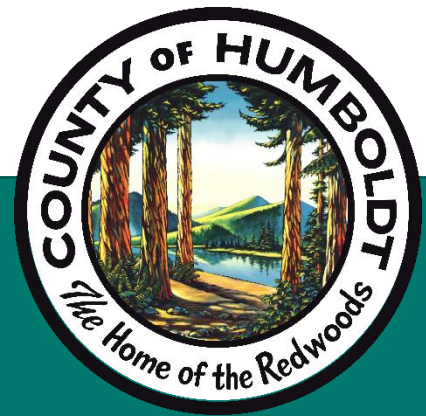


# Humboldt County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2025 - 2030

June 17, 2025



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## About the CEDS

This Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy is a document for Humboldt County, California, that charts a course for the county's future. It allows partners throughout the county and region to align around shared priorities. This alignment positions our county to leverage investment from local, state and federal governments. The strategy identifies local needs, actions necessary to address those needs and organizations with the ability to lead those actions.

In developing this CEDS, Humboldt County has considered relevant planning documents and conducted quantitative data analysis. Qualitative data were solicited from a broad stakeholder base, including elected officials, government staff, economic developers, organizations, educational institutions and the general public. Humboldt County conducted a public survey, hosted a workshop for key stakeholders and held a strategy session with the CEDS Committee.

## Economic Resiliency

Each strategy within Humboldt County's plan is developed to maximize the community's resilience to potential economic shocks. The strategic action plan outlines ways in which Humboldt County can build capacity to respond to disruptions that may arise due to: events or downturns in the national or global economies that impact consumer spending and demand for local goods and services; downturns in a region's major industries; disasters – natural or man-made – extreme weather events, critical infrastructure disruptions or loss of a major employer; and/or other external shocks.

# Strategic Action Plan

The Strategic Action Plan provides the framework for Humboldt County's forward movement toward fulfilling the community's vision for the future. The following vision was created with broad community support through various virtual and in-person engagements:

*"Humboldt County aspires to be a model of economic vitality and resilience, where a diverse economy thrives alongside our commitment to foster sustainable economic development, enhance community wellbeing and build climate-resilient infrastructure to support future generations."*

Within the CEDS, the following strategies are described in more detail, including: reasoning behind each focus area, quantitative and qualitative data that support it, the ways in which it impacts the community, our approach to building resiliency and alignment with existing initiatives and priorities.

## 1. Industry Elevation and Diversification

- 1.1 Advance efforts to cultivate favorable conditions for Humboldt County's legacy industries to thrive.
- 1.2 Catalyze growth for Humboldt County's emerging industries.
- 1.3 Foster an effective and valuable small business ecosystem.
- 1.4 Revise regulations, policies and incentives to boost local industries and drive future investment.

## 2. Collaboration

- 2.1 Continue Redwood Region Rise collaboration (beyond CA Jobs First) and actively participate in implementation.
- 2.2 Set a unified brand and marketing strategy for Humboldt County.
- 2.3 Develop marketing strategies to attract and retain business.
- 2.4 Leverage partnerships and marketing to attract and retain residents and workforce.
- 2.5 Invest in a wide variety of targeted marketing campaigns to draw visitors to the county and region.

## 3. Natural Assets and Disaster Response

- 3.1 Prepare for natural disasters.

- 3.2 Balance increases in use and development with the protection of natural assets.

#### **4. Fundamental Community Needs**

- 4.1 Catalyze the growth of the healthcare industry to expand opportunities and support local demand.
- 4.2 Enhance housing stock availability and quality at all income and market levels.
- 4.3 Provide avenues for growth in workforce initiatives, education and training to develop a relevant talent pool for employers and increase wages and promising career opportunities for workers.

#### **5. Infrastructure**

- 5.1. Develop and maintain transportation infrastructure that supports local industries and increases access for residents.
- 5.2. Increase reliability and resiliency of electric infrastructure.
- 5.3. Provide support and resources to expand broadband infrastructure.
- 5.4. Expand water, wastewater and solid waste infrastructure.

## **Evaluation Framework**

The Evaluation Framework included in the CEDS outlines implementation of these strategies, including partners for collaboration in driving progress, key performance indicators, timelines for completion and checkpoints for evaluation and reporting. This is the roadmap for Humboldt County's increasing momentum for economic vitality.

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*Humboldt County encourages you to explore the full Comprehensive Economic Development Strategic Plan for a more in-depth understanding of the content described in this summary.*

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# INTRODUCTION



# About Humboldt County

## History

Since time immemorial, Humboldt County has been the home of many indigenous peoples, including Big Lagoon Rancheria, Blue Lake Rancheria, Hoopa Valley Tribe, Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria, Trinidad Rancheria, Wiyot Tribe and the Yurok Tribe. The service area is also home to the Karuk Tribe, Pulikla Tribe of Yurok People and Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation (formerly the Smith River Rancheria) and the region touches the northwestern portion of the Wiyot ancestral territory.

European settlement came in waves. The area was first recorded in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century by the Spanish, with the “discovery” of Humboldt Bay in 1806. After that, Europeans came to the Humboldt Area to extract natural resources. In the early 1800s, Russian boats hunted sea otters, decimating the otter population. The California Gold Rush in the 1850s brought significant colonization, displacement and genocide, impacts that continue to be felt today. While Humboldt County was not a major source of gold, the area acted as a landing point and supply hub.<sup>1,2</sup>

Attention soon shifted to other abundant natural resources in the region, particularly its redwood forests, referred to as “red gold.” Shipbuilding and fishing became major industries, with Eureka, Shelter Cove and Trinidad supporting sizeable fishing fleets. These industries were soon joined by the agriculture industry, thanks to the region’s rich soils.<sup>3,4</sup> With the rise of the automobile and the connection of Humboldt County to San Francisco with passenger rail in the early 20th century, tourism was added to the industry mix.<sup>5,6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “A Brief History of Humboldt County” Pamela Service. Humboldt County Historical Society. <https://www.humboldthistory.org/>

<sup>2</sup> “Humboldt County: A Briefest of Histories.” Susie Van Kirk. Cal Poly Humboldt Library Special Collections & Archives. <https://specialcollections.humboldt.edu/humboldt-county-briefest-histories>

<sup>3</sup> Humboldt County Historical Society.

<sup>4</sup> Cal Poly Humboldt

<sup>5</sup> Humboldt County Historical Society.

<sup>6</sup> “Trains Into Humboldt.” Humboldt County Historical Society.

<https://www.humboldthistory.org/history-nuggets/2022/6/17/trains-into-humboldt>

However, by the late 20th century, the timber and fishing industries declined. In timber production, this was due to decades of overharvesting and a new-found emphasis on conserving the old-growth redwoods that remained.<sup>7</sup> Fishing suffered from overharvesting as well, along with the results of dam and water management practices that caused anadromous fish populations--these are fish such as salmon that hatch in freshwater, migrate to the ocean and then at some point return to freshwater to spawn--once incredibly valuable resources. The 1960s brought underground alternative agriculture to the region, which became a major economic driver for the region. Legalization brought new regulations, competition and corporate interests to the market, leading to price drops and economic challenges for legacy growers.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> "Regional Plan Part 1." Redwood Region RISE.  
[https://ccrp.humboldt.edu/sites/default/files/pages\\_from\\_regional\\_plan\\_part\\_1-redwood\\_region\\_overview.pdf](https://ccrp.humboldt.edu/sites/default/files/pages_from_regional_plan_part_1-redwood_region_overview.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Redwood Region RISE.

## Humboldt County Today

Humboldt County today has a population of just under 134,000. While the county remains largely Caucasian, it is becoming more diverse over time. Important to the region's economy, culture and current management of natural resources, the original peoples who came to the area thousands of years ago still live here and represent a much higher-than-average percentage of the population.

The county's remoteness represents a distinguishing factor and a mixed blessing. Though greatly altered, the area appears in many ways to be naturally pristine. This draws tourists and motivates talented people to want to make a living here. But remoteness comes with infrastructure challenges, health care challenges, cost challenges and others. Building on the county's strengths and addressing weaknesses is one of the themes of this document.

While logging, fishing and alternative agriculture all continue to contribute economically, their employment is substantially smaller than it was. The area has experienced repeated boom and bust cycles and is currently in a bust. There is a clear need for additional industries that provide good jobs. Ideally, these jobs would be multi-generational and the industry mix would be more diversified.

Residents of the county generally recognize that it's not for everyone, but for those who appreciate the complexity and culture that is Humboldt, there may be no better place. They hope for a bright economic future that allows them and their children to build productive lives.

## Humboldt County Vision

The following vision was created with broad community support through various virtual and in-person engagements:

*“Humboldt County aspires to be a model of economic vitality and resilience, where a diverse economy thrives alongside our commitment to foster sustainable economic development, enhance community wellbeing and build climate-resilient infrastructure to support future generations.”*

## About the CEDS

This Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy is a document for Humboldt County, California, updated every five years, that charts a course for the county’s future. It allows partners throughout the county and region to align around shared priorities. This alignment positions our county to leverage investment from local, state and federal governments. The strategy identifies local needs, actions necessary to address those needs and organizations with the ability to lead those actions.

## How will the CEDS be used?

**Educate**—The plan will engage elected officials, staff, partner organizations, business leaders and the community to help amplify the vision and intent of strategic actions.

**Invest**—The plan will leverage greater investment in Humboldt County priorities by providing data and rationale for obtaining public and private funding and resources for implementation and for aligning with local, regional and state legislative agendas to collaboratively solicit further investment.

**Collaborate** - The work will engage organizations and departments within Humboldt County to break down silos and leverage resources to the greatest extent possible to elevate one another's work.

## Guiding Documents and Alignment

The state of California, the Redwood Region and localities within Humboldt County have provided a strong base from which to build the next steps for economic resiliency.

In developing this CEDS, Humboldt County considers many relevant planning documents, linked throughout. These include, but are not limited to:

- 2009-2019 Humboldt Industry Sector Report
- 2009-2019 Targets of Opportunity Report
- 2018-2023 Comprehensive Development Strategy
- 2022 Regional Transportation Improvement Program
- 2025-2028 Local and Regional Workforce Development Plans
- California Transportation Plan 2050
- County of Humboldt Strategic Framework
- Humboldt County Community Resource List
- Humboldt County General Plan
- Humboldt Regional Climate Action Plan
- Humboldt Rising Community Outreach Report
- Port Readiness Plan
- Economic Development Recovery and Resiliency Playbook
- Redwood Region RISE Regional Roadmap
- VROOM 2022-2042 Variety in Rural Options of Mobility Plan
- Project Rebound

## Data-informed Strategies

To ensure the strategies outlined in this report are well-suited to the unique conditions in Humboldt County, a lengthy quantitative data analysis was undertaken at the outset of the project. Data from a variety of public – local, state, federal – and private sources were collected and analyzed. In many cases, demographic- and community-related data have been sourced through the U.S. Census or the American Community Survey (ACS); as of the writing of this report, data from the 2020 Census and 2023 ACS 1-Year Estimates are the most recent. Much of the industry and occupation data has been provided by Lightcast, a labor market analytics company that provides historical and projected data for industries and occupations at various levels of specificity. To promote transparency in our process, data sources are provided in captions for every table and graph in the report.

The project team worked in close collaboration with Humboldt County to confirm that the findings of the data analysis were accurate and reflective of the local experience. While these data make up a critical part of the report, they are not intended to stand alone. In developing the strategic framework for this report, findings of the quantitative analysis were measured against those of other local and regional reports and paired with feedback collected through stakeholder engagement to provide a thorough evaluation of the local economy.

## Stakeholder Engagement

In developing this CEDS, Humboldt County has had ongoing engagement with a diverse set of local and regional stakeholders, including elected officials, government staff, economic developers, business organizations, educational institutions, healthcare facilities, other community partners and the general public.

A community survey was built upon previous engagements and focused on gathering input on a shared vision and perspectives related to local industries, infrastructure, community needs and the impact on residents and workers. The survey resulted in more than 800 responses from residents, workers, and business owners.

An on-site workshop was conducted—a fast-paced and active session focused on pinpointing what is holding Humboldt County back from economic advancement, catalysts that are already propelling the county forward, identifying key themes and goals, building on opportunities and finding potential approaches to mitigate the county’s challenges. Using compiled data and results of engagement feedback as a solid foundation, the CEDS Committee strategy session mapped a framework for success with desired outcomes, specific tactics, projected timelines, metrics for success, partners and available and needed resources. Follow-up conversations and resource sharing set the stage for the strategic action plan. The strategy development engagements involved 30 different individuals and organizations.

# ECONOMIC RESILIENCY

COME IN!  
WE'RE **OPEN**

A hand is shown holding a rectangular sign with a double-line border. The sign contains the text 'COME IN! WE'RE OPEN' in a serif font. The word 'OPEN' is significantly larger than the other words. The sign is suspended by a chain from a dark, rounded rectangular shape at the top of the frame. The background is a teal gradient with a faint floral pattern.

Each strategy within Humboldt County’s plan is developed to maximize the community’s resilience to potential economic shocks. The process requires the ability to anticipate what risks exist, evaluate potential risk impacts and proactively mitigate those risks. The strategic action plan also outlines ways in which Humboldt County can build capacity to respond to disruptions that may arise due to:

- Events or downturns in the national or global economies that impact consumer spending and demand for local goods and services;
- Downturns in a region’s major industries;
- Disasters – natural or man-made – extreme weather events, critical infrastructure disruptions or loss of a major employer; or
- Other external shocks.

Measuring economic resiliency is complex, as many factors impact a region’s ability to anticipate, evaluate and respond to shocks. The Hazard and Vulnerability Research Institute at the University of South Carolina has developed the Baseline Resilience Indicators for Communities (BRIC) as a quantitative measure of community resiliency. The BRIC is comprised of 49 indicators across six sub-indices: social, economic, housing/infrastructure, institutional, community capacity and environmental. The sub-indices are scales from 0 to 1, creating a total measure for the county ranging from zero to six, with zero being less resilient and six being more resilient.<sup>9</sup>

When compared to the rest of the nation, Humboldt County has a moderate level of economic resilience, ranking in the 58<sup>th</sup> percentile, meaning that 42% of counties in the U.S. have a higher community resilience. Compared to other counties in California, Humboldt County ranks in the 64<sup>th</sup> percentile, with 36% of counties having a higher community resilience rating.

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<sup>9</sup>

[https://www.sc.edu/study/colleges\\_schools/artsandsciences/centers\\_and\\_institutes/hvri/data\\_and\\_resources/bric/index.php](https://www.sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/artsandsciences/centers_and_institutes/hvri/data_and_resources/bric/index.php)

Table 1: Baseline Resilience Indicators for Communities. Source: USC Hazards Vulnerability & Resilience Institute.<sup>10</sup>

County	Social	Economic	Housing/ Infrastructure	Community Capital	Institutional	Environmental	Total
Humboldt	0.64	0.45	0.28	0.36	0.33	0.57	2.63
Siskiyou	0.63	0.42	0.25	0.35	0.36	0.55	2.56
Del Norte	0.61	0.45	0.22	0.31	0.34	0.56	2.49
Trinity	0.59	0.39	0.20	0.34	0.43	0.58	2.54
Mendocino	0.63	0.44	0.25	0.33	0.36	0.57	2.57

To bolster its economic resilience, Humboldt County has undertaken risk assessments and resiliency planning. Current ongoing initiatives include:

- [Project Rebound](#)
- [Humboldt Community Organizations Active in Disaster \(COAD\)](#)
- [Humboldt County Operational Area Hazard Mitigation Plan](#)
- [Humboldt County Emergency Operations Plan](#)

The intentionality of alignment with local and regional planning aims to increase capacity, durability and agility in Humboldt County’s economy. Each of the following strategies outlines how the approach aligns with current plans and initiatives. The deliberate efforts this CEDS makes to incorporate more comprehensive approaches will provide a solid base for future project planning to ensure increased accessibility and economic stability.

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<sup>10</sup>

[https://www.sc.edu/study/colleges\\_schools/artsandsciences/centers\\_and\\_institutes/hvri/data\\_and\\_resources/bric/index.php](https://www.sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/artsandsciences/centers_and_institutes/hvri/data_and_resources/bric/index.php)

# STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN



The Strategic Action Plan provides the framework for Humboldt County's forward movement toward fulfilling the community's vision for the future. The following vision was created with broad community support through various virtual and in-person engagements:

*"Humboldt County aspires to be a model of economic vitality and resilience, where a diverse economy thrives alongside our commitment to foster sustainable economic development, enhance community wellbeing and build climate-resilient infrastructure to support future generations."*

Each strategic focus area includes an introduction with a rationale, links to quantitative and qualitative data that supports it, a description of impacts to the community, our approach to building resiliency and alignment of existing initiatives and priorities.

The state, region, county, localities within Humboldt County and partner organizations have provided a strong base from which to build on that alignment. In lieu of duplicating the details of the existing specialized plans, the CEDS seeks to create synergy at a broader level with a holistic view of economic development. The micro-level actions not specified in this Strategic Action Plan will follow existing plans and initiatives or they will be developed through an additional collaborative process where applicable. This allows partners already progressing the aligned initiatives to continue their momentum without conflict. The intent is to engage organizations and departments within Humboldt County to break down silos and leverage resources to the greatest extent possible to elevate one another's work and position the county to seek additional investment.

# 1. Industry Elevation and Diversification

## Reason

Humboldt County has endured economic shifts in agriculture, forest products and fisheries. Additionally, the community is currently facing significant price drops, which are critical to the local alternative agriculture industry and causing extreme losses in what was previously the highest-producing region in the country. Limited processing facilities and the absence of cold storage options significantly impact profitability and competitiveness in these legacy industries. Humboldt County's target industries also face some of the highest regulatory costs in the nation.

## The Data:

Follow the links for more context, quantitative data, qualitative data and analysis: [SWOT Analysis](#), [Summary Background](#) and [Appendix A](#)

## The Impact

The ripple effects of this decline are extensive, impacting jobs, local businesses and county revenue. Widespread business closures and reduced profitability for small-scale cultivators have occurred. The increasing costs for food producers hinder growth and negatively impact food security.

## Our Approach

**Resiliency:** Humboldt County's economy is heavily influenced by external factors. This dependence limits local control over economic outcomes and hampers long-term planning. Without state-level regulatory reform, improved market access, expanded infrastructure and economic diversification, Humboldt County may continue to face significant economic challenges from this instability. Humboldt County is taking a multi-faceted approach to resiliency. The recent completion of Project Rebound provides insights into target clusters for diversification and the growth of its legacy industries and small businesses. Industry diversification has been shown to reduce risk and create a more stable economy with an increased ability to adapt to fluctuations and disruptions. Elevating existing legacy industries is likely to help preserve local culture and expand job opportunities.

**Alignment:** This strategy aligns with Humboldt County’s recently completed Project Rebound, which identified target clusters to diversify the local economy. The strategy also aligns with Redwood Region Rise (RRRISE) and California’s Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy.

## Evaluation Framework

[Evaluation Framework for Industry Elevation and Diversification:](#) outlines implementation of the following strategic actions, including partners, key performance indicators, checkpoints and timelines.

## Strategic Actions

### **1.1 Advance efforts to cultivate favorable conditions for Humboldt County’s legacy industries to thrive.**

- 1.1.1 Strengthen legacy industries with innovative technologies, regenerative approaches and modernization of facilities.
- 1.1.2 Encourage food hubs, cooperatives and collaborations for collective purchasing, distribution, project bidding and marketing.
- 1.1.3 Prioritize investment in cold storage, supply chain efficiencies and streamlined distribution to support food resiliency.
- 1.1.4 Create, support and expand regional trade shows, farmers markets, fish markets and industry fairs to connect buyers and sellers/wholesalers.

## **1.2 Catalyze growth for Humboldt County’s emerging industries.**

- 1.2.1 Collaborate on the development of incentive programs to attract emerging industries.
- 1.2.2 Increase attraction and recruitment efforts, especially among target industries such as construction, financial services, renewable energy, education and training, healthcare and niche manufacturing.
- 1.2.3 Increase access to innovative technologies that appeal to emerging industries.

## **1.3 Foster an effective and valuable small business ecosystem.**

- 1.3.1 Incentivize tourism-related business development.
- 1.3.2 Build upon existing professional development and leadership programs for business owners.
- 1.3.3 Capitalize a low-interest revolving loan fund for small and medium-sized businesses to invest in modernization and technology.
- 1.3.4 Collaborate with partners to expand small business mentorship programs.
- 1.3.5 Expand assistance for small business succession programs and assistance with scaling or transitions.

## **1.4 Revise regulations, policies and incentives to boost local industries and drive future investment.**

- 1.4.1 Encourage the use of local preferences in procurement.
- 1.4.2 Continue evaluation of potential incentive programs.
- 1.4.3 Streamline permitting and policies where applicable and provide technical assistance for businesses to navigate requirements and processes.
- 1.4.4 Increase competitiveness in global markets and avenues for foreign and direct investments.

# **2. Collaboration**

## **The Reason**

Economic development-related initiatives in Humboldt County are currently fragmented, with duplicative initiatives, sometimes accompanied by a territorial mindset. Roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined. Combined efforts are critical to conducting core

economic development operations like small business and entrepreneurship support, workforce development, infrastructure development, tourism marketing, business retention and expansion and business attraction.

There is momentum for collaboration following Redwood Region RISE (RRRISE) and the county's economic development practitioners, some of whom remain in the field, previously collaborated at a higher level through the Prosperity Network. Humboldt County has a broad network of organizations and stakeholders dedicated to promoting and leveraging the region's assets to attract businesses, residents, workers and tourists. However, there is presently no cohesive plan or consistent messaging.

### **The Data:**

Follow the links for more context, quantitative data, qualitative data and analysis: [SWOT Analysis](#), [Summary Background](#) and [Appendix A](#)

### **The Impact**

Conflicts and unnecessary duplication of efforts often lead to confusion and ineffective service delivery to businesses, residents, workers and even tourists. Lack of communication between partner organizations can hinder planning and perpetuate capacity challenges.

## Our Approach

**Resiliency:** Successful collaborations set common goals resulting in decreased territorialism, increased communication, streamlined service delivery and more effective resource acquisition, distribution and utilization. This coordination also paves the way for preparedness and response to disruptions. **Alignment:** Redwood Region RISE

## Evaluation Framework

[Evaluation Framework for Collaboration](#): outlines implementation of the following strategic actions, including partners, key performance indicators, checkpoints and timelines.

## Strategic Actions

### **2.1 Continue Redwood Region Rise collaboration (beyond CA Jobs First) and actively participate in implementation.**

- 2.1.1 Explore reorganization of economic development roles and responsibilities (e.g. county economic development commission).
- 2.1.2 Support collaborative asset mapping of facilities, services and initiatives related to target industries, fundamental community needs and other collaborative efforts related to economic and community development.
  - 2.1.2.1 Identify redundancies and gaps in missions and activities within the asset map.
  - 2.1.2.2 Identify critical assets within the map—assets that, if they experience significant disruption or failure, would create a domino effect on the system or key services.
  - 2.1.2.3 Plan for organizational continuity (e.g., contingency planning for critical assets, key employee turnover, succession planning, etc.)
  - 2.1.2.4 Streamline communications and processes.
  - 2.1.2.5 Clarify the action plan to address gaps and eliminate unnecessary redundancy.

### **2.2 Set a unified brand and marketing strategy for Humboldt County.**

- 2.2.1 Establish formal relationships and partnership structures (e.g., tourism advisory board) to streamline efforts among various organizations within the regional marketing framework.

- 2.2.2 Identify best practices for effective destination marketing organizations.
- 2.2.3 Determine a core message.
- 2.2.4 Integrate indigenous cultural literacy into the brand.
- 2.2.5 Develop and utilize shared technology.
- 2.2.6 Create a work plan to build a brand around triple-bottom lines.

### **2.3 Develop marketing strategies to attract and retain businesses.**

- 2.3.1 Prepare marketing materials and strategies for target industries, suppliers and site selectors.
- 2.3.2 Develop and deliver a prospectus for identified priority properties and development districts within the county.
- 2.3.3 Leverage networks of existing industry leaders and community members for business outreach.
- 2.3.4 Create a campaign to attract and retain tourism-related businesses – retail, restaurants, lodging, personal services, recreation, agritourism, etc.—and include local business support resources.
- 2.3.5 Invest in “buy local” campaigns.

### **2.4 Leverage partnerships and marketing to attract and retain residents and workforce.**

- 2.4.1 Collaborate with local organizations to work with employers on an initiative to better attract and retain talent.
- 2.4.2 Promote Humboldt County’s opportunities, assets, and quality of life.
- 2.4.3 Develop marketing specifically to attract the workforce for target industries.
- 2.4.4 Create a welcoming and homecoming community initiative.
- 2.4.5 Collaborate with educational institutions on recruitment efforts.

### **2.5 Invest in a wide variety of targeted marketing campaigns to draw visitors to the county and region.**

- 2.5.1 Preserve and promote Humboldt County’s natural, cultural, and built environments.
- 2.5.2 Preserve and promote the vibrancy of Humboldt County’s culture of art, history, and adventurous spirit.
- 2.5.3 Highlight the resiliency and influences of the Indigenous peoples of Humboldt County.

- 2.5.4 Continue to improve campaigns to advertise public and private tourism attractions and activities.
- 2.5.5 Engage media influencers to visit and post content about Humboldt County.

## 3. Natural Assets and Disaster Preparedness

### The Reason

Protecting Humboldt County's natural assets is essential for continued economic growth. However, the area is facing a multifaceted and substantial threat. Humboldt County is susceptible to rising sea levels, earthquakes and increasingly severe weather events like flooding, landslides, drought and wildfires. Rising temperatures, pest infestation, warming waters and ocean acidification have also created challenges.

Natural assets draw tourists, attract businesses, sustain legacy industries and inspire people to love living, working and learning in Humboldt County. This is foundational to economic development, but human activities can cause pollution, contamination, resource depletion, habitat destruction and biodiversity loss.

### The Data:

Follow the links for more context, quantitative data, qualitative data and analysis: [SWOT Analysis](#) and [Summary Background](#)

### The Impact

Humboldt County's legacy industries—agriculture, tourism, aquaculture, fisheries, forestry—are particularly reliant on the health of the area's natural assets in order to thrive. Much of the county's population and institutional infrastructure is located near coastal zones. Even modest sea level rise and extreme weather events can disrupt access to services, displace residents and require costly mitigation. Pollution and other human impacts on natural assets can lead to significant health and safety issues.

### Our Approach

**Resiliency:** This strategy is fundamental to economic resiliency. Proactive planning is a critical part of managing risks—such as those posed by extreme weather events—and can provide a clear framework for disaster

response. Preventing overuse of natural assets and mitigating the effects of human activities can preserve these assets for sustainable economic progress.

**Alignment:** Humboldt County Hazard Mitigation Plan (update in progress), Regional Climate Action Plan

## Evaluation Framework

[Evaluation Framework for Natural Assets and Disaster Preparedness:](#) outlines implementation of the following strategic actions, including partners, key performance indicators, checkpoints and timelines.

## Strategic Actions

### 3.1 Prepare for natural disasters.

- 3.1.1 Update Humboldt County's Hazard Mitigation Plan and other disaster response plans, including those for local organizations, businesses and the community.
  - 3.1.1.1 Ensure all relevant staff are familiar with hazard mitigation and disaster response plans.
  - 3.1.1.2 Encourage local businesses and organizations to create or update business resiliency plans.
  - 3.1.1.3 Educate the community about how residents can prepare for and respond to natural disasters.
- 3.1.2 Collaborate on the implementation of the Regional Climate Action Plan.
  - 3.1.2.1 Create a campaign to effectively disseminate information to the public about the plan and its importance.
  - 3.1.2.2 Assist with funding and resource acquisition to implement the plan.
  - 3.1.2.3 Advocate for new regulations and zoning where appropriate.

### 3.2 Balance increases in use and development with the protection of natural assets.

- 3.2.1 Mitigate of contaminants on potential development properties; discourage development in hazardous/sensitive areas.
  - 3.2.1.1 Conduct a brownfield analysis.
- 3.2.2 Support provisions and appropriate maintenance of natural assets and green spaces.
- 3.2.3 Research and utilize best practices in sustainable tourism.

## 4. Fundamental Community Needs

### The Reason

Humboldt County struggles with persistent challenges related to fundamental community needs like healthcare, housing and education. The county's population is aging and there has been an accelerating population loss in recent years, largely due to out-migration. Industry leaders across sectors consistently report challenges in recruiting and retaining talent. Critical industries such as healthcare are particularly

strained, with long-standing job vacancies and reduced access to quality and specialized services. In addition, housing development has slowed over the past two decades. While education and workforce training are strengths in Humboldt County, there are continued concerns about skills gaps, declining student enrollment, staffing shortages and funding uncertainty.

## The Data

Follow the links for more context, quantitative data, qualitative data and analysis: [SWOT Analysis](#), [Summary Background](#) and [Appendix A](#)

## The Impact

The decline in Humboldt County's population reduces overall consumer demand, intensifies workforce shortages across key industries and dampens investor confidence. As businesses struggle with these realities, the quality of life for residents is also negatively impacted. The strain on education, lack of healthcare access, limited housing options and rising costs disproportionately impact residents who are already disadvantaged.

## Our Approach

**Resiliency:** Humboldt County's ability to attract, retain and train workers is key to economic resiliency. Fundamental community needs like housing, healthcare and education and training opportunities are critical to this effort. Encouraging infill housing and higher-density development helps meet the housing demand while protecting natural landscapes. Strengthening local education and training systems builds a pipeline of skilled talent prepared to meet the needs of a changing economy, while expanding access to healthcare helps ensure a healthy community.

**Alignment:** 2025-2028 Local and Regional Workforce Development Plans, Redwood Region RISE, Humboldt County General Plan Housing Element, McKinleyville Community Plan, Arcata Gateway Plan, City of Eureka General Plan Housing Element

## Evaluation Framework

[Evaluation Framework for Fundamental Community Needs](#): outlines implementation of the following strategic actions, including partners, key performance indicators, checkpoints and timelines.

## Strategic Actions

### **4.1 Catalyze the growth of the healthcare industry to expand opportunities and support local demand.**

- 4.1.1 Support local and regional workforce assessments that focus on priority occupations in healthcare.
- 4.1.2 Strengthen county-wide emergency response, including continuity with disaster response plans.
- 4.1.3 Explore the development of regional healthcare hubs.<sup>11</sup>
- 4.1.4 Encourage expansion of telehealth solutions for local and regional healthcare providers.
- 4.1.5 Expand mobile health services (dental, general practitioner, etc.) and access to medical transportation.
- 4.1.6 Increase public awareness of health and wellness programs, including preventative care and familiarity with telehealth service use.
- 4.1.7 Invest in culturally-responsive approaches to health and wellness by intentionally engaging communities with inequitable health outcomes.
- 4.1.8 Conduct environmental health evaluation of impacts on the public health from pollution, air quality and other environmental hazards.

### **4.2 Enhance housing stock availability and quality at all income and market levels.**

- 4.2.1 Support regional efforts to conduct a current situational assessment and strategic plan for housing that considers the impact on current residents and priority industries.
- 4.2.2 Encourage the development of a range of housing types suitable for a range of income levels, including market rate, moderate income, low income, mixed income, single-family, multi-family, ADUs and mixed-use housing.
- 4.2.3 Support sustainable growth in the forestry and construction target industries to increase the supply of alternative and

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<sup>11</sup> The hub model organizes health care services around a central facility that coordinates with smaller, connected satellite campuses. This structure helps streamline patient care and resource management across the network.

regenerative building materials and increase skilled talent for housing development.

- 4.2.4 Collaborate on the expansion and elevated impacts of the first-time home buyer program and tribal housing programs.
- 4.2.5 Reduce barriers to housing development through a multi-faceted approach to include potential nontraditional opportunities and streamlined permitting and zoning.
- 4.2.6 Advance initiatives to provide assistance for the unhoused population.
- 4.2.7 Explore approaches to address dilapidated housing and long-term vacancies.
- 4.2.8 Evaluate the potential for dedicated housing or housing incentives to attract workers for target industries.

### **4.3 Provide avenues for growth in workforce initiatives, education and training to develop a relevant talent pool for employers and increase wages and promising career opportunities for workers.**

- 4.3.1 Support the development of local training centers for trades.
- 4.3.2 Expand apprenticeships programs and paid internship experiences in emerging and target industries.
- 4.3.3 Enhance local university education through public investment in K-16.
- 4.3.4 Explore incentives for local residents to stay in Humboldt County, (e.g., housing stipends, longevity bonus, loan repayment assistance).
- 4.3.5 Support the development of entrepreneurship programs in local schools.
- 4.3.6 Encourage more dual enrollment options, STEAM education for students and higher education sustainability initiatives.
- 4.3.7 Contribute resources to the development of childcare initiatives that increase the accessibility and affordability of childcare options; encourage training and incentive programs for childcare workers.
- 4.3.8 Build strong pathways to postsecondary education and careers.
- 4.3.9 Support regional and local efforts to invest in workforce data and scholarship/incentive opportunities.

4.3.10 Engage with businesses to provide information and context around wages, workforce programs, best practices and opportunities.

## 5. Infrastructure

### The Reason

Humboldt County is geographically isolated, approximately 250 miles from the nearest major metropolitan area and reliant on a single north-south transportation corridor. Humboldt County has a lack of access to rail, limited commercial air service and aging infrastructure from roads and bridges to water and wastewater.

As the endpoint of a single high-voltage transmission line, the county's energy grid is underpowered, restricting its capacity to import and export electricity. This presents a particular challenge as Humboldt looks to expand its renewable energy sector, limiting the ability to transmit clean energy to larger markets and slowing potential growth.

### The Data

Follow the links for more context, quantitative data, qualitative data and analysis: [SWOT Analysis](#), [Summary Background](#)

### The Impact

These infrastructure challenges impact public safety and quality of life, with significant strains on emergency response, healthcare access, education access and workforce mobility. Infrastructure challenges impact tourism, workforce recruitment and enrolment in higher education. There are major constraints on the county's target industries, business operations and investment attraction. Industries that rely heavily on transportation and specialized facilities, such as forestry, aquaculture and fisheries, are particularly vulnerable to Humboldt's infrastructure deficits. Transporting goods to and from Humboldt involves navigating mountainous terrain and long travel distances, which can delay shipments, raise expenses and reduce competitiveness in broader markets. Additionally, the smaller local consumer base limits economies of scale, while supply chain inefficiencies can discourage outside investment.

### Our Approach

**Resiliency:** Infrastructure is a critical factor in improving economic resilience for Humboldt County. It provides the essential transportation and utilities that residents and businesses need to thrive.

**Alignment:** Humboldt County General Plan, Variety in Rural Options of Mobility (VROOM) 2022-2024, California Transportation Plan 2050

## Evaluation Framework

[Evaluation Framework for Infrastructure](#): outlines implementation of the following strategic actions, including partners, key performance indicators, checkpoints, and timelines.

## Strategic Actions

### **5.1 Develop and maintain transportation infrastructure that supports local industries and increases access for residents.**

- 5.1.1 Strengthen the fragile road transportation infrastructure connecting Humboldt County to the rest of California.
- 5.1.2 Invest in infrastructure and urban design improvements that promote multi-modal transportation—such as expanded sidewalks, pedestrian-only zones, safe crossings, and mixed-use development—to reduce car dependency and encourage foot traffic in commercial areas.
- 5.1.3 Expand access, capacity, and ridership of public transportation.
- 5.1.4 Support airport improvements and enhance marketing efforts.
- 5.1.5 Leverage existing harbor assets, development, and modernization of additional port facilities (e.g., heavy marine terminal).
- 5.1.6 Assess opportunities for potential rail access.
- 5.1.7 Continue and expand the deployment of transportation that uses renewable energy and new technology.

## **5.2 Increase reliability and resiliency of electric infrastructure.**

- 5.2.1 Modernize and build capacity of the grid for resiliency, reliability, and increased integration of renewable energy.
- 5.2.2 Increase energy generation by exploring opportunities, including waste-to-energy and bioenergy, solar, ocean, hydrogen, and wind.
- 5.2.3 Support innovation in energy production and train energy workers to utilize automation and robotics to enhance quality and efficiency.
- 5.2.4 Plan for continuity of energy services, including clean backup power systems for essential facilities and services (e.g., hospitals, emergency response, shelters).
- 5.2.5 Create a renewable energy overlay district.
- 5.2.6 Enhance programs that promote energy efficiency, provide energy assistance for low-income households, and encourage reduced usage and decreased reliance on traditional power grids.
- 5.2.7 Support worker-owned, Tribal, and standalone clean energy enterprises, including solar-plus storage systems and small-scale wind energy installations.
- 5.2.8 Support efforts to establish “Clean Energy Hubs.”



## **5.3 Provide support and resources to expand broadband infrastructure.**

- 5.3.1 Increase broadband expansion into rural areas.
- 5.3.2 Encourage completion of broadband infrastructure from existing operators.

#### **5.4 Expand water, wastewater, and solid waste infrastructure.**

- 5.4.1 Expand efforts to train and retain operators.
- 5.4.2 Modernize and build capacity for both central and independent wastewater treatment.
- 5.4.3 Provide education on water conservation, nature-based solutions (e.g., wastewater reuse for wildlife/fisheries), closed-loop systems, low-flow fixtures, and expand deployment of similar systems.
- 5.4.4 Expand integration into county or municipal systems where possible.
- 5.4.5 Expand utilization of the RMDZ program to provide businesses with technical assistance and other resources.

# EVALUATION FRAMEWORK



The Evaluation Framework outlines the implementation of the actions identified in the Strategic Action Plan. This includes key performance indicators and timelines for completion. In addition, the strategies are accompanied by potential partners to advance the efforts, resources—such as funding, information or technical assistance—and catalyst actions that build momentum and set the stage for implementation.

This comprehensive and holistic plan accounts for current, ongoing, and planned initiatives. Some actions will be coordinated and implemented by partners. It is important to note that timelines are estimated and that medium- and long-term timelines may require actions that start within the 0-1 year timeframe. The CEDS Committee may adapt the plan based on internal or external changes.



# 1. Industry Elevation and Diversification

## 1.1 Advance efforts to cultivate favorable conditions for Humboldt County’s legacy industries to thrive.

<i>Action</i>	<i>KPIs</i>	<i>Timeline</i>
1.1.1 Strengthen legacy industries with innovative technologies, regenerative approaches and modernization of facilities.	Summary of activities, notable advancements, gross regional product (GRP), job creation, business expansion, # of new business	Long-term 4-5 years
1.1.2 Encourage food hubs, cooperatives and collaborations for collective purchasing, distribution, project bidding and marketing.	Summary of activities, projects completed, utilization	Medium-term 2-3 years
1.1.3 Prioritize investment in cold storage, supply chain efficiencies and streamlined distribution to support food resiliency.	Cold storage facility development progress, legacy industry leader survey	Medium-term 2-3 years
1.1.4 Create, support and expand regional trade shows, farmers markets, fish markets and industry fairs to connect buyers and sellers/wholesalers	Summary of activities, new initiatives and participation	Medium-term 2-3 years

**Partners:** State And Local Governments, Tribes, Developers, Planners, Legacy Industry Leaders, Chambers Of Commerce, Community Services Districts, The Alliance CDFI, Redwood Region Economic Development Commission, North Edge, Humboldt Area Foundation, Cal Poly Humboldt, College Of The Redwoods, The Redwood Coast Energy Authority And The Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District, UC Davis Extension

**Resources:** USDA, American Ag Credit, North Coast SBDC, Headwaters Fund, Apex, WIOA, Buy Indian Act, Private Capital, Land, Humboldt County Workforce Development Board

**Catalysts:** Humboldt Bay Port Development And Heavy Lift Terminal, Dockside Market, Nordic Aquafarms, Tribal Enterprise Career Pathway, North Coast Growers Association Food Hub

## 1.2 Catalyze growth for Humboldt County’s emerging industries.

<i>Action</i>	<i>KPIs</i>	<i>Timeline</i>
1.2.1 Collaborate on the development of incentive programs to attract emerging industries.	Summary of activities, changes in incentives and resource acquisition	Medium-term 2-3 years
1.2.2 Increase attraction and recruitment efforts, especially among target industries such as construction, financial services, renewable energy, education and training, healthcare and niche manufacturing.	Summary of attraction and recruitment activities, GRP, job creation, business expansion, # of new business	Medium-term 2-3 years
1.2.3 Increase access to innovative technologies that appeal to emerging industries.	Summary of activities, notable advancements	Long-term 4-5 years

**Partners:** *State And Local Governments, Tribes, Developers, Planners, Legacy Industry Leaders, Chambers Of Commerce, Community Services Districts, The Alliance CDFI, Redwood Region Economic Development Commission (RREDC), North Edge, Humboldt Area Foundation, Cal Poly Humboldt, College Of The Redwoods, The Redwood Coast Energy Authority And The Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District*

**Resources:** *North Coast SBDC, APEX, Headwaters Fund, Buy Indian Act, Private Capital, Land, WindLink, Humboldt County Workforce Development Board*

**Catalysts:** *Humboldt Bay Port Development And Heavy Lift Terminal, Tribal Enterprise Career Pathway, North Coast Growers Association Food Hub*

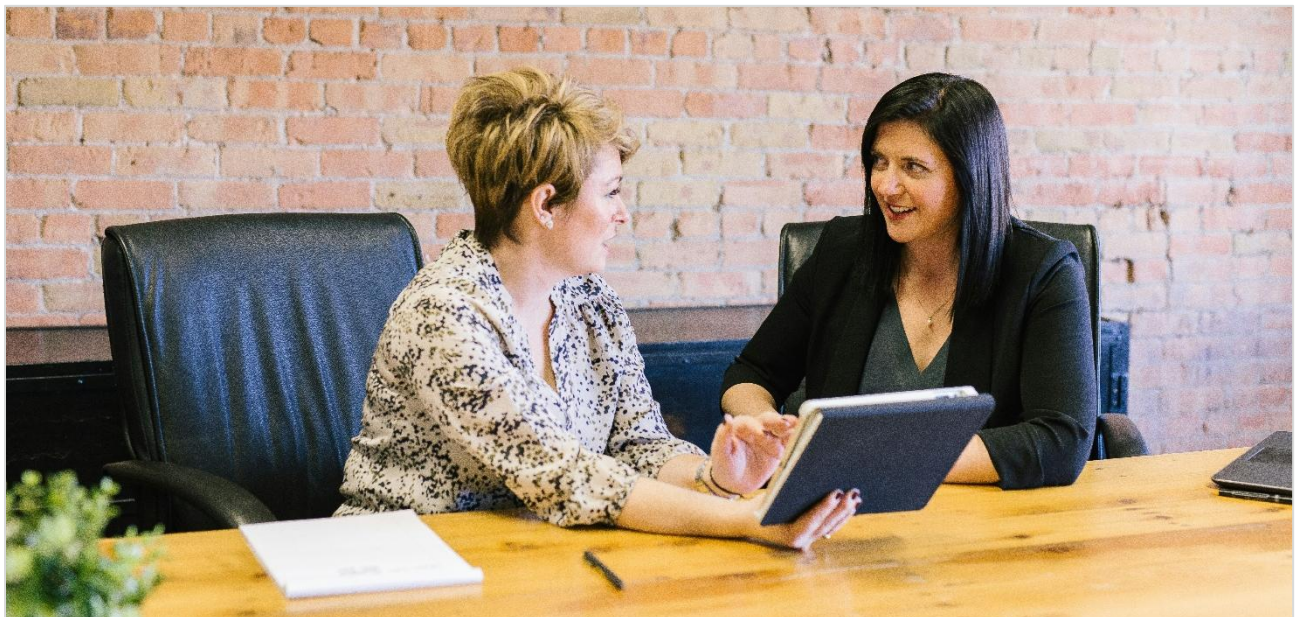
### 1.3 Foster an effective and valuable small business ecosystem.

