

OUR REGION



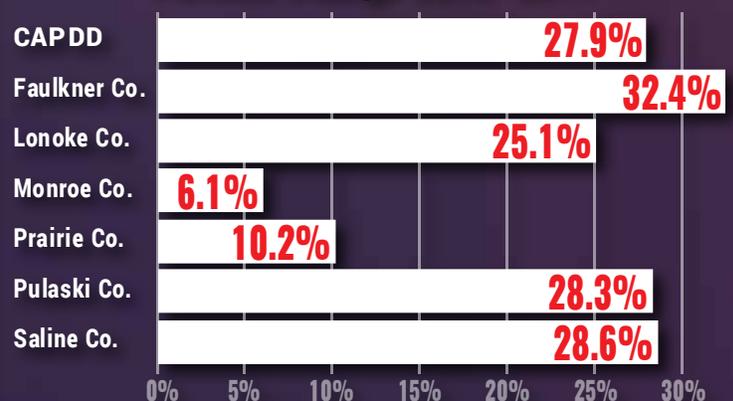
SUMMARY BACKGROUND

The regional and county snapshots shown on the following pages highlight the demographic and economic statistics of the region. As the data shows, government services, health care and social assistance, and retail trade are the leading industries, with health care projected as the leading growth industry. To support these businesses, and develop a broader foundation in other industries such as advanced manufacturing, agriculture, and professional, scientific and technical services, it is essential that local governments in the region continue to collaborate on essential services such as workforce training, the built infrastructure, broadband, and housing.

From 2010 to 2017, the region has experienced moderate population growth of 5.4% just below the national average of 5.96%. Three counties, Pulaski, Faulkner and Saline contain almost 88% of the region's population and most of the more densely populated urban areas. Saline County's population grew 10% since the 2010 Census and Faulkner County increased 9.2%. Over the same period Lonoke and Pulaski counties experienced low to moderate growth at 6.6% and 2.9% respectively, and two counties, Monroe and Prairie, showed significant population loss.

The fastest growing age group in the region were residents over 65. Faulkner County leads the region with a 32.4% increase since 2010 in residents over 65 closely followed by Saline, Pulaski and Lonoke counties, each with increases topping 25%. Monroe and Prairie Counties also saw significant percentage jumps in the number of seniors. Addressing the needs of an aging population requires planning and strategic investment including additional transportation options, infrastructure improvements and access to affordable health care particularly in less affluent counties.

