shaping the post-pandemic economy. Businesses continue to struggle to find workers, and employers are in constant competition with each other for attracting and retaining talent.

In November of 2021, Kentucky made national headlines for having the highest "quit rate" in the nation, meaning more Kentuckians were leaving their jobs than elsewhere in the country. This was another indicator of Kentucky's tight labor market, as it likely represents workers switching jobs and exploring new opportunities. That same dataset showed Kentucky with 170,000 open jobs in August and 142,000 open jobs in September. The new report addresses other important aspects of Kentucky's economy, including Gross Domestic Product growth, continuing concerns over inflation and supply chain disruptions, employment levels, and the housing market. With so much unpredictability and uncertainty continuing to color our post-pandemic economy, it remains vital that business leaders and policymakers approach decision making with reliable data and a strong understanding of economic trends.

EDUCATION

There are several educational institutions across the eight-county region. There are 12 school districts with elementary, middle, and high schools and higher education institutions that include West Kentucky Community & Technical College and Murray State University. Each institution has experienced the pandemic in a different way. Spring 2020, all schools faced shutdowns and were introduced to distant learning. By Fall 2020, as schools began a hybrid option (in-person or virtual learning), challenges were more evident than before. Schools in smaller communities couldn't meet the demand of virtual learning or new in-person requirements.

School administrators surveyed across the region agreed that the pandemic has had an overall detrimental effect on their education institution. They noted the main concern in administering in-person learning is a lack of space to provide recommended social distancing for students and lack of funding. The lack of technology assistance for virtual students was also highlighted as a concern. For example, not enough laptops to provide or students not having internet access. Other issues affecting educational institutions is the lack of available workforce.

Educators noted that to help relieve this issue they needed more funding for personnel cost, technology assistance, expansion of internet coverage and general support from the community in slowing the spread of the virus.

Table 2
List of School Closings, Openings, and other Requirements 2020-2021

March, 2020

- K-12 Schools closed in-person instruction, not to be reopened for the rest of the academic year.

August, 2020

- Governor Beshear asks schools to delay the start of the school year until September.

September, 2020

- The k-12 school year is underway with a majority of schools using either a virtual or hybrid in-person/virtual format.

November, 2020

- All k-12 schools to stop in-person classes. Elementary schools until December 7th and middle and high schools until January 4th.

January, 2021

- All K-12 allowed to offer in-person instruction.

March, 2021

- State mandates school districts to offer some form of in-person instruction.

July, 2021

- While all schools are slated to be open to in-person instruction, a masking requirement is put in place.

Academics weren't the only challenge faced in schools throughout the region. High school sports were drastically affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Following the orders of the Governor and the Kentucky High School Athletic Association (KHSAA), all spring season sports in March 2020 were cancelled for the remainder of the season. Social distancing policies caused many restrictions as the KHSAA worked with state legislation to allow Fall 2020 sports to take place. Staff and athletes were required to wear mandatory masks when not actively participating in their sport. Spectators also had to follow the mask mandate, as well as, socially distance in the stands and around the facilities. By the Spring of 2021, mandates and restrictions had been lifted and sports returned with some normalcy.

HEALTHCARE

The pandemic's effect on healthcare providers and operations has been extremely damaging throughout the region. Hospitals, primary care providers, nursing homes, and elective care facilities have suffered from the pandemic in more than one way. The executive order to halt elective procedures and other operations, forced nursing homes to stop resident visitations which led to equipment and staffing issues and created life-threatening capacity issues. Telehealth appointments weren't widely utilized prior to the pandemic, but to reduce exposure to COVID, doctors started conducting more telehealth appointments than previous years. Even though telehealth appointments can take place over the phone, most doctors prefer to be able to see the

patient through video appointments which require internet access. Broadband is either unavailable or unreliable in the Purchase Region which caused issues with appointments and caused patients to either risk exposure by visiting the doctors or cancel their appointments all together. CARES Act funding played a crucial role in many hospitals by recovering lost revenue and continuing payroll. These funds allowed for the purchase of PPE and testing and laboratory services too.