<i>Action</i>	<i>KPIs</i>	<i>Timeline</i>
1.3.1 Incentivize tourism-related business development.	Summary of activities, changes in incentives and resource acquisition, jobs	Medium-term 2-3 years
1.3.2 Build upon existing professional development and leadership programs for business owners.	Summary of activities, # of participants	Short-term 0-1 year
1.3.3 Capitalize a low-interest revolving loan fund for small and medium-sized businesses to invest in modernization and technology.	Resource acquisition, investments, allocations, notable accomplishments	Medium-term 2-3 years
1.3.4 Collaborate with partners to expand small business mentorship programs.	Summary of activities, list of programs, new initiatives, # of participants	Medium-term 2-3 years
1.3.5 Expand assistance for small business success programs and assistance with scaling or other transitions.	Summary of activities, list of programs, new initiatives, # of participants	Medium-term 2-3 years

**Partners:** State And Local Governments, Tribes, The North Coast Small Business Development Center (SBDC), Chambers Of Commerce, Main Street Organizations, Tourism Partners, Business Owners, Lenders, The Alliance CDFI, The Redwood Region Economic Development Commission, North Edge, K-16 Schools, Lenders, APEX, WindLink

**Resources:** Revolving Loan Fund, Small Business Administration, Go Biz, HUD CDBG

**Catalysts:** North Coast SBDC Innovation Hub



## 1.4 Revise regulations, policies and incentives to boost local industry growth and drive future investment.

<i>Action</i>	<i>KPIs</i>	<i>Timeline</i>
1.4.1 Encourage the use of local preferences in procurement.	Summary of outreach, planning and policy adoption	Short-term 0-1 year
1.4.2 Continue evaluation of potential incentive programs.	Summary of activities, list of incentives that have been created, revised, eliminated	Short-term 0-1 year
1.4.3 Streamline permitting and policies where applicable and provide technical assistance for businesses to navigate requirements and processes.	Description of actions and changes, number of businesses assisted.	Medium-term 2-3 years
1.4.4 Increase competitiveness in global markets and avenues for foreign direct investment	Summary of activities, exports	Long-term 4-5 years

**Partners:** *Municipalities, Economic Development Partners, Business And Industry Leaders*

**Resources:** *Best Practice Examples*

## 2. Collaboration

### 2.1 Continue Redwood Region RISE collaboration (beyond CA Jobs First) and actively participate in implementation.

<i>Action</i>	<i>KPIs</i>	<i>Timeline</i>
2.1.1 Explore reorganization of economic development roles and responsibilities (e.g. county economic development commission).	Summary of activities, outline of structure, partners, coordination plan	Short-term 0-1 year
2.1.2 Support collaborative asset mapping of facilities, services and initiatives related to target industries, fundamental community needs and other collaborative efforts related to economic and community development.	Asset map completed, gaps identified, summary of activities to strengthen assets and boost resiliency	Medium-term 2-3 years

**Partners:** Redwood Region RISE Tables And Sector Coordinators, Economic Development Partners, Workforce Partners

**Resources:** Redwood Region RISE, Best Practice Examples

**Catalysts:** California Jobs First Initiative, Redwood Region RISE

### 2.2 Set a unified brand and marketing strategy for Humboldt County.

<i>Action</i>	<i>KPIs</i>	<i>Timeline</i>
2.2.1 Establish formal relationships and partnership structures (e.g. tourism advisory board) to streamline efforts among various organizations within the regional marketing framework.	Structure determined, partner list, any applicable related documentation (e.g. by-laws, agreements)	Short-term 0-1 year
2.2.2 Identify best practices for effective destination marketing organizations..	List of criteria and practices identified	Short-term 0-1 year
2.2.3 Determine a core message.	Summary of activities, core message established	Medium-term 2-3 years
2.2.4 Integrate indigenous cultural literacy into the brand.	Summary of engagement and approach to integration	Medium-term 2-3 years
2.2.5 Develop and utilize shared technology.	Applicable research documentation, technology acquisition, implementation and user training	Long-term 4-5 years
2.2.6 Create a work plan to build a brand around triple-bottom lines.	Work plan developed	Medium-term 2-3 years

**Partners:** Tourism Partners, Economic Development Partners, Tribes, Foundations

**Resources:** Transient Occupancy Tax, Community Input, Potential Marketing Consultant Or Service Provider

**Catalysts:** California Jobs First Initiative, Redwood Region RISE

## 2.3 Develop marketing strategies to attract and retain businesses.

<i>Action</i>	<i>KPIs</i>	<i>Timeline</i>
2.3.1 Prepare marketing materials and strategies for target industries, suppliers and site selectors.	Target industry-specific marketing plan and materials developed, summary of outreach conducted	Short-term 0-1 year
2.3.2 Develop and deliver a prospectus for identified priority properties and development districts within the county.	Priority development areas identified, prospectus completed, summary of outreach conducted	Medium-term 2-3 years
2.3.3 Leverage networks of existing industry and community leaders for business outreach.	Description of outreach activities, any notable results or connections.	Medium-term 2-3 years
2.3.4 Create a campaign to attract and retain tourism-related businesses—retail, restaurants, lodging, personal services, recreation, agritourism, etc.—and include local business support resources.	Campaign created, description of outreach activities and results	Medium-term 2-3 years
2.3.5 Invest in “buy local” campaigns.	Campaign(s) created, description of activities and results	Short-term 0-1 year

**Partners:** *Economic Development Partners, Tourism Partners, Businesses, Community*

**Resources:** *Potential Marketing Consultant Or Service Provider, Best Practice Examples*

**Catalysts:** *California Jobs First Initiative, Redwood Region RISE, Project Rebound*

## 2.4 Leverage partnerships and marketing to attract and retain residents and workforce.

<i>Action</i>	<i>KPIs</i>	<i>Timeline</i>
2.4.1 Collaborate with local organizations and employers initiatives to attract and retain talent.	Summary of collaborative activity, employee attraction and retention data	Long-term 4-5 years
2.4.2 Promote Humboldt County’s opportunities, assets and quality of life.	Summary of collaborative activities and results data	Short-term 0-1 year
2.4.3 Develop marketing specifically to attract workforce for target industries.	Marketing developed, summary of outreach efforts and results data	Medium-term 2-3 years
2.4.4 Create a welcoming and homecoming community initiative.	Initiative created, summary of collaborative activities, participation data	Medium-term 2-3 years
2.4.5 Collaborate with educational institutions on recruitment efforts.	Summary of collaborative activities, enrollment data	Medium-term 2-3 years

**Partners:** *Workforce Partners, Economic Development Partners, Educational Institutions, Local Businesses*

**Resources:** *Foundations, Best Practice Examples, Humboldt County Workforce Development Board*

**Catalysts:** *Redwood Region RISE, Project Rebound, Workforce Local and Regional Plan*

## 2.5 Invest in a wide variety of targeted marketing campaigns to draw visitors to the county and region.

<i>Action</i>	<i>KPIs</i>	<i>Timeline</i>
2.5.1 Preserve and promote Humboldt County's natural, cultural and built environments.	Summary of preservation and promotion efforts, resource allocation, tourism data—TOT, reach data, etc.	Short-term 0-1 year
2.5.2 Preserve and promote the vibrancy of Humboldt County's culture of art, history and adventurous spirit.	Summary of preservation and promotion efforts, resource allocation and results	Medium-term 2-3 years
2.5.3 Highlight the resiliency and influences of the Indigenous peoples of Humboldt County.	Summary of promotion efforts, resource allocation and results	Medium-term 2-3 years
2.5.4 Continue to improve campaigns to advertise public and private tourism attractions and activities.	Summary of improvements and promotion efforts, resource allocation, campaign results data	Long-term 4-5 years
2.5.5 Engage media influencers to visit and post content about Humboldt County.	Media influencers engaged, documented posts, tourism data—TOT, reach data, etc.	Medium-term 2-3 years

**Partners:** *Tourism Partners, Economic Development Partners, Tribes, EPIC*

**Resources:** *Transient Occupancy Tax, Foundations, Best Practice Examples*

**Catalysts:** *California Jobs First Initiative, Redwood Region RISE, Regional Climate Action Plan, Tourism Asset Inventory and Strategy Analysis*

## 3. Natural Assets and Disaster Preparedness

### 3.1 Prepare for natural disasters.

Action	KPIs	Timeline
3.1.1 Update Humboldt County’s Hazard Mitigation Plan and other disaster response plans, including those for local organizations, businesses and the community.	Completed plans, summary of planning efforts—any relevant information sessions, training, workshops, or community outreach	Medium-term 2-3 years
3.1.2 Collaborate on the implementation of the Regional Climate Action Plan.	Plan adoption progress updates, summary of implementation efforts	Long-term 4-5 years

**Partners:** State And Local Governments, Tribes, Humboldt Area Foundation, Humboldt Cert Coalition, Emergency Response Services, Healthcare Sector, Business And Industry Leaders, Utility Providers, Environmental Groups, EPIC, RCEA, Education Partners, Tourism Partners, Residents

**Resources:** CalEPA, Cal OES, FEMA, CALTRANS, Best Practice Examples

**Catalysts:** 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan Update Process, Regional Climate Action Plan

### 3.2 Balance increases in use and development with the protection of natural assets.

Action	KPIs	Timeline
3.2.1 Mitigate contaminants on potential development properties; discourage development in hazardous or sensitive areas..	Identification of properties/areas, contaminant assessments, report of mitigation efforts	Long-term 4-5 years
3.2.2 Conduct a brownfield analysis.	Analysis conducted, results report and relevant actions	Medium-term 2-3 years
3.2.3 Support provisions and appropriate maintenance of natural assets and green spaces.	Summary of support and resources allocated, actions taken, relevant results	Medium-term 2-3 years
3.2.4 Research and utilize best practices in sustainable tourism.	List and description of best practice examples	Short-term 0-1 year

**Partners:** State And Local Governments, Tribes, Economic Development Partners, Business And Industry Leaders, EPIC, Educational Partners

**Resources:** US EPA, Calepa, California Department Of Toxic Substance Control (DTSC), California State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), California Association For Local Economic Development (CALED), USDA

**Catalysts:** 2025 Humboldt County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update, California Land Reuse And Revitalization Act (CLRRRA), Gatto Act

## 4. Fundamental Community Needs

### 4.1 Catalyze the growth of the healthcare industry to expand opportunities and support local demand.

<i>Action</i>	<i>KPIs</i>	<i>Timeline</i>
4.1.1 Support local and regional assessments that focus on healthcare provider gaps and priority occupations in healthcare.	Summary of activities, gaps identified, assessment completed	Medium-term 2-3 years
4.1.2 Strengthen county-wide emergency response, including continuity with disaster response plans.	Response times, response outcomes, plans completed	Medium-term 2-3 years
4.1.3 Explore the development of regional healthcare hubs.	Summary of exploratory efforts, determination and any projected actions	Short-term 0-1 year
4.1.4 Encourage expansion of telehealth solutions for local and regional healthcare providers.	# of telehealth users	Medium-term 2-3 years
4.1.5 Expand mobile health services (dental, general practitioner, etc.) and access to medical transportation.	# of mobile health units, population served, utilization, provider/patient ratios	Long-term 4-5 years
4.1.6 Increase public awareness of health and wellness programs, including preventative care and familiarity with telehealth service use.	Outreach metrics (e.g. website traffic, # of sessions held, # of ads placed)	Short-term 0-1 year
4.1.7 Invest in culturally-responsive approaches to health and wellness by intentionally engaging communities with inequitable health outcomes.	Summary of activities, socio-demographic health outcomes	Medium-term 2-3 years
4.1.8 Conduct environmental health evaluation of impacts on the public from pollution, air quality and other environmental hazards.	Funding secured, consultant hired, evaluation conducted	Long-term 4-5 years

**Partners:** K-16 Educators, Healthcare Administrators, Unions, Universities, Local Government, Tribes, North Coast Health Improvement Information Network Referral System, Providence, Open Door, HIS Indian Health Service, SHCHD Southern Humboldt, Kimaw Medical, North Coast Air Quality Control District

**Resources:** California Center For Rural Policy At Cal Poly

**Catalysts:** 2025-2028 Local And Regional Workforce Development Plans

## 4.2 Enhance housing stock availability and quality at all income and market levels.

Action	KPIs	Timeline
4.2.1 Support regional efforts to conduct a current situational assessment and strategic plan for housing that considers the impact on current residents and priority industries.	Summary of activities, resources contributed, assessment completed	Short-term 0-1 year
4.2.2 Encourage the development of a range of housing types suitable for a range of income levels, including market rate, moderate income, low income, mixed income, single-family, multi-family, ADUs and mixed-use housing.	Units developed by type and AMI range, units preserved, projects planned	Long-term 4-5 years
4.2.3 Support sustainable growth in the forestry and construction target industries to increase the supply of alternative and regenerative building materials and increase skilled talent for housing development.	Jobs, GRP, Imports and Exports, construction program enrollment and completion	Long-term 4-5 years
4.2.4 Collaborate on the expansion and elevated impacts of the first-time home buyer program and tribal housing programs,	Summary of activities, resource allocation, utilization	Medium-term 2-3 years
4.2.5 Reduce barriers to housing development through a multi-faceted approach to include potential nontraditional opportunities and streamlined permitting and zoning.	Opportunities considered, planned or utilized, description of permitting and zoning changes	Short-term 0-1 year
4.2.6 Advance initiatives to provide assistance for the unhoused population.	Resources contributed, # of individuals served	Medium-term 2-3 years
4.2.7 Explore approaches to address dilapidated housing and long-term vacancies.	Summary of exploration and actions taken	Short-term 0-1 year
4.2.8 Evaluate the potential for dedicated housing or housing incentives to attract workers for target industries.	Summary of evaluation and any resulting projects	Long-term 2-3 years

**Partners:** Municipalities, Tribes, Housing Authority Of The City Of Eureka And County Of Humboldt, Housing Humboldt, Humboldt County Office Of Education, Humboldt Housing And Homelessness Coalition (HHHC), UPLIFT Eureka, Habitat For Humanity, Betty Chinn Fund, Eureka Rescue Mission, Humboldt Association Of Realtors, Workforce Partners, Education Partners, Planners, Lenders, Property Owners And Managers, Forestry And Construction Industry Leaders, Building Supply Manufacturers And Retailers

**Resources:** Available Land, HAF, California Department Of Housing And Community Development (HCD), US Department Of Housing And Urban Development (HUD), California Housing Partnership

**Catalysts:** 2025 Humboldt County Affordable Housing Needs Report, Local Mills Developing New Products, Redwood Region RISE

### 4.3 Provide avenues for growth in workforce initiatives, education and training to develop a relevant talent pool for employers and increase wages and promising career opportunities for workers.

Action	KPIs	Timeline
4.3.1 Support the development of local training centers for trades.	Summary of activities, development steps taken	Long-term 4-5 years
4.3.2 Expand apprenticeship programs and paid internship experiences in emerging and target industries.	Number of new/expanded apprenticeship programs and interns by industry	Long-term 4-5 years
4.3.3 Enhance local university education through public investment in K-16.	Amount of public funding and resources allocated	Long-term 4-5 years
4.3.4 Explore incentives for local residents to stay in Humboldt County (e.g. housing stipends, longevity bonus, loan repayment assistance)	Summary of research efforts, prioritization of options and any relevant actions taken	Medium-term 2-3 years
4.3.5 Support the development of entrepreneurship programs in local schools.	Description of new/expanded programs, participation data, resources allocated	Short-term 0-1 years
4.3.6 Encourage more dual enrollment options, STEAM education for students and higher education sustainability initiatives.	Description of new or expanded offerings for dual enrollment, STEAM, etc.	Medium-term 2-3 years
4.3.7 Contribute resources to the development of childcare initiatives that increase the accessibility and affordability of childcare options; encourage training and incentive programs for childcare workers.	Resources allocated, summary of progress, relevant data such as new facilities, enrollment, certifications, participation	Medium-term 2-3 years
4.3.8 Build strong pathways to postsecondary education and careers.	Summary of pathway improvements and results	Long-term 4-5 years
4.3.9 Support regional and local efforts to invest in workforce data and scholarship/incentive opportunities.	Summary of activities, identification of sources, scholarship/incentive growth and allocation	Long-term 4-5 years
4.3.10 Engage with businesses to provide information and context around wages, workforce programs, best practices and opportunities.	Summary of engagement activities, materials, number of participants, reach data	Short-term 0-1 year

**Partners:** Workforce Development Partners, Economic Development Partners, Education Partners, Business And Industry Leaders

**Resources:** Local Foundations, California Workforce Development Board (CWDB) Workforce Accelerator Fund, California Employment Training Panel, US Department Of Labor ETA Workforce Data Hub, Division Of Apprenticeship Standards (DAS), American Job Center, Grow Apprenticeship California, U.S. Department Of Education, Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP), Employment Development Department

**Catalysts:** Redwood Region RISE, 2025-2028 Local And Regional Workforce Development Plans

## 5. Infrastructure

### 5.1 Develop and maintain transportation infrastructure that supports local industries and increases access for residents.

Action	KPIs	Timeline
5.1.1 Strengthen the fragile road transportation infrastructure connecting Humboldt County to the rest of California.	Summary of planned and completed transportation projects.	Long-term 4-5 years
5.1.2 Invest in infrastructure and urban design improvements that promote multi-modal transportation—such as expanded sidewalks, pedestrian-only zones, safe crossings, and mixed-use development—to reduce car dependency and encourage foot traffic in commercial areas.	Summary of activities, resources allocated, and results achieved	Medium-term 2-3 years
5.1.3 Expand access, capacity, and ridership of public transportation.	Expanded routes, number of opportunities available, and number of users	Medium-term 2-3 years
5.1.4 Support airport improvements and enhance marketing efforts.	Summary of activities, improvements made, marketing reach data	Medium-term 2-3 years
5.1.5 Leverage existing harbor assets, development, and modernization of additional port facilities (e.g., heavy marine terminal).	Summary of activities, project progress updates	Long-term 4-5 years
5.1.6 Assess opportunities for potential rail access.	Assessment completed	Medium-term 2-3 years
5.1.7 Continue and expand the deployment of transportation that uses renewable energy and new technology.	Projects started and completed, including upgrades	Long-term 4-5 years

**Partners:** Municipalities, Caltrans, Humboldt County Public Works Department, Utility Providers, Humboldt County Association Of Governments, Humboldt Transit Authority

**Resources:** Humboldt Bay Harbor Recreation and Conservation District, Samoa Peninsula Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District (EIFD)

**Catalysts:** Project SOAR, Humboldt County Regional Transportation Plan, Humboldt County Regional Bicycle Plan



## 5.2 Increase reliability and resiliency of electric infrastructure.

Action	KPIs	Timeline
5.2.1 Modernize and build capacity for grid resiliency, reliability, and increased integration of renewable energy.	Project progress updates, energy generation	Long-term 4-5 years
5.2.2 Increase energy generation by exploring opportunities, including waste-to-energy and bioenergy, solar, ocean, hydrogen, and wind.	Summary of research and activities, project progress updates, and energy generation	Long-term 4-5 years
5.2.3 Support innovation in energy production and train energy workers to utilize automation and robotics to enhance quality and efficiency.	Training completions, new innovations planned or implemented	Long-term 4-5 years
5.2.4 Plan for continuity of energy services, including clean backup power systems for essential facilities and services (e.g., hospitals, emergency response, shelters).	Planning process updates, summary of coordination with disaster preparedness efforts, plan completion	Medium-term 2-3 years
5.2.5 Create a renewable energy overlay district.	District plan draft, district designation complete	Medium-term 2-3 years
5.2.6 Enhance programs that promote energy efficiency, provide energy assistance for low-income households and encourage reduced usage and decreased reliance on traditional power grids.	Summary of program progress, participation in programs, usage rates	Short-term 0-1 year
5.2.7 Support worker-owned, Tribal and standalone clean energy enterprises, including solar-plus storage systems and small-scale wind energy installations.	Summary of support activities, projects and resources allocated	Medium-term 2-3 years
5.2.9 Support efforts to establish "Clean Energy Hubs."	Summary of support activities, resources allocated, progress updates	Long-term 4-5 years

**Partners:** Municipalities, Tribes, Economic Development Partners, Education Partners, Business And Industry Leaders, POWER CA, Redwood Coast Energy Authority (RCEA), Vineyard Offshore, RWE Offshore Wind

**Resources:** Bureau Of Ocean Energy Management, Humboldt Wind Energy Area, Grid Resilience And Innovative Partnerships (GRIP), Schatz Energy Research Center

**Catalysts:** Cal Poly Humboldt Schatz Energy Research + Sustainability Center, Pacific Offshore Wind Consortium, Redwood Region RISE, Tribal Energy Resilience And Sovereignty (TERAS), Sandrini Solar Park, North Coast Hwy 36 Solar, Regional Climate Action Plan

## 5.3 Provide support and resources to expand broadband infrastructure.

Action	KPIs	Timeline
5.3.1 Increase broadband expansion into rural areas.	Summary of support, description of new rural expansion projects planned and completed, service data	Long-term 4-5 years
5.3.2 Encourage completion of broadband infrastructure from existing operators.	Summary of support, activities, service data, projects completed	Medium-term 2-3 years

**Partners:** Municipalities, Tribes, economic development partners, service providers

**Resources:** California Public Utilities Commission, Vero Heroes Program, Lifeline

**Catalysts:** Environmental and Social Justice (ESJ) Action Plan, Vero Fiber Networks Project, Karuk Tribe Fiber-To-The-Home Project, AT&T Project, Fairhaven model Innovation Challenge, Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program

## 5.4 Expand water, wastewater and solid waste infrastructure

Action	KPIs	Timeline
5.4.1 Expand efforts to train and retain operators.	Training completions, employee retention	Long-term 4-5 years
5.4.2 Modernize and build capacity for both central and independent wastewater treatment.	Planned, active, completed projects and capacity results	Long-term 4-5 years
5.4.3 Provide education on water conservation, nature-based solutions (e.g., wastewater reuse for wildlife/fisheries), closed-loop systems, low-flow fixtures and expand deployment of similar systems.	Summary of activities (such as sessions conducted, participants, outreach), relevant deployment results	Medium-term 2-3 years
5.4.4 Expand integration into county or municipal systems where possible.	List of potential, active and completed projects, investment amount	Long-term 4-5 years
5.4.5 Expand utilization of the RMDZ program to provide businesses with technical assistance and other resources.	Summary of activities and outreach efforts, results	Short-term 0-1 year

**Partners:** Municipalities, Economic Development Partners, Tribes, Utility Service Providers, Education Partners, Workforce Partners, Community Partners

**Resources:** USDA, California State Water Resources Control Board, California Department Of Water Resources (DWR), California Water Association, Samoa Peninsula Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District (EIFD), US Environmental Protection Agency, Recycling Market Development Zone (RMDZ), Department Of Resources Recycling And Recovery

**Catalysts:** Samoa Wastewater Planning Project, Sustainable Groundwater Management Act

# SWOT ANALYSIS



<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural Environment</li> <li>• Education and Workforce Training Assets</li> <li>• Indigenous Community</li> <li>• Economic, Environmental and Community Resiliency</li> <li>• Strong Legacy Industries</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Geographic Isolation</li> <li>• Infrastructure Limitations</li> <li>• Healthcare Access</li> <li>• Housing Availability, Affordability and Quality</li> <li>• Dependence on External Factors</li> <li>• Limited Processing Infrastructure</li> <li>• Decline of the Alternative Agriculture Industry</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversification of Legacy Industries</li> <li>• Developing a Consistent Community Marketing Strategy</li> <li>• Expansion and Diversification of Local Construction Industry</li> <li>• Maximize the Potential of the California Redwood Coast-Humboldt County Airport</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Declining Resident Population</li> <li>• Workforce Shortages</li> <li>• Regulatory Burdens on Key Industries</li> <li>• Climate Change</li> <li>• Funding Uncertainty</li> </ul>

# 1. Strengths

## Natural Environment

The county's natural landscape, from the coast to the forest, is one of its greatest strengths and central to Humboldt County's identity. The diverse landscape and outdoor recreation activities attract tourists to the area, while the county's natural resources, whether agricultural lands, timber resources, or the ocean, provide a base for numerous industries. An abundance of natural resources strengthens local economic development by supporting key industries, creating jobs and generating revenue that can be reinvested in long-term growth. While an asset, sustainable management of these natural resources must remain a priority for community leaders to avoid an overreliance on environmental degradation.

## Education and Workforce Training Assets

Humboldt County features a diverse range of workforce development and training resources. Educational institutions such as the Humboldt County Office of Education, College of the Redwoods, Cal Poly Humboldt and several adult education and trade schools provide the training backbone. The Humboldt County Office of Education offers Career Technical Education (CTE) programs that provide secondary students with hands-on learning and clear pathways to both post-secondary education and direct-to-career opportunities. Notably, the College of the Redwoods maintains articulation agreements with the Academy of the Redwoods, enabling high school students to earn college credit and participate in advanced coursework. Serving as key academic and research resources for the region, local higher education institutions, Cal Poly Humboldt and the College of the Redwoods offer degree and certificate programs in target industries, such as aquaculture, healthcare and education.

Similarly, the workforce system includes participant programs and support from the Humboldt County Workforce Development Board, the California Department of Rehabilitation, the Northern California Indian Development Council and the Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services, amongst other partners. These workforce entities provide general workforce development in the form of soft skills

training, supportive services, paid work experience and subsidized education in high-demand industries. In addition, workforce system partners provide industry and/or population focused programs. Examples of current programs focused on the county's target industries include healthcare, aquaculture, construction and renewable energy.

It is important to note that while unions are present and active in Humboldt, the majority of training and apprenticeship programs are available out of the area. This includes training offered by the members of the Building and Construction Trades Council of Humboldt and Del Norte County, which includes, but is not limited to, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 551, Laborers International Union North America Local 324 and the Operating Engineers Local 3.

In addition, many local tribes have workforce development programs and have made significant investments toward trainings and facilities. Examples include Blue Lake Rancheria's soon to be open Ta'm training facility and the Yurok tribe's workforce development center.

## **Indigenous Community**

Cal Poly Humboldt identifies 11 federally recognized and unrecognized tribes, rancherias and sovereign tribal governments within its tri-county service area—Humboldt, Del Norte and Trinity Counties, eight of which are located within Humboldt County. These include the Big Lagoon Rancheria, Blue Lake Rancheria, Hoopa Valley Tribe, Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria, Trinidad Rancheria, Wiyot Tribe and the Yurok Tribe. The service area is also home to the Karuk Tribe, Pulikla Tribe of Yurok People and Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation (formerly the Smith River Rancheria) and the region touches the northwestern portion of the Wiyot accessorial territory.

Regional coordination is supported by the Northern California Indian Development Council (NCIDC), which provides workforce services, block grants and disaster planning. Several tribes, such as the Karuk, Hoopa Valley and Wiyot, have independently developed strategic plans, including federally supported Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS).

The Karuk Tribe's CEDS outlines initiatives such as renewable energy development, broadband expansion, business incubation and

educational facilities. It also emphasizes sustainable land use, disaster resilience and regional economic integration. The Hoopa Valley Tribe's CEDS focuses on planning capacity, infrastructure development, workforce training, small business support and self-determination. Meanwhile, the Wiyot Tribe's strategic framework outlines six priorities: enhancing staff capacity, expanding community programs, improving financial conditions, safeguarding sovereignty, strengthening communication and protecting land resources. These planning efforts reflect a strong commitment to long-term economic growth rooted in cultural values and local needs.

The Blue Lake Rancheria has emerged as a national sustainability and climate resilience leader. This federally recognized tribe of Wiyot, Yurok and Hupa peoples operates on 76 acres near Blue Lake, California. It has developed an award-winning low-carbon strategy across five essential sectors: energy, water, food, communication/IT and transportation. Since initiating climate planning in 2008, the Tribe has reduced energy consumption by 40% from 2014 and committed to net-zero emissions by 2030. Their work has earned FEMA, DistribuTECH and PG&E recognition for integrating energy efficiency, distributed generation and community preparedness. These efforts highlight the Tribe's forward-looking approach to economic development, grounded in environmental stewardship and regional service.

## **Economic, Environmental and Community Resiliency**

Humboldt County demonstrates a strong environmental and economic resiliency foundation, positioning itself to navigate market fluctuations and external disruptions effectively. By diversifying its economy—particularly through investments in emerging sectors like renewable energy—the county is reducing its reliance on historically dominant industries, including the alternative agriculture sector, which has experienced a significant boom-bust cycle in recent years. Workforce development initiatives and small business support further enhance the county's adaptability, ensuring residents and businesses have the tools to thrive in an evolving economic landscape.

This focus on resiliency extends beyond economic strategy to reflect the county's deep-rooted culture of community response. From natural

disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic to the closure of key healthcare facilities, Humboldt County has repeatedly demonstrated a collective ability to mobilize in times of crisis. These coordinated efforts, whether through mutual aid networks, emergency response partnerships, or nonprofit support, highlight the county's social infrastructure's strength and capacity to recover from disruption.

Humboldt's proactive economic planning and strong community cohesion create a comprehensive resiliency framework. The county's experience with the volatility of the alternative agriculture industry underscores the importance of diversifying its economic base and planning for long-term sustainability. Humboldt County is building a resilient future grounded in environmental stewardship and shared community strength by fostering innovation, supporting local enterprise and prioritizing inclusive recovery efforts.

## **Strong Legacy Industries**

Humboldt County's economic foundation is rooted in its legacy agriculture, fishing, alternative agriculture and forestry industries—sectors that have long defined the region's identity and continue to generate significant economic value. The county's marine climate, abundant rainfall and fertile soils support approximately 35,000 acres of productive agricultural land in coastal alluvial plains<sup>12</sup>. This environment enables a diverse agricultural economy anchored by a historic dairy industry that once led the state in production. While the dairy sector has faced modern economic challenges, it remains vital to sustaining Humboldt's agricultural heritage.

Forestry has played a central role in Humboldt County's economy since the 1850s and continues to adapt amid evolving environmental regulations and sustainable land management practices. The industry generated a \$102 million harvest in 2023<sup>13</sup>, reflecting its resilience and ongoing relevance. With deep local expertise and infrastructure, the forestry sector is well positioned for future innovation in restoration

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<sup>12</sup> <https://humboldt.gov/276/GIS-Data-Download>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.cdtfa.ca.gov/dataportal/dataset.htm?url=PropTaxTimberProductionStats>

forestry, carbon sequestration, and providing for sustainable building materials.

Humboldt's fisheries and aquaculture sectors continue to benefit from the county's strategic coastal location, providing access to high-demand markets along the West Coast. The Pacific Ocean and local waterways support a variety of seafood industries, enhancing food security and export capacity.

In recent decades, the alternative agriculture industry has emerged as a major economic force in Humboldt County, drawing on the region's legacy of small-scale cultivation and rural innovation. However, the industry has experienced a pronounced boom-bust cycle, challenging its long-term stability and prompting the need for regulatory adaptation and diversification. Despite these challenges, alternative agriculture remains important to the county's economic landscape. Together with legacy agriculture, forestry and fishing sectors, alternative agriculture contributes to a multifaceted rural economy that, when supported by strategic planning and investment, offers a resilient and sustainable path forward for Humboldt County.

## **2. Weaknesses**

### **Geographic Isolation**

While part of its natural allure, Humboldt County's remote location presents notable logistical and economic challenges. Situated approximately 250 miles from the nearest major metropolitan area and reliant on a single north-south transportation corridor, the county faces significant barriers to connectivity. Limited commercial air service further compounds these challenges, restricting access for visitors, students and professionals and placing added strain on economic development efforts. Although general aviation airports serve certain needs, they do not offset the broader impacts of limited transit options, which affect everything from tourism and higher education to healthcare access and workforce mobility.

The county's isolation adds to operational costs and hinders market access for businesses and industries – especially agriculture, forestry and emerging sectors like renewable energy. Transporting goods to

and from Humboldt involves navigating mountainous terrain and long travel distances, which can delay shipments, raise expenses and reduce competitiveness in broader markets. Additionally, the smaller local consumer base limits economies of scale, while supply chain inefficiencies can discourage outside investment.

## **Infrastructure Limitations**

Humboldt County faces significant infrastructure limitations that hinder both daily life and long-term economic development. As the endpoint of a single high-voltage transmission line, the county's energy grid is underpowered, restricting its capacity to import and export electricity. This presents a particular challenge as Humboldt looks to expand its renewable energy sector, limiting the ability to transmit clean energy to larger markets and slowing potential growth. The county's road and bridge infrastructure are also aging, with average conditions rated as "mediocre<sup>14</sup>." This impacts public safety and quality of life and constrains business operations, emergency response and investment attraction.

Industries that rely heavily on transportation and specialized facilities, such as forestry, aquaculture and fisheries, are particularly vulnerable to Humboldt's infrastructure deficits. Highway 101 is the county's main transportation artery, but its susceptibility to weather-related closures and natural disasters disrupts supply chains and increases costs. The absence of rail access further compounds logistical challenges, especially for heavy goods like timber. In the fisheries and agricultural sectors, limited processing facilities and the absence of local cold storage options significantly impact profitability and competitiveness. The recent closure of Pacific Seafood's processing operations in the county highlights the urgent need for infrastructure investment to support existing industries and ensure future economic resilience.

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<sup>14</sup> <https://infrastructurereportcard.org/humboldt-county-californias-transportation-report-card-released/>

## Healthcare Access

Humboldt County struggles with persistent challenges in accessing healthcare due to a shortage of medical professionals and the limited availability of specialized services. Many areas of the county are designated as Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) for primary care, dental health and mental health, with a significant portion of the population residing in medically underserved areas<sup>15</sup>. This shortage is further exacerbated by the closure of local medical facilities, which increases waitlists and creates barriers to timely care. The county's healthcare system faces significant strain, with reports of mental health providers having waitlists of over 500 individuals and long delays for specialty care. Moreover, the lack of healthcare professionals has led some providers to delay retirement due to inadequate replacement staff.

Access to specialized care is another major concern in Humboldt County. The limited number of specialized treatment facilities forces residents to travel long distances, often out of the county, to receive the necessary care. Families seeking pediatric specialty care are frequently required to go to San Francisco. At the same time, the closure of the labor and delivery unit at Mad River Community Hospital has left only one hospital with a birthing center in the county<sup>16</sup>. This impacts high-risk pregnancies, with families needing to relocate to access necessary services. The county's aging population further compounds these healthcare challenges, as older adults typically require more frequent and complex care. This demographic shift places added pressure on an already overburdened healthcare system and the economic barriers faced by many residents – such as low household incomes and high healthcare costs, exacerbating the difficulty in accessing care.

## Housing Availability, Affordability and Quality

Housing availability, affordability and quality present a critical weakness for Humboldt County, impacting both quality of life and

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<sup>15</sup> <https://data.hrsa.gov/maps/map-tool/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://krcrtv.com/north-coast-news/eureka-local-news/providence-st-joseph-hospital-soon-to-have-humboldt-countys-only-birthing-center>

economic development. With housing development slowing over the past two decades and vacancy rates falling below the “natural” market threshold for over 10 years, supply has not kept pace with demand. Single-family homes, with limited multi-family or medium-density options, dominate the county’s housing stock. Over half of the housing units were built before 1980 and a significant portion is considered substandard, limiting viable options for residents and deterring potential new workforce entrants. The lack of diverse, modern housing restricts mobility within the region and poses a major barrier to talent attraction and retention.

Rising housing costs further exacerbate the issue, with the median monthly housing expenses increasing by nearly 27% in just five years<sup>17</sup>. As of 2023, nearly 22,500 households were cost-burdened – spending over 30% of their income on housing – and renters were disproportionately affected, with over half of cost-burdened renters spending more than 50% of their income on housing<sup>18</sup>. This affordability crisis significantly strains low- and moderate-income households and limits discretionary spending, which affects local businesses.

## **Dependence on External Factors**

Humboldt County’s economy is heavily influenced by external markets, exposing its core industries to significant volatility and uncertainty. Agriculture, timber, construction and aquaculture are particularly susceptible to factors outside local control, including global commodity prices, international trade conditions, interest rates and supply chain disruptions. Farmers experience large swings in crop prices due to climate variability and shifting consumer demand. Similarly, timber prices fluctuate in response to national construction trends and monetary policy, while the construction industry faces frequent delays and rising costs tied to global material shortages.

This dependence limits local control over economic outcomes and hampers long-term planning. In aquaculture and fisheries, producers

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<sup>17</sup> Monthly Housing Costs. Source: ACS 1-Year Estimates

<sup>18</sup> Housing Cost Burden by Tenure. Source: ACS 2018/2023 1-Year Estimates

must navigate changing regulations and demand from distant markets, often without the benefit of local processing or distribution infrastructure. Large-scale projects in the renewable energy sector often rely on outside investment, which can delay progress and reduce community influence. Without greater local capacity to manage production, distribution and investment, Humboldt County remains vulnerable to external shocks that threaten the stability and profitability of its key industries.

## **Limited Processing Infrastructure**

The county has limited seafood processing capacity and no US Department of Agriculture (USDA)-certified slaughterhouses, increasing costs and forcing producers to rely on facilities outside the community. Moreover, the county lacks large-scale cold storage facilities, limiting its ability to store large quantities of food and hindering the growth of the agriculture and aquaculture and fisheries industries. Through the CEDS engagement process, stakeholders identified achieving food sovereignty as an opportunity in the county.

## **Decline of the Alternative Agriculture Industry**

The alternative agriculture industry has historically played a vital role in Humboldt County's economy, with a 2011 study estimating that it comprised roughly 25% of the local economic activity prior to legalization. However, the shift to a regulated market has significantly eroded the industry's economic viability. Falling wholesale prices, high regulatory compliance costs, limited access to capital and market oversaturation have led to widespread business closures and reduced profitability for small-scale cultivators, the backbone of Humboldt's alternative agriculture legacy. The ripple effects of this decline are extensive, impacting jobs, local businesses and county revenue. Reduced Measure S tax income has already constrained funding for vital community services such as mental health care, substance abuse prevention, public safety and environmental restoration.

As one of the three counties in California's famed Emerald Triangle, Humboldt was once synonymous with high-quality alternative agriculture cultivation. Today, however, the county is experiencing a sharp contraction in alternative agriculture activity. There has been a notable drop in the number of active cultivation permits and seasonal

harvest volumes continue to decline<sup>19,20,21</sup>. Many small operators, unable to compete with large-scale producers or navigate the burdens of regulation, are exiting the industry altogether. This downturn threatens the local economy and undermines community identity and long-standing agricultural traditions. Without state-level regulatory reform, improved market access and economic diversification, Humboldt County may continue to face significant economic and social challenges tied to the alternative agriculture industry's instability.

### 3. Opportunities

#### Diversification of Legacy Industries

Humboldt County's legacy industries – agriculture, aquaculture and forestry—provide a strong foundation for targeted innovation and industry diversification. Advances in technology, shifting consumer demand and environmental priorities have opened new doors for these traditional sectors. New technologies meant to reduce climate pollution present an economic opportunity for Humboldt County. For example, reducing reliance on natural gas could catalyze the sale of electric heaters, stoves, etc. In agriculture and aquaculture, there are growing opportunities for value-added products, such as artisanal foods and sustainable seafood, as well as for expanding local food systems through farmers' markets and farm-to-table programs. Green building materials can reduce the carbon emissions of new construction, and Humboldt County is well-positioned to support the growth of green building material industries. Innovations in forest management, including carbon sequestration and forest restoration, can be sustainable, address climate goals and create new jobs.

California Polytechnic institution supports these opportunities by aligning academic resources and research capacity with economic development goals. This opens the door to workforce development

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.cdtfa.ca.gov/DataPortal/charts.htm?url=CannabisSalesByCounty>

<sup>20</sup> <https://cannabis.ca.gov/resources/data-dashboard/harvest-report/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://lostcoastoutpost.com/2024/apr/25/yesterday-supes/>

programs, applied research and partnerships that bolster innovation in agriculture, renewable energy and other high-potential sectors. The region is also well positioned to support eco-friendly tourism and agritourism, which take advantage of Humboldt's natural beauty, rural character and strong environmental stewardship. These tourism sub-sectors generate revenue, support small businesses and promote local products and experiences.

Emerging industries like offshore wind development, port modernization and distributed energy resources like microgrids offer transformative potential for Humboldt County's economy. Investment in renewable energy infrastructure supports local energy resilience and creates long-term economic opportunities in engineering, construction, operations and maintenance. As the County works to implement the Climate Action Plan, it should also look for opportunities to invest in economic development opportunities supportive of that plan. These efforts, combined with the county's emphasis on sustainability, position Humboldt as a forward-thinking region capable of transitioning from economic dependence on declining industries – like alternative agriculture and traditional timber – toward a more resilient and diversified economic future.

## **Developing a Consistent Community Marketing Strategy**

Humboldt County has a broad network of organizations and stakeholders dedicated to promoting the region's assets, including its natural beauty, sustainability efforts and unique quality of life. However, these efforts are often fragmented, lacking a cohesive vision or consistent messaging. By aligning these efforts under a unified community marketing strategy, Humboldt County can more effectively promote its identity and values, improving external perceptions and enhancing its competitiveness for tourism, talent attraction and investment.

Investing in Humboldt County's tourism infrastructure can create a more welcoming environment, strengthen community marketing and generate economic activity. Improved infrastructure supports tourism-related businesses and amenities such as welcome centers, restrooms,

signage, public art and attractions. Local investment alongside successful advocacy and collaboration with the state for expanded tourism infrastructure in gateway communities such as Orick, Garberville and Willow Creek could be transformational.

A consistent marketing strategy would allow the county to proactively tell its story – highlighting its environmental leadership, outdoor recreation, sustainable industries and vibrant culture. Such an approach could help change outdated or inaccurate perceptions of the region while increasing visibility in statewide and national conversations. Speaking with one voice, Humboldt can build a stronger brand that resonates with visitors, businesses and potential residents, creating momentum for economic development and community pride.

## **Expansion and Diversification of Local Construction Industry**

Humboldt County’s construction industry is well positioned for continued growth and diversification. The sector has already added over 500 jobs in the past decade and is projected to employ more than 3,000 workers by 2034<sup>22</sup>. The construction sector represents a strong economic asset with a high local business concentration – 26% more than the national average – and competitive wages averaging \$80,600 annually<sup>23</sup>. An existing network of over 240 payrolled businesses provides a solid foundation on which to build. Local demand is growing steadily, driven by residential and commercial development, public sector investments and institutional expansions, including over \$575 million in planned improvements at Cal Poly Humboldt and major projects at the College of the Redwoods<sup>24,25</sup>.

In addition to traditional construction opportunities, emerging industries are creating new pathways for diversification. Offshore wind development will require significant investment in port infrastructure,

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<sup>22</sup> *Lightcast 2024.4*

<sup>23</sup> *Lightcast 2024.4*

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.humboldt.edu/about/polytechnic/infrastructure-projects>

<sup>25</sup> <sup>25</sup> <https://www.redwoods.edu/about/projects/index.php>

transmission lines and wind farm facilities, offering long-term job creation and growth in specialized construction fields. Further, state and federal investments in infrastructure, such as over \$80 million in local road improvements<sup>26</sup> and \$35 million in broadband expansion<sup>27</sup>, provide further momentum. With a strong project pipeline and increasing demand, Humboldt County’s construction industry is well placed to expand its capacity, embrace new technologies and become a regional leader in sustainable and large-scale infrastructure development.