**Population Growth for 65+ Population
Percent Change 2010–2017**



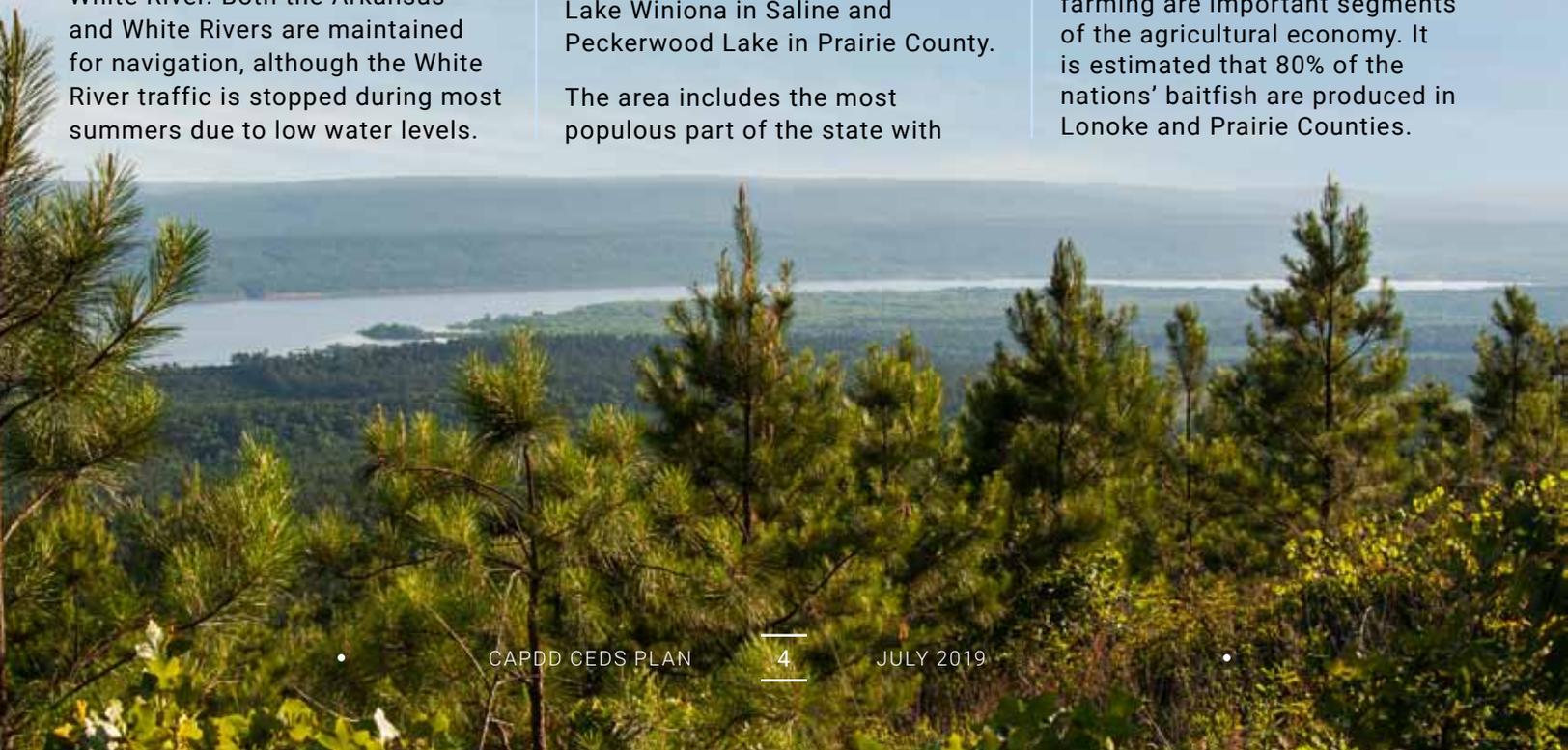


ENVIRONMENT

The CAPDD contains the state's most populated and urban-oriented areas along with Arkansas' most productive rural agricultural land. The Central Arkansas area is divided by the Arkansas River. Flat land lies to the east of the river and the mountainous land to the west. The eastern area is divided by the White River. Both the Arkansas and White Rivers are maintained for navigation, although the White River traffic is stopped during most summers due to low water levels.

Other eastern streams are the Cache River and the Bayou Meto. The western portion of the area contains the Ouachita River, Saline River, and Hurricane Creek. The northern part of the area includes Cadron Creek. Major lakes within the Central Arkansas area include Lake Maumelle in Pulaski County; Lake Conway in Faulkner County; Lake Winona in Saline and Peckerwood Lake in Prairie County. The area includes the most populous part of the state with

urban and build-up land that is heavily agrarian on the east and heavily timbered on the west. In the 2017 Agricultural Census, the central area had 2,660,512 acres of land area, 1,164,172 acres of land area in farms, 732,880 acres of cropland harvested, and 582,750 acres of land area in forestland, minor and cover uses. In addition, catfish and minnow farming are important segments of the agricultural economy. It is estimated that 80% of the nation's baitfish are produced in Lonoke and Prairie Counties.





ECONOMY

Most of the economic growth of the region comes from Pulaski, Faulkner, and Saline Counties. Pulaski County is the state’s most populous county and historically Arkansas’ largest center of economic activity. It houses the state capitol and state government and is home to the state’s largest medical facilities. Faulkner County has experienced strong economic growth fueled primarily by the city of Conway and its vibrant educational institutions, health care facilities and retail trade. Since 2010, Saline County experienced the largest percentage increase in population growth in the District and added a significant number of jobs in health care, retail and manufacturing.

Though significantly smaller in population than Pulaski, Faulkner, and Saline counties, Lonoke County has experienced significant population growth and modest but steady job growth is projected for the next few years. Overwhelmingly rural and possessing a fraction of the population and resources of the other four counties, Prairie

and Monroe represent a significant obstacle to effective economic development in the region. Their economies are dominated by agricultural and related industries and population in both counties has steadily declined since 2010.

Perhaps the greatest challenge facing the district is the disparity between the areas enjoying relative economic success and those struggling to keep their populations and maintain existing infrastructure and businesses. Despite remarkable growth in Saline and Faulkner counties and steady growth in Lonoke and Pulaski, many communities in the region lack up-to-date water or sewer service. Broad sections of the region lack accessible health care, adequate housing and Broadband internet access. Insufficient transportation infrastructure remains an important issue for residents and businesses particularly outside the more populated urban centers.

Smaller cities and rural areas often lack access to matching funds,

grants and other services readily available to more economically successful cities and urban areas. This greatly limits their ability to initiate activities that effectively promote economic development and hampers the efforts of CAPDD and like-minded organizations to make effective changes in many communities facing real need.