In March 2020, the Western Kentucky Area Readiness in Emergencies (WeKARE) Healthcare Coalition supported weekly calls initiated by Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) from its nine hospitals to coordinate COVID-19 response efforts. In June, as COVID-19 cases continued to climb, the WeKARE Healthcare Coalition recognized the need to strengthen communication across the health care community to coordinate a more cohesive, regional surge response. As a result, the coalition took a series of steps to elevate situational awareness among hospitals, emergency medical services (EMS) agencies, emergency management, and other key partners.

Table 3 shows the number of cases and deaths as of January 26, 2022, for each county in the Purchase region.

Table 3

County	Cases	Deaths
Ballard	1120	26
Calloway	7119	73
Carlisle	889	16
Fulton	1061	23
Graves	10001	142
Hickman	723	22
Marshall	7270	90
McCracken	15936	206
PADD	44119	599
<i>Source: KDPH COVID-19 Dashboard</i>		

Local healthcare leaders offered some input about their experience during the pandemic. They highlighted staffing issues, staff exposure to the virus, issues obtaining PPE supplies and other equipment as the most prominent concerns. Administrators noted that the path forward would call for funding opportunities.

Table 4

Vaccine Approval and Dispersion in Kentucky

December 11th, 2020: First of three COVID-19 vaccine receives emergency use authorization from the FDA, allowing shots to go into arms.
December 14th, 2020: Five frontline healthcare workers become the first Kentuckians to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. Beginning of phase 1A of vaccine distribution for residents of long-term care facilities and healthcare workers.
February 1st, 2021: Groups in Phase 1B of vaccine distribution becomes eligible. Group includes school staff, first responders, and anyone over the age of 70.
February 2nd, 2021: Regional vaccination centers open across the state.
March 1st, 2021: Groups in Phase 1C of vaccine distribution becomes eligible. Group includes anyone over the age of 60 and anyone 16 or older with conditions that makes them at-risk.
March 31st, 2021: Everyone 50 and over eligible is to receive the vaccine.
April 5th, 2021: All residents 16 and older are eligible to receive the vaccine.
May 10th, 2021: Vaccine gets approval for children 12-15 years old.
September 22nd, 2021: FDA authorizes booster shots for eligible groups.
October 29th, 2021: Vaccine gets approval for children 5-12 years old.

The history of vaccine approval and dispersal is still ongoing and everchanging. The vaccine has had a positive impact on reducing deaths for those who receive it and has decreased transmission rates. Unfortunately, there is still a considerable number of people who are ineligible to receive the vaccine and some who are reluctant. While the number of those eligible to receive initial doses or booster doses increases, including boosters for select groups and initial eligibility for those five and older, there is still a large contingent of eligible people who have not received a shot. There have been multiple outreach efforts encouraging people to receive the vaccine. These include being entered into a lottery system and having public figures encourage the vaccine.

The Area Agency on Aging & Independent Living offers multiple aging services in the eight-county region. Services include case management; funding for drive by meals; transportation; and in-home services that include home making, personal care, and respite care. This department and the services they offer have been affected by the pandemic to a degree, but according to department staff, the pandemic has not affected the services as severely as other areas of life in the region have been affected. Affected aspects noted seem to revolve around coming in contact with the customers; issues include Title III D health prevention and promotion, health assessments, and transportation. The department noted a need for “increased outreach” and overhaul to the Title III D program to determine what can be done virtually or distanced. With

the help of vaccine efforts, deaths, notably for seniors are down, making their ability to partake in aging services safer. As of June 1st, 2021, Kentucky senior citizen centers were allowed to reopen, with certain restrictions based on some CDC guidance or local case rates.

TOURISM

In line with local businesses struggling during the pandemic, local tourist activities have been affected. The region offers several tourist attractions, including distilleries/wineries, historic sites, restaurants, community festivals, parks, museums, boating, hunting, and fishing.