## **Maximize the Potential of the California Redwood Coast-Humboldt County Airport**

Maximizing the potential of the California Redwood Coast–Humboldt County Airport is a critical opportunity for strengthening regional connectivity, supporting economic development and enhancing tourism. Currently, limited commercial flight options can deter both visitors and business travelers, constraining Humboldt County’s ability to attract outside investment, talent and tourism dollars. Expanding direct air service to additional key markets—such as Seattle, Portland, or Sacramento – could reduce travel barriers, making the county more accessible to prospective visitors, students and professionals. Broader air service also supports local industries that depend on timely travel, such as healthcare, education and advanced manufacturing and could improve the movement of high-value goods and services in and out of the region.

In addition to expanding passenger service, the airport presents a significant opportunity for economic diversification by developing adjacent land for aviation-compatible business uses. This includes opportunities for aircraft maintenance and repair facilities, logistics hubs, flight training centers and other aerospace-related industries. Leveraging these assets would generate non-aeronautical revenue for the airport and support job creation and investment in high-wage sectors. Strategic partnerships with aviation and logistics firms,

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<sup>26</sup> <https://humboldt.gov/2212/Projects>

<sup>27</sup> <https://lostcoastoutpost.com/2024/aug/26/humboldt-county-nabs-353-million-state-grants-expa/>

combined with infrastructure upgrades and targeted marketing efforts, can help position the airport as a regional economic driver, strengthening Humboldt County's long-term resilience and connectivity.

## 4. Threats

### Declining Resident Population

A declining population poses a significant barrier for Humboldt County, with population loss accelerating in recent years. Between 2020 and 2024, the county lost an estimated 4,087 residents and nearly 60% of that decline was attributed to out-migration<sup>28</sup>. This trend reduces overall consumer demand, intensifies workforce shortages across key industries and dampens investor confidence. As the population contracts, local businesses may struggle to maintain customer bases and government revenues tied to population-driven metrics may decline, limiting resources for public services and infrastructure investment. Without targeted intervention, continued population loss risks trigger a broader economic disinvestment and stagnation cycle.

Demographic shifts also create downstream effects on education and workforce development. From 2019 to 2023, the under-18 population declined by 3.8%, reducing the pipeline of local youth for future college enrollment and employment<sup>29</sup>. This trend threatens the sustainability of local education institutions and limits the county's ability to retain young talent. Industries such as financial services and housing are also vulnerable, as a shrinking population leads to reduced demand for banking, lending and real estate activity.

### Workforce Shortages

A persistent workforce shortage threatens economic development in Humboldt County. Industry leaders across sectors consistently report challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified workers. These issues are exacerbated by the county's aging population and geographic isolation, which limits the available labor pool. As these demographic trends continue, businesses face growing difficulty in filling positions—impacting productivity, limiting expansion and reducing service

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<sup>28</sup> Population Projections. Source: U.S. Census, 2020; American Community Survey, 2023; Esri, 2025; Lightcast, 2025; CA Department of Finance, 2025

<sup>29</sup> American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

availability for residents. Critical public services such as education and healthcare are particularly strained, with long-standing vacancies in education and healthcare—particularly specialists—leading to reduced access and quality of care.

In the healthcare sector, the shortage of professionals has left many parts of the county designated as Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) for primary care, dental and mental health services<sup>30</sup>. Long waitlists—sometimes exceeding 500 individuals—are common and providers delay retirement due to the absence of replacements. Similarly, the education sector struggles to fill over 100 full-time equivalent roles for the 2024-2025 school year<sup>31</sup>. Financial services, agriculture and construction industries face similar constraints, with a limited local talent pool and increasing difficulty in attracting external candidates due to the county’s rural location and housing challenges. In construction and timber, the aging workforce raises concerns about a growing skills gap as experienced workers retire without a pipeline of trained replacements. Other industries face similar challenges.

Wages in Humboldt County are often not competitive with the rest of the state, especially given the cost of living and there is a lack of access to childcare. These pose significant barriers to employee attraction and retention.

## **Regulatory Burdens on Key Industries**

A complex and overlapping regulatory environment affects economic development across key industries in Humboldt County. While regulations play a vital role in protecting the environment, worker safety and public health, they also create high compliance costs—particularly for small and mid-sized businesses with limited administrative capacity. Sectors such as agriculture and forestry are especially affected. For instance, California farmers face some of the

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<sup>30</sup> <https://data.hrsa.gov/maps/map-tool/>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.times-standard.com/2022/08/11/humboldt-county-schools-are-struggling-to-find-teachers/>

highest regulatory costs in the nation, with small farms bearing a disproportionate burden.

The renewable energy and aquaculture sectors also face significant regulatory challenges. Permitting for renewable energy projects—such as wind and solar developments—requires complex and time-consuming environmental reviews that can stall progress and deter private investment. Similarly, Humboldt’s aquaculture and commercial fishing industries must navigate a labyrinth of federal, state and local regulations, often cited by stakeholders as the single largest barrier to industry growth. Without streamlining and better coordination among agencies, the regulatory burden risks stifling innovation, discouraging new business formation and limiting the ability of existing businesses to expand.

## **Climate Change**

Climate change poses a multifaceted threat to Humboldt County, with significant implications for public safety, infrastructure and essential services. Rising sea levels and increasingly severe weather events like flooding, landslides and wildfires jeopardize critical infrastructure, including roads, utilities and education facilities like the College of the Redwoods’ Eureka campus<sup>32</sup>. With much of the county’s population and institutional infrastructure located near vulnerable coastal zones, even modest sea level rise or intensified storms could disrupt access to services, displace residents and require costly mitigation. The region’s unique seismic risk at the Triple Junction, compounded by climate-related hazards, further underscores the need for comprehensive planning and resilience investment.

Key industries across Humboldt County are also increasingly exposed to climate-related disruptions. Agriculture faces rising temperatures, drought risk and shifting precipitation patterns, which can reduce crop yields, increase pest pressures and strain already limited water supplies. Similarly, the forestry sector is threatened by more frequent and intense wildfires, as well as long-term forest health risks from drought

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<sup>32</sup> <https://www.humboldt.edu/sites/default/files/sustainable-campus/2024-07/cap20resilienceplan.pdf>

and pest infestations. These factors threaten the productivity and long-term viability of the region's natural resource-based industries, reducing both economic output and employment opportunities.

The tourism, fisheries and aquaculture sectors are equally vulnerable. Coastal erosion, sea level rise and wildfire smoke events threaten the natural beauty and accessibility that underpin Humboldt's tourism economy. Ocean acidification and warming waters are already contributing to species migration and shellfish health challenges, increasing the likelihood of seasonal fishery closures and reduced harvests<sup>33</sup>. These risks not only impact current economic activity but also threaten future investment and diversification in these sectors. Without strategic climate adaptation and mitigation efforts, the cumulative effects of climate change could significantly undermine Humboldt County's long-term economic resilience and quality of life.

## **Funding Uncertainty**

Uncertainty in federal and state funding substantially threatens Humboldt County's long-term economic stability and growth. Many critical economic development initiatives depend on sustained public investment, including workforce training, infrastructure expansion and education. As budget deficits at both the state and federal levels increase, the reliability of funding becomes more tenuous. This makes long-term planning and project implementation more difficult and risky, undermining the county's ability to move forward on key strategic initiatives and weakening confidence among public and private partners.

Education institutions, particularly Cal Poly Humboldt and the College of the Redwoods, face immediate impacts from reduced state funding. Budget reallocation policies tied to enrollment performance threaten the financial health of these schools, which play a central role in workforce development, innovation and the regional economy. Continued under-enrollment could lead to further funding cuts, diminishing academic offerings and services and limiting the

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<sup>33</sup> <https://e360.yale.edu/features/feeling-the-heat-warming-oceans-drive-fish-into-cooler-waters>

institutions' ability to support emerging industries. Programs that support the next generation of educators and healthcare professionals—such as the Golden State Teacher Grant—are also vulnerable to cuts<sup>34</sup>, compounding workforce shortages in high-demand fields.

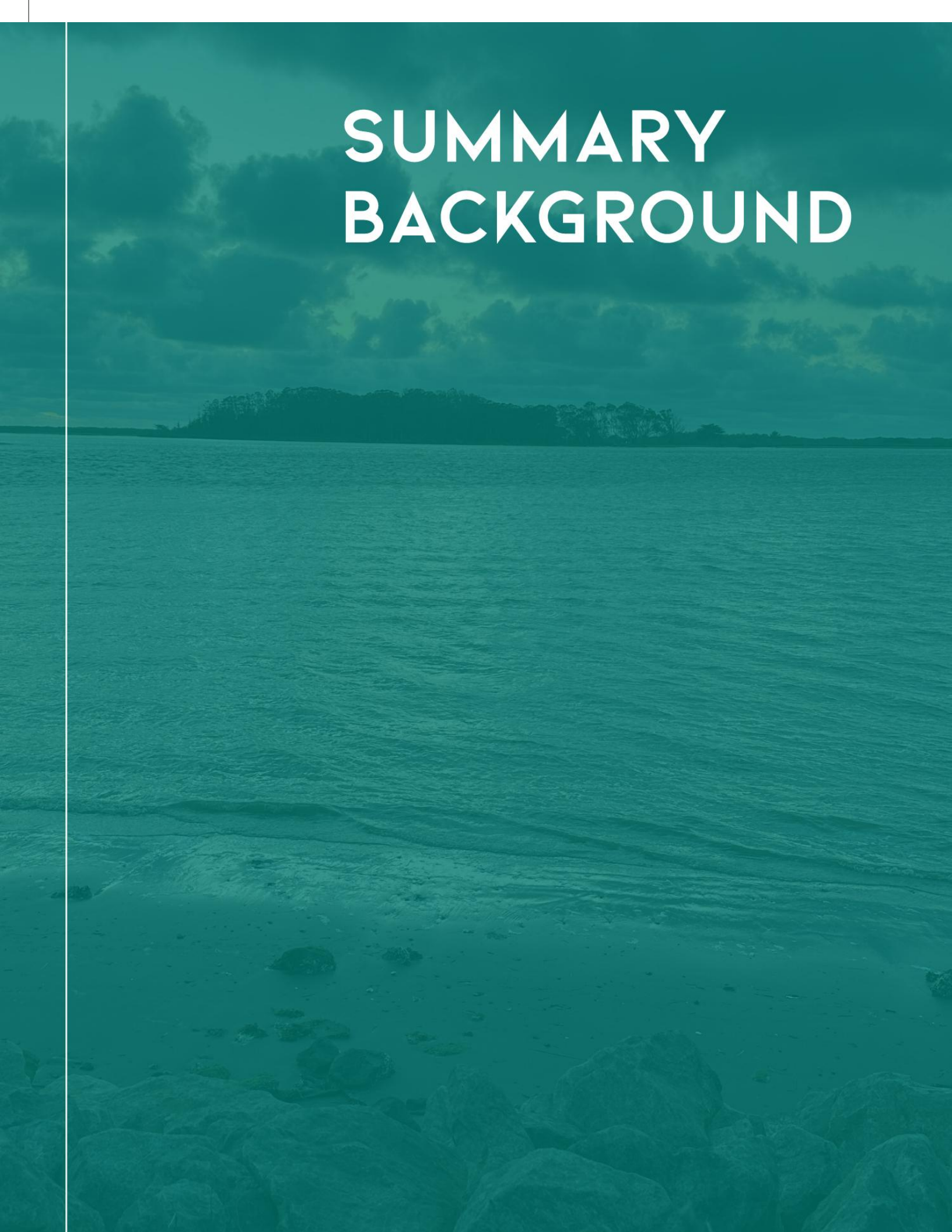
Other key sectors, including healthcare, agriculture, construction and the arts, are similarly exposed. Proposed changes to Medicaid and Medicare could reduce access to care and shift financial burdens to local systems. Agricultural producers, already grappling with rising labor costs, may face greater uncertainty if federal visa programs are altered. The construction industry, which relies heavily on public infrastructure funding, may see major projects delayed or canceled, weakening its growth trajectory. Meanwhile, significant cuts to state arts funding could jeopardize Humboldt County's vibrant cultural sector, forcing local organizations to rely more heavily on unstable private donations<sup>35</sup>. The cumulative effect of these uncertainties threatens the county's ability to build a resilient, inclusive and diversified economy.

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<sup>34</sup> [https://www.csac.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2024-08/gsa\\_2024-59.pdf](https://www.csac.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2024-08/gsa_2024-59.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.caartsadvocates.org/news/advocacy-victory-final-california-budget-restores-75-of-arts-funding-cuts>

# SUMMARY BACKGROUND



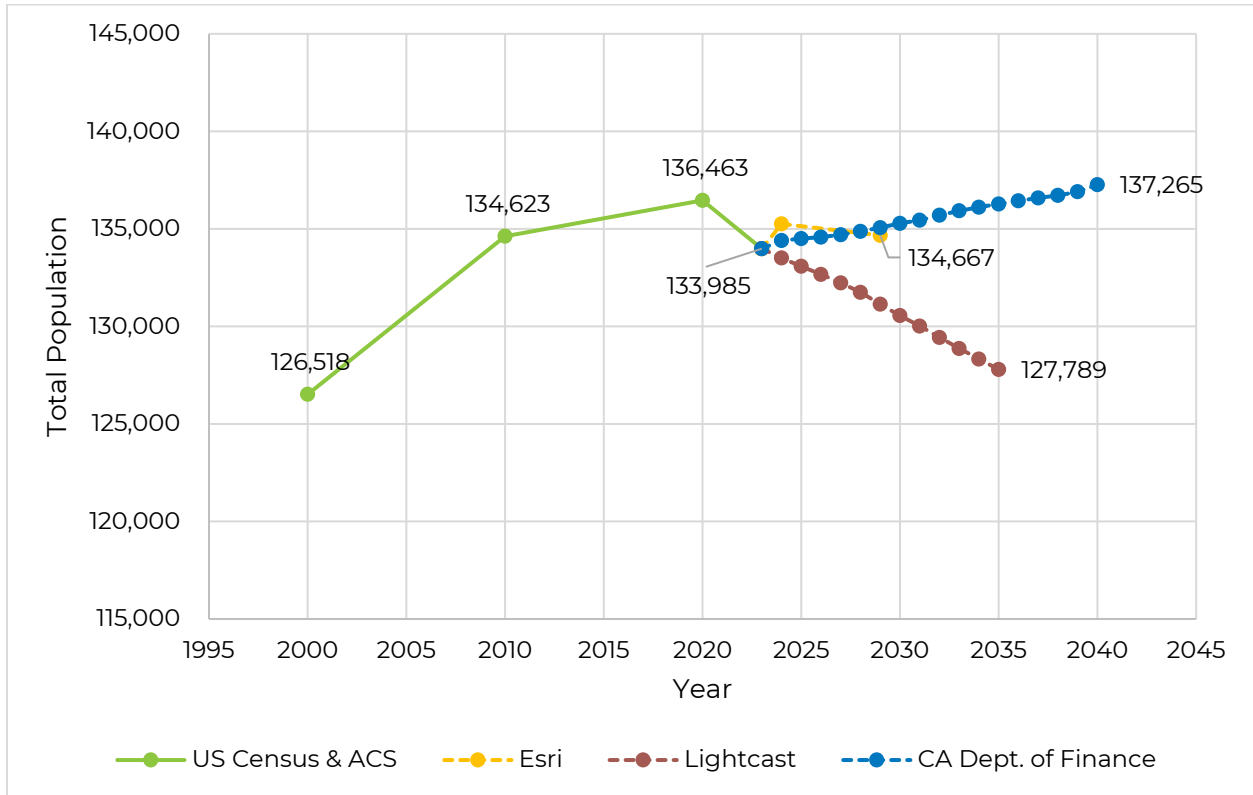
# Demographic Overview

## Population and Socioeconomic Analysis

Humboldt County's population grew considerably between 2000 and 2010. Over the 10-year period, the population increased by roughly 8,100 people, or 6.4%. In the next decade, growth slowed and the county grew by fewer than 2,000 people. The most recent American Community Survey (ACS) estimated that Humboldt County's population was 133,985 in 2023, down from the 2020 count of 136,463.

To estimate future population growth, several projective models are provided in Figure 1. Due to differences in methodology, these models vary slightly in their projections and some of them extend further into the future than others. Lightcast, a private, third-party data modeling company, projects that the county's population will fall to about 127,789, or by about 4.6%, between 2023 and 2035. Environmental Systems Research Institute (Esri), another private company, projects that the population will remain relatively stable through 2029, increasing by only 682 people. Finally, the California Department of Finance projects that the county will grow by 3,280 people, or 2.4% between 2023 and 2040. Each of these models illustrates a different scenario; many factors will determine which trajectory is realized over the next several years and an economic development strategy can help the county achieve the desired growth.

Figure 1: Humboldt County Population, 2000 to 2040 (projected). Source: U.S. Census, 2020; American Community Survey, 2023; Esri, 2025; Lightcast, 2025; CA Department of Finance, 2025.



## Population by Age

As of 2023, children under the age of 15 years made up about 15% of the population. Over the last 10 years, births and birth rates have fallen considerably in the county. In 2014, there were 1,474 births in Humboldt County; that figure fell steadily through 2023, which saw only 1,075 births in the county – about 27% fewer than in 2014.<sup>36</sup>

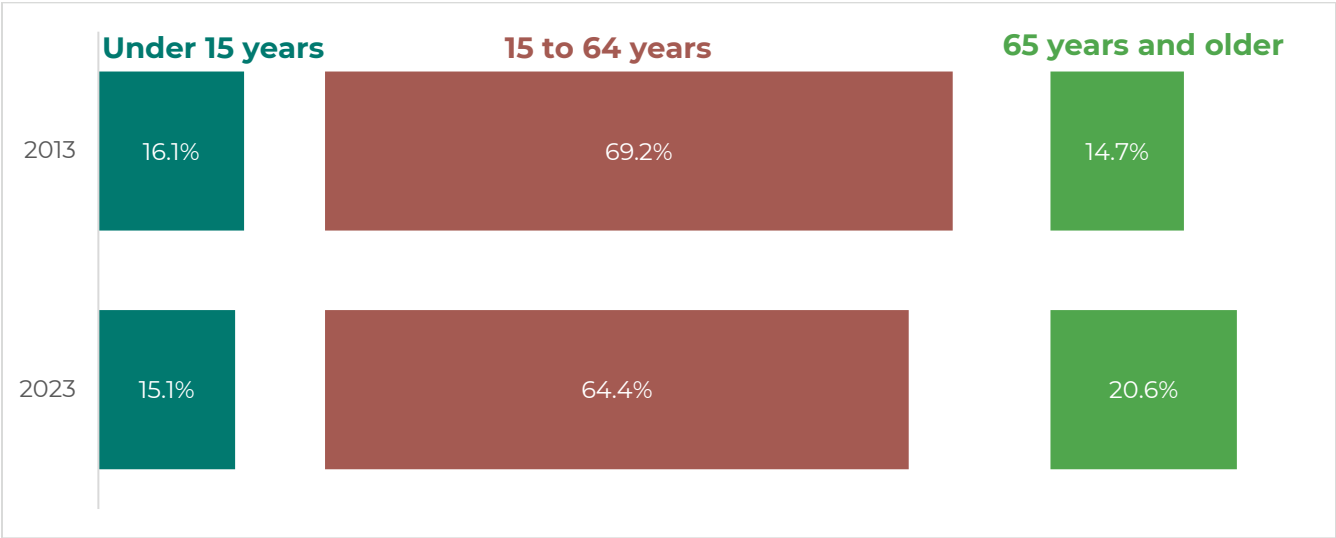
In the same year, 86,243 people – or 64.4% – were between the ages of 15 and 64. This age group is largely representative of the working-age population. As a percentage of the whole, the size of this group has decreased over the last 10 years; in 2013, it constituted 69.2% of the total

<sup>36</sup> California Department of Public Health, 1960-2023 Final Births by Month by County. <https://data.chhs.ca.gov/dataset/live-birth-profiles-by-county/resource/d6c30e46-8618-407a-ba5a-bae308f86a1c?filters=County%3AHumboldt>

population, or 93,094 people. A shrinking working-age population and low birth rates can indicate a challenge for economic development, as these populations strengthen the workforce and build local business.

Another important trend to consider is the shift in the percentage of the population over the age of 65 years. Between 2013 and 2023, this population grew by almost six percentage points, which is equal to an increase of approximately 7,800 people in this age bracket. Many communities throughout the country are experiencing growing populations of senior communities, which can impact the local economy in a variety of ways. An older population typically has specific housing preferences, greater healthcare needs and participates in the workforce at a much lower rate. To ensure that the local population continues to thrive, an economic development strategy should take into consideration the county's shifting demographic.

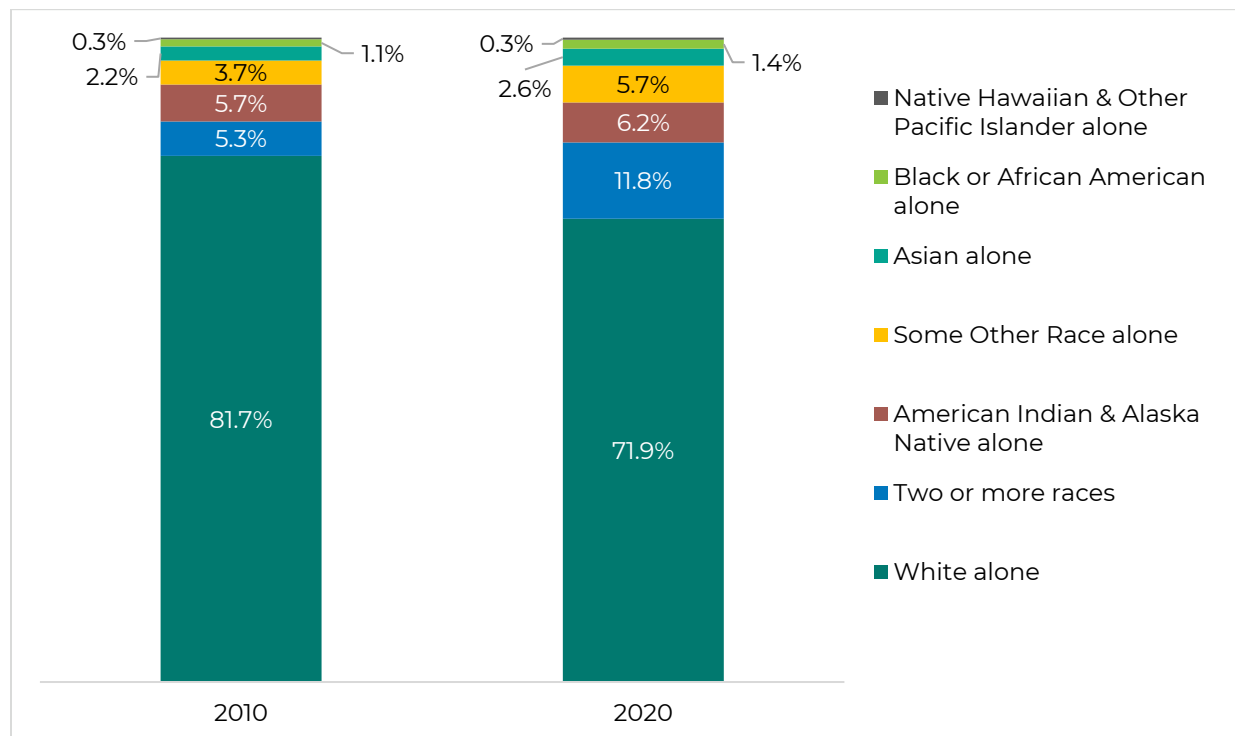
Figure 2: Humboldt County Age Distribution, 2013 and 2023. Source: ACS 2013 and 2023 1-Year Estimates.



## Population by Race and Ethnicity

Between 2010 and 2020, Humboldt County’s population increased in diversity.<sup>37</sup> Approximately 71.9% of Humboldt County residents identified as “White alone,” a decrease of 11,825 people from 2010. The primary driver of the growing diversity in Humboldt has been the increase in multiracial residents, whose share of the population more than doubled from 5.3% in 2010 to 11.8% in 2020. Humboldt also saw an increase in the percent of residents identifying as American Indian and/or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American and “some other race.” Among the Asian population, the Hmong community is substantial and rapidly growing, increasing by 48% between 2015 and 2021 to 1,702 people.

Figure 3: Humboldt County Population by Race, 2010 and 2020. Source: 2010 and 2020 U.S. Census.



<sup>37</sup> Decennial Census data used due to large margins of error for smaller racial groups in the American Community Survey.

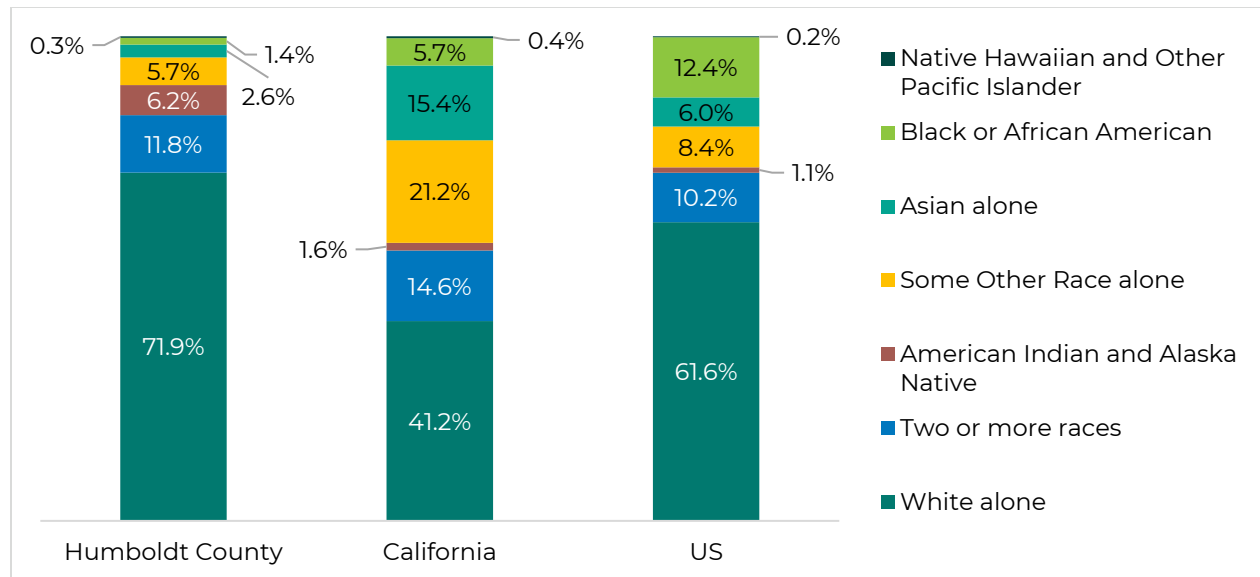
The Hispanic or Latino population – considered an ethnic group by the US Census – increased from 9.8% of residents in 2010 to 13.6% in 2020, reflecting Humboldt’s increasing diversity. Because the Census defines Hispanic or Latino as an ethnicity rather than a race, individuals of any race can identify as Hispanic or Latino. As a result, this population is not shown in the race-specific graphs to avoid double-counting and to maintain clarity in racial breakdowns.

Table 2: Humboldt County by Ethnicity, 2010 and 2020. Source: 2010 and 2020 U.S. Census.

	Number of Hispanic or Latino Residents	Percent of Population
<b>2010</b>	13,211	9.8%
<b>2020</b>	18,535	13.6%

Compared to the state and national populations, Humboldt County’s population is less racially diverse. However, a larger share of the local population, 6.2%, is comprised of members of the American Indian or Alaskan Native group than at the state or national levels, 1.6% and 1.1%, respectively.

Figure 4: Comparative Race Distribution, Humboldt County, California and US. Source: 2020 US Census.



Similarly, in 2020, Hispanic or Latino residents represented a smaller portion of Humboldt County’s population when compared to the state and the nation as a whole.

Table 3: Humboldt County, California and US by Ethnicity, 2020. Source: 2020 U.S. Census.

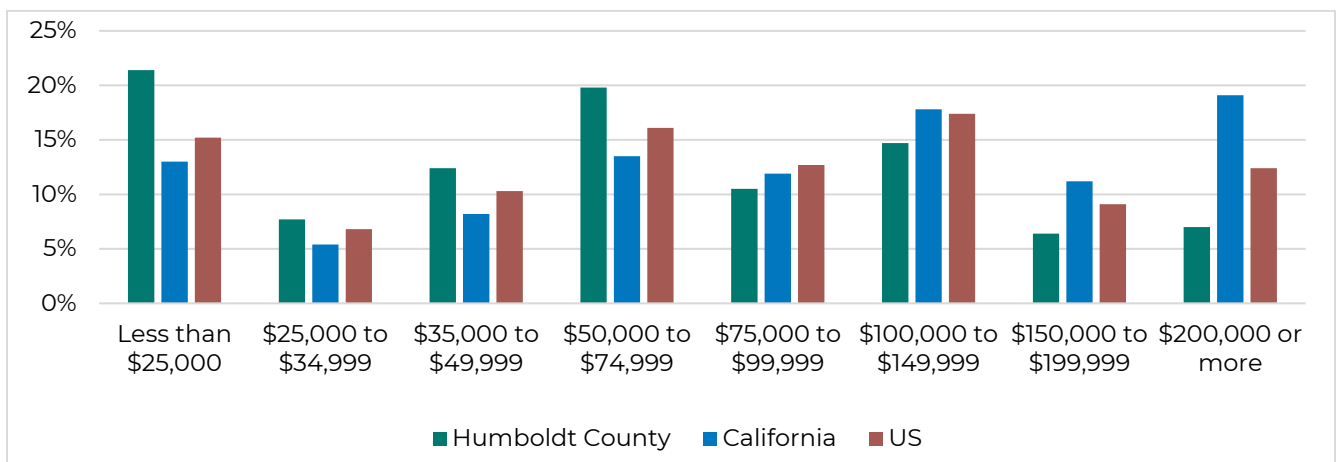
	Number of Hispanic or Latino Residents	Percent of Population
<b>Humboldt County</b>	18,535	9.8%
<b>California</b>	15,579,652	39.4%
<b>US</b>	62,080,044	18.7%

## Income and Earnings

In 2023, the median household income in Humboldt County reached \$61,621, a 46.4% increase since 2013. While this is an increase of nearly \$20,000, income growth in Humboldt lags behind that seen in California (58.7%) and the US overall (48.7%).

In that year, more than one in five Humboldt households (21.4%) earned less than \$25,000 per year, compared to 13.0% in the state and 15.2% nationwide. On the other end of the income spectrum, 28.1% of households earned more than \$100,000 per year, with 7.0% earning more than \$200,00 per year.

Figure 5: Household Income, Humboldt County, California and US. Source: ACS 2023 1-Year Estimates.



## Living Wages

The living wage shown in the following table is the hourly rate that an individual in a household must earn to support themselves and/or their family, working full-time, or 2080 hours per year. This is compared to poverty wages, the Department of Health and Human Services' Poverty Guidelines for 2025. They have been converted from an annual value to an hourly wage for ease of comparison.

Living wage calculations are provided by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and are estimated using a variety of data related to the local cost of living. For all but a two-adult family with no children, the living wage required is higher than the state minimum wage of \$16.50 and in some instances, is four times higher than the minimum wage.

*Table 4: Living and Poverty Wage Calculations for a One Adult Family in Humboldt County. Source: MIT Living Wage Calculator, 2025.<sup>38</sup>*

<b>Number of Children</b>	<b>Living Wage</b>	<b>Poverty Wage</b>
0 Children	\$22.84	\$7.52
1 Child	\$41.93	\$10.17
2 Children	\$52.81	\$12.81
3 Children	\$66.28	\$15.46

*Table 5: Living and Poverty Wage Calculations for a Two Adult, One Income Family in Humboldt County. Source: MIT Living Wage Calculator, 2025.*

<b>Number of Children</b>	<b>Living Wage</b>	<b>Poverty Wage</b>
0 Children	\$32.40	\$10.17
1 Child	\$40.11	\$12.81
2 Children	\$44.38	\$15.46
3 Children	\$52.21	\$18.10

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<sup>38</sup> Massachusetts Institute of Technology (2023). Living Wage Calculator. Retrieved from <https://livingwage.mit.edu/>

Table 6: Living and Poverty Wage Calculations for a Two Adult, Two Income Family in Humboldt County. Source: MIT Living Wage Calculator, 2025.

Number of Children	Living Wage	Poverty Wage
0 Children	\$16.20	\$5.08
1 Child	\$23.80	\$6.41
2 Children	\$29.13	\$7.73
3 Children	\$34.85	\$9.05

Living wages in Humboldt County are slightly higher than in Del Norte and Trinity Counties, but lower than in Mendocino County. At the state level, the living wage is considerably higher.

Table 7: Living Wage for a One Adult Family, Humboldt County, Del Norte County, Mendocino County, Trinity County, California. Calculations. Source: MIT Living Wage Calculator, 2025.

Number of Children	Humboldt County	Del Norte County	Mendocino County	Trinity County	California
0 Children	\$22.84	\$21.03	\$24.00	\$21.21	\$28.72
1 Child	\$41.93	\$37.86	\$42.19	\$37.90	\$50.83
2 Children	\$52.81	\$46.29	\$52.12	\$46.65	\$64.17
3 Children	\$66.28	\$57.01	\$65.33	\$57.21	\$82.66

Table 8: Living Wage for a Two Adult, One Income Family, Humboldt County, Del Norte County, Mendocino County, Trinity County, California. Calculations. Source: MIT Living Wage Calculator, 2025

Number of Children	Humboldt County	Del Norte County	Mendocino County	Trinity County	California
0 Children	\$32.40	\$31.29	\$33.26	\$30.67	\$38.53
1 Child	\$40.11	\$37.49	\$41.26	\$37.83	\$46.95
2 Children	\$44.38	\$41.45	\$45.46	\$42.02	\$51.15
3 Children	\$52.21	\$48.20	\$53.59	\$48.58	\$60.47

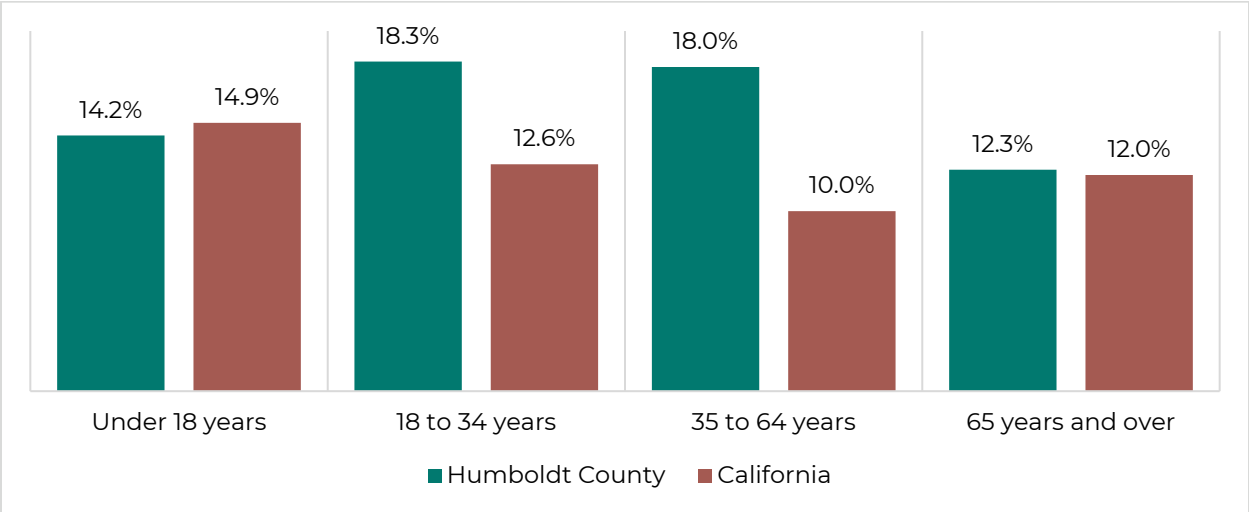
Table 9: Living Wage for a Two Adult, Two Income Family, Humboldt County, Del Norte County, Mendocino County, Trinity County, California. Calculations. Source: MIT Living Wage Calculator, 2025

Number of Children	Humboldt County	Del Norte County	Mendocino County	Trinity County	California
0 Children	\$16.20	\$15.65	\$16.63	\$15.33	\$19.27
1 Child	\$23.80	\$21.59	\$23.88	\$21.76	\$27.84
2 Children	\$29.13	\$25.97	\$28.77	\$26.26	\$34.55
3 Children	\$34.85	\$30.26	\$34.34	\$30.46	\$42.86

## Poverty Rates

Poverty levels – which are set annually by the Census Bureau using a different methodology than that used by MIT to calculate poverty wage – vary depending on family size and composition. Using the Census Bureau’s poverty thresholds, estimates for the number of individuals living below the poverty line are given for Humboldt County. In 2023, about 16.2% of the county’s population fell below the poverty line. In Figure 6, poverty rates in Humboldt County are compared to those of California. In Humboldt County, the 18-34-year-old age group experienced the highest poverty rates in 2023 (18.3%), followed by the 35-64-year-old age group (18.0%). 14.2% of children under the age of 18 experienced poverty. The population over the age of 65 years experiences poverty at the lowest rate (12.3%). While the local poverty rates in the populations under the age of 18 years and above the age of 65 years are comparable to those of the state, poverty rates for the middle-aged population are significantly higher in Humboldt County.

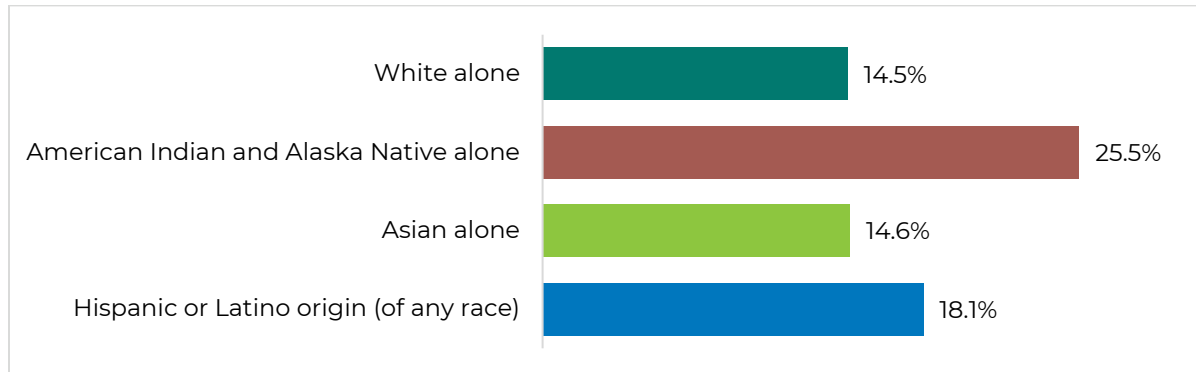
Figure 6: Poverty Rates by Age, Humboldt County and California. Source: ACS 2023 1-Year Estimates.



Because of the small population sizes of many racial and ethnic groups in Humboldt County, poverty data are only available for a handful of those groups. In Figure 7, available poverty data are provided by racial and ethnic group. As of 2023, about 14.5% of the “White alone” group fell below the poverty line. Poverty rates for the “Asian alone” group

were comparable to those of the “White alone” group. Members of the “Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)” and “American Indian and Alaskan Native alone” groups experienced higher poverty rates of 18.1% and 25.5%, respectively.

Figure 7: Poverty Rates by Race or Ethnicity in Humboldt County. Source: ACS 2023 1-Year Estimates.

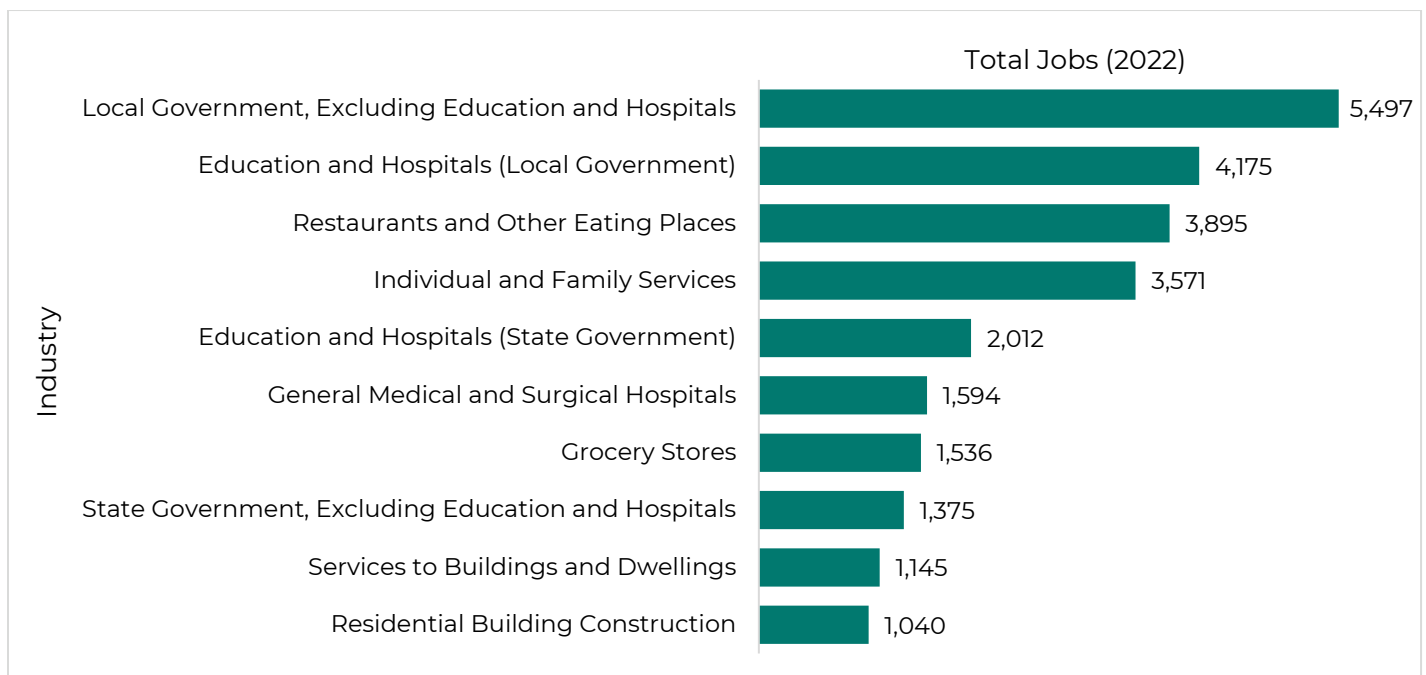


# 1. Industry Elevation and Diversification

## Largest Industries

There were around 57,000 workers employed in Humboldt County in 2022. The top two largest industries are public: local government, excluding education and hospitals, followed by the public education and hospitals industry.<sup>39</sup> Together, these industries employ nearly 10,000 workers. Quality-of-life industries, like the restaurant industry and grocery stores are large employers in the county. In addition, some healthcare and development-related industries top the list as significant employers.

Figure 8: Largest Industries (4-Digit NAICS Code) by Number of Jobs in Humboldt County. Source: Lightcast 2024.



<sup>39</sup> For more information on the education and healthcare assets, see the [Regional Profile](#).