To thrive economically, jurisdictions must work together to develop a well-balanced system of infrastructure, economic and community development that serves residents, supports communities, and attracts new businesses. The region must continue to be a place where talented people – and their businesses – want to be. This includes preserving and expanding the high quality of life in the region and providing the critical infrastructure needed by businesses to succeed. Supporting the economy requires providing the critical services necessary for the well-being of residents, the success of businesses and the safety of communities.



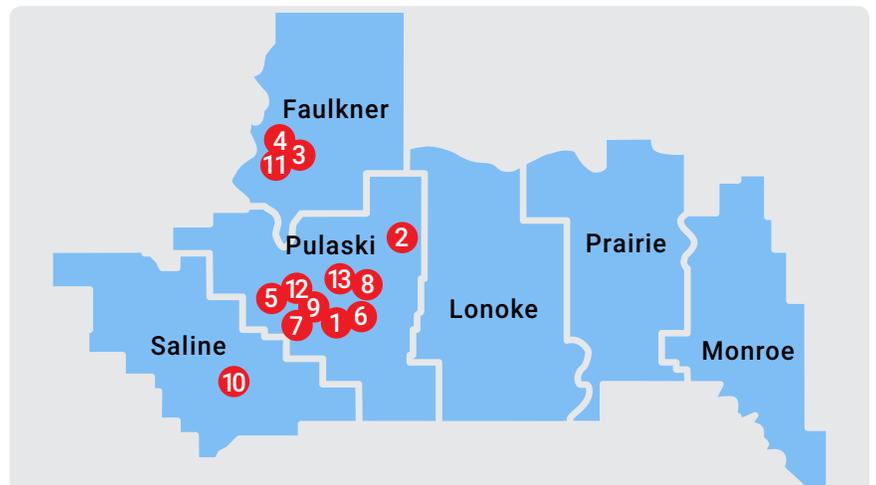
CULTURE AND OUTDOOR RECREATION

The region’s natural assets and cultural traditions set the area apart. Pulaski County has long been the cultural haven of the state, a center for music, theater and the arts. Conway, Faulkner County’s college town, is the seat of a state university and two academically respected liberal arts colleges. Saline County, one of Arkansas’ fastest growing counties, strives to preserve the small town character of its urban areas while meeting the challenges of unprecedented growth and opportunity. Quaint small towns in Lonoke and the more sparsely populated counties of Prairie and Monroe, reflect the state’s agricultural traditions and evoke Arkansas’ early history through museums, historic buildings and town festivals.

The entire district is famous for its beautiful lakes, rivers and bayous. Fishing and boating are popular sports. Hiking in the foothills of the Ouachita Mountains and in Pinnacle Mountain Park attract thousands of visitors. Every county contains multiple parks that offer everything from bird watching to exploring historic settlements. In addition to attracting new residents, cultural and recreational tourism has grown into a thriving industry as people travel to the District to experience the unique regional character of the area.

Colleges and Universities

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Arkansas Baptist College (Little Rock) | 8. Shorter College (Little Rock) |
| 2. ASU Beebe (LRAFB Campus) | 9. UA Little Rock |
| 3. Central Baptist College (Conway) | 10. UA Little Rock (Benton Campus) |
| 4. Hendrix College (Conway) | 11. University of Central Arkansas (Conway) |
| 5. ITT Technical Institute (Little Rock) | 12. University of Phoenix (Little Rock) |
| 6. Philander Smith College (Little Rock) | 13. UA – Pulaski Technical College (North Little Rock) |
| 7. Remington College – (Little Rock) | |





Parks and Attractions

Faulkner County

- Woolly Hollow State Park
- Cadron Settlement Park
- Baum Gallery at UCA
- Faulkner County Museum
- Hendrix Creek Preserve

Saline County

- Mills Park
- Saline Crossing Regional Park and Recreation Area
- Riverside Park
- Gann Museum of Saline County
- Saline County Historic Courthouse
- Bryant's Bishop Park

Pulaski County

- Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site
- William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum
- Old State House Museum
- Arkansas Arts Center
- Big Dam Bridge
- Esse Purse Museum and Store
- Pinnacle Mountain State Park
- Little Rock River Market
- The Witt Stephens Jr. Central Arkansas Nature Center
- Arkansas Inland Maritime Museum
- Arkansas Governor's Mansion
- Arkansas State Capitol
- Heifer Village and Urban Farm
- MacArthur Museum of Arkansas Military History
- The Old Mill
- Mosaic Templars Cultural Center
- Museum of Discovery
- Little Rock Zoo
- Two Rivers Park
- Arkansas River Trail
- David D. Terry Lock and Dam West Park

Lonoke County

- Lonoke County Historical Museum
- Toltec Mounds State Park
- Plantation Agriculture Museum State Park
- Scott Plantation Settlement