Many of the indoor tourist attractions and locations were affected by some of the similar COVID-19 restrictions that other businesses in the region were affected by. Additionally, state orders shut down state park lodges, temporarily closing them to the public. Other lodging was allowed to stay open. However, according to the American Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA) the hotel industry has been negatively impacted by the pandemic. A recent survey by the AHLA noted that nine in ten hotels in the U.S. have been forced to furlough or lay off employees during the pandemic, only a quarter of hotels have been able to bring back, at minimum, 60% of their staff, and half of hotel owners surveyed noted that they risk losing their property due to real estate foreclosure.

The Purchase Region was extremely affected by COVID-19 as most of the region is a tourist hub for the state. The Purchase Region is home to both Kentucky Lake and Lake Barkley, which are the largest bodies of water between the Great Lakes and the Gulf of Mexico and are a major source of economic activity for the region. The Kentucky State Tourism Commission estimates that over 17 million visitors visit the area annually. The Kentucky Department of Economic Development reported that the camping industry in Marshall County, Kentucky alone supplies over \$4.45 million dollars in revenue to the camping/rv industry annually. Because of restrictions in the accommodation and services industry, the region experienced a significant drop in employment within this industry. The state of Kentucky Tourism Commission estimates that the tourism industry incurred over a 20% loss from COVID-19. Into 2021, as vaccine efforts continue, there was still a significant impact on tourist activity as a result of the pandemic.

GOVERNMENT

Across the local governments in the region, representatives have noted the impact the pandemic has had on their operations. Per the governor's executive order, government buildings were shut off from citizens and several agencies were tasked with decreasing staffing in the building by 50%. Surveys were sent to local government leaders: mayors, judge-executives, city clerks, and administrators, they were asked about the effects of the pandemic on the services they provide and on their operations. Over half of the local government representatives agreed that budget issues and having to temporarily suspend the services they offer are ways their operations have been affected. Other agreed upon issues include employee furloughs in their organizations and technical issues surrounding employees telecommuting. More noted issues include not being able to cut services to individuals not paying bills; costs associated with health social distancing signage, PPE, sanitation, equipment; and dealing with employees who contracted the virus.

Figure 6 is a compilation of the preliminary projected coronavirus relief funds from the CARES Act passed in 2020. This money's intended use was COVID-19 related expenses, such as PPE or expanding social distancing capabilities.

Table 6
Preliminary Projected Coronavirus Relief Fund

County	Estimate
Ballard	\$268,556
Calloway	\$1,327,836
Carlisle	\$162,060
Fulton	\$203,222
Graves	\$1,268,765
Hickman	\$149,122
Marshall	\$1,058,837
McCracken	\$2,227,234

In Kentucky, the 2020 primary election was postponed from May 19 to June 23. Although Kentucky usually requires a reason for absentee voting, due to the pandemic, that was not the case in 2020. Early voting began a month before election day and with no-excuse absentee ballots, a high turnout of votes were cast during this election period.

The public protection entities including: police, firefighters, ambulance, and EMS were surveyed about the effects of the pandemic on their operations. Due to the pandemic there were issues across the board with staffing, employees and volunteers being exposed, budget shortfalls, and even PPE supply and distribution.

Procedures had to be improvised to accommodate the new COVID safety protocols. For example, EMS crews across the region wore masks and gloves when entering homes. Additional PPE like gowns, face shields, and booties were worn when going somewhere they knew had a COVID positive individual. Upon arrival at the hospital, PPE was removed and left there. The ambulance was then disinfected from top to bottom to prepare for the next run.

The respondents stated that more funds and better communication and information sharing was needed to assist public protection services during the pandemic.

Court proceedings were delayed and many went to virtual hearings during the pandemic. Even with adjustments made, the overall number of cases filed and number of cases closed within the state court system were much lower in 2020 than in 2019. Since the beginning of the pandemic, Kentucky court caseloads have been affected and appear to not fully recovered to pre-pandemic levels throughout 2021.

With the delays, fewer individuals were sent to recovery centers and jails from the courts. Decreased number of residents didn't mean a decrease in expenditures. Extra cleaning supplies and the purchase of PPE brought additional expenses to area facilities.