## Top Growing Industries

Many of the largest industries in the county are also expected to see significant growth over the next 10 years. The Individual and Family Services industry is expected to see the most growth. Businesses in this industry are primarily focused on providing social assistance services to children, seniors, individuals with disabilities, or other populations, such as adoption and foster care, adult day care centers and homecare services. The local government is expected to grow, as are some healthcare industries (Outpatient Care Centers and Hospitals). Overall, the county is projected to see net growth of more than 5,500 jobs between 2022 and 2032.

*Table 10: Fastest-Growing Industries by Projected Change in Jobs by 4-Digit NAICS Code in Humboldt County. Source: Lightcast, 2024.*

Industry	2022 Jobs	2032 Jobs (Projected)	Projected Change
Individual and Family Services	3,571	5,131	1,561
Local Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals	5,497	6,560	1,064
Education and Hospitals (Local Government)	4,175	5,135	961
Outpatient Care Centers	993	1,898	905
Education and Hospitals (State Government)	2,012	2,441	430
State Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals	1,375	1,784	409
Grantmaking and Giving Services	432	615	183
Special Food Services	321	492	171
Restaurants and Other Eating Places	3,895	4,048	154
Grocery Stores	1,536	1,663	127

## Employment Concentration

Employment concentration is used to measure the concentration of employment within an industry relative to comparable geographies throughout the country. An average score is equal to 1; if an industry has an employment concentration score of 1, its employment count is equal to the national average for other geographies of comparable size.

Highly concentrated industries tend to play an outsized role in the local economy. These sectors often benefit from established supply chains, a skilled workforce and specialized infrastructure. They are also more likely to export goods or services outside the region, drawing in new revenue and supporting broader economic activity. In some cases, concentrated industries are legacy sectors tied to the region’s history and natural resources; in others, they reflect emerging strengths and innovation clusters.

*Table 11: Employment Concentrations and Jobs in Highly Concentrated Industries (4-Digit NAICS) in Humboldt County. Source: Lightcast, 2024.*

<b>Industry</b>	<b>Employment Concentration</b>	<b>2022 Jobs</b>
Other Leather and Allied Product Manufacturing	19.6	87
Sawmills and Wood Preservation	18.9	602
Logging	18.0	414
Seafood Product Preparation and Packaging	15.7	155
Pesticide, Fertilizer and Other Agricultural Chemical Manufacturing	12.2	174
Support Activities for Forestry	11.4	91
Timber Tract Operations	11.2	14
Fishing	10.2	96
Grantmaking and Giving Services	8.8	432
Farm Product Raw Material Merchant Wholesalers	6.7	205

The most highly concentrated industry in Humboldt County is the Other Leather and Allied Product Manufacturing industry, which has an employment concentration of nearly 20 times the average. Processing and manufacturing jobs are highly concentrated in the county, with industries like Sawmills and Wood Preservation, Logging, Seafood Product Preparation and Packaging, Timber Tract Operations and Fishing industries all being very highly concentrated in the county.

### **Industry GRP**

Gross Regional Product (GRP) measures the value created by industries within Humboldt County. GRP is similar to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP); the only difference is that the former measures only industries

within the county while the latter is applied on a national scale. In 2022, Humboldt County’s GRP totaled \$6.9 billion.<sup>40</sup>

Table 12: High-GRP Industries and Employment in Humboldt County by 4-Digit NAICS Code. Source: Lightcast 2024.

Industry	2022 GRP	2022 Jobs
Local Government (Excluding Education & Hospitals)	\$488,164,181	5,497
Education and Hospitals (Local Government)	\$277,257,666	4,175
General Medical and Surgical Hospitals	\$222,867,219	1,594
State Government (Excluding Education & Hospitals)	\$212,655,435	1,375
Natural Gas Distribution	\$197,867,662	252
Restaurants and Other Eating Places	\$189,291,549	3,895
Education and Hospitals (State Government)	\$150,721,355	2,012
Sawmills and Wood Preservation	\$140,236,288	602
Outpatient Care Centers	\$127,997,496	993
Federal Government, Civilian	\$117,404,774	794

Local government industries have the highest GRP in the county, followed by a healthcare industry: General Medical and Surgical Hospitals. The Natural Gas Distribution industry has not yet appeared in our analysis and it has the fifth-highest GRP in the county (\$197 million). A mix of quality-of-place, healthcare and manufacturing industries are also high-value industries.

### Businesses by Number of Employees

Humboldt County’s business ecosystem is characterized by a higher percentage of small firms, with 87.5% of businesses employing less than 20 people. Only 3.2% of firms in the county have more than 50 employees, a smaller percentage than both the state and national share. Additionally, the county is home to 10,898 nonemployer establishments – businesses with no paid employees – further highlighting the importance of small businesses to the local economy.

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<sup>40</sup> U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, "[CAGDP2 Gross domestic product \(GDP\) by county and metropolitan area](#)"

Table 13: Comparison of Businesses by Number of Employees, Humboldt County, California, US, 2022. Source: Census County Business Patterns.

<b>Number of Employees</b>	<b>Humboldt County</b>	<b>California</b>	<b>US</b>
Less than 5 employees	51.0%	58.2%	55.7%
5 to 9 employees	21.6%	16.7%	17.6%
10 to 19 employees	14.9%	11.9%	12.4%
20 to 49 employees	9.2%	8.4%	8.9%
50 to 99 employees	2.0%	2.7%	2.9%
100 to 249 employees	1.0%	1.5%	1.6%
250 employees or more	0.2%	0.7%	0.7%

## Imports and Exports

In a globalized economy, the management of imports and exports fosters local growth and job opportunities, as well as attracting investment. Humboldt County’s largest imports center on a few major industries, including financial and insurance services, petroleum products and energy generation, professional scientific and technical services, automobile manufacturing and construction.

Table 14: Top imports in Humboldt County, 2024. Source: Lightcast 2025.1.<sup>41</sup>

<b>Industry</b>	<b>Imports</b>
Insurance Carriers	\$193,682,033
Petroleum and Coal Products Manufacturing	\$170,155,641
Computer Systems Design and Related Services	\$166,419,269
Electric Power Generation, Transmission and Distribution	\$148,132,047
Scientific Research and Development Services	\$141,140,785
Depository Credit Intermediation	\$136,867,282
Software Publishers	\$130,476,026
Motor Vehicle Manufacturing	\$128,603,548
Other Financial Investment Activities	\$124,641,091
Building Equipment Contractors	\$120,292,192

The top exported commodities are diverse, ranging from retail trade to manufacturing, showcasing the range of strengths in the County. Forestry and agriculture feature prominently in the top exports, highlighting the importance of these industries to the county.

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<sup>41</sup> Excludes imports from government services.

Table 15: Top exports in Humboldt County, 2024. Source: Lightcast 2025.1.<sup>42</sup>

<b>Industry</b>	<b>Exports</b>
Sawmills and Wood Preservation	\$359,364,747
Natural Gas Distribution	\$233,854,993
Crop Production	\$176,463,827
Outpatient Care Centers	\$149,732,635
Animal Production	\$145,857,729
Grocery Stores	\$145,709,991
Individual and Family Services	\$124,187,555
Building Material and Supplies Dealers	\$88,951,866
Pesticide, Fertilizer and Other Agricultural Chemical Manufacturing	\$85,511,307
Dairy Product Manufacturing	\$81,990,752

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<sup>42</sup> Excludes imports from government services.

## Available Commercial Space

Humboldt County has a range of different commercial sites available for local businesses. The highest square footage of vacant commercial space is suitable for retail operations, while flex spaces, those that are suitable for multiple uses, have the highest vacancy rate. Throughout the county, office, industrial and retail spaces have low vacancy rates, which could be indicative of demand for additional commercial space.

Table 16: Commercial Space by Type and Vacancy Rate in Humboldt County. Source: CoStar.

<b>Commercial Space Type</b>	<b>Total Inventory (sq. ft.)</b>	<b>Vacant Square Feet</b>	<b>Vacancy Rate</b>
Office	2,266,129	43,775	1.9%
Industrial	4,206,742	84,212	2.0%
Retail	6,649,648	133,242	2.0%
Flex	418,438	36,911	8.8%

## Target Industries

Project Rebound is a targeted industry analysis that identifies and prioritizes industry sectors with the greatest potential for growth, resilience and alignment with Humboldt County's assets. The following industry clusters were identified as the most promising for Humboldt County's future: Education and Training; Healthcare; Financial Services; Agriculture; Arts, Hospitality and Tourism; Construction; Renewable Energy; Forestry and Logging; and Aquaculture and Fisheries.

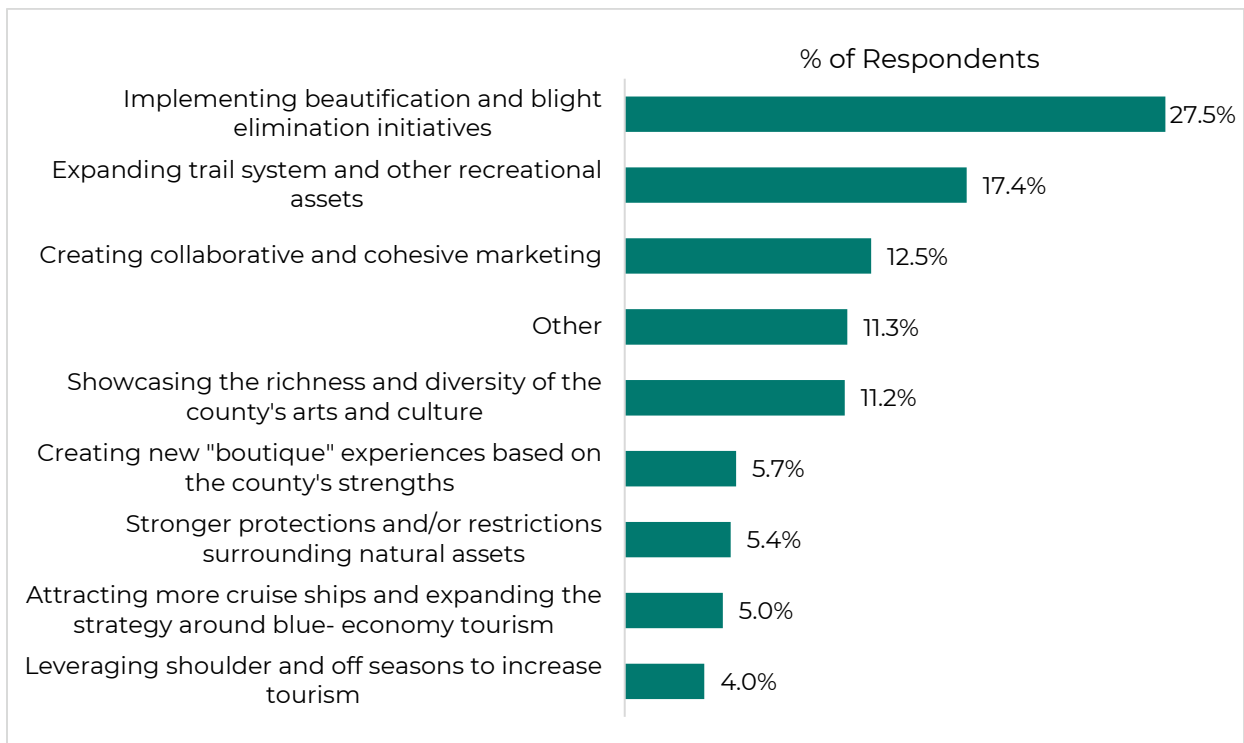
Within the recent public survey, a series of questions were asked about supporting target industry-specific growth in the county. Survey results related to Healthcare, Education and Training and Construction can be found in the Fundamental Community Needs section of this document. Survey results related to the Renewable Energy sector can be found in the Infrastructure section of this document. Results for the other five target industries follows:

### Tourism, Arts and Culture Survey Results

Survey respondents expressed the most support for 'Implementing beautification and blight elimination initiatives' (27.5% of respondents),

illuminating a strong interest in improving the visual appeal and cleanliness of the community to support tourism and local pride. ‘Expanding the trail system and other recreational assets’ was the second-most selected option (17.4%), reflecting interest in outdoor tourism and healthier lifestyles. ‘Creating collaborative and cohesive marketing’ (12.5%) also received substantial support, suggesting a need for unified promotion of the county’s attractions. Of the 11.3% respondents who selected the ‘Other’ option, many highlighted a need to address homelessness challenges and improve public infrastructure.

Figure 9: Support for Tourism, Arts and Culture Industries in Humboldt County. Source: Humboldt County Community Survey Findings, 2025<sup>43</sup>



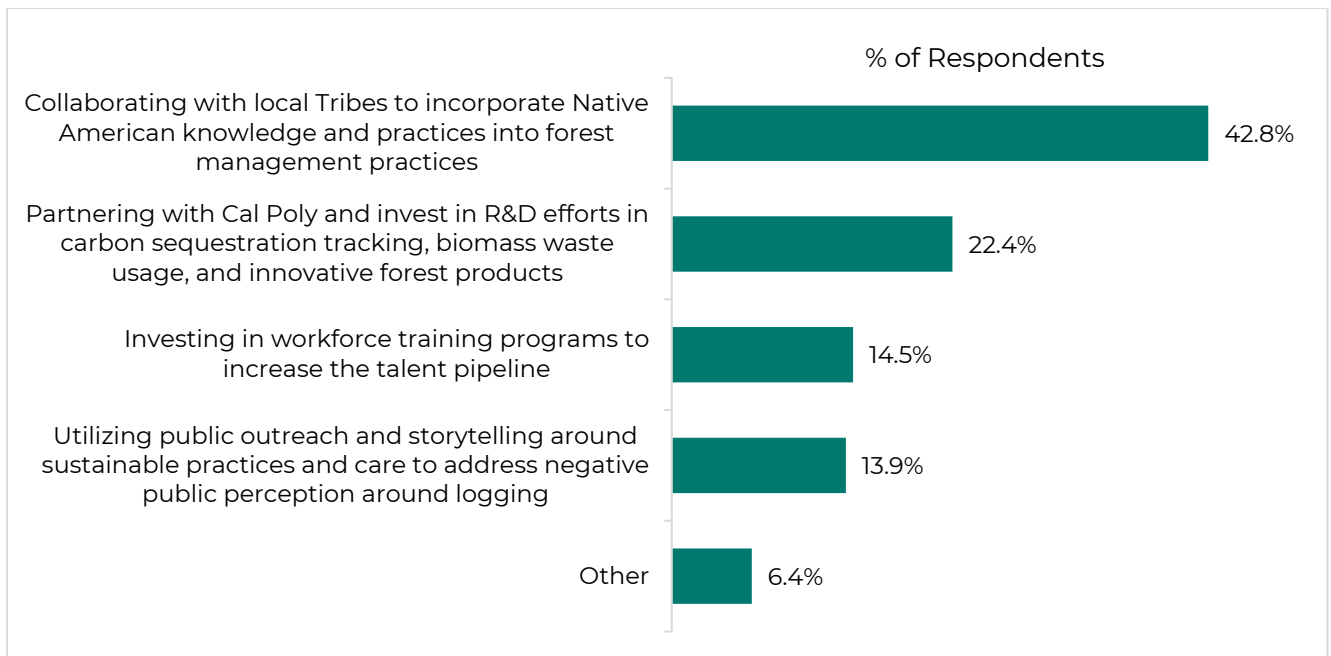
### Forest Products Survey Results

The most supported strategy, by a significant margin, was ‘Collaborating with local Tribes to incorporate Native American knowledge and practices into forest management practices,’ with

<sup>43</sup> Excludes respondents who selected “I don’t know.”

42.8% of respondents selecting this option. This reflects strong community interest in traditional ecological knowledge and culturally-informed sustainability. Following this, partnering with Cal Poly and investing in R&D (22.4%) suggests a desire for innovation in areas like carbon sequestration and biomass utilization. Moderate support was given to workforce training programs (14.5%) and public outreach to improve perceptions of logging (13.9%), indicating recognition of both economic development needs and the importance of shaping public narrative. Of the respondents who selected 'other,' (6.4%), some called for deregulation of the industry and many others expressed dissent for the support of the industry.

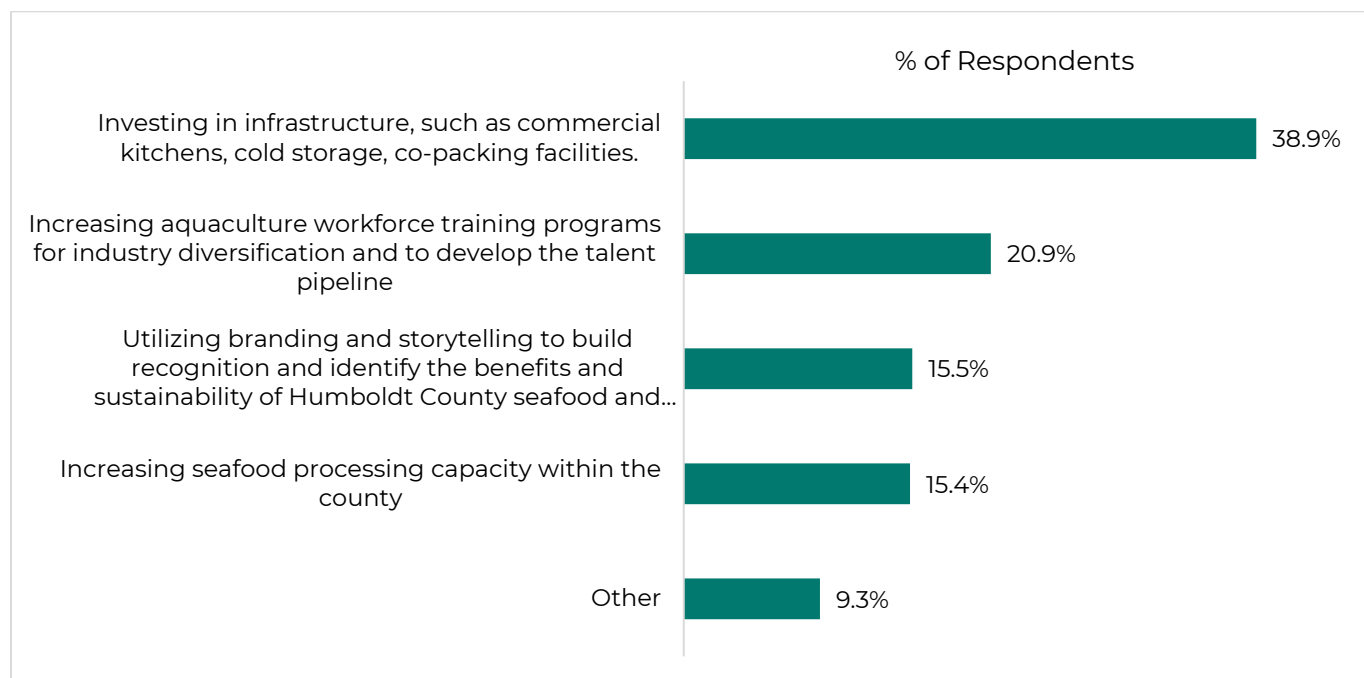
Figure 10: Support for Forest Products Industries in Humboldt County. Source: Humboldt County Community Survey Findings, 2025



## Blue Economy and Agriculture Survey Results

The top priority selected by respondents was ‘Investing in infrastructure, such as commercial kitchens, cold storage and co-packing facilities,’ indicating strong support for practical, foundational upgrades to enhance local food systems and value-added production. The second-highest priority, identified by 20.9% of respondents, was ‘Increasing aquaculture workforce training programs for industry diversification and to develop the talent pipeline,’ showing interest in building skilled labor and diversifying the industry. Use of branding and storytelling (15.5%) and increasing seafood processing capacity (15.4%) followed closely. Of the 9.3% of respondents who selected ‘Other,’ many underlined a need for ecological restoration and suggested that local partnerships (with Cal Poly Humboldt, for example) could benefit the industry cluster.

Figure 11: Support for Blue Economy and Agriculture Industries in Humboldt County. Source: Humboldt County Community Survey Findings, 2025<sup>44</sup>

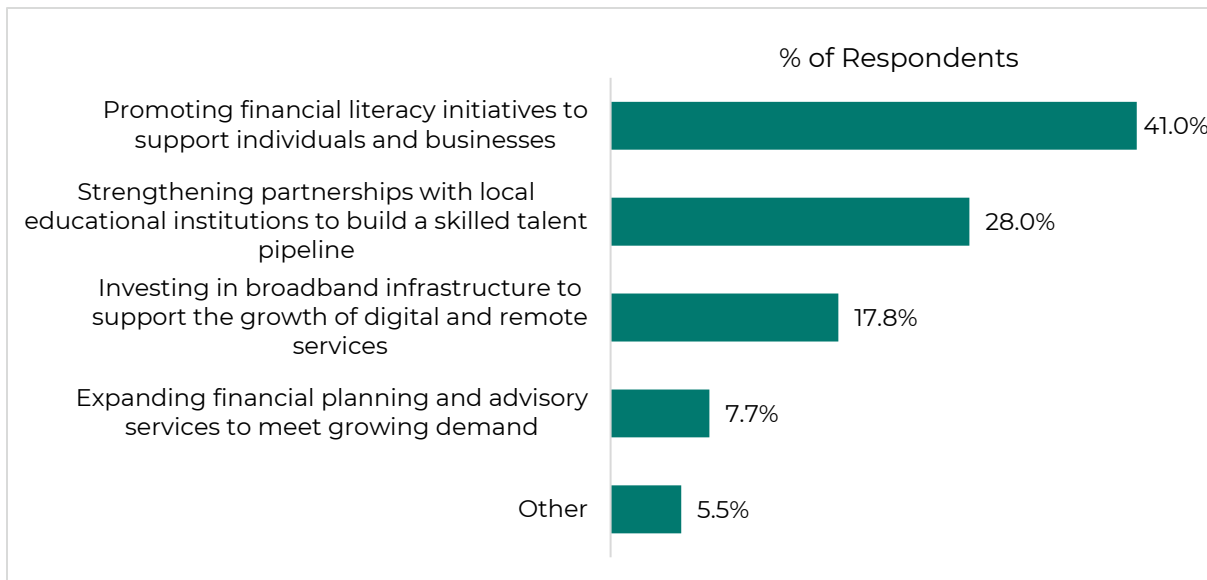


<sup>44</sup> Excludes respondents who selected “I don’t know.”

## Financial Services Survey Results

When asked which support services would best encourage the growth of financial services industries in Humboldt County, the most selected option was ‘Promoting financial literacy initiatives to support individuals and businesses,’ identified by 41.0% of respondents. Partnerships with local educational institutions were acknowledged to be important for building a skilled talent pipeline and broadband infrastructure was confirmed as an important industry support. Only 5.5% respondents selected ‘Other,’ with some underscoring the importance of developing a talented workforce to support the cluster.

Figure 12: Support for Financial Services Industries in Humboldt County. Source: Humboldt County Community Survey Findings, 2025<sup>45</sup>



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<sup>45</sup> Excludes respondents who selected “I don’t know.”

## 2. Collaboration

Collaboration is essential to advancing core economic development functions such as small business and entrepreneurship support, workforce development, infrastructure investment, tourism marketing, business retention and expansion, and business attraction. In Humboldt County, a wide array of committed organizations and stakeholders are working toward these goals. However, despite this strong foundation, efforts remain fragmented; there is currently no cohesive plan or consistent messaging to guide and align these initiatives.



During on-site engagement sessions with 30 Humboldt County stakeholders, participants emphasized the importance of strengthening collaboration—not just for implementing the CEDS, but more broadly across the region’s economic development landscape. They expressed that while partnerships are essential for the CEDS, a broader and more sustained level of coordination and collaboration among entities is needed.

The CEDS Committee identified collaboration as one of its three strategic focus areas, citing barriers such as siloed information and initiatives, territorial approaches, and insufficient coordination among

local, county, state, and tribal entities. These concerns were echoed by the broader group of stakeholders.

Despite these challenges, stakeholders also highlighted successful examples of regional collaboration already underway—most notably the momentum sparked by Redwood Region RISE (RRRISE). Through the California Jobs First initiative, the RRRISE coalition has developed a 10-year Regional Roadmap. This effort has brought together over 150 organizations and engaged more than 1,000 residents across the region, serving as a powerful example of what coordinated action can achieve.

Looking ahead, stakeholders are calling for a more intentional and structured approach to economic development to increase alignment, efficiency, and impact. While not an exhaustive list, the following partners have been identified for collaboration.

## **Communities**

- City of Arcata
- City of Blue Lake
- City of Eureka
- City of Ferndale
- City of Fortuna
- City of Rio Dell
- City of Trinidad
- Unincorporated communities throughout the county

## **Economic Development Organizations**

- North Edge (formerly Arcata Economic Development Corporation)
- Northern California Indian Development Council
- California Center for Rural Policy
- Redwood Region Economic Development Commission
- Humboldt County Economic Development Division
- City of Arcata Economic Development Division
- City of Blue Lake Economic Development Department
- City of Eureka Economic Development Division

## **Chambers of Commerce**

- Arcata Chamber of Commerce

- Blue Lake Chamber of Commerce
- Ferndale Chamber of Commerce
- Fortuna Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Eureka Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Trinidad Chamber of Commerce
- Loleta Chamber of Commerce
- McKinleyville Chamber of Commerce
- Orick Chamber of Commerce
- Rio Dell-Scotia Chamber of Commerce
- Southern Humboldt Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Center
- Willow Creek Chamber of Commerce

## **Downtown Organizations**

- Arcata Main Street
- Eureka Main Street Program
- Fortuna Downtown Business Association

## **Small Business Resource Partners**

- North Coast Small Business Development Center
- Blue Lake Rancheria Toma Resilience Campus & Business Incubator
- The Headwaters Fund (grants and revolving loan fund)
- Redwood Region EDC Revolving Loan Fund
- North Edge Revolving Loan Fund
- Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians EDC Revolving Loan Fund
- California Infrastructure and Economic Development Bank
- Lost Coast Ventures
- Humboldt County Farm Bureau
- Humboldt County Growers Alliance
- North Coast Growers' Foundation
- University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) Humboldt-Del Norte Counties
- Hoopa Development Fund
- APEX Accelerator

## **Workforce Partners**

- Big Brothers, Big Sisters
- California Jobs First

- Cal Poly Humboldt
- Changing Tides Family Services
- College of the Redwoods
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Department of Rehabilitation
- Employment Development Department
- Humboldt County Office of Education
- Humboldt County Workforce Development Board
- Humboldt Workforce Coalition
- The Job Market, America's Job Center of California
- Northern California Indian Development Council
- Redwood Community Action Agency
- Redwood Region RISE
- Westside Community Improvement Association
- Youth Ability

## **Local Foundations**

- Humboldt Area Foundation
- Humboldt Health Foundation
- Native Cultures Fund
- Humboldt County Community Foundation
- McLean Foundation
- Smullin Foundation

## Marketing and Tourism Organizations

- Chambers of Commerce
- Tourism-related businesses
- Visit Eureka
- Southern Humboldt Business and Visitors Bureau
- Humboldt Del Norte Film Commission
- Humboldt Made
- Humboldt County Visitors Bureau
- Humboldt Lodging Alliance
- People Center for the Arts

Workshop participants emphasized leveraging partnerships to create a unified brand and message for Humboldt County. In doing so, they stressed the importance of thoughtfully incorporating the community's cultural assets as they work to attract businesses, residents, workers, and tourists.

## Culturally Sensitive Areas

Humboldt County contains over 32,000 acres of culturally sensitive areas, places that hold deep historical, spiritual and cultural significance for Indigenous communities. These areas exist on public and private land and tend to be concentrated along the Lower Klamath, Lower Trinity, the lower end and North Fork of the Mad River, the Van Duzen River and the eastern shore of Humboldt Bay. While some locations are publicly identified, others remain confidential to protect them from disturbance. Safeguarding culturally sensitive areas is critical to honoring tribal sovereignty and respecting the connections between Tribal communities and the land. For more information about the Indigenous Tribes in Humboldt County, see [Appendix A](#).

## Cultural Amenities

Humboldt County's rich history and artistic spirit make it a vibrant cultural destination. The Victorian architecture in Ferndale and Eureka reflects the county's storied past, while a range of museums, including the Clarke Historical Museum, Blue Lake Museum, Hoopa Tribal Museum and Humboldt Bay Maritime Museum, preserve the diverse heritage of the region. These institutions, along with numerous historical landmarks, offer engaging opportunities for education, tourism and local pride.

The county is also home to a high concentration of visual artists, musicians and performers, fostering a thriving creative community. In 2023, cultural tourism generated over \$52 million in visitor spending, fueled by popular events and venues like the Morris Graves Museum of Art, the Redwood Coast Music Festival and the Arkley Center for the Performing Arts.

## Historic Sites and Landmarks

Historic sites in Humboldt County include locations recognized as California Historical Landmarks or listed on the National Register of Historic Places. These sites preserve the region's cultural, architectural and industrial heritage, offering a window into the people and events that shaped the county's past. Within Humboldt County, there are 13 sites that are California Historical Landmarks.

There are 59 places in Humboldt County that are on the National Register of Historic Places, the "official list of the Nation's historic places worthy of preservation."<sup>46</sup> Locations listed on the Register are diverse, ranging from architecturally significant buildings to historic and cultural districts to areas of importance to Indigenous communities. This existing Register should not be viewed as complete and protection efforts are ongoing; the most recent addition in Humboldt County occurred in July of 2024.

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<sup>46</sup> "National Register Database and Research." National Park Service. <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/database-research.htm>

Table 17: State Historical Landmarks in Humboldt County. Source: California Office of Historic Preservation, California Historical Landmarks.

<b>Site</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Description</b>
Trinidad Head	Trinidad, west of Highway 101	Site where Spanish explorers erected a cross in 1775 to claim the land for Spain.
Fort Humboldt	3431 Fort Ave, Eureka	Military post established in 1853 during settler-native conflicts; operated until 1866.
The Old Arrow Tree	Korbel, east of Korbel County Highway	Site of Indigenous peace treaty
Centerville Beach Cross	Centerville Road, west of Ferndale	Memorial for the 1860 shipwreck of the Northerner.
Camp Curtis	L.K. Wood Blvd, Arcata	Civil War-era military outpost and Mountain Battalion headquarters from 1862 to 1865.
Town of Trinidad	Edwards St. and Hector St., Trinidad	Oldest town on the North Coast
City of Eureka	3rd St. and East St., Eureka	Major port of entry
California's First Drilled Oil Wells	Mattole Rd. and Front St., Petrolia	Site of California's earliest commercial oil production
Jacoby Building	Eight and H, Arcata	Principal supply point for the Klamath-Trinity mining camp trade
Old Indian Village of Tsurai	Ocean St. and Edwards St., Trinidad	Site of Yurok village, occupied until 1916
Arcata and Mad River Rail Road Company	330 Railroad Ave, Blue Lake	Oldest rail line on the North Coast
Humboldt Harbor Historical District	Harold Larsen Vista Pt, Eureka	Early settlements on Humboldt Bay, later a hub for logging and shipbuilding.
Ferndale	Ferndale City Hall Park, Ferndale	Pioneer agricultural and dairy community

## 3. Natural Assets and Disaster Preparedness

### Geography

Located on the rugged northern coast of California, Humboldt County is characterized by its varied geography. To the west, 110 miles of coastline along the Pacific Ocean offer access to a rich marine environment. The natural benefits of the coastline are tremendous and the economy benefits from access to maritime transportation routes. Humboldt County is home to 40% of remaining old-growth redwood forest, most of which are protected and conserved within dozens of national, state and local forests and parks, totaling approximately 680,000 acres.

The Coast Ranges run through the county, attracting nature-loving tourists and supporting timber-rich forests that are processed by forestry and logging industries. Several rivers extend across the county, including the Eel River and the Klamath River; both supply water for residential and commercial operations. Most popular are the old-growth Redwood Forests, which call countless visitors to the county every year.

### Climate

Humboldt County has a temperate maritime climate, due to its proximity to the Pacific Ocean. Generally, the county experiences mild, wet winters and cool, dry summers. Heavy fog is common and rain falls most abundantly in the winter. Extreme temperatures are rarely experienced, making agricultural yields consistent and reliable. Humboldt County contains a remarkably high number of microclimates due to its diverse topography and rich biodiversity. Elevation changes from sea level to over 6,000 feet, along with complex coastal, forest and inland ecosystems, contribute to significant variations in temperature, precipitation and humidity across short distances, allowing for a wide range of natural habitats.

### Natural Resources

Natural resources in Humboldt County are both abundant and diverse. Timber forests extend throughout the county, making the forestry and logging industries strong drivers of economic activity. The coastline

provides access to the ocean’s resources and salmon and shellfish fisheries are particularly valuable assets. The county has long been known for the climate’s unique suitability for alternative agriculture cultivation and many alternative agriculture farms are scattered throughout it. Other agricultural products, such as dairy products, berries, vegetables and cut flowers are well supported by the climate and natural resources in the county. In recent years, the renewable energy industry has proven to have high potential in Humboldt County. Solar energy is harvested locally and the offshore wind industry is slated to grow rapidly over the next several years.

## Environmental Risks

Humboldt County faces several environmental threats due to both natural and human-induced factors. Some of these include:

- **Coastal Erosion and Rising Sea Levels:** Humboldt Bay is experiencing the fastest rate of sea level rise in California and portions of Humboldt County are already being flooded during king tides.<sup>47</sup> As sea levels continue to rise and coastal erosion accelerates, the region will face growing threats to critical infrastructure, more frequent and severe coastal flooding and the potential loss of vital habitats for marine and coastal species.
- **Earthquakes:** Humboldt County lies near several active fault lines, including the Cascadia Subduction Zone and the San Andreas Fault, making it highly susceptible to earthquakes. A major earthquake could have severe consequences, including ground shaking, landslides and damage to infrastructure. And, as mentioned in the next section, large earthquakes in the region could trigger tsunamis, further compounding the risks to coastal areas.

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<sup>47</sup> “Sea level rise vulnerability assessment for State wildlife areas surrounding Humboldt Bay, northern California.” Robert M. Sullivan, Laird A., Powell, B. and Anderson, J. K. <https://journal.wildlife.ca.gov/2022/11/22/sea-level-rise-vulnerability-assessment-for-state-wildlife-areas-surrounding-humboldt-bay-northern-california/>

- **Tsunamis:** Humboldt County is located on the Pacific Coast and is vulnerable to tsunamis, particularly after undersea earthquakes. The region has experienced tsunamis in the past and the potential for future events remains a concern, especially with seismic activity off the coast. Tsunamis can cause significant damage to coastal infrastructure, flooding and loss of life, especially in low-lying areas such as Humboldt Bay.
- **Water Pollution and Habitat Degradation:** Agriculture and industrial activities in the region have contributed to water pollution. Runoff from fertilizers, pesticides and sedimentation can contaminate rivers, streams and groundwater, threatening aquatic life and the health of local communities.
- **Wildfires:** Humboldt County, like much of California, is increasingly vulnerable to wildfires. Rising temperatures, prolonged droughts and changing climate patterns have made the area more susceptible to large-scale wildfires. These fires can devastate forests, habitats and communities, as well as contribute to air pollution and carbon emissions.

When considering the impacts on human life, buildings and agriculture, these environmental risks are estimated to result in an average economic loss of \$118 million annually in Humboldt County, a higher expected annual loss than 96% of counties in the United States.<sup>48</sup> This estimate does not include financial costs due to disasters outside of the region, such as wildfires in Los Angeles, which increase insurance premiums within Humboldt County, impacting residents, businesses and government. Efforts to mitigate and adapt to these risks are ongoing, but continued attention and preparation are necessary to ensure the safety and sustainability of the region.

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<sup>48</sup> "Expected Annual Loss." Federal Emergency Management Agency. <https://hazards.fema.gov/nri/expected-annual-loss>

Table 18: Expected Annual Loss for Natural Hazards in Humboldt County. Source: National Risk Index.<sup>49</sup>

<b>Hazard Type</b>	<b>Expected Annual Loss Rating</b>	<b>EAL Value</b>
Coastal Flooding	Relatively Moderate	\$4,308,641
Cold Wave	No Expected Annual Losses	\$0
Drought	Relatively Moderate	\$2,162,758
Earthquake	Relatively High	\$103,489,516
Hail	Very Low	\$5,062
Heat Wave	Very Low	\$2,364
Landslide	Relatively High	\$558,842
Lightning	Very Low	\$9,585
Riverine Flooding	Relatively Moderate	\$4,020,398
Strong Wind	Very Low	\$6,033
Tornado	Very Low	\$28,945
Tsunami	Relatively Moderate	\$114,717
Volcanic Activity	No Expected Annual Losses	\$0
Wildfire	Relatively Moderate	\$3,301,582
Winter Weather	Very Low	\$7,423
Total	Relatively High	\$118,015,866

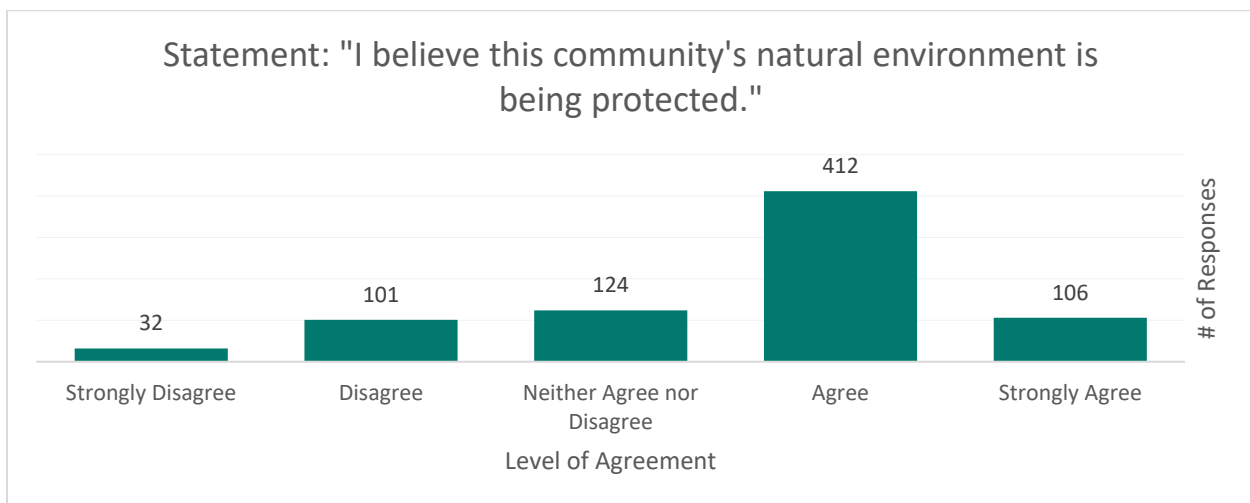
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<sup>49</sup> “National Risk Index.” Federal Emergency Management Agency. <https://hazards.fema.gov/nri/report/viewer?dataLOD=Counties&dataIDs=C06023#SectionExpectedAnnualLoss>

## Natural Assets and Disaster Preparedness Survey Findings

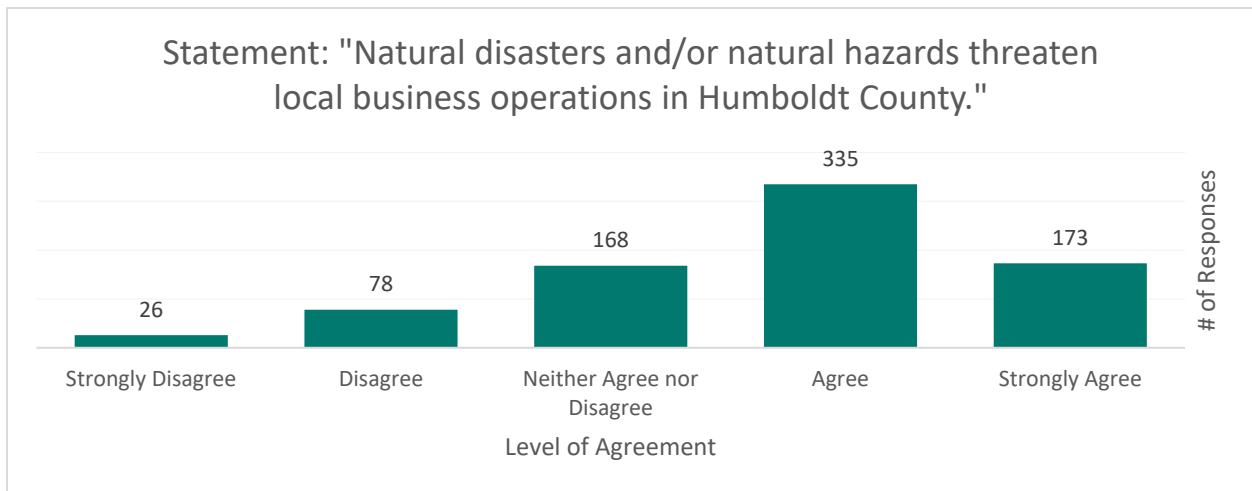
In order to evaluate the community's sentiment regarding the protection of the natural environment and the county's preparedness for natural disasters or hazards, survey respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with three related statements. When responding to the statement, "I believe this community's natural environment is being protected," 518 respondents, or 65.3%, agreed or strongly agreed. 124 respondents did not agree nor disagree and 133 (16.8%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. The majority of respondents, then, believe that the natural environment in Humboldt County is being protected.

Figure 13: Protection of the Natural Environment in Humboldt County. Source: Humboldt County Community Survey Findings, 2025



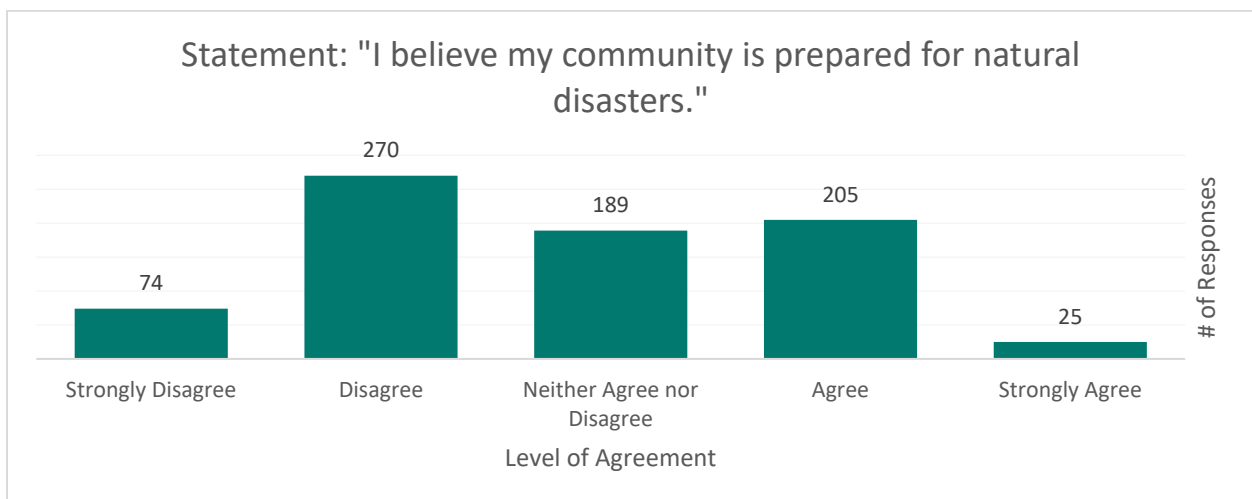
Next, when responding to the statement, "Natural disasters and/or natural hazards threaten local business operations in Humboldt County," 508 respondents, or 65.1%, indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed. 168 respondents neither agreed nor disagreed and 103 respondents (13.3%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. The majority of respondents, then, agree that natural disasters or hazards threaten local business operations in the county.