Prairie County

- Lower White River Museum
- Bayou Des Arc
- Peckerwood Lake
- Lake Des Arc
- Steamboat Days Festival

Monroe County

- Louisiana Purchase State Park
- Fargo Training School Museum
- Cache River National Wildlife Refuge
- Arkansas Delta Music Trail
- Central Delta Depot and Museum
- Ivory Billed Duck Hunters Lodge
- Jacobs Park and Museum
- Clarendon Historic Walking Tour



WORKFORCE

Central Arkansas has the state's second fastest growing economy. Although significant sections of the region remain poor and underpopulated, the district as a whole is experiencing relatively robust job growth. From 2018 to 2023, jobs in the area are projected to increase 4.6% from 443,371 to 464,985. Saline County's projected job growth of 10% by 2023 is the highest in the region, followed by Faulkner, Prairie, and Lonoke which range from 6.3% to 5.6%; Pulaski should achieve a 4% increase and Monroe is expected to suffer a net loss of jobs (-2.0%) at the close of the five-year period.

As the economy grows so will the demand for individuals with strong skill sets in communications, engineering, advanced manufacturing processes, and computer and medical technology. The job skills required by the new economy are not the skills of generations past. Many require advanced degrees or unique abilities that call for specific training, certifications, licenses and apprenticeships.

Accordingly, CAPDD in compliance with the Workforce Competitiveness Goal of Arkansas' Five Year Delta Development Plan and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA), has collaborated with the Central Arkansas Workforce Development Area (CAWDA) to help CAWDA provide a variety of employment and training programs that:

- link employers with potential employees and assists Central Arkansas businesses with recruiting, retaining, developing and maintaining a pipeline of qualified applicants.
- align workforce training programs with in-demand industry sectors within the region.
- use data analysis to meet the labor force needs of business and industry throughout the six county service area.
- provide a variety of job related services to area workers and potential workers through local workforce centers.

During 2016–2017 CAWDA, in line with WIOA, state, and federal guidelines, developed an up to date transitional local and regional workforce plan. New goals and strategies were developed based on a comprehensive analysis of workforce and economic conditions in the area, employment needs by industry, and an assessment of all existing service delivery to employers and job seekers.

In addition, a comprehensive draft of a CAWDA local workforce plan for 2020–2024, another WIOA requirement, has been completed to provide more actionable plans and objectives consistent with the local plan's respective regional strategic visions and goals.



ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

The diverse and robust economy of Central Arkansas derives from the strength of local communities and the powerful economic engine provided by the metro areas in Pulaski, Faulkner and Saline counties. The region’s economic opportunities and its rich and unique quality of life encourage businesses to expand, locate or develop here. This creates a resilient economy critical to long-term growth and financial stability for families.

Merriam-Webster defines resilience as, “an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change.” CAPDD believes establishing economic resilience in a local or regional economy requires anticipating risk, assessing how that risk affects key economic assets, and building a responsive capacity. Often, the shocks or disruptions to the economic base of an area or region occur in three ways:

- Downturns or other significant events in the national or international economy that affect demand for locally produced goods and consumer spending.
- Downturns in particular industries that constitute a critical component of the region’s economic activity.
- Other external shocks (a natural or manufactured disaster, closure of a military base, exit of a major employer, impacts of climate change, etc.)

The District can help the region respond to changes in the economy through Steady-state and Responsive initiatives. Steady-state initiatives are long-term efforts that bolster the community or region’s ability to withstand or avoid a shock. Responsive initiatives provide economic development organizations the capability to assist with recovery. CAPDD and CEDS have adopted this two-pronged approach to develop strategies and performance measures.

STEADY-STATE INITIATIVES INCLUDE:

- Incorporating economic resiliency into existing planning efforts, such as hazard mitigation or transportation plans.
- Ensuring our workforce development and community/economic development teams work together to identify employment training or infrastructure investment opportunities when emerging sectors are identified.
- Continuing to work with the education and workforce training communities to build a resilient workforce that can easily shift between jobs or industries.
- Leading efforts to capitalize on the region’s strengths identified through the CEDS.
- Continuing to promote strategic economic assessments at the community level to identify strengths and weaknesses.
- Informing elected officials about resiliency by scheduling speakers at CAPDD board meetings.

RESPONSIVE INITIATIVES INCLUDE:

- Strengthening coordination between the local Workforce Development Board and economic development entities within the region to address employer and employee needs more effectively during times of economic downturn.
- Inviting businesses and economic development types to meetings regarding workforce initiatives, (i.e. the local partner’s meetings coordinated by WIOA staff members.)
- Utilizing the local Workforce Development Board to communicate directly with businesses to understand the needs of the business community.
- Considering economic resiliency when identifying projects to include in hazard mitigation plans.