COMMUNITY EVENTS AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

Community events are the social core for community life for many residents in the region. These events offer a wide range of organization sponsored activities that assist in bringing together the community. Despite the ongoing health crisis due to the pandemic, communities improvised and adapted several events to encourage community togetherness. Church gatherings, community festivals, charitable activities, public meetings, sports leagues, and other organizational meetings were made virtual or outdoor when possible. Fireworks were set off in multiple areas and parades for graduating seniors were organized to give students a chance to be publicly recognized and celebrated as a way to reduce crowd size. Drive-in movies occurred across the Purchase Region throughout the pandemic to provide entertainment while social distancing.

The need for local non-profit charity organizations increased due to the impact the pandemic had on many low-income households. Aside from assistance with bills, many families lacked the ability to cover food expenses. Local food banks improvised and continued their services by using a drive-thru system to help minimize contact.

TRANSPORTATION

The Purchase region is served by three transit agencies that provide public transportation services to the citizens. Fulton County Transit Authority, Murray Calloway Transit Authority and Paducah Area Transit System were all challenged during the pandemic. Each were mandated to follow federal and state guidelines for social distancing and keeping people safe. Due to these mandates, each agency had to find ways to provide a critical service of getting people to their destination. Buses were reduced to 50% capacity for riders and seats were rigged with shower curtains and other means for protecting riders and drivers, keeping them safely distanced from each other. Routes were modified or completely shut down from March 2020 – July 2020, as agencies needed to be more available to make essential trips for Medicaid/medical appointments and testing. Due to the reduced capacities and loss of ridership during the pandemic shutdown, drivers were furloughed. Callbacks for more employers to return to work started in January 2021 and since that time ridership has steadily been returning.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on some of the infrastructure services in the Purchase Region. Access to reliable internet has always been an issue, but the pandemic identified the importance of access to reliable broadband even more. With mandated closings, more individuals were required to work remotely and students were required to participate in distance learning. The lack of broadband impacted the entire country. According to the Federal Communications Commission, broadband is internet access that is always on and is typically faster than traditional dial-up internet. The lack of reliable broadband is continually brought up by citizens, elected officials, and community leaders in the PADD region.

Public utility access is another infrastructure issues that was highlighted during the pandemic. The Kentucky Public Service Commission (KPSC) issued an order to halt late fees and

disconnections for non-payment in March 2020. An executive order was also issued by Governor Beshear to do the same for utilities not regulated by the KPSC. The Healthy at Home Utility Relief Fund aided Kentuckians at risk for disconnection from natural gas, water, wastewater services, and electric. The executive order designated \$15 million in COVID-19 relief funds after the statewide moratorium ended November 6, 2020.

Some individuals impacted by COVID-19 were truly unable to pay due to the loss of their job, illness or furlough. Others saw the moratorium on disconnections simply as a reason to not pay their bills. Overall, municipally owned utilities took losses on some household accounts.

RECOVERY AND RESILIENCY STRATEGIES

The vast spreading of the pandemic in 2020 had a major impact on the communities within the Purchase Region. The Recovery and Resiliency Strategies are meant to guide PADD communities toward a path of economic growth and sustainment. The terms recovery and resiliency are used throughout this plan to shine light on the important roles and responsibilities they have on a community. Recovery focuses on the immediate challenges the community is facing and how to restore the economic and community participation it had before being impacted by the pandemic. Resiliency focuses on how a community responded to the disruptive change and how it can be more flexible and adaptable to be able to withstand future pandemics.

Governor Beshear's *Better Kentucky Plan* aims to help the commonwealth lead in the post-COVID economy. Through the passage of bills in the 2021 and 2022 legislative sessions, federal funds were allocated to boost the state's economy by building new schools, delivering clean drinking water and expanding access to broadband.

Local governments were directly provided funds through two Federal acts in 2020 and 2021. The Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF) from the CARES Act were used to initiate recovery in March 2020. This fund was established to reimburse local governments for expenses that were incurred during the pandemic. Funds for PPE, unemployment assistance, first responder payroll, and business grants were several of the reimbursed expenditures eligible under these funds. The State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds were set aside from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) in March 2021. These funds focused more on the local level by creating a more resilient foundation for communities. In addition to these funds, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, along with local funding, sent stimulus checks to residence. This provided a much needed income to households during the pandemic.