Figure 14: Threat of Natural Disasters and Hazards to Local Business in Humboldt County. Source: Humboldt County Community Survey Findings, 2025



Finally, respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with the statement, "I believe my community is prepared for natural disasters." Responses to this statement were more mixed; 230 respondents, or 30.1%, agreed or strongly agreed. 344 respondents, or 45.1%, disagreed or strongly disagreed. 189 respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. While some of the community feels prepared to handle natural disasters, a larger share believe that efforts could be made to improve the county's preparedness.

Figure 15: Natural Disaster Preparedness in Humboldt County. Source: Humboldt County Community Survey Findings, 2025



## 4. Fundamental Community Needs

### Healthcare

#### Healthcare Access

Humboldt County faces significant healthcare access challenges. Provider shortages, coupled with geographic isolation and transportation limitations, have resulted in a lack of access to quality care, particularly in primary and mental health care.

Regional Medical Centers in Humboldt County:

- Providence Medical Centers (acute and comprehensive care)
  - St. Joseph Hospital
  - Redwood Memorial
- Southern Humboldt Community Healthcare District: (acute, specialized and comprehensive care)
  - Five medical centers in Southern Humboldt
- Mad river Community Hospital (acute care)
- Non-profit community focused healthcare providers
  - Open Door Community Health Centers
  - WeCare Community Health Centers

These facilities are not currently meeting the access needs of the county's residents for primary or specialized health care. Many residents are forced to travel outside the county to receive treatment. Contributing to this lack is the county's ongoing shortage of healthcare professionals, with many areas in the county being designated as a health professional shortage area (HPSA) for primary care, dental health and mental health, in addition to many medically underserved areas<sup>50</sup>. Access is limited further for residents who rely on public health

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<sup>50</sup> St. Joseph & Redwood Memorial Hospital. (2023). Community Health Report. Retrieved from <https://www.providence.org/-/media/project/psjh/providence/socal/files/about/community-benefit/pdfs/2023/2023-chna-redwoodmemorialhospital.pdf?rev=a65f0d1d768b4ba29f415670ba69c0ed&hash=966850E555C6D09F6D876EF58235F6F3>

insurance coverage like Medicare and Medicaid, a group that makes up more than half of the county's residents.<sup>51</sup>

Since 2021, two of the three obstetrics providers in the county have ended their services, leaving St. Joseph Hospital's birthing center the only provider in about 4,000 square miles. Rehabilitation and elder care providers are also scarce and shrinking, with hospitals ending rehab services and several local nursing homes closing.

Behavioral health services are a significant need in the county. The Southern Humboldt Community Healthcare District (SoHum Health), Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) and the St. Joseph Hospital and Redwood Memorial Hospital CHNA all identify behavior and mental health as top health priorities.<sup>44,45</sup>

## **Health Metrics**

In Table 19, a variety of other health metrics are provided for Humboldt County, the State of California and the United States. A healthy population is both a driver and a result of economic growth; when residents are physically and mentally well, they are better able to participate in the workforce and contribute to the local economy. At the same time, economic growth can improve health outcomes by increasing access to jobs, education, housing and healthcare. Investments in community health are therefore key to fostering a resilient and prosperous economy in Humboldt County.

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<sup>51</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). Selected Characteristics of Health Insurance Coverage in the United States, American Community Survey 2023 5-Year Estimates. Retrieved from <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2023.S2701?q=050XX00US06023>

Table 19: Health Metric Comparison, Humboldt County, California, United States. Source: County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, 2021

Health Metric	Humboldt County	California	United States
Life Expectancy (years)	75.8	79.4	77.1
% of Population Identified in Poor or Fair Health	20%	18%	14%
Adult Obesity	33%	28%	34%
Diabetes Prevalence	10%	11%	10%
Current Cigarette Smokers	16%	9%	15%
Sexually Transmitted Infections (per 100,000 people)	350.7	488.2	495.5
Uninsured	7%	8%	10%

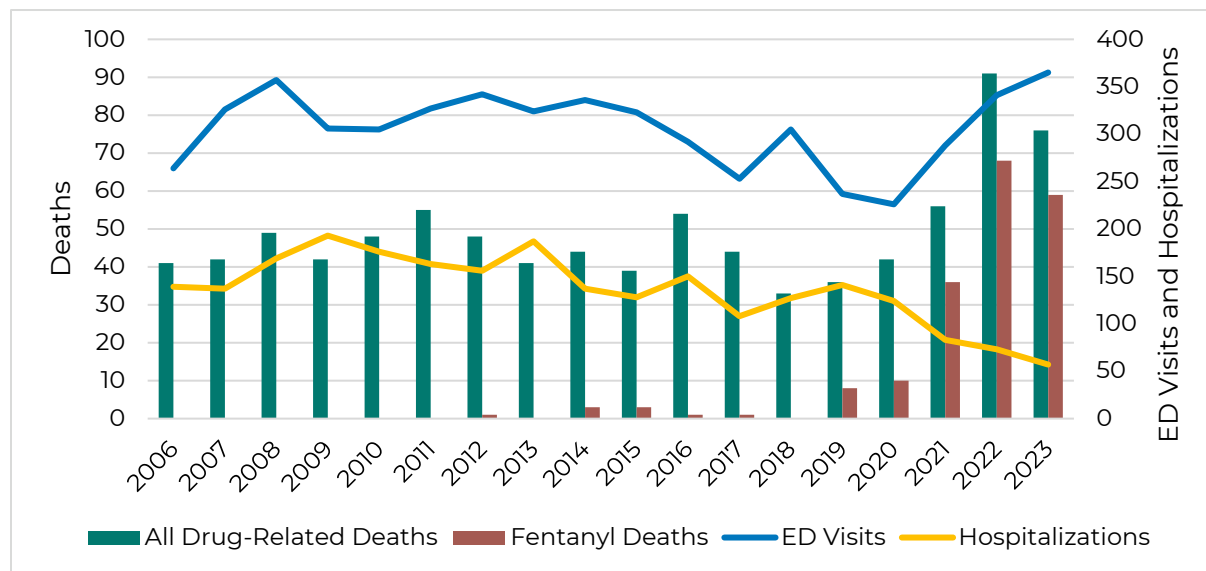
### Substance Use Disorder Trends

Substance use disorder (SUD) is a serious and growing public health challenge across the country, impacting the local community in Humboldt. Between 2018 and 2023, drug poisoning and SUD resulted in 334 deaths, 1,762 emergency department (ED) visits and 605 inpatient hospitalizations in Humboldt County.<sup>52</sup> While substance abuse disorder has long been a public health concern for the county, drug overdose deaths have increased significantly in recent years, due to the rise in Fentanyl. By 2023, Fentanyl became the leading cause of drug-related deaths, representing 77.6% of drug-related deaths.

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<sup>52</sup> California Overdose Surveillance Dashboard. Prepared by California Department of Public Health (CDPH - Substance and Addiction Prevention Branch (SAPB). Accessed on 04/16/25. Retrieved from <https://skylab.cdph.ca.gov/ODdash/>

Figure 16: Drug-Related Deaths, ED Visits and Hospitalizations in Humboldt County. Source: California Overdose Surveillance Dashboard

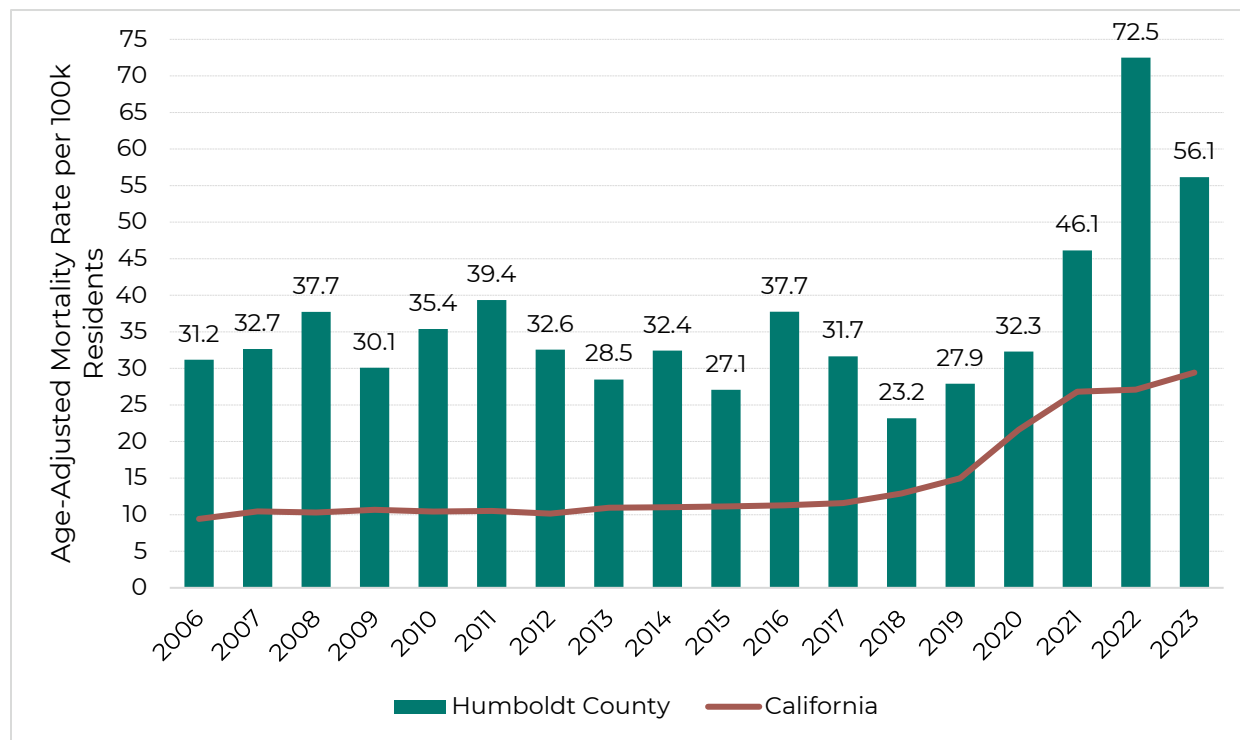


Humboldt County has consistently experienced higher mortality rates due to drug overdoses compared to the state as a whole. California average and the gap has only grown in recent years. When compared to the state as a whole, the mortality rate (per 100,000 people) in Humboldt County is much higher, in some instances more than double. One contributing factor may be the high prevalence of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) - traumatic childhood experiences - among the county's population. Seventy-six percent of adults in Humboldt County report having at least one ACE, higher than the California average of 63.5%.<sup>53</sup> Research shows that individuals exposed to ACEs are at an increased risk of developing mood, anxiety and substance use disorders.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Let's Get Healthy California. Adverse Childhood Experiences. <https://letsgethealthy.ca.gov/goals/healthy-beginnings/adverse-childhood-experiences/>

<sup>54</sup> Penn Medicine News. (2024). Stopping a spreading fire: identifying connections between adverse childhood events and substance use disorders. Retrieved from <https://www.pennmedicine.org/news/news-blog/2024/june/how-adverse-childhood-events-can-exacerbate-substance-use>

Figure 17: Age-adjusted drug overdose death rate per 100,000 residents in Humboldt County.  
 Source: California Overdose Surveillance Dashboard



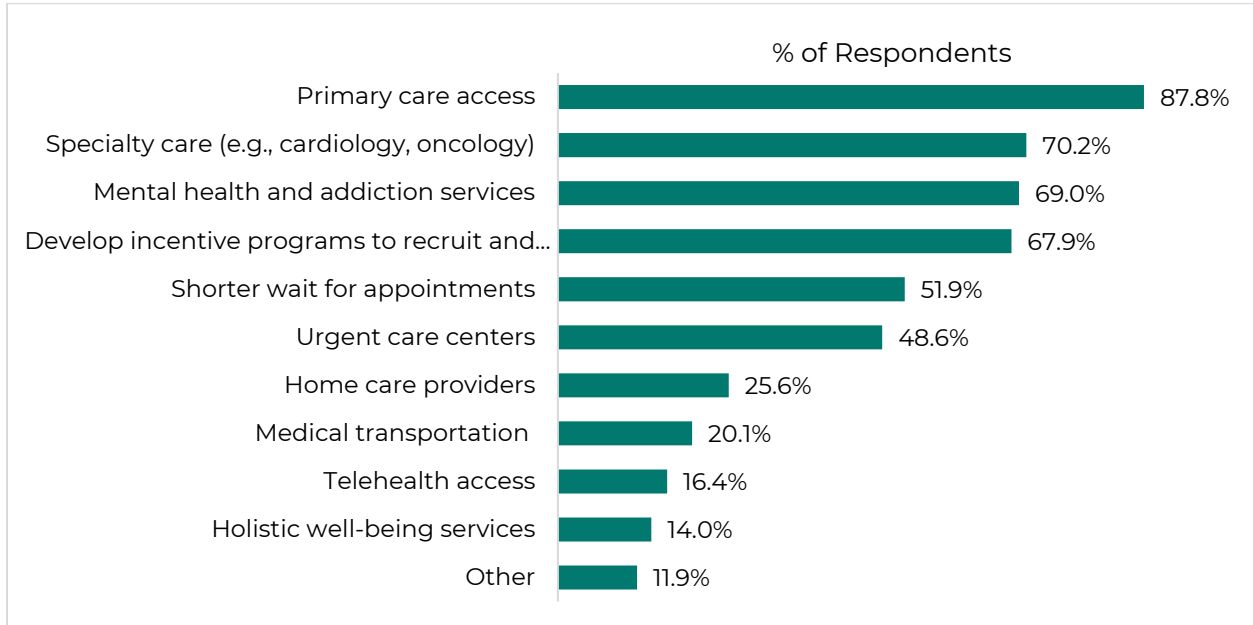
Widespread substance use can present public health and safety challenges and those challenges can affect various parts of the local economy. The prevalence of the issue in Humboldt County must be taken into consideration in a strategic plan and a proactive approach can be taken to ensure resources are available for individuals struggling with substance use.

### Healthcare Survey Results

Respondents identified 'Primary care access' as the most pressing healthcare need in the community, selected by 87.8% of respondents, indicating a significant concern about the availability of general health services. 'Specialty care (e.g., cardiology, oncology)' followed, identified by 70.2% of respondents, reflecting the need for more advanced and focused medical services. Close behind were 'Mental health and addiction services' (69.0%) and the development of 'Incentive programs to recruit and retain healthcare professionals' (67.9%), highlighting challenges with behavioral health and provider shortages. The 'Other' category was selected by 11.9% of participants. Many of those who selected this option expressed a need for a higher quality of healthcare

service, generally and several called for more healthcare facilities without any religious affiliation.

Figure 18: Greatest Healthcare Need in Humboldt County. Source: Humboldt County Community Survey Findings, 2025<sup>55</sup>

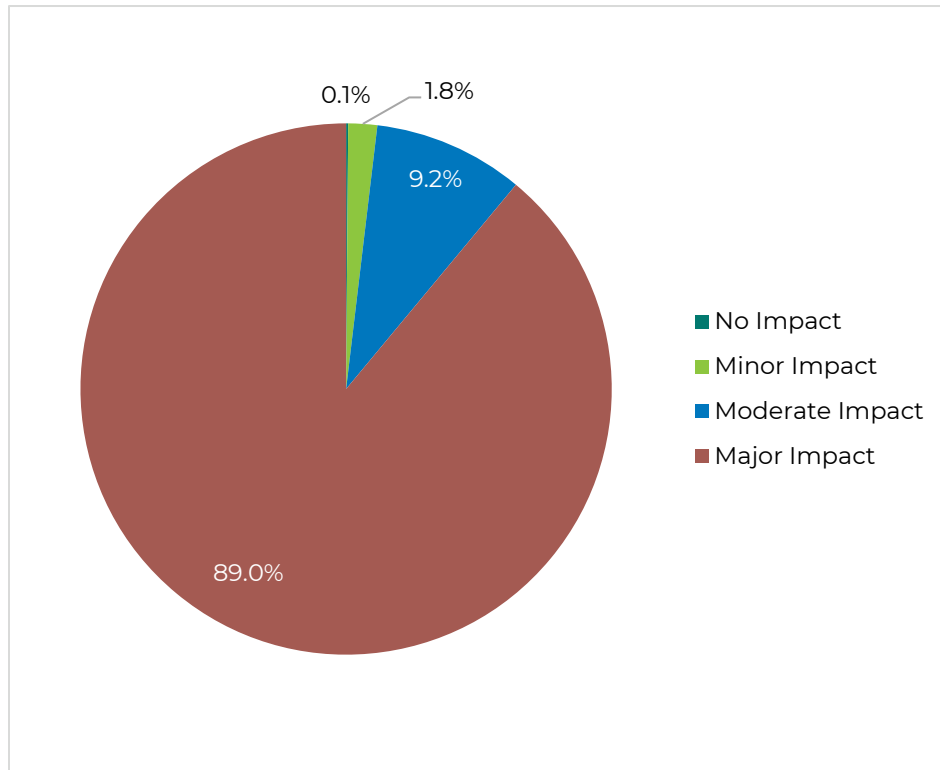


When asked whether lack of healthcare access had an impact on Humboldt County residents, the overwhelming majority of respondents (709 respondents, or 89.0%) indicated that it had a major impact. Another 73 respondents, or 9.2%, believed its impact to be moderate. Only 15 respondents, or 2%, believed the impact to be minor or nonexistent. This indicates the community's awareness of the pressing need to expand healthcare services throughout the county and increase the overall accessibility of those services.

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<sup>55</sup> Excludes respondents who selected "I don't know."

Figure 19: Impact of Lack of Healthcare Access in Humboldt County. Source: Humboldt County Community Survey Findings, 2025



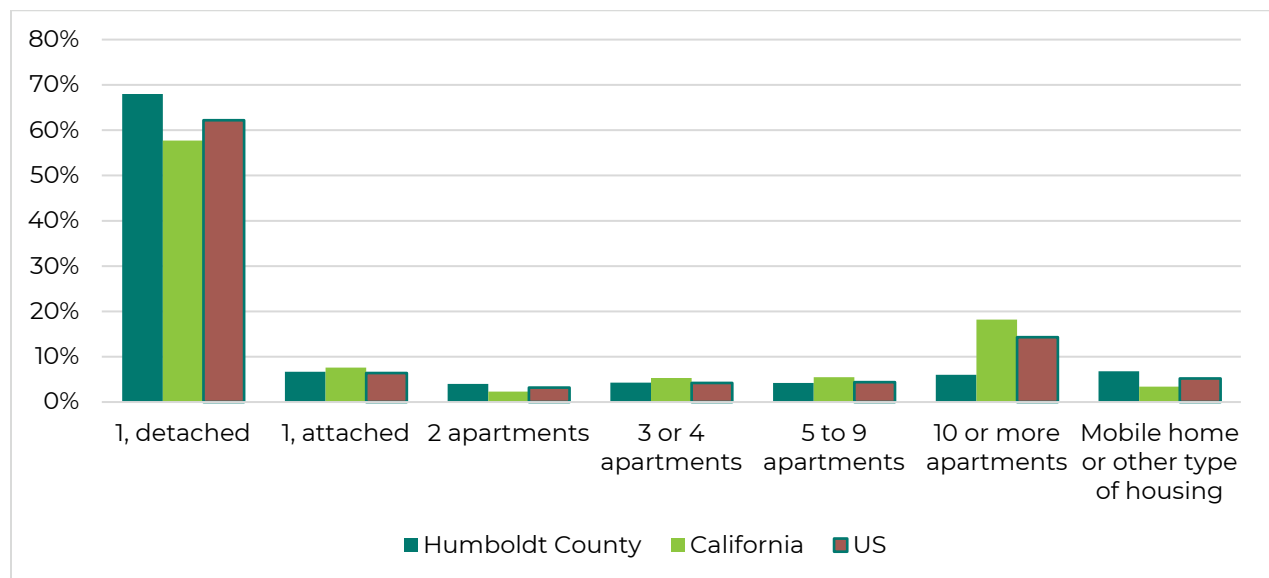
## Housing

Ensuring an adequate supply of affordable, accessible and high-quality housing is essential for residents to thrive and for the county’s economic prosperity. In recent years, housing development has slowed, while vacancies have declined, resulting in rising costs. In alignment with the [Housing Element of the Humboldt County General Plan](#), meeting the needs of the community and supporting economic growth will require increased housing production—including affordable and workforce housing, diverse housing options and housing for special populations.

### Housing by Type

The housing mix in Humboldt County is predominantly single-family, detached homes, representing 68% of units in the county. An additional 6.7% are single-unit, attached homes, such as townhomes, while 12.5% are in medium-density multifamily developments, such as duplexes, or small apartment buildings. Only 6.0% of units are located in large multi-family structures of 10 or more units. Around 7% of units are mobile homes or some other type of uncategorized unit.

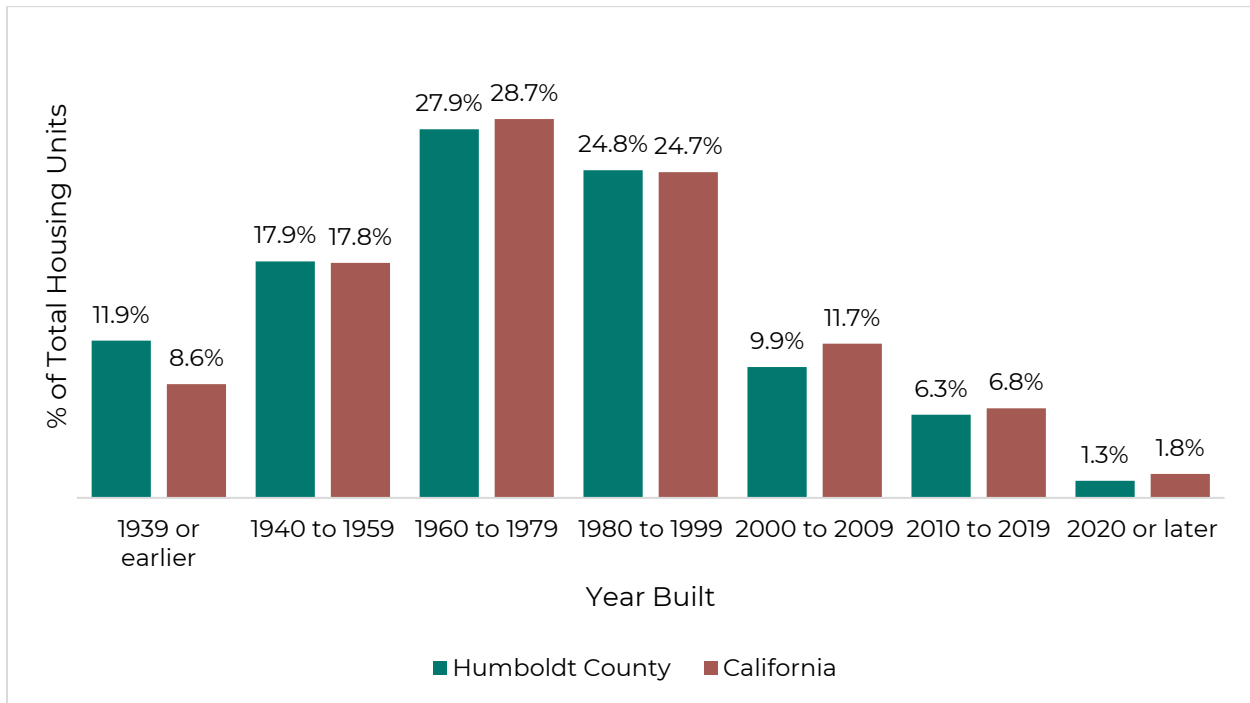
Figure 20: Housing by Type in Humboldt County. Source: ACS 2023 1-Year Estimates



## Housing by Age of Structure

The age of the existing housing stock can be useful for understanding the overall quality of housing stock in the county. It is often the case that older homes are more difficult to maintain and their upkeep can raise total housing costs. However, well maintained, older homes can add a lot of character to a region, which can boost its appeal for prospective residents. In Humboldt County, 57.7% of the housing stock was built before 1980 and about 12% was built before 1940. This is a slightly higher share than the statewide average in California, where 8.6% of housing units were built before 1940. Development in the county has slowed in the last two decades and only around 17.5% of all housing units were developed after 2000.

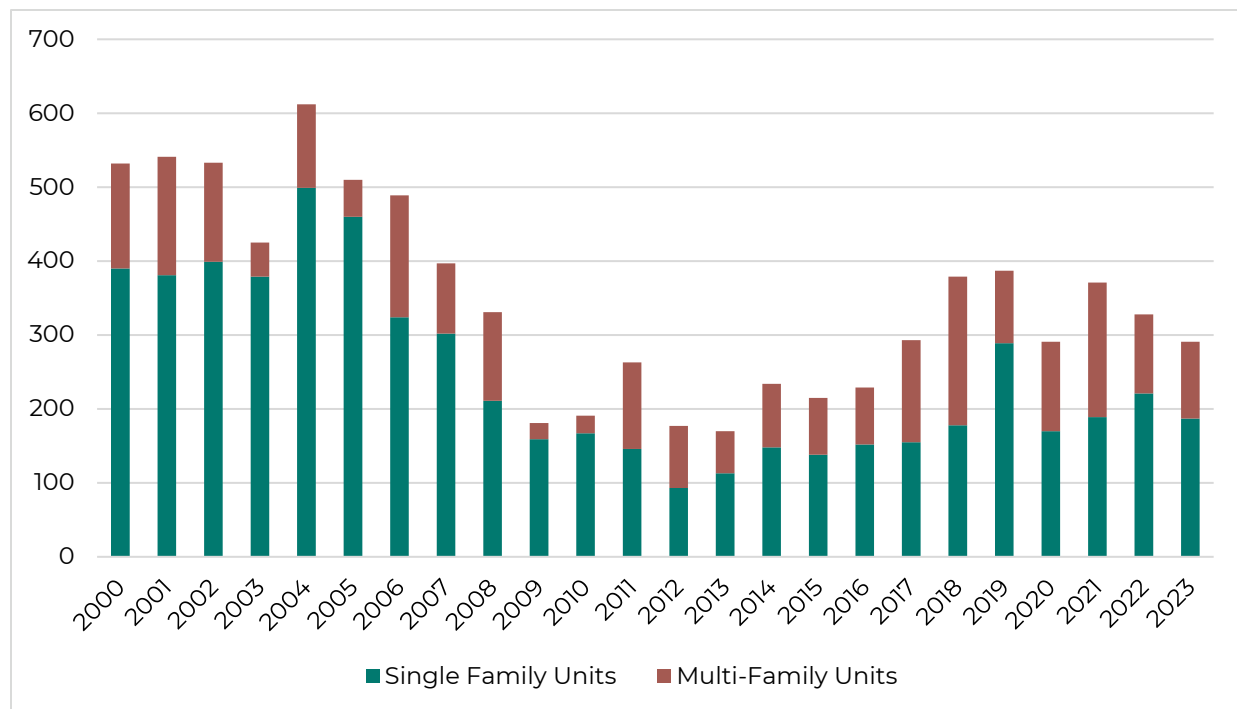
Figure 21: Housing by Age of Structure in Humboldt County and California. Source: ACS 2023 1-Year Estimates



## Building Permits

Looking at residential building permit data from 2000 to 2023, permits peaked in the early 2000s, followed by a steep decline during and after the Great Recession. Permit activity stayed relatively flat, until beginning to increase in the late 2010s. However, permitting activity decreased in recent years, following the COVID-19 pandemic. While the majority of permits are issued for single-family homes, following the Great Recession, there has been an increase in the percentage of permits allocated to multifamily units, signaling some diversification in the housing mix.

Figure 22: Building Permits by Housing Type, 2000 to 2023, Humboldt County. Source: US Census Bureau Building Permits Survey.<sup>56</sup>



<sup>56</sup> Contains imputed data.

## Housing Tenure

There is an even mix of renters and homeowners in Humboldt County. A little over half (54.7%) of housing units are owned and the rest (45.3%) are rented, similar to the state as a whole.

Table 20: Housing Tenure, Humboldt County and California. Source: ACS 2023 1-Year Estimates

Tenure	Humboldt County	California
Owner-Occupied Units	54.6%	55.9%
Renter-Occupied Units	45.4%	44.1%

While the majority of single-family, detached units are owner-occupied, renters occupy a more than a quarter of those units, or 28.4%. Renters occupy the vast majority of single-family, attached units and apartments in Humboldt.

## Housing Costs

Low vacancy rates, long vacancy duration and low housing production all constrain the housing supply in Humboldt County, resulting in rising housing costs.<sup>57</sup> As a result, the median monthly housing cost has risen from \$992 to \$1,259, an increase of 26.9%, comparable to the change seen in the state as a whole. In 2018, 27,749 households, or 51.6% of households, spent less than \$1,000 a month on housing costs. In 2023, that number had decreased by nearly 8,000 households, to 18,805, or 38.8% of households.

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<sup>57</sup> Housing costs include mortgage and rent payment, real estate taxes, insurance, utilities, land rent and mobile home park fees.

Table 21: Monthly Housing Costs, 2018 and 2023, Humboldt County. Source: ACS 1-Year Estimates.

<b>Monthly Housing Costs</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2023</b>
Less than \$500	17.0%	10.2%
\$500 to \$999	34.6%	28.5%
\$1,000 to \$1,499	22.4%	27.1%
\$2,000 to \$2,499	16.3%	17.4%
\$2,500 to \$2,999	6.8%	9.0%
\$3,000 or more	2.9%	7.7%

### **Housing Cost Burden by Tenure**

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines a cost-burdened household as any household which spends more than 30% of its income on housing costs. An extremely cost-burdened household spends 50% or more of its income on housing costs. As a result of spending a significant portion of their monthly income on housing, cost burdened households may be unable to afford other basic necessities, such as healthcare and groceries.

In 2023, about 22,500 households were cost burdened in Humboldt County. Approximately 32% of owner-occupied households were cost burdened; 17.8% spent between 30% and 49.9% of their income on housing costs and 14.1% spent more 50% or more of their income on housing costs. For renters, cost burden is much more common. In the same year, one in two renter households were cost burdened; more than half were extremely cost burdened and spent more than 50% of their income on housing costs.

On the whole, the incidence of housing cost burden has declined in Humboldt County since 2018. Rates of cost-burdened owner-occupied households increased slightly between 2018 and 2023, while rates decreased for renter-occupied households over the same period. However, the disparity in the incidence of cost burden between owner-occupied and renter-occupied households persists.

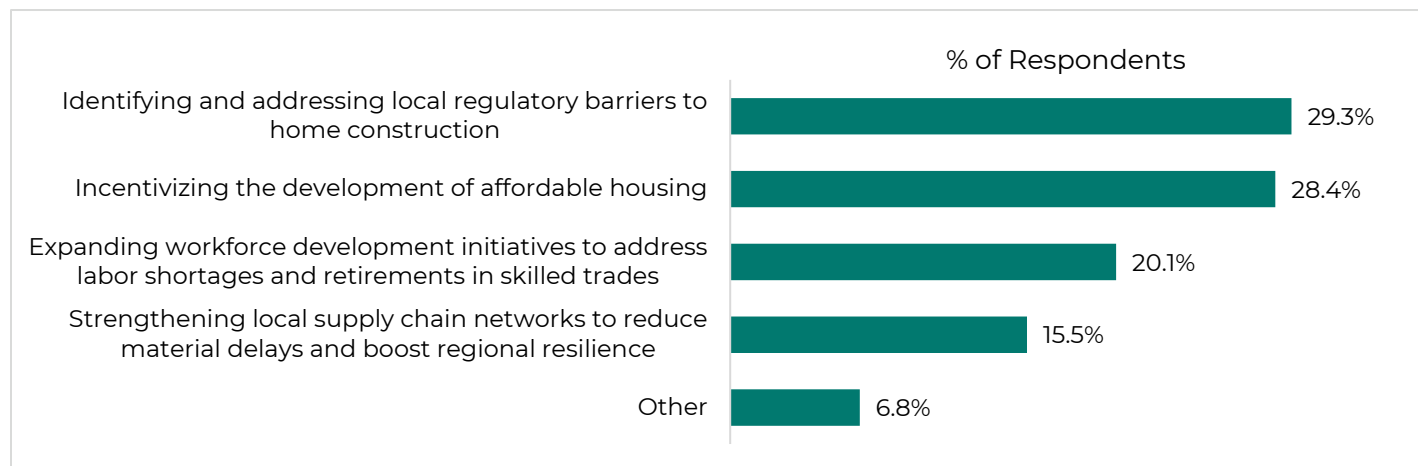
Table 22: Housing Cost Burden by Tenure, 2018 and 2023. Source: ACS 2018/2023 1-Year Estimates

	<b>All Households 2018</b>	<b>All Households 2023</b>	<b>Owner-Occupied 2018</b>	<b>Owner-Occupied 2023</b>	<b>Renter-Occupied 2018</b>	<b>Renter-Occupied 2023</b>
Cost Burdened (30%-49.9%)	22.9%	19.8%	20.6%	17.8%	25.5%	22.1%
Extremely Cost Burdened (50%+)	21.4%	20.3%	9.5%	14.1%	35.0%	27.9%
<b>Total Cost Burdened</b>	<b>44.2%</b>	<b>40.1%</b>	<b>30.1%</b>	<b>31.9%</b>	<b>60.4%</b>	<b>49.9%</b>

### Housing and Construction Industry Survey Results

Respondents indicated that the best support for construction industries in Humboldt County could come in the form of ‘Identifying and addressing local regulatory barriers to home construction,’ with 29.3% of respondents. This was followed closely by ‘Incentivizing the development of affordable housing,’ identified by 28.4% of respondents, highlighting a clear focus on increasing housing availability through both policy reform and financial incentives. Workforce concerns are also a major priority, evidenced by 20.1% of respondents selecting ‘Expanding workforce development initiatives to address labor shortages and retirements in skilled trades.’ Supply chain resilience is a somewhat lesser concern but still notable, with 15.5% of respondents selecting ‘Strengthening local supply chain networks to reduce material delays and boost regional resilience.’ Lastly, 6.8% of respondents selected ‘Other,’ with many respondents making additional comments about adjustments to the regulatory process and workforce training pipelines.

Figure 23: Support for Construction Industries in Humboldt County. Source: Humboldt County Community Survey Findings, 2025<sup>58</sup>



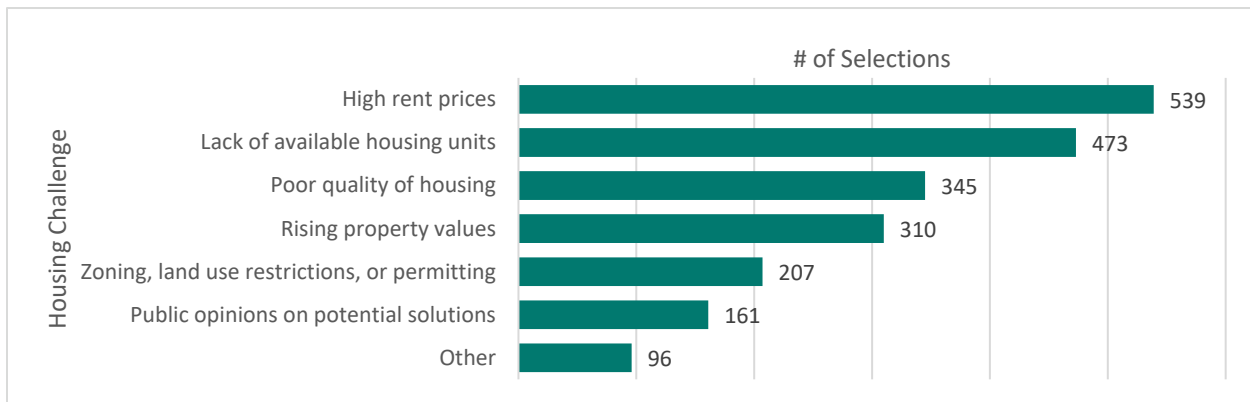
When asked whether the current housing situation has an impact in Humboldt County, 66.1% of respondents indicated that its impact was major. An additional 26.6% of respondents believe that the housing situation has a moderate impact on the county. Only 7.3% of respondents believe that the housing situation has a minor impact or none at all.

The top housing challenge identified by survey respondents was high rent prices, with 539 selections, indicating a widespread concern about affordability in the rental market. This was closely followed by the lack of available housing units (473), suggesting that supply constraints are also a significant issue. Other notable concerns include the poor quality of housing (345) and rising property values (310), which may contribute to affordability and displacement pressures. Regulatory factors such as zoning, land use restrictions, or permitting (207) and public opinions on potential solutions (161) also appear, though to a lesser extent. Of those who selected the 'Other' option, rising insurance costs and disproportionate increases in housing costs relative to income were commonly cited as challenges.

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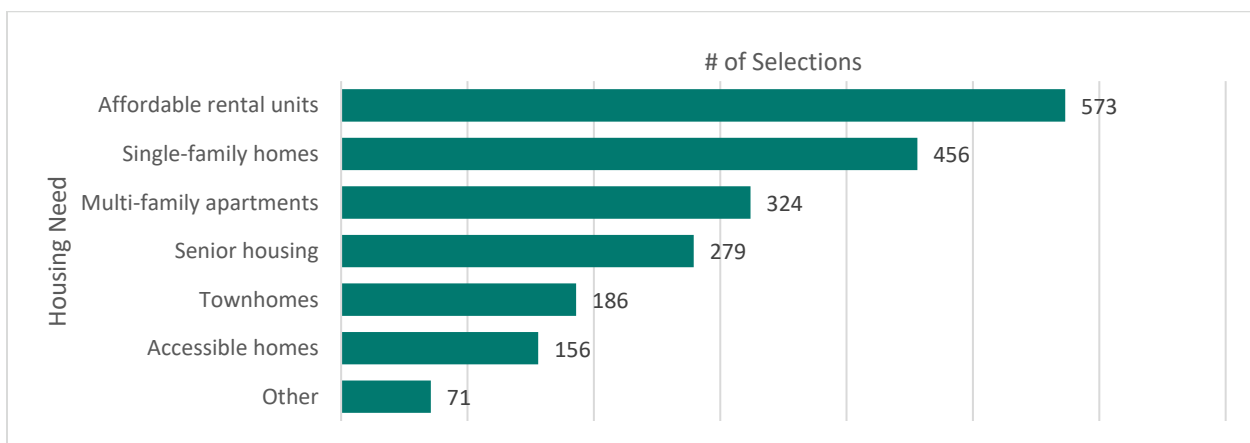
<sup>58</sup> Excludes respondents who selected "I don't know."

Figure 24: Greatest Housing Challenges in Humboldt County. Source: Humboldt County Community Survey Findings, 2025



In alignment with the findings of the previous question, respondents expressed that the greatest housing need is for affordable rental units, with 573 respondents selecting this option. The next greatest needs are for single-family homes (456), multi-family apartments (324) and senior housing (279). This indicates high demand for a variety of housing options that provide for households with different financial ability, density preferences and age-specific requirements. Townhomes (186) and accessible homes (156) were less commonly selected, but demand does exist for these housing types. Of the respondents who selected the 'Other' option, many expressed interest in tiny home communities and expanded temporary housing options for those experiencing homelessness.

Figure 25: Greatest Housing Needs in Humboldt County. Source: Humboldt County Community Survey Findings, 2025



## Workforce and Education

### Education in Humboldt County

Humboldt County is home to a network of educational institutions, serving learners from early childhood to post-secondary education. The Humboldt County Office of Education (COE) serves 17,000 students across 32 school districts and 88 schools.<sup>59,60</sup> Humboldt County provides learners with a wide range of career and technical education (CTE) offerings, enrolling more than 3,400 students countywide.<sup>61</sup> In addition to a robust public school system, Humboldt County is home to 12 private schools, serving about 650 learners.<sup>62,63</sup>

For those seeking post-secondary education, the county has well established institutions, including Cal Poly Humboldt. With 58 major programs, 15 graduate programs and additional minor and credential programs, the University served 5,726 students in the 2023-2024 academic year, awarding more than 1,500 degrees.<sup>64,65</sup> The University serves as a resource hub and economic driver, with annual activity—including \$317 million in direct expenditures and student spending—supporting nearly 4,900 jobs, \$459 million in industry output, \$150 million in labor income and \$32 million in state and local tax revenue in the North Coast.<sup>66</sup> Alumni activity in the region support an additional 2,343 jobs, \$109 million in labor income, \$351 in industry activity and \$27 million in state and local taxes (includes corporate, household income

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<sup>59</sup> Includes elementary schools, middle schools, comprehensive high schools, alternative schools, charter schools and special education schools.

<sup>60</sup> <https://hcoe.org/fast-facts/>

<sup>61</sup> <https://hcoe.org/wp-content/uploads/CTE-Infographic-Participation-23-24.pdf>

<sup>62</sup> California Department of Education Private School Data.

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/si/ps/>

<sup>63</sup> National Center for Education Statistics, Private School Universe Survey (PSS).

<https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/>

<sup>64</sup> Cal Poly Humboldt Institutional Research, Analytics and Reporting, Historical Enrollment and FTES. <https://www.humboldt.edu/irar/hsu-historical-hc-fte>

<sup>65</sup> Cal Poly Humboldt Institutional Research, Analytics and Reporting, Degrees Awarded. <https://www.humboldt.edu/irar/got-data/grad-reten>

<sup>66</sup> Includes direct, indirect and induced impacts.

and other business taxes).<sup>67</sup> However, amidst state budget cuts and declining enrollment, the University faces reductions in staffing and academic programs, as well as deferring capital improvement and maintenance projects.

In addition to Cal Poly Humboldt, the county is home to the College of the Redwoods, an accredited two-year institution offering degrees and certifications in over 30 areas of study. The college also offers a variety of adult education and training programs, supporting local and regional employers. Additionally, for students seeking a four-year degree, the College of the Redwoods has articulation agreements with the California State University and the University of California systems, in-state independent universities and out-of-state college and universities, creating more options for students and building pathways to a bachelor's degree.<sup>68</sup> Of the 1,836 students who left the College of the Redwoods in the 2020 to 2021 school year, 365 enrolled in a four-year institution in the 2021 to 2022 school year, or 20% of all exits with 12 credits or more.<sup>69</sup> Many of these students attend Cal Poly Humboldt, which strengthens the local talent pipeline and supports regional economic growth through building a skilled and educated workforce.

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<sup>67</sup> California State University, "The Impact of the California State University." <https://www.calstate.edu/impact/Documents/Economic-Impact-Report-2021.pdf>

<sup>68</sup> <https://www.redwoods.edu/services/counseling/transfer.php>

<sup>69</sup> <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/joseph.hays/viz/TransferstoFour-YearInstitutions/TransferRatesandDisproportionateImpact>

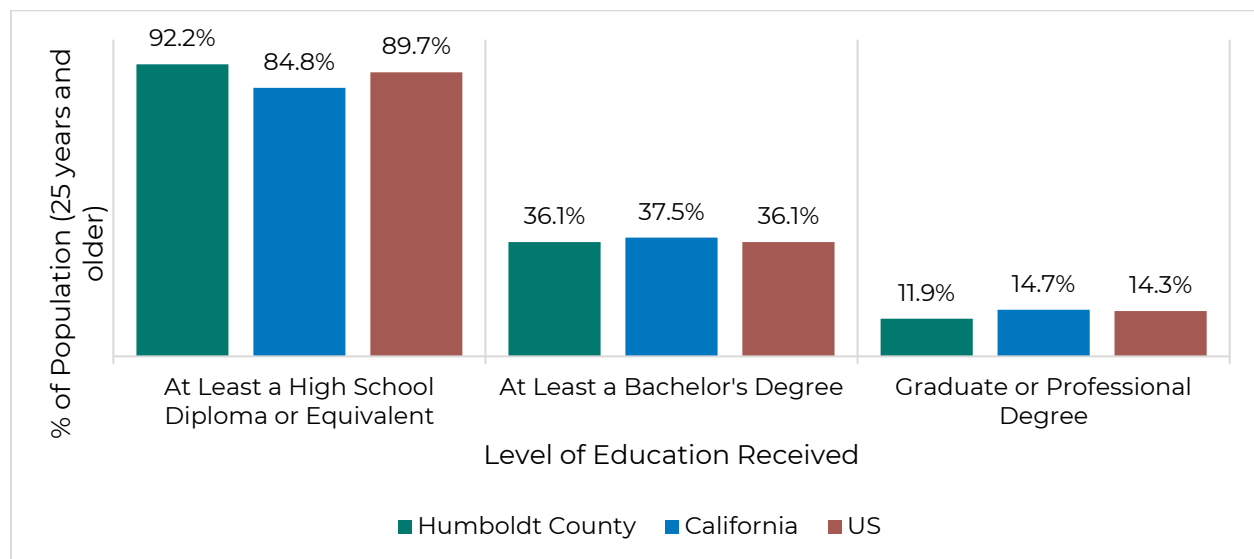
## Educational Attainment

Humboldt County has a rich educational ecosystem, including California State Polytechnic University, Humboldt (Cal Poly Humboldt) and College of the Redwoods. These assets provide valuable opportunities for higher education and workforce training.

Approximately 92.2% of Humboldt County residents aged 25 and over hold a high school diploma or equivalent certificate. More than one-third of the population aged 25 years and over have earned a bachelor's degree and 11.9% hold a graduate or professional degree.

Humboldt County residents have higher high school completion rates than both the state and the nation. At the state level, a larger share of the population has attained a graduate or professional degree. This is likely a result of both a lack of local options for attaining such a degree, as well as a lack of local jobs that require one for employment.

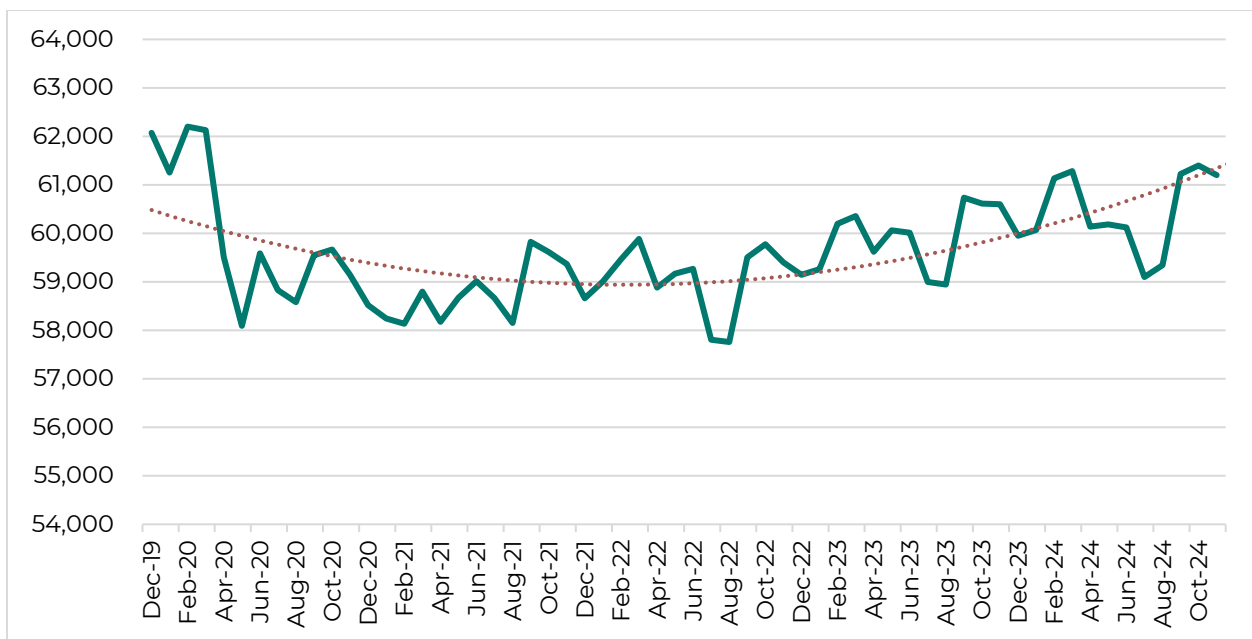
Figure 26: Educational Attainment for Population Older than 25 Years, Humboldt County, California and US. Source: ACS 2023 1-Year Estimates



## Civilian Labor Force

As of November 2024, the civilian labor force in Humboldt County comprised 61,200 workers. This civilian labor force includes all people in the county who are over the age of 16 year and are classified as either “employed” or “unemployed”. In other words, these individuals are either employed or actively seeking employment. At the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the county saw its labor force fall by about 4,000 workers. In the three years since, the labor force has grown steadily and is gradually returning to pre-pandemic levels. In 2023, the county’s labor force participation rate was 57.4%, reflecting the share of the population engaged in or actively looking for work.

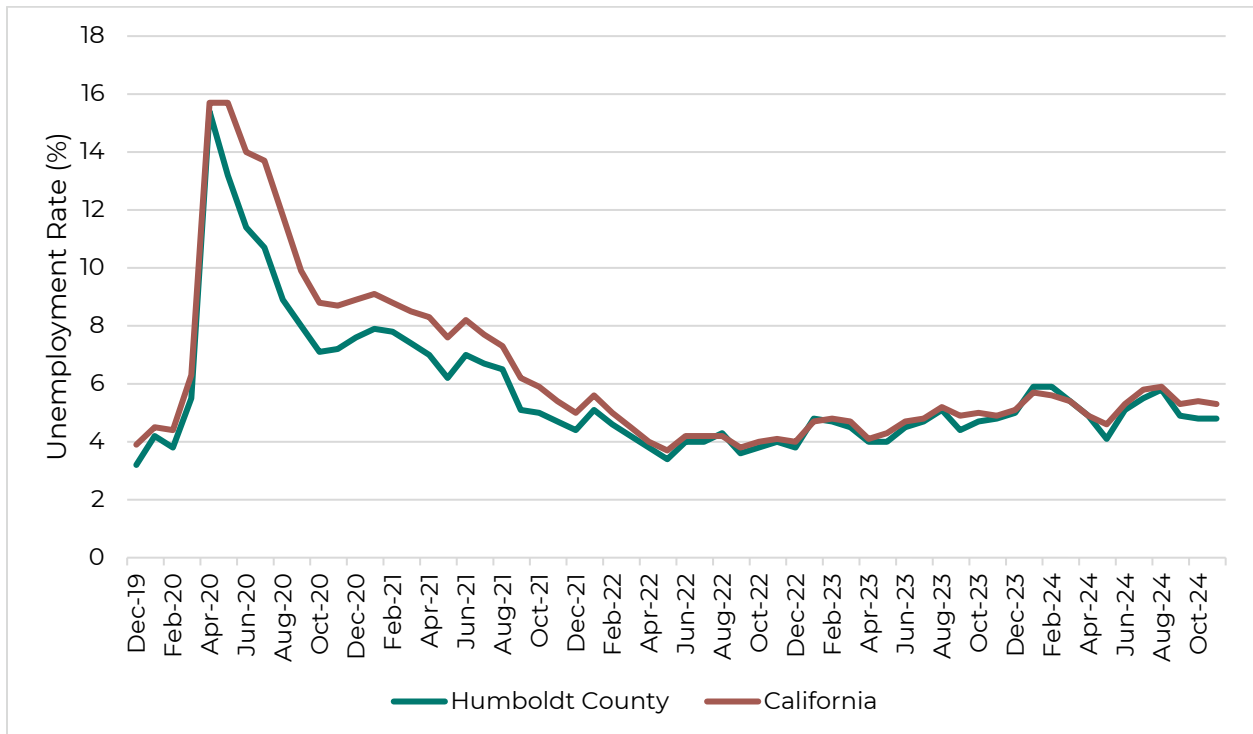
Figure 27: Civilian Labor Force (Not Seasonally Adjusted), December 2019 to November 2024, Humboldt County. Source: St. Louis Federal Reserve, 2025



## Unemployment Rates

Unemployment rates, like the civilian labor force level, changed dramatically in the spring of 2020. Between February and April of that year, the unemployment rate in the county jumped from 3.8% to 15.5%. Unemployment has fallen again as the economy has restabilized. The unemployment rate hovered between 4% and 6% throughout 2024. Trends in the local unemployment rate have mostly aligned with those observed at the state level.

Figure 28: Unemployment Rate, December 2019 to November 2024, Humboldt County.  
Source: St. Louis Federal Reserve, 2025



## Top Occupations

A breakdown of the county's top occupations provides a different look into the economy than an industry breakdown. Some industries might employ workers with vastly different responsibilities and skillsets; therefore, industry data doesn't necessarily provide information about the workers themselves. Occupational data can be helpful for understanding the local workforce. The top occupations, by number of jobs, in Humboldt County are Home Health and Personal Care Aides and Nursing Assistants, Orderlies and Psychiatric Aides. These occupations comprise about 3,800 local jobs. Retail workers, construction trades workers and processing or distribution workers are among the next most common occupations in the county.

Figure 29: Top Occupations in Humboldt County by 3-Digit SOC Code. Source: Lightcast, 2024



## Fastest-Growing Occupations

Home health and personal care aide; and nursing assistants, orderlies and psychiatric aides, the largest occupation in Humboldt County, is also the occupation that is projected to grow the most between 2022 and 2032. Other occupations which are projected to grow are counselors, social workers, teachers and various healthcare practitioners.

*Table 23: Current and Projected Employment Levels in Fastest-Growing Occupations in Humboldt County by 3-Digit SOC Code. Source: Lightcast, 2024*

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>2022 Jobs</b>	<b>2032 Jobs (Projected)</b>	<b>Projected Change</b>
Home Health and Personal Care Aides; and Nursing Assistants, Orderlies and Psychiatric Aides	3,789	5,112	1,323
Counselors, Social Workers and Other Community and Social Service Specialists	1,609	2,045	437
Postsecondary Teachers	1,163	1,586	423
Preschool, Elementary, Middle, Secondary and Special Education Teachers	1,583	1,902	319
Business Operations Specialists	1,854	2,128	275
Healthcare Diagnosing or Treating Practitioners	1,783	2,019	236
Law Enforcement Workers	793	966	172
Other Educational Instruction and Library Occupations	806	968	163
Food and Beverage Serving Workers	2,269	2,419	151
Health Technologists and Technicians	779	921	142

## Highly Demanded Occupations

To measure occupational demand, the average annual job openings are calculated for all occupations in the county. The Home Health and Personal Care Aides occupational group has the highest number of annual openings, which means there is high demand for workers of this occupation in the county. Retail, distribution, service and construction workers are also highly demanded.

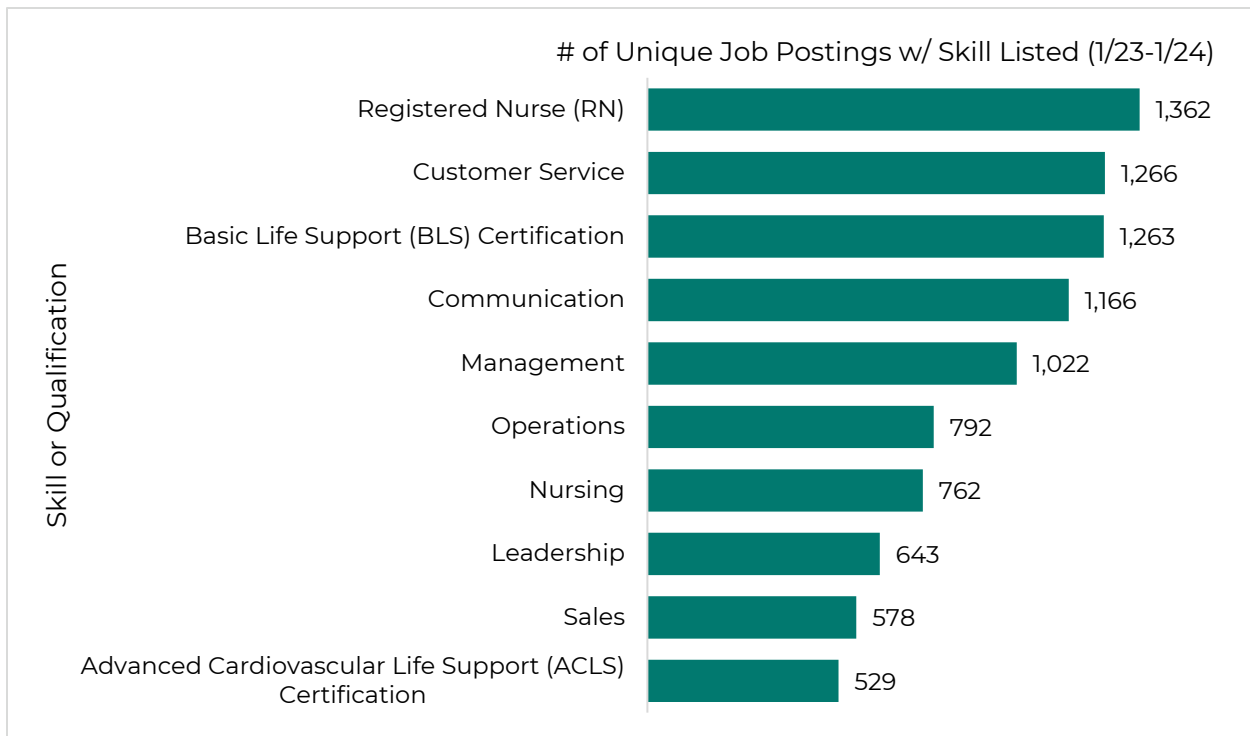
Table 24: Highly Demanded Occupations (3-Digit SOC Code) by Average Annual Openings and Employment Levels in Humboldt County. Source: Lightcast, 2024

Description	Average Annual Openings	2022 Jobs	Openings per Job
Home Health and Personal Care Aides; and Nursing Assistants, Orderlies and Psychiatric Aides	784	3,789	0.21
Retail Sales Workers	533	3,325	0.16
Food and Beverage Serving Workers	517	2,269	0.23
Material Moving Workers	293	1,968	0.15
Cooks and Food Preparation Workers	247	1,419	0.17
Construction Trades Workers	232	2,538	0.09
Building Cleaning and Pest Control Workers	218	1,448	0.15
Information and Record Clerks	203	1,493	0.14
Other Management Occupations	197	2,133	0.09
Counselors, Social Workers and Other Community and Social Service Specialists	197	1,609	0.12

## Highly Demanded Skills and Qualifications

Job posting data can provide information about the skills or qualifications most highly demanded by employers in the county. Between January 2023 and January 2024, the most commonly listed qualification in job postings was a Registered Nurse certification. Other healthcare related skills are listed, such as Basic Life Support certification, nursing and Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support certification. In addition, many skills related to management and customer service are highly demanded and frequently listed in job postings.

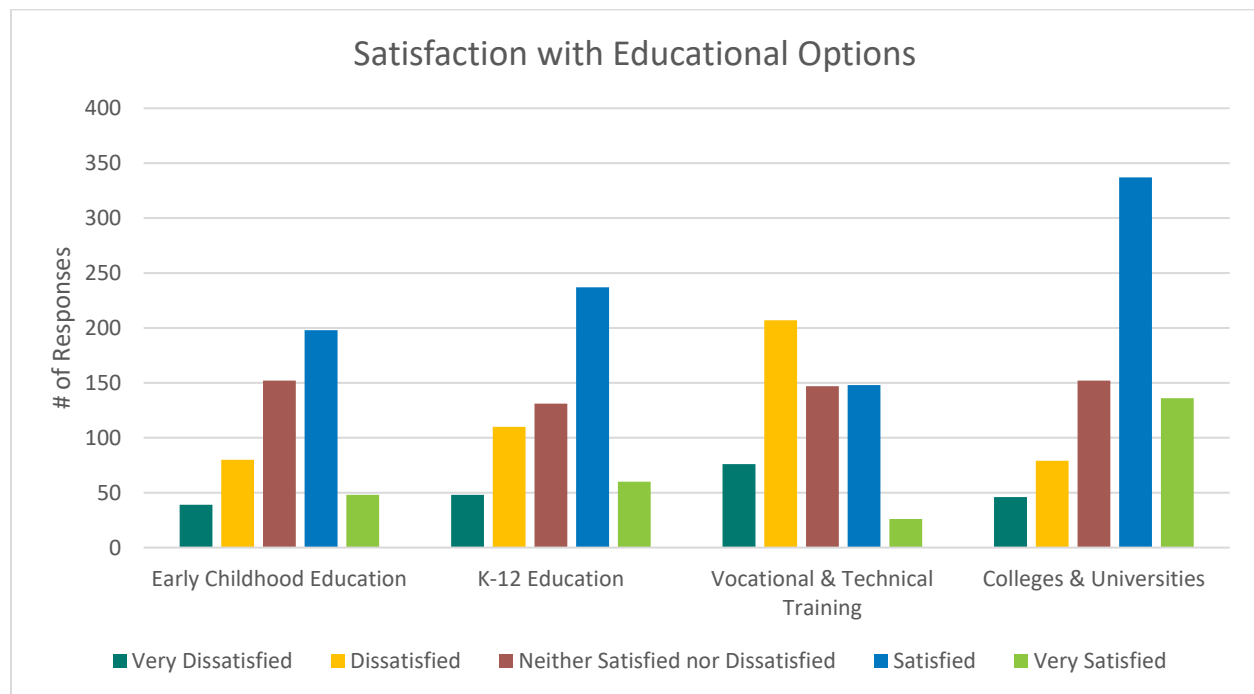
Figure 30: Highly Demanded Skills and Qualifications in Humboldt County. Source: Lightcast, 2024



## Education and Workforce Survey Results

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with four categories of educational options in the county: Early Childhood Education; K-12 Education; Vocational & Technical Training; and Colleges & Universities. Respondents generally were most satisfied with the colleges and universities in the county; 473 respondents, or 63.0%, were either satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of educational options in that category. Respondents seemed to be most dissatisfied with vocational and technical training options in the county; 283, or 46.9% of respondents indicated being either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the quality of educational options in that category. Sentiment about the quality of early childhood and K-12 educational options was generally neutral-to-favorable, but some respondents did express dissatisfaction with the quality of options in those categories.

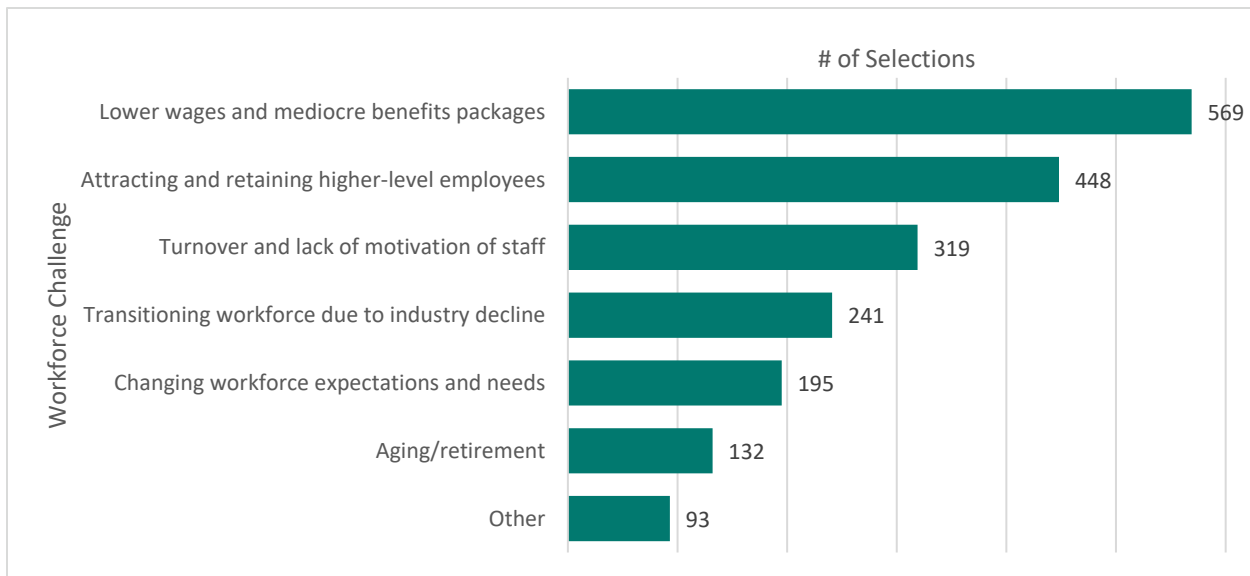
Figure 31: Satisfaction with Educational Options in Humboldt County. Source: Humboldt County Community Survey Findings, 2025



## Workforce Survey Results

When asked to select up to three of the greatest workforce-related challenges faced by the county, the ‘Lower wages and mediocre benefits packages’ challenge was the most selected, with 569 respondents identifying it as a significant challenge. ‘Attracting and retaining higher-level employees’ (448) and ‘Turnover and lack of motivation of staff’ (319) were the next most common selections. Of the 93 respondents who selected ‘Other’, many cited a lack of high-quality local jobs and limited healthcare access as barriers to workforce development.

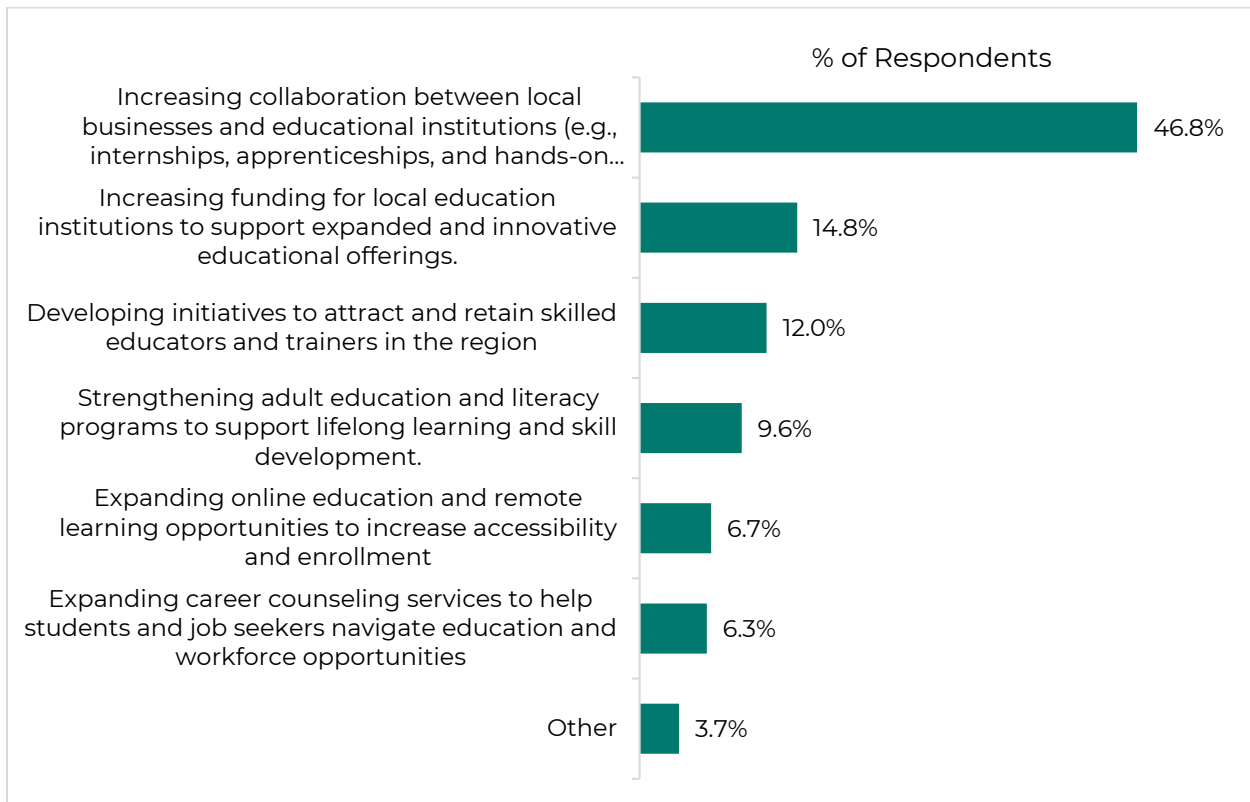
Figure 32: Greatest Workforce-Related Challenges in Humboldt County. Source: Humboldt County Community Survey Findings, 2025



Respondents overwhelmingly supported the building of stronger ties between businesses and educational institutions, with 46.8% of respondents selecting ‘Increasing collaboration between local businesses and educational institutions (e.g., internships, apprenticeships and hands-on training programs).’ This finding reflects a clear preference for experiential learning and work-based training opportunities as a key workforce development strategy. Secondary priorities include ‘Increasing funding for local education institutions’ (14.8% of respondents) and ‘Developing initiatives to attract and retain skilled educators and trainers’ (12.0% of respondents’ selections), pointing to an interest in expanding educational capacity and ensuring instructional quality. Adult education and literacy (9.6% of respondents)

online and remote learning expansion (6.7% of respondents) and career counseling services (6.3% of respondents) received more modest support. Many respondents who selected 'Other' suggested a variety of methods for improving educational resources for children, young college students and adult workers alike.

Figure 33: Support for Education and Training Industries in Humboldt County. Source: Humboldt County Community Survey Findings, 2025<sup>70</sup>



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<sup>70</sup> Excludes respondents who selected "I don't know."

## 5. Infrastructure

### Transportation Infrastructure

US Route 101 serves as the major north-to-south route throughout the region, providing access to the rest of California, as well as Oregon and Washington. State Route 299 is the major east to west connector, linking to I-5 to the east of the County. These roadways are the only principal arterials in the county, critical for the flow of people and commerce. However, roadways throughout the region are vulnerable to disruption, facing frequent closures due to landslides, mudslides and slipouts.

Table 25: Major roadways in Humboldt County.

State Highways	US Routes
SR 254	US 101
SR 36	
SR 299	
SR 96	
SR 255	
SR 211	
SR 200	
SR 169	

The length of SR 299 within Humboldt is open to trucks conforming to the Surface Transportation Assistance Act (STAA) requirements the industry standard; the majority of US 101 is also open to STAA trucks.<sup>71,72</sup> However, due to roadway restrictions within Richardson Grove, STAA trucks are prohibited, creating a 1.1 mile gap that is inaccessible to

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<sup>71</sup> "CA Truck Network." California Department of Transportation.

<https://dot.ca.gov/programs/traffic-operations/legal-truck-access/truck-network-map>

<sup>72</sup> "Truck Networks on California State Highways." California Department of Transportation. <https://dot.ca.gov/-/media/dot-media/programs/traffic-operations/documents/trucks/truckmap-d01-a1ly.pdf>

industry-standard trucks.<sup>73</sup> With the exception of SR 299, all other state routes within Humboldt are limited to California legal trucks (not STAA) and many have kingpin-to-rear-axle (KPRA) advisories, limiting the recommended KPRA distance to 30 feet or less.

## **Airports**

Humboldt County has nine airports within the county, six of which are owned by the County. County-owned airports include the California Redwood Coast-Humboldt County Airport (Arcata Airport, ACV), Dinsmore Airport, Garberville Airport, Kneeland Airport, Murray Field Airport and Rohnerville Airport. Other airports in the region include the Hoopa Airport, maintained by the Hoopa Valley Tribe, the Shelter Cove Airport, maintained by the Resort Improvement District and the Samoa Field Airport, maintained by the City of Eureka.<sup>74</sup>

The California Redwood Coast-Humboldt County Airport is the sole commercial passenger service provider, with direct flights to San Francisco, Denver, Los Angeles and Burbank. Also located on the property is the US Coast Guard Humboldt Bay Air Station. All other airports are general aviation facilities, with Murray Field also providing freight services.<sup>75</sup>

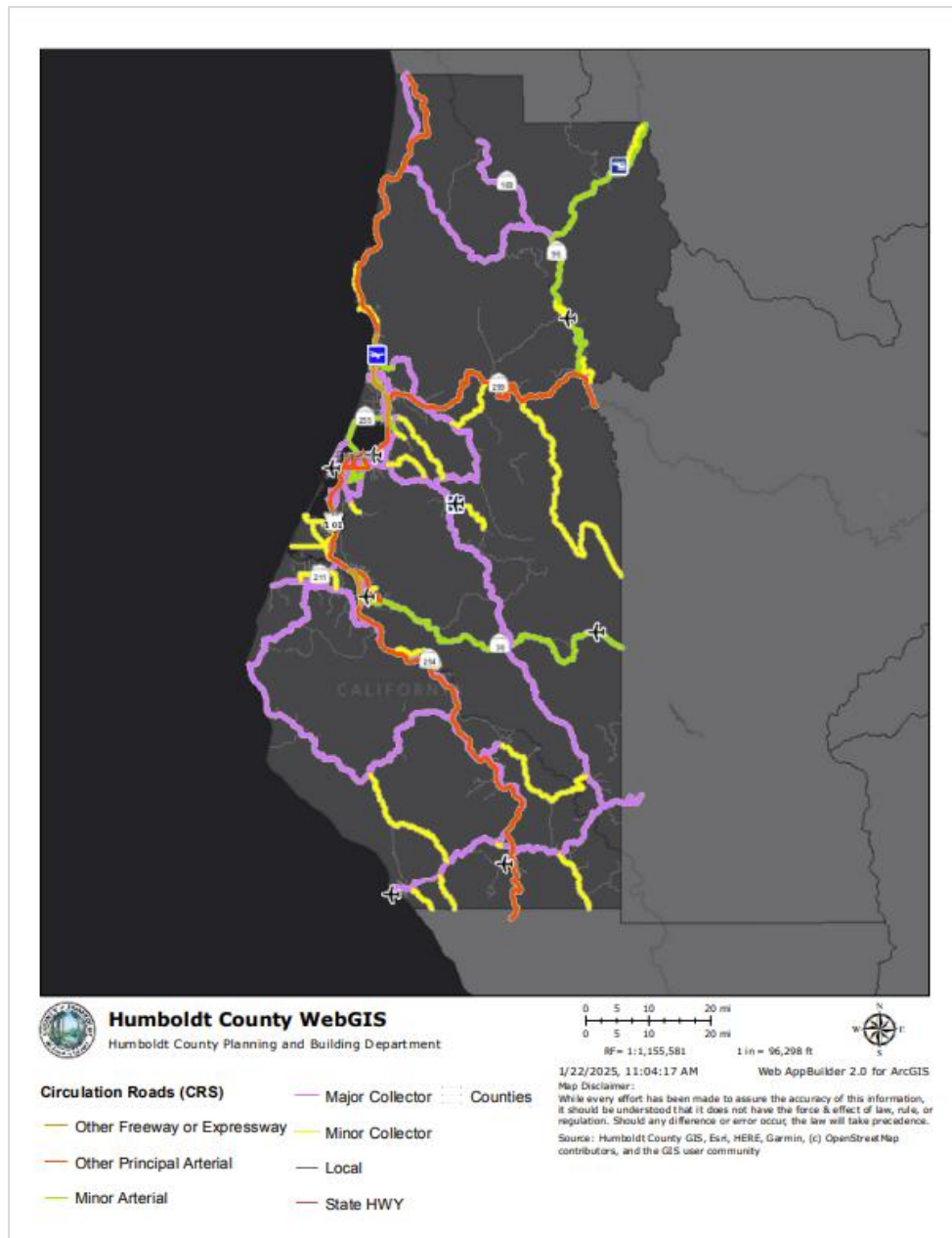
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<sup>73</sup> “Richardson Grove Improvement Project.” California Department of Transportation. <https://dot.ca.gov/caltrans-near-me/district-1/d1-projects/d1-richardson-grove-improvement-project>

<sup>74</sup> “Humboldt County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan.” Humboldt County Land Use Commission. <https://humboldt.gov/DocumentCenter/View/95080/2021-Airport-Land-Use-Compatibility-Plan-adopted-04132021-33-MB>

<sup>75</sup> General aviation airports are public-use airports without scheduled service or less than 2,500 annual passenger boardings.

Figure 34: Major Roadways and Airports in Humboldt County. Source: Humboldt County WebGIS

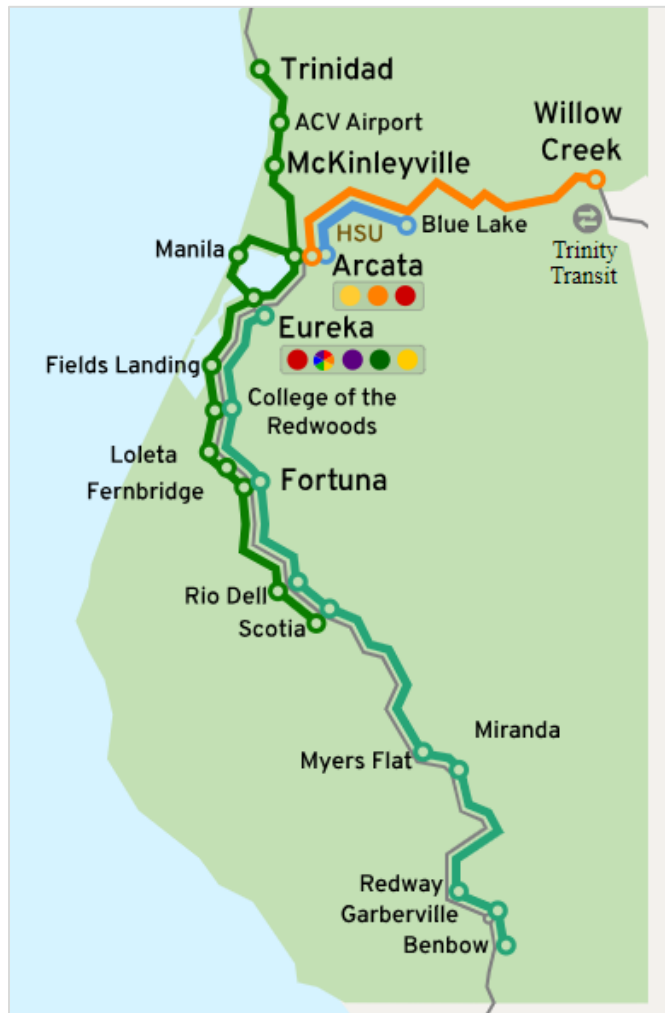


## Public Transportation

Public transit provides critical linkages to social networks, employment, healthcare, education and recreation. Public transit within the County is administered jointly between Humboldt County and the cities of Arcata, Eureka, Fortuna, Rio Dell and Trinidad, providing fixed route and dial-a-ride transit options. Riders can travel south from Trinidad to

Benbow, via SR 101 and from Arcata to Willow Creek, via Trinity Highway. Service is provided from Trinidad to Benbow (north/south) and from Arcata to Willow Creek (east/west).

Figure 35: Humboldt Transit Authority System map. Source: Humboldt Transit Authority.



## Railroads

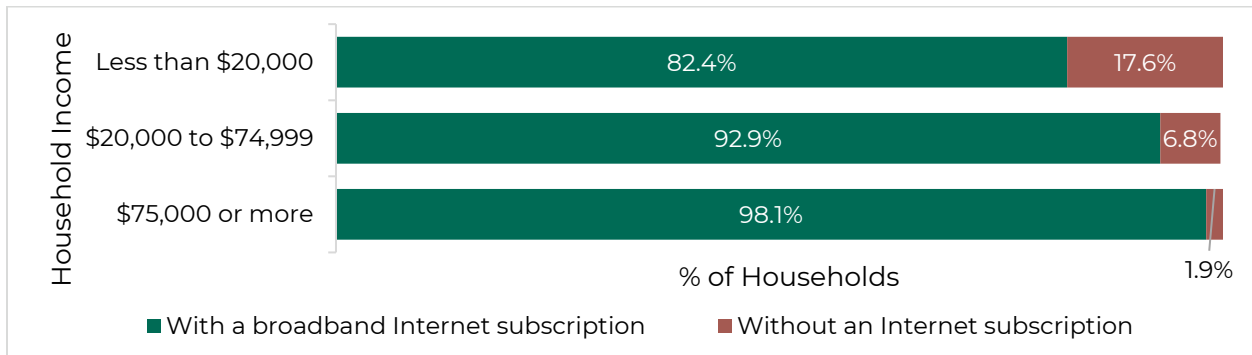
While there has been interest in reviving existing rail lines or establishing new ones, including a 2013 feasibility study, to date there is

no rail service in the County.<sup>76</sup> In recent years, there has been a focus on reactivating former rail corridors as public use trails. In 2018, state legislation was passed to formally dissolve the North Coast Railroad Authority and initiate the transfer of its property and rights-of-way to a new entity tasked with developing the Great Redwood Trail, a long-distance path for hiking, biking and horseback riding that would span Northern California.

## Broadband

Reliable high-speed internet is necessary for much of daily life. Having access to broadband benefits economic development, education, health and public safety and provides social connections. In Humboldt County, about 93% of households report having some type of internet subscription. Internet access is not equal across income brackets, with a larger percentage of low-income households having no internet subscription.

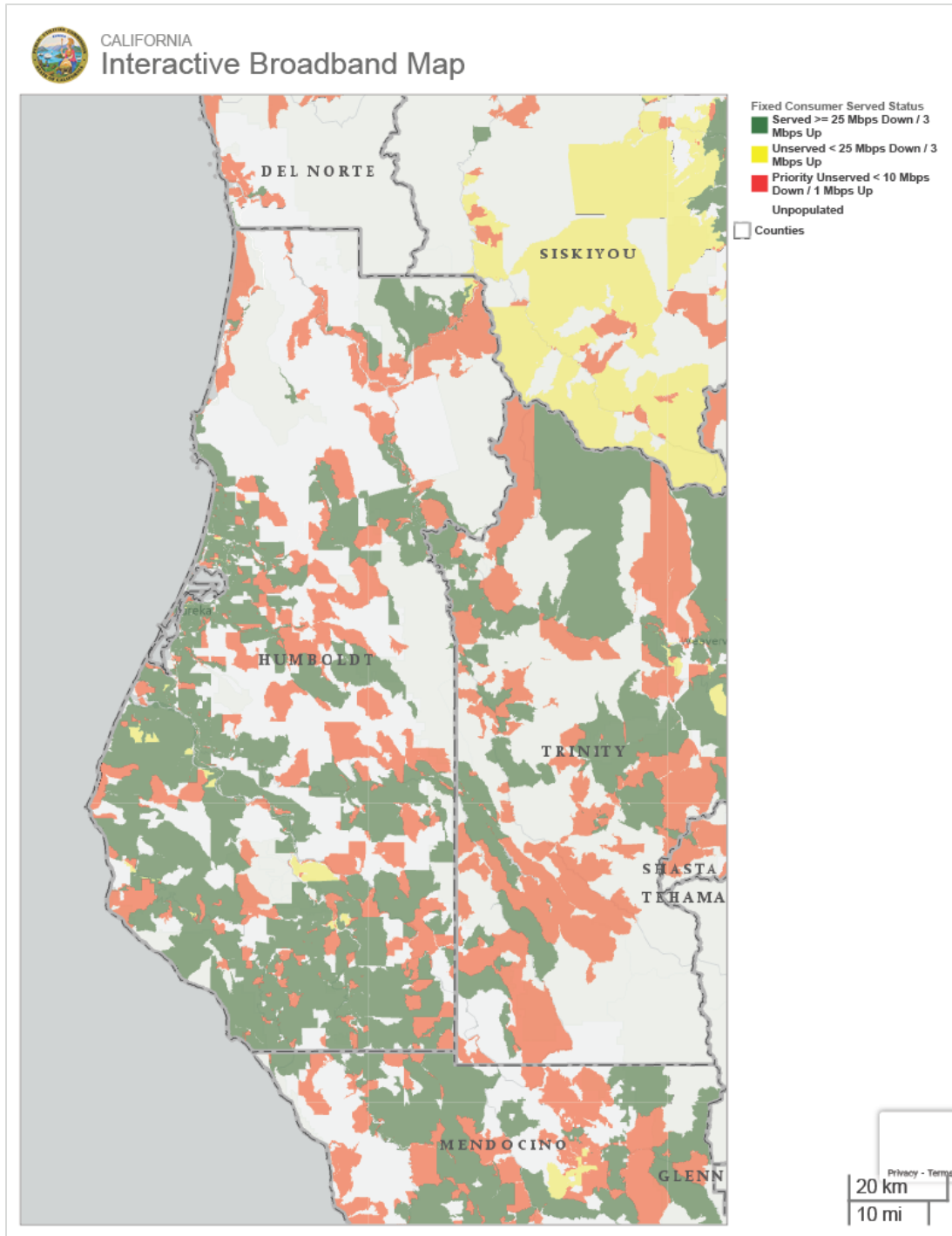
Figure 36: Broadband Internet Access in Humboldt County by Household Income. Source: 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.



Moreover, service varies throughout the County, with significant areas being unserved (speeds less than 25 Mbps down and 3 Mbps up) or priority unserved (speeds less than 10 Mbps down and 1 Mbps up).

<sup>76</sup> "Humboldt Bay Alternative Rail Corridor Concept Level Construction Cost and Revenue Analysis." Humboldt Bay Harbor, Recreation and Conservation District. <https://humboldt.gov/DocumentCenter/View/61425/Humboldt-Bay-Alt-Rail-Corridor-Concept-Level-Construction-Cost--Revenue-Analysis-2013-PDF>

Figure 37: Fixed internet service by speed in Humboldt County. Source: California Interactive Broadband Map.



Ongoing efforts are being made to improve service and access, much of them led by Tribal governments. Through the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)'s Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program, Tribes in Humboldt County were awarded over \$128 million for broadband planning, design and deployment. In 2024, the California Public Utilities Commission awarded \$33.1 million to broadband infrastructure projects in Humboldt County, plus an additional \$19.6 million to fund a multicounty project, which would include \$14.6 million for broadband infrastructure in Humboldt County.

Table 26: Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program award recipients in Humboldt County. Source: National Telecommunications and Information Administration Tribal Connectivity Program.<sup>77</sup>

<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Project Purpose</b>	<b>Unserved Households</b>	<b>Unserved Tribal businesses</b>	<b>Unserved Tribal Community Anchor Institutions</b>	<b>Awarded Amount</b>
Blue Lake Rancheria	Broadband planning, design and stage 1 deployment	45	8	15	\$493,400
Hoopa Valley Tribe	Broadband infrastructure deployment	1,045	64	19	\$65,140,408
Karuk Tribe	Broadband planning study	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$500,000
Wiyot Tribe	Broadband use and adoption	-	-	3	\$499,997
Yurok Telecommunications Corp	Broadband infrastructure deployment	921	110	18	\$61,661,366

<sup>77</sup> National Telecommunications and Information Administration. Round One Award Recipients. Retrieved from <https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/funding-programs/tribal-broadband-connectivity/award-recipients>

Table 27: Last Mile Federal Funding Grants in Humboldt County, 2024. Source: California PUC Federal Funding Account Recommendations and Awards.<sup>78</sup>

<b>Recipient</b>	<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Estimated Unserved Population</b>	<b>Estimated Benefitting Population</b>	<b>Awarded Amount</b>
Karuk Tribe	Karuk Tribe Fiber-To-The-Home	736	767	\$27,445,463
Vero Fiber Networks	Arcata Bay	629	1,921	\$4,396,296
AT&T	Humboldt - 1B	301	317	\$775,000
AT&T	Humboldt - 1	611	570	\$531,021
Yurok Telecommunications Corporation (Del Norte and Humboldt Counties)	YTEL FTTH Project	2,299	2,491	\$14,111,494 (Humboldt) \$5,490,542 (Del Norte)

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<sup>78</sup> California Public Utilities Commission. (2025). Federal Funding Account Recommendations and Awards. Retrieved from <https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/industries-and-topics/internet-and-phone/broadband-implementation-for-california/last-mile-federal-funding-account/federal-funding-account-awards>

## Energy

Humboldt County faces unique challenges when it comes to the provision of energy. It is located at the end of electricity and natural gas transmission lines, which do not have enough capacity to import all of the County's energy. To meet its energy needs, the County produces much of its own electricity, as well as some of its own natural gas. As discussed in the [Humboldt County General Plan](#), there is strong support for energy independence, including utilizing the county's rich energy resources, such as wind, wave, biomass, hydroelectric and solar power.