The Western Kentucky Healthcare Coalition services 24 counties which encompasses the Purchase Region. Aside from meeting weekly throughout the pandemic, they used an alert system called Ready Op to send mass texts to area hospitals and place EMS agencies and emergency managers on standby for patient diversion and transfer. WeKARE Healthcare Coalition has already taken steps to eliminate redundant communications in patient transfer with a series of drills with hospital personnel, ensuring partners are ready to respond and available to move patients quickly. A combination of daily snapshots and adequate surge planning provided Kentucky with the tools needed to manage COVID-19 patient surges collectively as a region,

rather than as standalone agencies. The WeKARE Healthcare Coalition and its stakeholders benefitted from this highly collaborative effort to advance medical surge capacity. Enhancing situational awareness among health care partners was critical in fostering collaboration and coordination when a cohesive community response was paramount.

To support recovery and resilience, PADD was able to assist many counties and cities to be able to create small business grants to help businesses impacted by the pandemic. PADD also helped with grants and other financial assistance useful to individuals, businesses, and local governments.

CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUND FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF) were set aside from the CARES Act to help offset pandemic expenses. Allocations were based on population of each city and county and funds were used to reimburse COVID related expenditures made between March 2020 and March 2021.

Recovery and Resiliency efforts were both funded using CRF. Funds were used to reimburse cities and counties for short-term recovery efforts such as small business grants, utility relief grants, first responder payroll, cleaning supplies, PPE for government and public use. More long-term resiliency projects like upgraded outdoor LED lighting, installation of permanent plexiglass, drive-thrus and drop boxes for utility payments, road and bridge repair, and water conservations were also funded. These funds were essential in helping with the initial recovery and future resiliency. After being reimbursed for these expenses, cities and counties were able to put that money back toward other services.

COVID-19 BUSINESS RELIEF PROGRAM

Many businesses sought relief through programs such as the Paycheck Protection Program and the SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program. But many smaller establishments could not qualify for adequate funding to meet basic operating costs such as rent, utilities, inventory, insurance and payroll. Sole proprietors and contracting industries such as hair stylists and salon owners found themselves unable to apply for this assistance.

The PADD provides support to businesses recovering from any business disruption because of COVID-19. As of March 21, 2022, the PADD provided over \$2.3 million dollars in funding through a CARES ACT Revolving Loan Fund to help struggling businesses. This has been distributed among 21 companies; saving or creating over 150 jobs.

Community Development Block Grants – COVID19 (CDBG-CV) were also funded by the CARES Act. Some of these funds went towards a utility assistance program and the only requirement to be eligible for assistance was to have been impacted by COVID in some way.

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) was signed into law on March 11, 2021. The legislation dedicated \$350 billion of the \$1.9 trillion for state, local, and tribal governments to respond to the effects of the pandemic. ARPA includes many types of funds to help individuals, businesses, and local governments. The State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) is one of those

funds that also prepares the country for a more resilient future and addresses the needs presented by COVID-19.

Counties and cities have until the end of 2024 to allocate these funds, and until the end of 2026 to spend them. With the extended timeline, some areas are taking their time deciding how to spend the funds, in an effort to do what's best for their communities.

There are five categories of eligible uses:

- Supporting through public health response
- Replace Public Sector Revenue Loss
- Address negative economic impacts of the pandemic
- Provide premium pay for essential workers
- Make improvements to water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure

The Purchase Region has had many cities and counties to already make a difference with the various funds provided. With a variety of notable project examples listed below, the region is preparing for more resilient communities.

McCracken County has allocated \$4 million to stormwater capital improvement projects and utilized \$2.5 million of CARES Act funding for police officer and firefighter salaries.

Marshall County has approved several clean water projects and lift station upgrades throughout the city and county. West Kentucky Rural Telephone Cooperative Corporation (WK&T) was also awarded \$3,365,704 to expand high-speed internet access to 843 currently unserved households and businesses in Calloway and Marshall.