### Electricity

In 2022, Humboldt County used approximately 775 gigawatt-hours (GWh) of electricity, a figure that has steadily decreased over the past 10 years.<sup>79</sup> About 46% was for residential, with the remaining 54% being for non-residential use.

The County is connected to the broader electrical grid through three transmission lines: two 60 kilovolt (kV) and one 115 kV, all operated by PG&E. Upgrades to the existing electrical service are planned, with expected in-service dates of 2034.<sup>80</sup> Power is also generated locally at six power plants using biomass, natural gas and hydropower.

Humboldt County also has two microgrids. The Redwood Coast Airport Microgrid has two photovoltaic, one 2.2 megawatt (MW) array with a 2.3 MW battery storage system and a smaller 300 kilowatt (KW) array. The Blue Lake Rancheria Microgrid has a 420 kW array and a 1,150 kW battery storage system. Blue Lake Rancheria has been recognized multiple times for their microgrid, first in 2017 by the Federal Emergency Management Agency as a recipient of the John D. Solomon

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<sup>79</sup> With vehicle electrification and building decarbonization, it is likely that electricity usage will increase in future years.

<sup>80</sup> "2023-2024 Transmission Plan." California ISO. <https://www.caiso.com/documents/iso-board-approved-2023-2024-transmission-plan.pdf>

Whole Community Preparedness Award and, secondly, in 2018 as a DistribuTECH Project of the Year.

Building from the success of these microgrids, there are additional microgrids in development in Humboldt. PG&E has announced its intent to award up to \$43 million to nine community microgrids, through their Microgrid Incentive Program, four of which are in Humboldt County.<sup>81</sup> Additionally, Redwood Coast Energy Authority, in partnership with the Hoopa, Yurok, Karuk and Blue Lake Rancheria Tribes, received a conditional award for \$88 million from the Department of Energy's Grid Resilience and Innovative Partnerships program to build four nested microgrids, a project anticipate to result in a 90% reduction in outage hours and develop over 20 MW in clean energy.<sup>82,83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> "PG&E Advancing \$43 Million for Nine New Community Microgrids in Northern California." PG&E Corporation. <https://investor.pgecorp.com/news-events/press-releases/press-release-details/2025/PGE-Advancing-43-Million-for-Nine-New-Community-Microgrids-in-Northern-California/default.aspx>

<sup>82</sup> "DOE funding enables a transformative energy solution for rural Northern California tribes." Schatz Energy Research Center. <https://schatzcenter.org/2024/08/teras/>

<sup>83</sup> Project is currently undergoing a programmatic review.

Figure 38: Humboldt County Electricity. Source: California Energy Commission; mapping by TPMA.



## Renewable Energy

There is considerable interest in the County to increase local renewable energy use. The [Humboldt Regional Climate Action Plan](#) calls for greenhouse gas emissions being 40% below 1990 levels by 2030, with carbon neutrality by 2045. Redwood Coast Energy Authority, a local energy provider, has plans to have 100% renewable and carbon-free energy by 2026. Further, they have set a target to meet 100% of the County's electricity needs with local renewable energy sources by 2030.

In addition to planned solar projects like North Coast Highway Solar and Hatchery Road Solar, Humboldt County is poised to become a leader in offshore wind energy. The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) has designated the Humboldt Wind Energy Area (WEA), located approximately 20 miles offshore, encompassing about 206 square miles, an area with the potential to generate up to 1.6 gigawatts of clean energy, enough to power approximately 560,000 homes.<sup>84</sup>

### Renewable Energy Survey Results

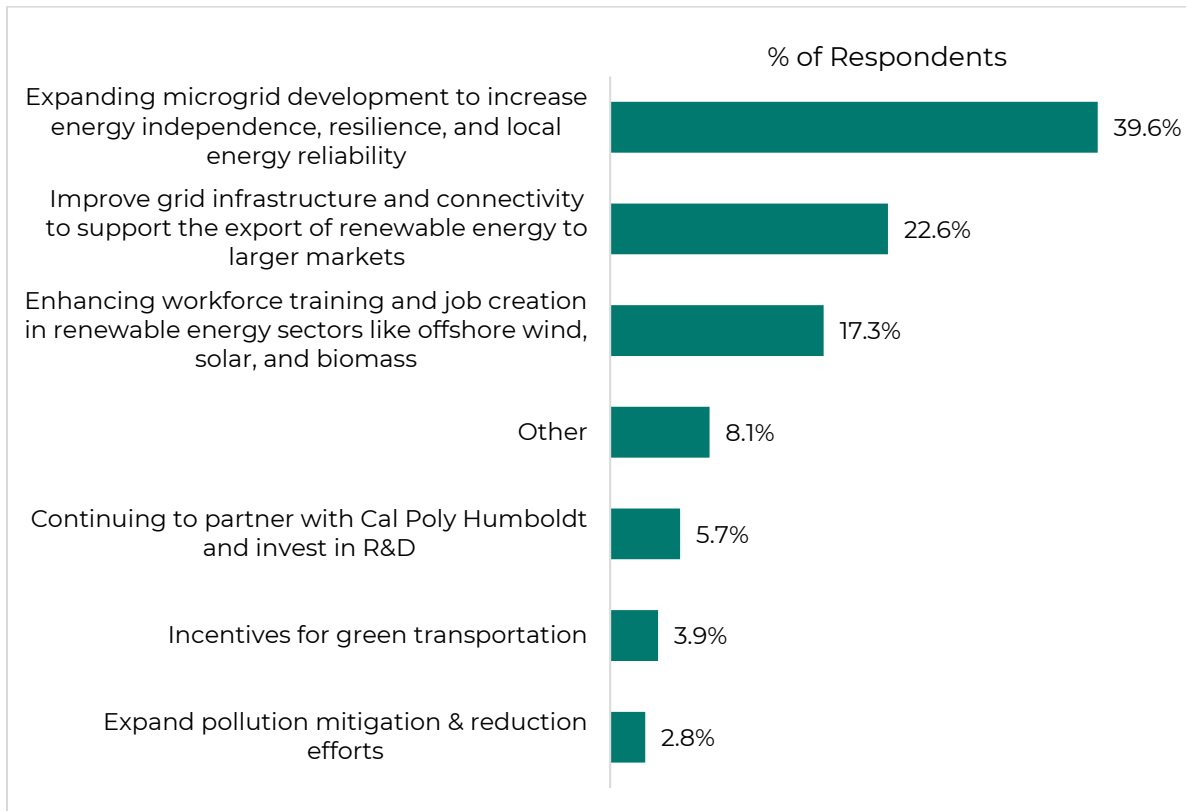
Respondents indicated that one of the best ways to support renewable energy industries would include infrastructure and resilience improvements, with the 'Expanding microgrid development to increase energy independence, resilience and local energy reliability' option receiving the highest number of selections (39.6%); this suggests strong public and stakeholder interest in decentralized, reliable energy systems. Next, 22.6% of respondents selected 'Improve grid infrastructure and connectivity to support the export of renewable energy to larger markets,' highlighting the need for better integration with external energy systems. Workforce development was also noted to be an important tool for support, with 17.3% of respondents selecting 'Enhancing workforce training and job creation in renewable energy sectors like offshore wind, solar and biomass.' Of the respondents who selected 'Other,' many suggested various methods for improving public

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<sup>84</sup> "BOEM Completes Environmental Review of Offshore Wind Leasing in Northern California." Bureau of Ocean Energy Management. [https://www.boem.gov/newsroom/press-releases/boem-completes-environmental-review-offshore-wind-leasing-northern?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.boem.gov/newsroom/press-releases/boem-completes-environmental-review-offshore-wind-leasing-northern?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

access to renewable energy resources. Other forms of support such as continued academic partnerships (5.7% of respondents), incentives for green transportation (3.9% of respondents) and pollution mitigation efforts (2.8%) received relatively lower levels of support, suggesting that while they are important, they are seen as secondary to foundational infrastructure and workforce priorities.

Figure 39: Support for Renewable Energy Industries in Humboldt County. Source: Humboldt County Community Survey Findings, 2025<sup>85</sup>



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<sup>85</sup> Excludes respondents who selected “I don’t know.”

## **Natural Gas**

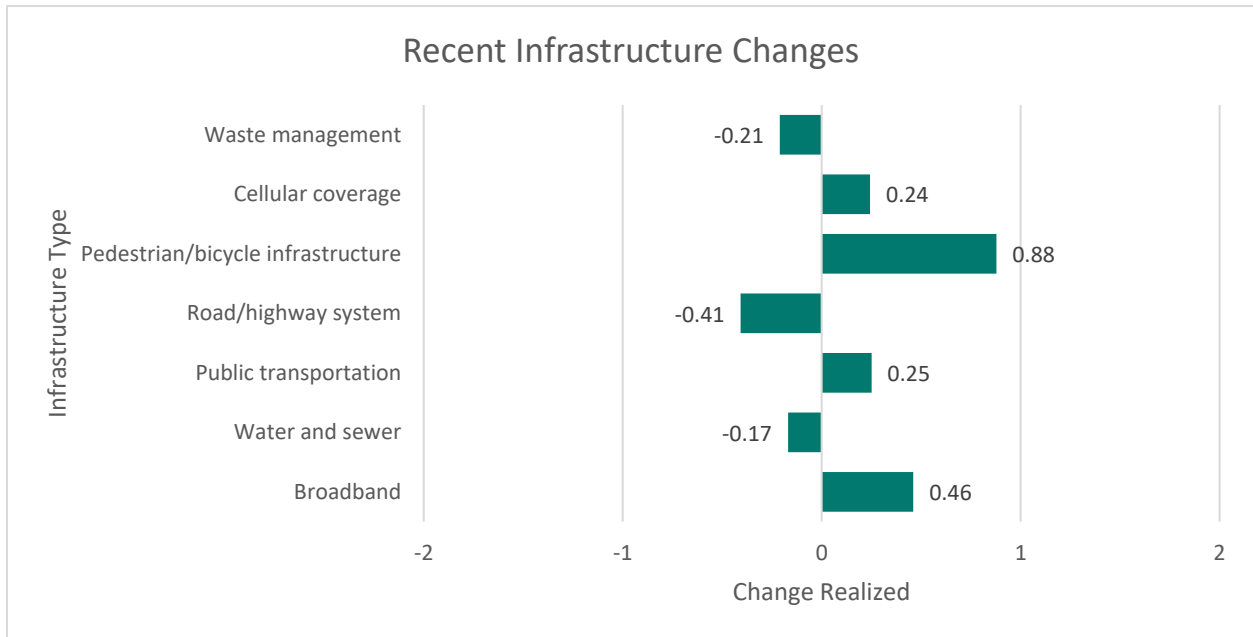
In 2022, Humboldt County consumed 30 million therms of natural gas, with 64% being for residential use. Natural gas is used to generate electricity at the Humboldt Bay Generating Station, a 163 MW facility, in addition to being used as the primary heating source for 54% of Humboldt County homes.

## **Infrastructure Survey Findings**

Infrastructure plays a critical role in local economic development. To understand the community's perception of recent infrastructure changes, survey respondents were asked to describe how each type of infrastructure has changed over the last three years. A score of '-2' indicates that the infrastructure has significantly declined; a score of '2' indicates that the infrastructure has significantly improved. A score of '0' indicates that the infrastructure has neither improved nor declined.

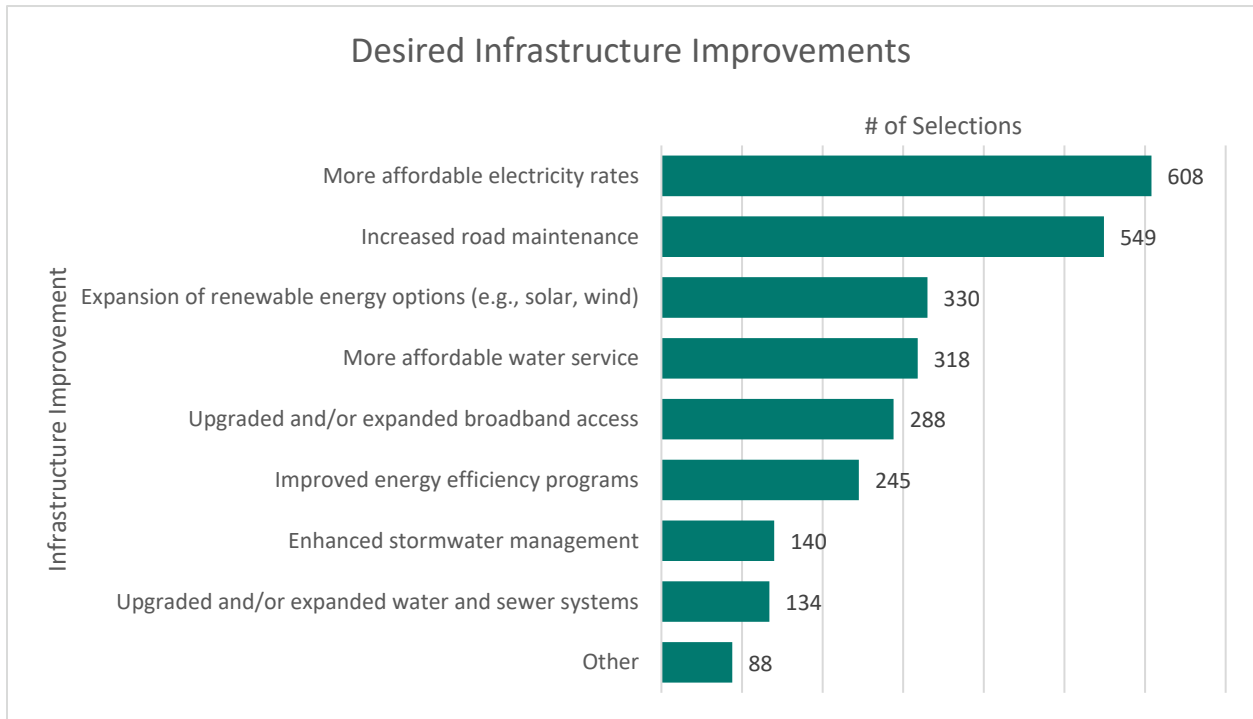
All infrastructure types were only perceived to have changed modestly over the last three years. Pedestrian/bicycle infrastructure was believed to have changed the most and for the better. Respondents also noted positive changes in the county's cellular coverage, public transportation and broadband infrastructure. Waste management, road/highway system and water and sewer infrastructure were perceived to have declined over the last three years.

Figure 40: Recent Infrastructure Changes in Humboldt County. Source: Humboldt County Community Survey Findings, 2025



Then, to help prioritize future infrastructure development, respondents were asked to select the improvements they'd most like to see in the county. The most selected infrastructure improvement was 'More affordable electricity rates,' which was selected 608 times. The next most desired infrastructure improvement was 'Increased road maintenance,' which was selected 549 times. 'Expansion of renewable energy options,' 'More affordable water service,' and 'Upgraded and/or expanded broadband access' were the next most desired improvements. Of the 88 respondents who selected 'Other,' many expressed a desire for expanded pedestrian/bicycle infrastructure and more affordable natural gas.

Figure 41: Desired Infrastructure Improvements in Humboldt County. Source: Humboldt County Community Survey Findings, 2025



# Appendix A

## Industry Elevation and Diversification

### Major Employers

A mix of public- and private-sector businesses employ a significant share of the regional workforce. California State Polytechnic University, Humboldt (Cal Poly Humboldt) is, by far, the largest public-sector employer in the county; the California State Controller estimated that the university employed 3,387 workers in 2023. 2,469 workers were employed by the county in the same year and the Redwoods Community College District employed 877 workers. A mixture of cities, K-12 school systems and a healthcare district, are also among the largest public-sector employers in the county.

*Table 28: Major Public-Sector Employers in Humboldt County. Source: California State Controller, 2023*

<b>Employer</b>	<b>Employment Estimate</b>
California State Polytech University, Humboldt	3,387
Humboldt County	2,469
Redwoods Community College District	877
Humboldt County Office of Education	721
Eureka	442
Fortuna Elementary	312
Arcata	262
Southern Humboldt Community Healthcare District	146
Fortuna	143
Blue Lake Union Elementary	106

Data on private-sector employment in the county come from a different source: the State of California Employment Development Department. Although exact employment counts are not available, a range of estimated employment is provided for some of the largest companies in the county. In 2024, Providence St. Joseph Hospital was, by far, the largest private-sector employer in the county. A mixture of transportation, accommodation, financial and healthcare industries,

among others, find representation in major businesses in Humboldt County.

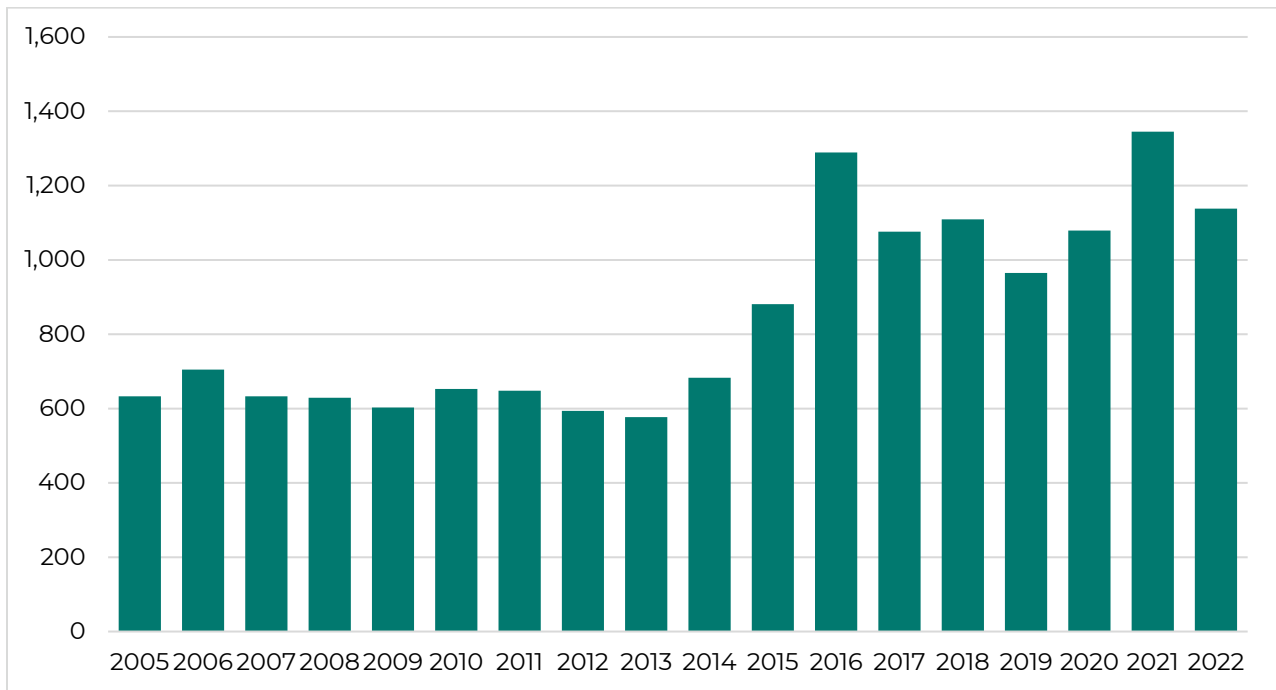
*Table 29: Major Private-Sector Employers in Humboldt County. Source: State of California Employment Development Division, 2024*

<b>Employer</b>	<b>Employment Estimate</b>
Providence St. Joseph Hospital	1,000-4,999
Bettendorf Trucking	250-499
Blue Lake Casino & Hotel	250-499
Green Diamond Resource Co	250-499
Mad River Community Hospital	250-499
Newmarket International Inc	250-499
Umpqua Bank	250-499
Costco Wholesale	100-249
Danco Group	100-249
North Coast Co-Op	100-249
Pacific Seafood Co	100-249
Redwood Memorial Hospital	100-249
Schmidbauer Lumber Inc	100-249
Security National Svc Co	100-249
Target	100-249
Winco Foods	100-249

## Business Applications by Year<sup>86</sup>

The number of business formations gives insight into the level of entrepreneurial and business initiation activity. Since 2014, Humboldt County has seen a significant upswing in the number of business applications, with annual business applications exceeding 1,000 per year in recent years.

Figure 42: Business applications in Humboldt County by year. Source: U.S. Census Bureau Business Formation Statistics.



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<sup>86</sup> For more information on the economic development ecosystem in Humboldt County, please see [Economic Development Assets](#).

## Economic Development Assets

Humboldt County has a robust network of economic development assets to support business growth and entrepreneurship and workforce development.

### Key Investments and Economic Development Wins

- Airport runway and electrical rehabilitation and parking lot rehabilitation
- Establishment of the Samoa Peninsula EIFD to revitalize commercial development in the region
- Investment into Life Plan Humboldt retirement community
- Brought American Job Center of California in house along with all programs
- Established WindLink to support the collaborative development of local supply chain around Offshore Wind
- Heavy Marine Terminal Project under development to modernize the port infrastructure
- Expansion of internet connectivity and service providers heavily influenced by the work of the Tribes
- Nordic Aquafarms project on the Peninsula is moving forward with permitting and environmental impact study
- Expansion Project at K'ima:w Medical Center
- Development of new hospital facility in southern Humboldt
- Development of solar array and Micro Grid at ACV
- Redevelopment of Orick by the Yurok tribe including a welcome center
- Opening of North Coast SBDC Startup Humboldt Innovation Hub
- Construction under way of the Blue Lake Rancheria T'am Resilience Center

### Business Improvement Districts and Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts

- Humboldt Tourism Business Improvement District
- Samoa Peninsula Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District

### Economic Development Organizations

- North Edge (formerly Arcata Economic Development Corporation)

- Northern California Indian Development Council
- California Center for Rural Policy
- Redwood Region Economic Development Commission
- Humboldt County Economic Development Division
- City of Arcata Economic Development Division
- City of Blue Lake Economic Development Department
- City of Eureka Economic Development Division

### **Chambers of Commerce**

- Arcata Chamber of Commerce
- Blue Lake Chamber of Commerce
- Ferndale Chamber of Commerce
- Fortuna Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Eureka Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Trinidad Chamber of Commerce
- Loleta Chamber of Commerce
- McKinleyville Chamber of Commerce
- Orick Chamber of Commerce
- Rio Dell-Scotia Chamber of Commerce
- Southern Humboldt Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Center
- Willow Creek Chamber of Commerce

### **Downtown Organizations**

- Arcata Main Street
- Eureka Main Street Program
- Fortuna Downtown Business Association

## **Small Business Resource Partners**

- North Coast Small Business Development Center
- Blue Lake Rancheria Toma Resilience Campus
  - Blue Lake Rancheria Resilience Business Incubator
- The Headwaters Fund (grants and revolving loan fund)
- Redwood Region EDC Revolving Loan Fund
- North Edge Revolving Loan Fund
- Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians EDC Revolving Loan Fund
- California Infrastructure and Economic Development Bank
- Lost Coast Ventures
- Humboldt County Farm Bureau
- Humboldt County Growers Alliance
- North Coast Growers' Foundation
- University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) Humboldt-Del Norte Counties
- Hoopa Development Fund
- APEX Accelerator

## Opportunity Zones

Qualified opportunity zones (QOZ) are economically distressed communities, defined by individual census tracts, where certain investments are encouraged through the provision of tax incentives. Humboldt County has seven opportunity zones, located in the northeast part of the county and to the west in the Eureka/Arcata/McKinleyville area.

Investments in these zones, including those in commercial and industrial real estate, housing, infrastructure and existing or start-up businesses, may qualify for tax benefits. Within these areas, investors within the opportunity zone are eligible for capital gains tax deferral, tax reduction, or elimination of taxes on future gains.<sup>87</sup>

About Humboldt County's QOZs:

- All are located in a qualified HUBZone.<sup>88</sup>
- The closest EDA University Center is California State University, Chico.
- There are three EDA-funded revolving loan funds: the Redwood Region Economic Development Commission, the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians Economic Development Corporation and North Edge (formerly the Arcata Economic Development Corporation).<sup>89</sup>

Three of the seven QOZs are also HUD 2025 Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Qualified Census Tracts.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> "Opportunity Zones." *GoHumCo Economic Development*.  
<https://www.gohumco.com/358/Opportunity-Zones>

<sup>88</sup> <https://maps.certify.sba.gov/hubzone/map#center=44.722800,-103.249700&zoom=4>

<sup>89</sup> <https://www.eda.gov/grant-resources/economic-development-directory/ca>

<sup>90</sup> <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/qct.html>

Figure 43: Opportunity Zones in Humboldt County. Mapping by TPMA; data from the State of California Department of Finance.

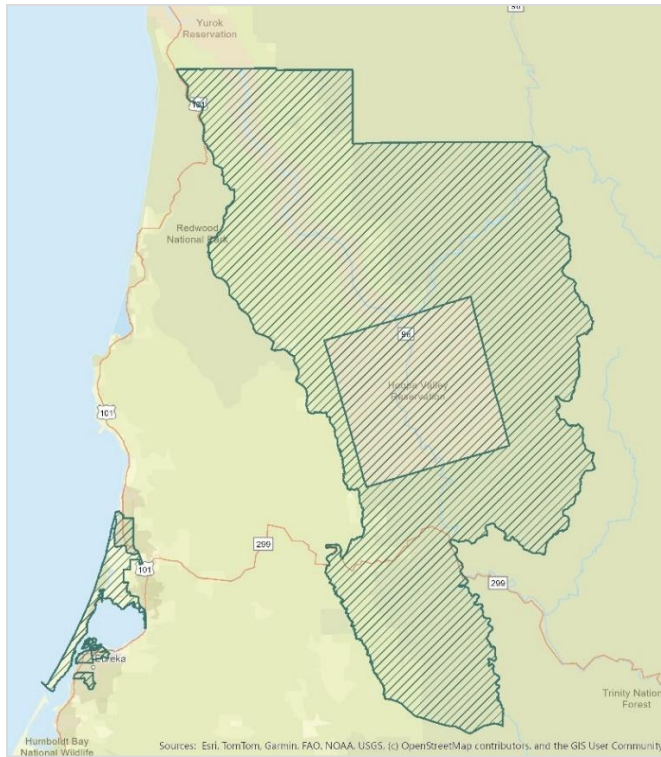


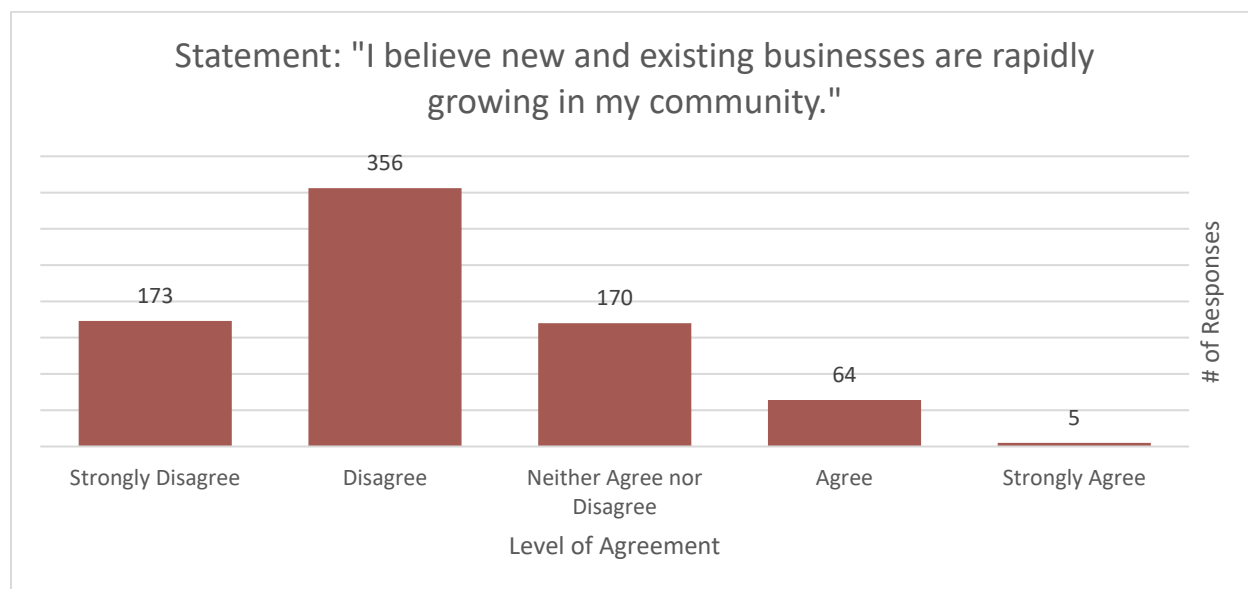
Table 30: Opportunity Zone Data Overview in Humboldt County. Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates

<b>Geographic Area</b>	<b>Median Household Income</b>	<b>Below Poverty Line</b>	<b>Median Home Value</b>	<b>High School Education</b>	<b>Median Age</b>
Humboldt County <sup>91</sup>	\$61,135	18.9%	\$418,000	91.5%	39.6
Census Tract 1	\$37,985	29.4%	\$365,300	92.7%	36.1
Census Tract 3	\$70,457	11.3%	\$345,300	87.7%	37.2
Census Tract 5	\$42,122	25.1%	\$371,000	91.3%	44.4
Census Tract 13	\$59,818	10.2%	\$409,100	89.9%	43.6
Census Tract 101.02	\$46,935	16.0%	\$328,500	91.1%	54
Census Tract 105.01	-	-	-	-	-
Census Tract 9400	\$54,306	28.1%	\$250,000	90.0%	

## Business Support & Attraction Survey Results

To measure the community's perception of local business activity, respondents were presented with a series of related statements and asked to rate their level of agreement with each. The first statement was, "I believe new and existing businesses are rapidly growing in my community." Of 768 respondents, only 69 (9.0%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. The majority of respondents (529, or 68.9%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

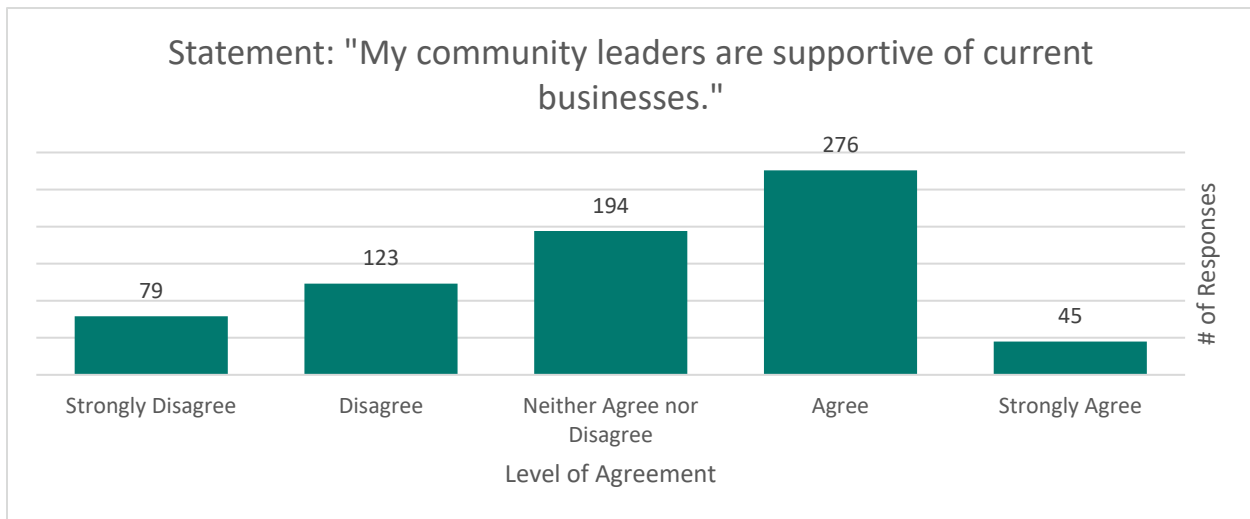
Figure 44: Local Business Growth in Humboldt County. Source: Humboldt County Community Survey Findings, 2025



Despite the perception that local businesses are not growing, many respondents felt that community support for local businesses exists. When presented with the statement, "My community leaders are supportive of current businesses," 321 respondents, or 44.8%, agreed or strongly agreed. A smaller share of respondents (202, or 28.2%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

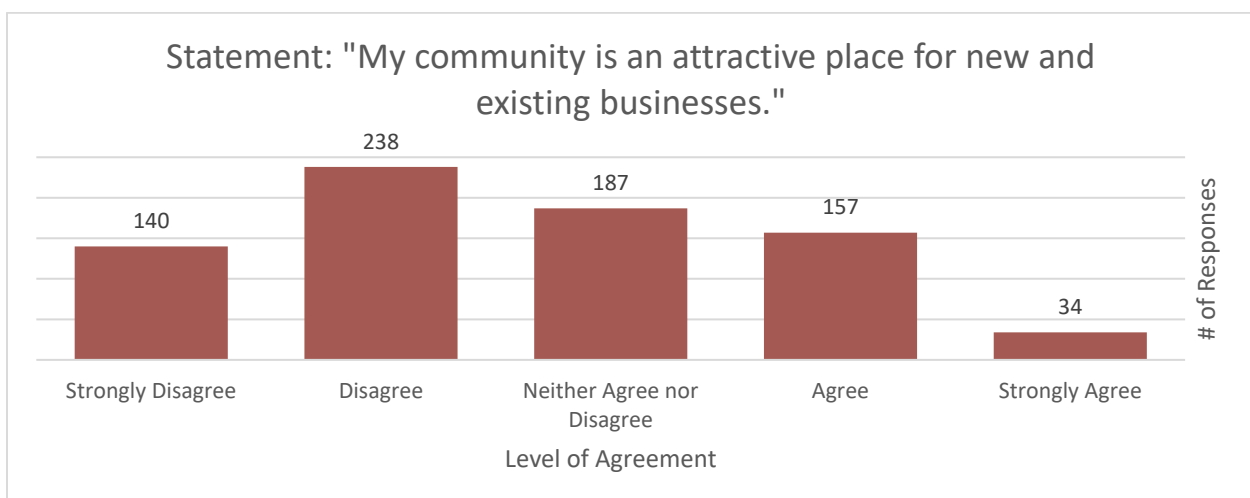
<sup>91</sup> This table uses 5-year estimates, therefore, there may be differences in county-level data between this data and other figures in this report.

Figure 45: Local Business Support in Humboldt County. Source: Humboldt County Community Survey Findings, 2025



Then, respondents were asked to rate their agreement with the statement, "My community is an attractive place for new and existing businesses." As can be seen in the graph, agreement with this statement skewed negative. Of 756 respondents, 191 (25.3%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement; 378, or 50%, disagreed or strongly disagreed. This indicates a need to improve the county's image as an attractive place for business development and relocation.

Figure 46: Business Attraction in Humboldt County. Source: Humboldt County Community Survey Findings, 2025



To identify challenges faced by entrepreneurs in the county, respondents were asked to select the options that presented the greatest barrier to growth. Respondents could select up to three options. The top challenge identified by respondents was ‘Navigating licenses/permits/regulations,’ which was selected 391 times. ‘Access to capital’ and ‘Retaining a motivated workforce’ were each selected 288 times and were the next most commonly identified challenges. 140 respondents selected the ‘Other’ option and many listed high costs of commercial space, the prevalence of homelessness in the community, limited access to healthcare and a small local consumer base as barriers to starting and supporting a business.

Figure 47: Greatest Entrepreneurial Challenges in Humboldt County. Source: Humboldt County Community Survey Findings, 2025



## Indigenous Tribes in Humboldt County

Humboldt County and the greater Northwest California region is home to many sovereign Tribal governments. These include: the Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria, the Big Lagoon Rancheria, the Blue Lake Rancheria, the Hoopa Valley Tribe, the Karuk Tribe, the Pulikla Tribe of Yurok People, the Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation, Trinidad Rancheria, the Wiyot Tribe and the Yurok Tribe.

### Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria

The Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria was established in 1910, as a “home for homeless, landless Native American Indians.” After having their federal recognition revoked in 1958, the Tribe regained federal recognition in 1983, but was not compensated for lost land, resources, culture and rights.<sup>92</sup> The Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria is based in Loleta with over 600 Tribal members, primarily from the Mattole and Wiyot Tribes; other Tribes, such as Hoopa, Yurok and Tolowa are included through marriage or interrelations.<sup>93,94</sup>

The Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria has invested in economic development to support Tribal sovereignty and community wellbeing. The Tribe opened the Bear River Casino in 2005, followed by the Bear River Hotel in 2012, generating jobs and revenue for Tribal services. In 2014, the Tribe developed its first Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) to guide long-term growth.

This commitment to community-focused development continued with the opening of the Bear River Recreation Center in 2016 and the Bear River Family Entertainment Center in 2019.<sup>95</sup> In addition, the Tribe owns

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<sup>92</sup> Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria. Our Story. Retrieved from <https://www.bearriverrancheria.org/our-story>

<sup>93</sup> Bear River Casino & Resort. Bear River Band of Rohnerville Rancheria. Retrieved from <https://bearrivercasino.com/bear-river-band-of-rohnerville-rancheria/>

<sup>94</sup> Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria. Bear River Band of Rohnerville Rancheria Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. Retrieved from [https://www.bearriverrancheria.org/\\_files/ugd/c3beb0\\_aea67550251542f28d69ce117a363f38.pdf](https://www.bearriverrancheria.org/_files/ugd/c3beb0_aea67550251542f28d69ce117a363f38.pdf)

<sup>95</sup> Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria CEDs

and operates the Bear River Pump & Play Gas Station and Bear River Tobacco Traders.<sup>96</sup> The Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria completed a second CEDS in 2024 and is actively developing a new plans to guide the next phase of its development.<sup>97</sup>

## **Big Lagoon Rancheria**

The Big Lagoon Rancheria is a federally recognized Tribe comprised of Yurok and Tolowa people. Federally recognized since 1918, the Tribe has a small membership of approximately 20 individuals. The reservation, located on 20 acres adjacent to the Big Lagoon in Northern Humboldt, has its headquarters in Arcata. The tribe has pursued casino development since 1994 but has not been able to proceed because of legal battles that have continued into 2025.

## **Blue Lake Rancheria**

The Blue Lake Rancheria is a federally recognized Tribe, with about 100 members. The base for the Blue Lake Rancheria is comprised of about 100 acres near Arcata and Eureka on the ancestral homelands of the Wiyot people. The Tribe was established in 1908 under the Rancheria Act and had their federal recognition revoked in 1958. In 1983, the Tribe regained recognition but was only granted access to a portion of its former land.<sup>98</sup>

The Blue Lake Rancheria has made significant investments in economic development and climate resilience. The Tribe owns and operates several successful enterprises, including the Blue Lake Casino Hotel, Powers Creek Brewery and Alice's Restaurant, supporting local employment. The Tribe is also building the Ta'm Resilience Campus, a 15,000 square foot facility designed to serve as centralized hub for resilience, economic development and disaster preparedness. The campus will include a business incubator, workforce training center

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<sup>96</sup> Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria. Enterprises. Retrieved from <https://www.bearriverrancheria.org/enterprises>

<sup>97</sup> Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria CEDS

<sup>98</sup> Blue Lake Rancheria. Blue Lake Rancheria Wetland Program Plan. Retrieved from [https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2016-06/documents/blr\\_wpp\\_final.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2016-06/documents/blr_wpp_final.pdf)

and a commercial kitchen, in addition to hosting networking opportunities. The Tribe is also actively engaged in sustainability initiatives, such as the development of the Blue Lake Rancheria Microgrid, as well as its \$11.5 million carbon sequestration project.

## **Hoopa Valley Tribe**

The Hoopa Valley Tribe is a federally recognized tribe with over 3,500 enrolled members.<sup>99</sup> The Tribe has been federally recognized since 1864, following the signing of a treaty giving the Hoopa people rights to a 141-square mile area, less than a third of their less than a third of their ancestral lands. The Tribe has worked to regain parts of that area over time, most recently purchasing 10,395 acres of land on the western boundary of the Tribe's Reservation.<sup>100</sup>

The Hoopa Valley Tribe operates a number of Tribal enterprises, such as the Hoopa Valley Public Utilities District (HVPUD), Lucky Bear Casino, Hoopa Shopping Center, Hoopa Forest Industries and the K'ima:w Medical Center. To further economic development, the Tribe has established the Hoopa Development Fund and a Native Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) to provide financial services and promote entrepreneurship in the community. The Hoopa Valley Tribe is one of a small group, estimated to be 10% nationwide, of Tribes with their own Tribal Business Codes.<sup>101</sup>

## **Karuk Tribe**

The Karuk Tribe has been recognized as a sovereign government since 1851, when the Karuk Tribe signed Treaty R, one of the unratified California Indian Treaties of 1851-1852. Because the treaties were not

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<sup>99</sup> Judicial Branch of California. Hoopa Valley Tribal Court. Retrieved from <https://courts.ca.gov/programs-initiatives/tribalstate-programs/tribal-justice-systems/california-tribal-courts-0>

<sup>100</sup> "Hoopa Valley Tribe Regains Major Tract of Ancestral Land." <https://www.conservationfund.org/our-impact/news-insights/hoopa-valley-tribe-regains-major-tract-of-ancestral-land/>

<sup>101</sup> Hoopa Valley Tribe Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2016-2020. [https://www.hoopa-nsn.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Hoopa-Valley-Tribe\\_CEDS\\_Draft\\_v5\\_FINAL-APPROVED.pdf](https://www.hoopa-nsn.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Hoopa-Valley-Tribe_CEDS_Draft_v5_FINAL-APPROVED.pdf)

ratified, the Tribe was not granted a reservation in 1851. The Tribe reestablished government-to-government communications in 1979, when its federal recognition was reaffirmed; however, no land was granted to the Tribe at that time. The Tribe has worked to acquire land and now has 914 acres of land held in trust by the federal government and 822 acres owned by the Tribe, located throughout Orleans, Happy Camp and Yreka.<sup>102,103</sup> The Tribe has over 3,500 enrolled members.