Carlisle County is using funds for Milburn Water District's AC Line Rehabilitation project from the Cleaner Water Program (CWP).

Graves County has allocated half of its APRA funds for projects that include improvements to emergency management through the purchase of a new ambulance, as well as, updating their radio system county-wide for more efficient communication. The county has also made investments in outdoor recreation through the addition of bathroom and handwashing stations at locations that saw increased use during times that public health orders closed indoor gatherings.

Hickman County is helping non-profit organizations to improve outdoor spaces, help rebuild a local food pantry, and renovate the local library. The Oakhill Recreational Association purchased new tractors and mowers for upkeep of the greens, repaired concrete around the pool and outdoor areas, and updated the indoor meeting area.

Ballard County added UV lights to help clean equipment at the jail and ambulance service, expanded the senior center meals on wheels program, purchased voting machines for safer voting, and purchased an EMS response truck and communication system for better service.

Calloway County added LED lighting and UV-C lighting to the jail, judicial building and sheriff station. West Kentucky Rural Telephone Cooperative Corporation (WK&T) was also awarded \$3,365,704 to expand high-speed internet access to 843 currently unserved households

and businesses in Calloway and Marshall. The jail also received water conservation upgrades and piping replacements.

RESILIENCY THEMES AND GOALS

Throughout the ten categories analyzed, resiliency themes and goals emerged from meetings, surveys, and discussions with local officials. These are areas in which the Purchase Region must improve in order to better withstand future disruptions. Pursuing these goals is crucial to long-term recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Accomplishing these goals will also make the region better able to withstand future shocks, pandemics or otherwise.

Broadband: The pandemic brought to focus how many Americans lack reliable internet. Many students and remote workers had to travel to public Wi-Fi hotspots to get decent access. Future disasters will be better survived with reliable in-home broadband.

Adaptability: Businesses, households, and other entities that got creative when the world changed overnight were the ones who best survived. Creativity and a willingness to do things differently allow entities to absorb the impacts of disasters.

Disaster Preparedness Plans: Households, governments, healthcare, businesses, organizations, and schools can all benefit from having an emergency plan. Being prepared for any disaster can reduce stress and lead to better decision making.

Trust and Communication: Establishing public trust in an organization, entity, or place makes it a reliable source of information. During times of distress like the pandemic, people need entities they can trust.

The steps below demonstrate the process local governments and organizations should follow when creating and implementing resilient projects. There are six general phases which every project will go through.

Identify Needs: Community and individual meetings, surveys, and social media

Identify Funding Sources: Reach out to PADD staff, Kentucky Department of Local Government, Grants.gov, FEMA, USDA-RD

Planning: Determine how to address needs, make sure project fits the objectives of the funding, and prioritize projects

Applying: Complete the funding application and provide appropriate documentation

Implementation: Use the funds to complete projects and stay in compliance with regulations

Administration: Ensure reporting is completed in accordance with the specified timeframe and all documentation is completed.

These ideas were gathered through conversations with local officials, the general public, nonprofits, and businesses. It is essential that local officials continue to expand this list through further community conversations. Counties, cities, and organizations in the Purchase Region worked diligently to create supportive and strong economies to recover from the pandemic.

Resource Page

[PADD COVID-19 Business Relief Working Capital Loan Program](#)

[Small Business Administration Coronavirus Relief Options](#)

[Kentucky Coronavirus Relief Fund for Local Governments](#)

[FEMA Public Assistance Program](#)

[Small Business Administration Coronavirus Relief Options](#)

[USDA COVID-19 Federal Rural Resource Guide](#)

[Kentucky Coronavirus Page](#)

[Kentucky Governor Updates, Guidance, and Requirements](#)

[Kentucky Healthy at Work](#)

[US Department of Health & Human Services](#)

[Kentucky Emergency Management COVID-19 Dashboard](#)

[Centers for Disease Control COVID-19 Page](#)

[Federal COVID-19 Page](#)

[Chmura Economics & Analytics](#)

[Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, “Kentucky’s Economic Recovery”](#)