In 2021, the Tribe released its latest Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), building upon previous plans and prioritizing five pillars: infrastructure, innovation, resilience, adaptation and capacity. The Karuk Community Development Corporation (KCDC) leads many of the Tribe's economic initiatives, supporting a diversified economy. The Tribe owns and operates Rain Rock Casino, which is currently undergoing an expansion that will provide further employment opportunities. To increase digital access and equity, in 2015 the Tribe launched its own internet service Provider (ISP), Áan Chúuphan. The Tribe has consistently worked to increase and improve internet service, including a recent partnership with the California Department of Technology (CDT) for the construction of 46 miles of open-access, middle-mile broadband infrastructure.<sup>104</sup>

## **Pulikla Tribe of Yurok People**

The Pulikla Tribe of Yurok People is a federally recognized Tribe of Yurok Origin. In 1851, 18 treaties were negotiated in California, including with the “Pohlik or Lower Klamath River Tribe.” However, none of these treaties were ratified by the federal government and in 1855, the Pulikla

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<sup>102</sup> “Tribal Government Profile and Summary, 2020.” Karuk Tribe. [https://www.karuk.us/images/docs/hr-files/Karuk-Tribal\\_Government\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_2020.final.pdf](https://www.karuk.us/images/docs/hr-files/Karuk-Tribal_Government_Fact_Sheet_2020.final.pdf)

<sup>103</sup> “Benefits of Trust Land Acquisition.” US Department of the Interior, Indian Affairs. <https://www.bia.gov/service/trust-land-acquisition/benefits-trust-land-acquisition>

<sup>104</sup> California Department of Technology. California Department of Technology and Karuk Tribe Partner to Close the Digital Divide. Retrieved from <https://cdt.ca.gov/newsroom/2024/12/california-department-of-technology-and-karuk-tribe-partner-to-close-the-digital-divide/>

Tribe was part of the Klamath River Reservation.<sup>105</sup> In 1938, the US government purchased 228 acres of land on the lower Klamath River, which became the Resighini Rancheria in 1939.<sup>106</sup> Today, the Tribe owns over 450 acres of land and has 152 Tribal citizens.<sup>107</sup>

The Tribe operates the Cher'ere Campground & RV Park at the Klamath River estuary, generating tourism and revenue.<sup>108</sup> In 2023, the Tribe signed a historic General Agreement with the National Park Service and California State Parks to co-manage projects in Redwood National and State Parks, ensuring the protection of Yurok cultural resources and opening pathways for cooperative economic development and education programs.<sup>109</sup>

## **Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation**

The Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation is a federally recognized Tribe based in Smith River, California, with ancestral homelands that span from Wilson Creek and Smith River in California to the Sixes River in Oregon. Before sustained contact with settlers, the Tolowa were devastated by epidemics introduced indirectly through Spanish and Russian intermediaries. The California Gold Rush led to the state-sponsored massacre of the Tolowa people, resulting in the decimation of the California Indian population. In 1862, the 17,000-acre Smith River Reservation was established. However, this was rescinded in 1868. In 1908, the 160-acre Smith River Rancheria was established, but this was

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<sup>105</sup> Pulikla Tribe of Yurok People. Who We Are. Retrieved from <https://puliklatribe.gov/who-we-are/>

<sup>106</sup> Native News Online. Resighini Rancheria Becomes Pulikla Tribe of Yurok People, Honoring Ancestral Lands and Cultural Heritage. Retrieved from <https://nativenewsonline.net/sovereignty/resighini-rancheria-becomes-pulikla-tribe-of-yurok-people-honoring-ancestral-lands-and-cultural-heritage>

<sup>107</sup> Pulikla Tribe of Yurok People. Enrollment & Elections. Retrieved from <https://puliklatribe.gov/enrollment/>

<sup>108</sup> Pulikla Tribe of Yurok People. Cher'ere Campground & RV Park. Retrieved from <https://puliklatribe.gov/campground/>

<sup>109</sup> Redheaded Blackbelt. Redwood National Park and State Parks and Resighini Rancheria Sign Historic General Agreement. Retrieved from <https://kymkemp.com/2023/05/08/redwood-national-park-and-state-parks-and-resighini-rancheria-sign-historic-general-agreement/>

followed by the federal termination of rancheria governments in 1960, resulting in the loss of all but a few acres of land. In 1983, recognition was restored.<sup>110</sup> Today, the Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation has over 950 acres of tribal-owned land and over 1,900 Tribal citizens.<sup>111</sup>

The Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation owns and operates several Tribal enterprises that support its economic independence and provide vital services to members. These include the Lucky 7 Casino & Hotel, Howonquet Village & Resort and the Rowdy Creek Fish Hatchery.<sup>112</sup> In addition to generating revenue, these businesses support jobs and contribute to Tribal services such as education, housing, healthcare and social programs. The Tribe has also made significant investments into community development, such as the 27-unit Dat-naa-svt Village Project (with five more homes being built in 2026) and the expansion of the Xaa-wan'-k'wvt Head Start facility.<sup>113,114</sup>

## **Trinidad Rancheria**

The Trinidad Rancheria, with ancestral ties to the Yurok, Wiyot and Tolowa peoples, was established in 1906 to house homeless California Indians. In 1908, 60 acres were purchased to accommodate the Tribe and federal recognition was granted in 1917.<sup>115</sup> The Tribe has expanded

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<sup>110</sup> Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation. About Us. Retrieved from <https://www.tolowa-nnsn.gov/35/About-Us>

<sup>111</sup> Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation. Our Lands. Retrieved from <https://www.tolowa-nnsn.gov/246/OUR-LANDS>

<sup>112</sup> Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation. Enterprises. Retrieved from <https://www.tolowa-nnsn.gov/101/Enterprises>

<sup>113</sup> Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation. Daat-naa-svt Village Project. Retrieved from <https://www.tolowa-nnsn.gov/170/Dat-naa-svt-Village-Project>

<sup>114</sup> Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation. May 2025 Tribal Government Newsletter. Retrieved from [https://issuu.com/tolowadeeni/docs/may\\_2025\\_newsletter](https://issuu.com/tolowadeeni/docs/may_2025_newsletter)

<sup>115</sup> Cher-Ae Heights Indian Community of the Trinidad Rancheria. About Trinidad Rancieria. Retrieved from <https://trinidad-rancheria.org/about/>

its land holdings and the Rancheria now includes 108 parcels across five properties. As of 2011, the Tribe had 206 members.<sup>116</sup>

The Tribe owns and operates the Heights Casino, Seascope Restaurant and Seascope Home Rental. It also owns and manages the Trinidad Pier and Harbor through the Trinidad Tribal Harbor District, which was recently put into Trust for the Trinidad Rancheria. To guide development, the Harbor District completed a strategic planning process, creating a roadmap for Tribal Harbor District that honors traditional ways of life and brings economic prosperity to the Tribe.<sup>117</sup>

## **Wiyot Tribe**

The Wiyot Tribe, with about 600 members, is a federally recognized tribe with ancestral ties to the Humboldt Bay region, including present-day Eureka and Arcata. In 1860, during the Tribe's annual World Renewal Ceremony, settlers carried out the Tuluwat Massacre, killing an estimated 80 to 250 Wiyot people. Survivors were displaced across the region until the early 1900s, when a church group purchased 20 acres in the Eel River estuary that became a federally recognized reservation in 1908. The Tribe's federal recognition was revoked in 1961 but reinstated in 1981 following a legal challenge. After a lawsuit over contaminated drinking water, the federal government purchased new land and the Tribe relocated to the 88-acre Table Bluff Reservation, while the original 20 acres remain privately owned by families. In recent years, the City of Eureka returned Tuluwat to the Wiyot Tribe, putting the Tribe's sacred site back in rightful hands for the first time in about 160 years.

A five-year strategic plan guides the Wiyot Tribe's economic development efforts. A key initiative is the Dishgamu Humboldt Community Land Trust (CLT), established to return ancestral lands to

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<sup>116</sup> Cher-Ae Heights Indian Community of the Trinidad Rancheria. Comprehensive Community-Based Plan. Retrieved from [https://trinidad-rancheria.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/TR\\_Comprehensive\\_Plan\\_Final-Dec2011.pdf](https://trinidad-rancheria.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/TR_Comprehensive_Plan_Final-Dec2011.pdf)

<sup>117</sup> Strategic Earth Consulting. Project Wrap Up: Trinidad Rancheria Tribal Harbor District. Retrieved from <https://strategicearth.com/project-wrap-up-trinidad-rancheria-tribal-harbor-district/>

Wiyot stewardship and promote affordable housing, workforce development and environmental and cultural restoration. The CLT has completed the Jaroujiji' Youth Housing project, for youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. In partnership with the City of Eureka, Dishgamu Humboldt has also been selected to develop affordable housing on two city-owned parking lots, which will result in 93 new units of housing.

## Yurok Tribe

The Yurok Tribe signed a “Treaty of Peace and Friendship” in 1851, one of the unratified California Indian Treaties.<sup>118</sup> In 1855, the government created the 55,000 Yurok Indian Reservation and confined the Yurok people to it, an area much smaller than their ancestral territory.<sup>119</sup> The Tribe suffered further land losses through the General Allotment Act, which allotted less than 30,000 acres to Tribal members; the Tribe has focused on expansion efforts and the current Yurok Reservation is about 56,000 acres.<sup>120</sup> With 6,500 enrolled members, the Yurok Tribe is currently the largest Tribe in California and employs more than 480 people to provide services and membership to the community.<sup>121</sup>

Through the Yurok Economic Development Corporation (YEDC), the Tribe manages a diverse portfolio of enterprises, including the Redwood Hotel Casino, Klamath Jet Boat Tours, Bluff Creek Resort and Redwood RV Park. In 2023, YEDC secured a \$6 million grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration to construct a new Shoreline Market in Orick, featuring a fuel station, laundromat, convenience store and tribal government offices designed in the style of a traditional Yurok home. The Tribe has also expanded into the technology sector with the launch of Condor Aviation, an aerial surveying enterprise established with a \$5 million federal grant. Additionally, the Yurok Telecommunications Corporation was created to improve broadband access across Tribal lands, aiming to bridge the digital divide in rural communities.

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<sup>118</sup> Yurok Tribe. Tribe Constitution. Retrieved from <https://yurok.tribal.codes/Constitution/Preamble>

<sup>119</sup> Yurok Tribe. Formation of Reservations. Retrieved from <https://www.yuroktribe.org/formation-of-reservations>

<sup>120</sup> Per-Geesh Construction. The Yurok Tribe. Retrieved from <https://www.per-geeshconstruction.com/>

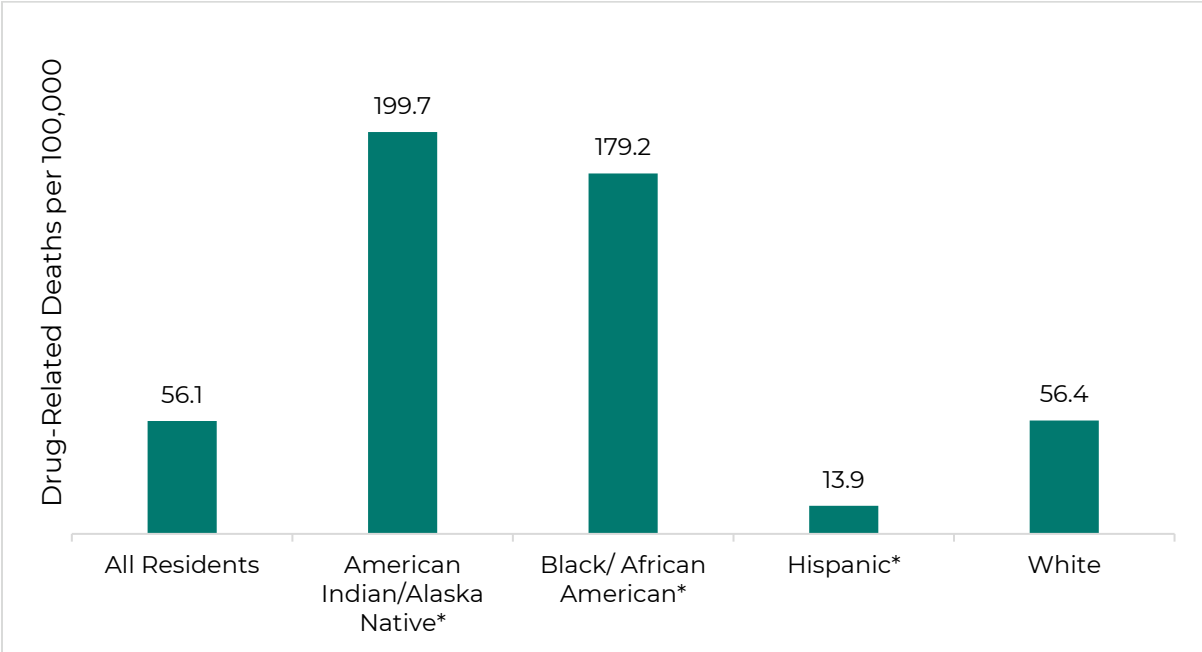
<sup>121</sup> Visit Yurok Country. The Yurok Tribe. Retrieved from <https://www.visiturokcountry.com/about>

# Fundamental Community Needs

## Healthcare

Drug poisoning and SUD deaths do not occur equally within racial and ethnic groups. The incidence of drug poisoning/SUD deaths for the American Indian/Alaskan Native group is nearly twice as high as in other racial and ethnic groups in Humboldt County.

Figure 48: Age-Adjusted Drug-Related Death by Race and Ethnicity in Humboldt County, 2023.<sup>122</sup> Source: California Overdose Surveillance Dashboard.

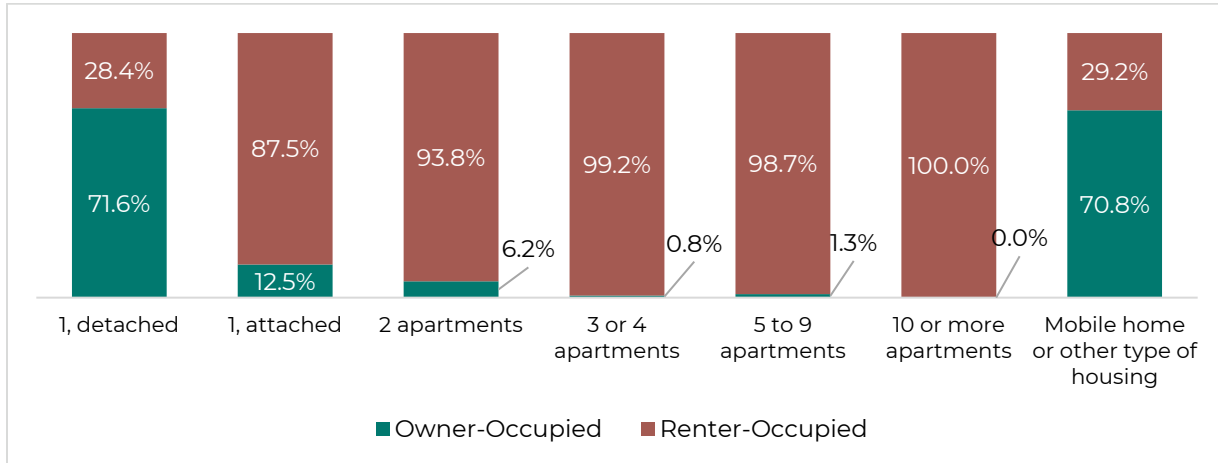


<sup>122</sup> Data for race and ethnicities marked with a star should be interpreted with caution due to large margins of error.

# Housing

## Tenure

Figure 49: Tenure by Unit Type in Humboldt County. Source: ACS 2023 1-Year Estimates.



## Vacancy Rate & Duration

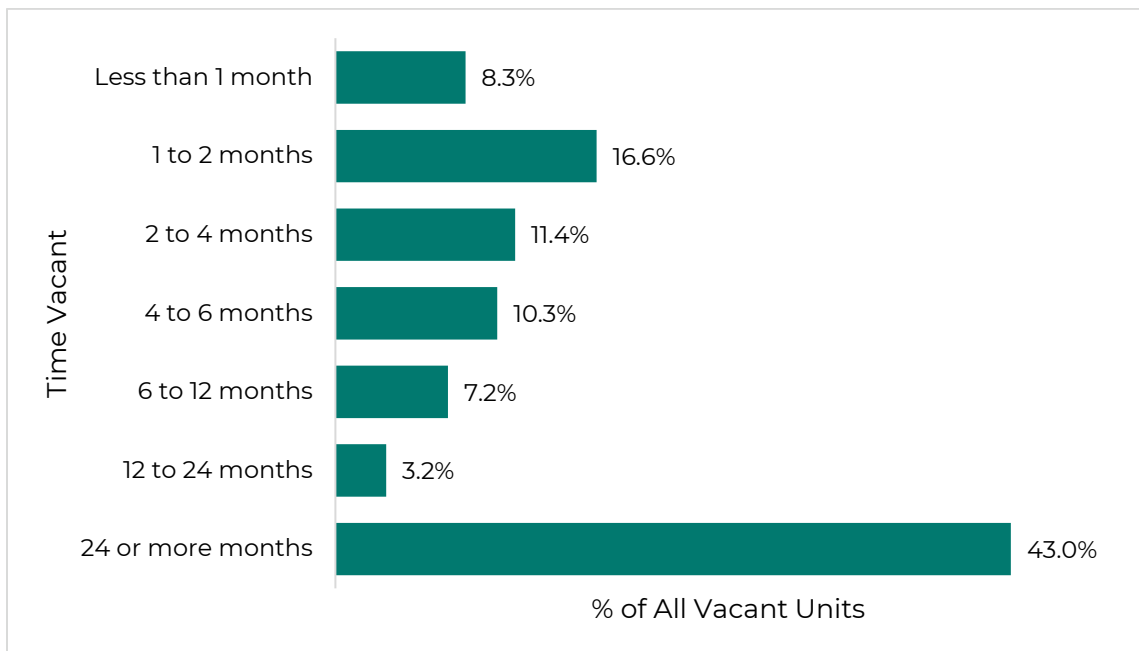
In real estate, the “natural” vacancy rate is the vacancy rate that would persist if the housing supply and demand were in balance, resulting in prices remaining steady. If the vacancy rate falls below this number, housing demand outpaces the supply, resulting in rising prices. Conversely, if the vacancy rate rises about this number, the housing supply is greater than demand and should result in decreasing prices. The “natural” vacancy rate in a housing market is estimated to be about seven to eight percent. In Humboldt County, vacancy rates have remained below this level for more than 10 years and have continued to decline, indicating an increasingly competitive housing market. To bring the vacancy rate up to 7%, the county would need an estimated additional 1,300 rental units and 1,700 owner-occupied units, which represents nearly 7% of the current housing stock.

Table 31: Vacancy Rates by Tenure in Humboldt County, 2013, 2018 and 2023. Source: ACS 1-Year Estimates

Tenure	2013	2018	2023
Homeowner	3.4%	1.6%	1.4%
Renter	4.5%	2.4%	2.0%

Figure 50 categorizes all vacant units in the county by the duration of their vacancy. About 43% of vacant units (3,073 units) have been empty for more than two years. Approximately one quarter of units have been vacant for less than two months, which could mean that they're actively being turned over from resident to resident. Units which have been vacant for short periods of time represent a part of the housing stock which is always in transition; units which have been vacant for longer periods of time could be dilapidated or uninhabitable and their rehabilitation could provide extra housing supply within the county.

Figure 50: Housing Vacancy Duration in Humboldt County. Source: ACS 2023 1-Year Estimates



## Housing Cost Burden by Income

Cost burden occurs at different rates across various income groups. Households with incomes less than \$50,000 per year experience a high level of cost burden, with 74.1% of households being cost burdened. While there was a slight improvement in the level of cost burden for households with incomes less than \$35,000 per year, the high incidence highlights the need for affordable housing options. As income levels increase, the incidence of cost burden decreases, with about 11% of households earning more than \$75,000 per year experiencing cost burden, compared to 84.7% of households earning less than \$20,000 per year.

Table 32: Housing Cost Burden by Income in Humboldt County. Source: ACS 2018 and 2023 1-Year Estimates

Household Income	2018	2023
Less than \$20,000	87.9%	84.7%
\$20,000 to \$34,999	76.5%	71.9%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	51.6%	67.1%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	33.1%	41.3%
\$75,000 or more	7.7%	11.4%

## Housing Cost Burden by Age

In Humboldt County, the incidence of cost burden varies by the age of the householder and is likely highly correlated with income.<sup>123</sup> The highest incidence of cost burden can be among the youngest households, nearly 80% in 2023, an increase of more than 20 percentage points between 2018 and 2023. Cost burden generally decreases with age, with those aged 35 to 64 experiencing the lowest rate at 28.6%. However, those 65+ had a higher level of cost burden than the previous income bracket, the percentage of which increased from

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<sup>123</sup> A householder, as defined by the Census Bureau, is, "The person, or one of the people, in whose name the home is owned, being bought, or rented."

2018 to 2023, suggesting increasing financial pressure on seniors, many of whom may be on fixed incomes.

Table 33: Housing Cost Burden by Age of Householder in Humboldt County. Source: ACS 2018 and 2023 1-Year Estimates

Age	2018	2023
15 to 24	56.2%	79.5%
25 to 34	52.0%	35.2%
35 to 64	32.3%	28.6%
65 years and over	22.4%	34.2%

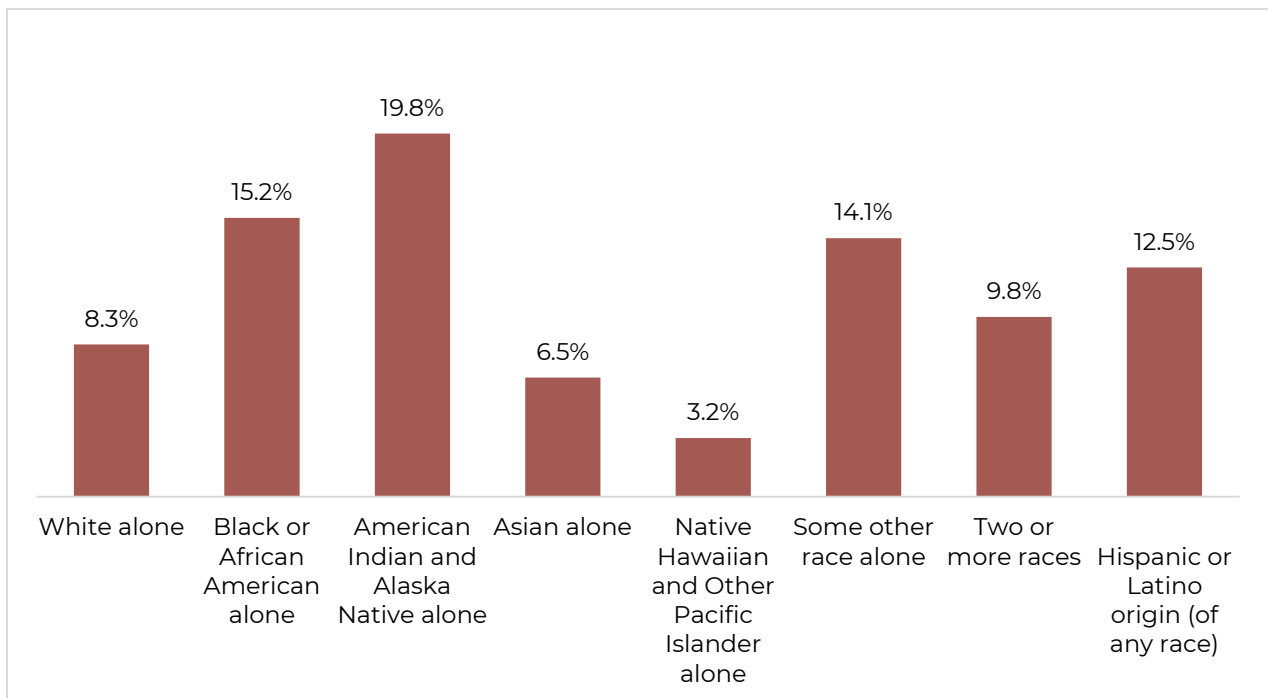


## Workforce and Education

### Unemployment Rates

Unemployment within the County varies by race, from 5.8% to 17.8%, depending on the racial group.<sup>124</sup> Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders have the lowest unemployment rate, while the American Indian and Alaska Native community face the highest unemployment rate. This variability in unemployment rate highlights the disparities in employment opportunities faced by different racial groups in Humboldt County.

Figure 51: Unemployment Rate by Race in Humboldt County. Source: 2018-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.



<sup>124</sup> It is important to note that the margin of error (indicated by the capped error bar) for many of these estimates – especially those which represent groups with small population sizes in Humboldt County – is very high.

## Highly Concentrated Occupations

As with industry employment concentration, the occupation concentration metric used in Table 34 compares the densities of specific occupations in Humboldt County to those of other comparable geographies. With high concentrations of specific workers, the county can more easily attract certain industries or businesses.

The most highly concentrated occupation group in the county includes Forest, Conservation and Logging Workers. Other fishing, hunting and farming occupations are highly concentrated within Humboldt County, as are a variety of healthcare and educational occupations.

*Table 34: Highly Concentrated Occupations (3-Digit SOC Code) by Occupation Concentration and Employment in Humboldt County. Source: Lightcast, 2024*

<b>Description</b>	<b>Occupation Concentration</b>	<b>2022 Jobs</b>
Forest, Conservation and Logging Workers	16.78	432
Fishing and Hunting Workers	6.99	76
Supervisors of Farming, Fishing and Forestry Workers	4.52	93
Firefighting and Prevention Workers	3.45	411
Woodworkers	2.54	218
Life, Physical and Social Science Technicians	2.14	294
Home Health and Personal Care Aides; and Nursing Assistants, Orderlies and Psychiatric Aides	2.04	3,789
Postsecondary Teachers	1.99	1,163
Social Scientists and Related Workers	1.97	233
Counselors, Social Workers and Other Community and Social Service Specialists	1.95	1,609

## Highest-Earning Industries

Average earnings per job are measured by dividing the total annual earnings of an industry by the total number of jobs within the county. The Natural Gas Distribution industry had the highest average annual earnings in 2022, equal to roughly \$245,000. A mixture of financial, healthcare and construction industries follow on the list and all provide average annual earnings of over \$100,000.

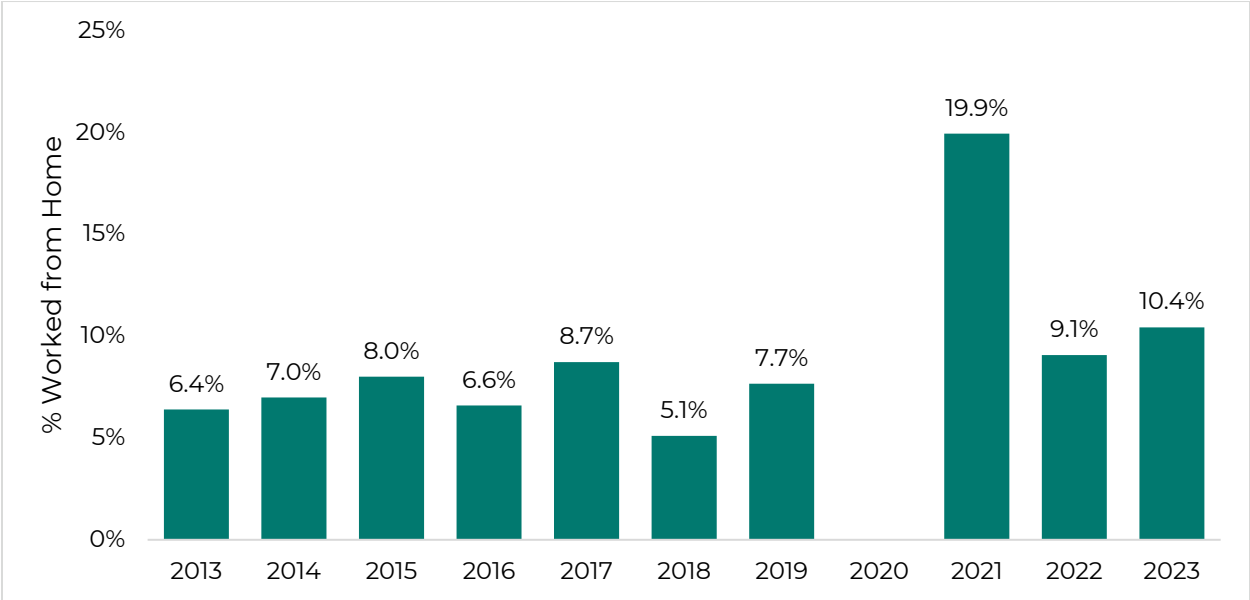
*Table 35: Highest-Earning Industries and Employment Levels (4-Digit NAICS Code) in Humboldt County. Source: Lightcast, 2024*

<b>Industry</b>	<b>Average Annual Earnings</b>	<b>2022 Jobs</b>
Natural Gas Distribution	\$244,686	252
Securities and Commodity Contracts Intermediation and Brokerage	\$226,911	53
Offices of Physicians	\$200,601	456
Nondepository Credit Intermediation	\$147,504	74
Highway, Street and Bridge Construction	\$141,241	268
Scheduled Air Transportation	\$125,293	39
State Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals	\$117,597	1,375
General Medical and Surgical Hospitals	\$116,584	1,594
Wired and Wireless Telecommunications (except Satellite)	\$107,949	92
Federal Government, Civilian	\$107,376	794

### Remote Work Trends

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the percentage of workers who worked from home was stable, ranging from 5.1% to 8.7%. In 2020, ACS 1-Year estimates were not released due to the impacts of the pandemic on data collection. By 2021, however, the percentage of workers who worked from home jumped to nearly 20%, likely a result of the pandemic. In 2022, this percentage decreased significantly, to 9.1%. In 2023, the share of remote workers increased by about 1.4 percentage points, to 10.5%. It remains to be seen whether the share of remote workers will fall back to pre-pandemic levels, or if they will remain elevated.

Figure 52: Percent of Workers 16 Years and Over that Worked at Home in Humboldt County. Source: 2013-2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

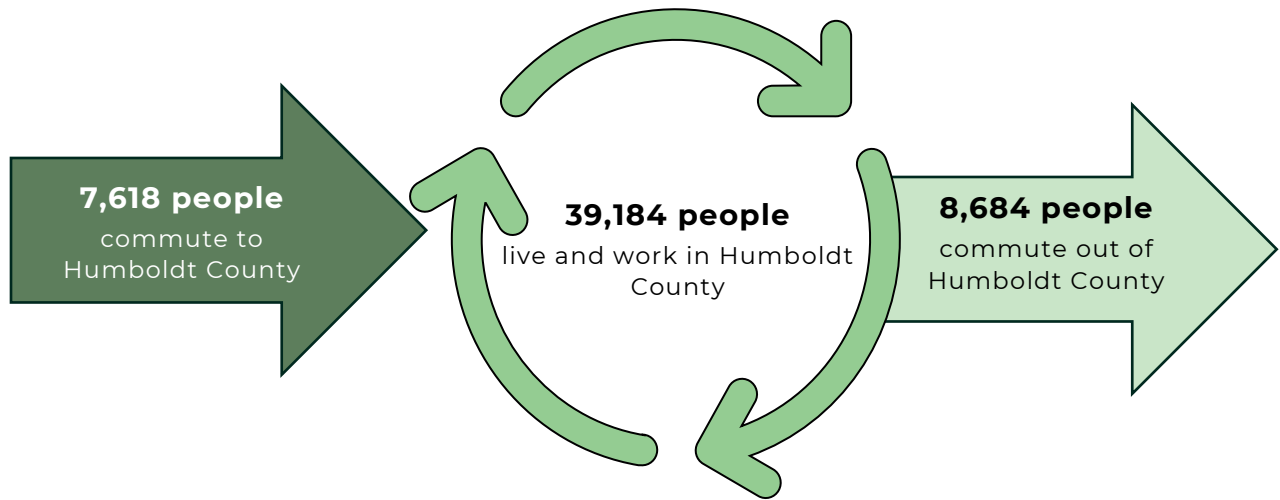


# Infrastructure

## Commuting and Traffic Patterns

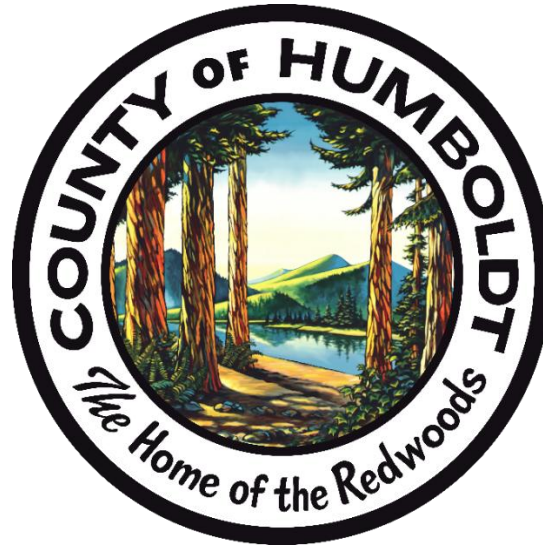
In Humboldt County, inbound and outbound commuter levels are similar. Around 7,600 workers live outside of the county but travel into for work; roughly 8,700 residents of the county travel outside of the county for work. Approximately 39,800 people both live and work within county borders.

Figure 53: Commuting Patterns in Humboldt County. Source: US Census OnTheMap, 2022



# Appendix B

## Humboldt County Community Survey



### Humboldt County Community Survey

Thank you for taking the time to take our **community survey**! The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is Humboldt County's framework to grow a diverse and thriving economy, outline a plan for regional resilience and improve the quality of life for everyone who lives in Humboldt. The collaborative process to update the CEDS is a unique opportunity for the community to come together and discuss the key issues we are facing and to design a roadmap toward our mutual thriving.

The Humboldt Rising Community Outreach Report details the results of extensive public outreach conducted by Humboldt County in 2022 for the development of the CEDS. Through this process, the county committed to listening to the community's perspectives and has continued to offer ways for residents, businesses and organizations to share their insights. As an extension of that effort, you are invited to complete this important survey as we work to finalize and submit the Humboldt County CEDS.

Please return completed surveys to:

**Humboldt County Administrative Office**  
**825 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Eureka**

1. What is the zip code of your primary residence? \_\_\_\_\_

2. How would you describe yourself? **(Please select all that apply.)**

- I live in Humboldt County.
- I work in Humboldt County.
- I own a business in Humboldt County.
- I am an elected official in Humboldt County
- I am a community leader in Humboldt County.
- I am a member of a Tribe.
- I am a leader of a Tribe.
- I own property in Humboldt County, but my main address is outside of the county.

3. What subjects do you have professional expertise or experience in? **(Please select all that apply.)**

- Agriculture
- Aquaculture & fisheries
- Arts, hospitality and tourism
- Construction
- Economic development
- Education
- Environment and Natural Resources
- Financial services
- Forestry & logging
- Healthcare
- Housing
- Renewable energy
- I do not have professional expertise or experience in any of the above subjects.

4. What should be our top priorities as a community to support economic development efforts and improve quality of life? Please rank from **highest importance (1)** to **lowest importance (7)**.

- \_\_\_ Community Support (education, housing, childcare, healthcare, workforce programs, etc.)
- \_\_\_ Climate Resiliency and Disaster Recovery (green practices, programs and industries; mitigating the impacts of climate change; fire, drought and sea level rise.)
- \_\_\_ Equitable Economic Development (addressing inequities and ensuring every member of our community is able to share in and benefit from economic growth.)
- \_\_\_ Leading Industries (arts/culture, tourism, agriculture, forest products, food and beverage, etc.)
- \_\_\_ Physical Infrastructure (transportation, broadband, public utilities)
- \_\_\_ Emerging Industries (offshore wind, solar, aquaculture, tech)
- \_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Of the following vision statements for this Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), which best resonates with you? **(Please select 1)**.

- Humboldt County envisions a diverse and thriving economy that fosters resilience, enhances the quality of life for all residents and promotes sustainable economic development.
- Our vision is to cultivate a vibrant and sustainable economy in Humboldt County, characterized by equitable economic development, resilient communities and high quality of life.
- Humboldt County aspires to be a model of economic vitality and resilience, where a diverse economy thrives alongside our commitment to foster sustainable economic development, enhance community well-being and build climate-resilient infrastructure to support future generations.
- Humboldt County celebrates what makes us different, collaborates around what we have in common and cultivates a diverse, sustainable and resilient economic environment in which everyone can prosper.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

6. What do you think will be the most significant challenges, from an economic development perspective, that the county will face in the next 5 years?

**(Please select up to 3)**

- Availability of attainable housing for employees
- Attracting a qualified workforce
- Retaining workers
- Cost of doing business (labor costs)
- Cost of doing business (non-labor costs, e.g. overhead, materials)
- Supply chain issues
- Energy infrastructure
- Transportation infrastructure
- Water infrastructure
- Air/Water quality
- Communications infrastructure (including broadband)
- Limited economic incentives (e.g. tax rebates, subsidies, etc.)
- Access to capital for businesses
- Lack of public funding
- Public safety
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

7. To what degree does the current housing situation impact Humboldt County?

- No Impact
- Minor Impact
- Moderate Impact
- Major Impact
- I do not know

8. What is the most significant challenge for housing in your area? **(Please select all that apply.)**

- High rent prices
- Rising property values
- Lack of available housing units
- Poor quality of housing
- Zoning, land use restrictions or permitting
- Public opinions on potential solutions
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

9. What types of housing are most needed in your community? **(Please select all that apply.)**

- Single-family homes
- Multi-family apartments
- Townhomes
- Senior housing
- Affordable rental units
- Accessible homes
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

10. To what degree does the lack of healthcare access impact Humboldt County?

- No Impact
- Minor Impact
- Moderate Impact
- Major Impact
- I do not know

11. How satisfied are you with the quality of the following educational options in Humboldt County:

	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	I don't know
Early Childhood Education	1	2	3	4	5	X
K-12 Education	1	2	3	4	5	X
Vocational and technical training	1	2	3	4	5	X
Colleges and universities	1	2	3	4	5	X

12. What are the most significant challenges related to the local workforce?  
**(Please select up to 3)**

- Attracting and retaining higher-level employees
- Turnover and lack of motivation of staff
- Transitioning workforce due to industry decline
- Aging/retirement
- Lower wages and mediocre benefits packages
- Changing workforce expectations and needs
- Other (please specify)

13. I believe this community's natural environment is being protected

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- I do not know

14. Natural disasters and/or natural hazards threaten local business operations in Humboldt County.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- I do not know

15. I believe my community is prepared for natural disasters.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- I do not know

16. How have the following types of infrastructure changed over the past three years?

	Significantly declined	Somewhat declined	Neither improved nor declined	Somewhat improved	Significantly improved	I don't know
Broadband	1	2	3	4	5	X
Water and sewer	1	2	3	4	5	X
Public transit	1	2	3	4	5	X
Road/highway system	1	2	3	4	5	X
Pedestrian/bicycle infrastructure	1	2	3	4	5	X
Cellular coverage	1	2	3	4	5	X
Waste management	1	2	3	4	5	X

17. What improvements would you most like to see in the infrastructure in Humboldt County? **(Please select all that apply.)**

- Upgraded and/or expanded water and sewer systems
- More affordable electricity rates
- More affordable water service
- Enhanced stormwater management
- Improved energy efficiency programs
- Expansion of renewable energy options (e.g., solar, wind)
- Upgraded and/or expanded broadband access
- Increased road maintenance
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

18. I believe new and existing businesses are rapidly growing in my community.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree
- I don't know

19. My community leaders are supportive of current businesses.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree
- I don't know

20. My community is an attractive place for new and existing businesses.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree
- I don't know

21. What challenges prevent local entrepreneurs from growing and thriving?  
(Please select up to 3)

- Access to capital
- Navigating licenses/permits/regulations
- Hiring qualified employees
- Retaining a motivated workforce
- Infrastructure access and quality, including broadband
- Access to quality commercial space
- Lack of a cohesive countywide vision, outreach and brand
- Lack of small business support
- Other (please specify)

22. What is most needed for **healthcare** in Humboldt County? (Please select all that apply)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Primary care access                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Home care providers   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Telehealth access                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Long-term care facilities (such as nursing homes, assisted living, etc.)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Holistic well-being services                | <input type="checkbox"/> Medical transportation  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health and addiction services        | <input type="checkbox"/> Shorter wait for appointments   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Specialty care (e.g., cardiology, oncology) | <input type="checkbox"/> Develop incentive programs to recruit and retain healthcare professionals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Urgent care centers                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Other   |

23. Which of the following would best support the county's **tourism, arts and culture** industry? (Select one)

- I don't know
- Creating collaborative and cohesive marketing
- Leveraging shoulder and off seasons to increase tourism
- Creating new "boutique" experiences based on the county's strengths
- Attracting more cruise ships and expanding the strategy around blue-economy tourism
- Showcasing the richness and diversity of the county's arts and culture
- Expanding trail system and other recreational assets
- Implementing beautification and blight elimination initiatives
- Stronger protections and/or restrictions surrounding natural assets
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

24. Which of the following would best support the "legacy industry" of **forest products**? (Select one)

- I don't know
- Utilizing public outreach and storytelling around sustainable practices and care to address negative public perception around logging
- Partnering with Cal Poly and invest in R&D efforts in carbon sequestration tracking, biomass waste usage and innovative forest products
- Collaborating with local Tribes to incorporate Native American knowledge and practices into forest management practices
- Investing in workforce training programs to increase the talent pipeline
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

25. Which of the following would best support the county's **blue economy** (i.e. aquaculture and fisheries) and **agriculture** industries? (Select one)

- I don't know
- Increasing aquaculture workforce training programs for industry diversification and to develop the talent pipeline
- Utilizing branding and storytelling to build recognition and identify the benefits and sustainability of Humboldt County seafood and agriculture.
- Investing in infrastructure, such as commercial kitchens, cold storage and co-packing facilities
- Increasing access to capital resources
- Increasing seafood processing capacity within the county
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

26. Which of the following would best support the county's **financial services** industry? (Select one)

- I don't know
- Expanding financial planning and advisory services to meet growing demand
- Strengthening partnerships with local educational institutions to build a skilled talent pipeline
- Investing in broadband infrastructure to support the growth of digital and remote services
- Promoting financial literacy initiatives to support individuals and businesses
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

27. Which of the following would best support the county's **construction industry**? (Select one)
- I don't know
  - Identifying and addressing local regulatory barriers to home construction
  - Incentivizing the development of affordable housing
  - Expanding workforce development initiatives to address labor shortages and retirements in skilled trades
  - Strengthening local supply chain networks to reduce material delays and boost regional resilience
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_

28. Which of the following would best support the county's **renewable energy industry**? (Select one)
- I don't know
  - Expanding microgrid development to increase energy independence, resilience and local energy reliability
  - Continuing to partner with Cal Poly Humboldt and invest in R&D
  - Improve grid infrastructure and connectivity to support the export of renewable energy to larger markets
  - Enhancing workforce training and job creation in renewable energy sectors like offshore wind, solar and biomass
  - Expanded pollution mitigation & reduction efforts
  - Incentives for green transportation
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_

29. Which of the following would best support the county's **education and training industry**? (Select one)
- I don't know
  - Increasing collaboration between local businesses and educational institutions (e.g., internships, apprenticeships and hands-on training programs)
  - Developing initiatives to attract and retain skilled educators and trainers in the region

- Expanding online education and remote learning opportunities to increase accessibility and enrollment
- Increasing funding for local education institutions to support expanded and innovative educational offerings.
- Expanding career counseling services to help students and job seekers navigate education and workforce opportunities
- Strengthening adult education and literacy programs to support lifelong learning and skill development.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

*The following questions are for research purposes only. This survey is completely anonymous.*

30. Do you have children living in your household?

- Yes, only **under** 18 years old
- Yes, only **over** 18 years old
- Yes, both over and under 18 years old
- No

31. How many people, **including yourself**, live in your household? \_\_\_\_\_

32. Which of the following ranges includes your age?

- Younger than 18
- 18 to 24
- 25 to 34
- 44 to 54
- 55 to 64
- 65 to 74
- 75 years or more

33. Which of the following best describes your gender?

- Man
- Woman
- Non-binary
- Prefer to self describe: \_\_\_\_\_

34. Do you identify as a person with a disability?

- Yes
- No

35. Which of the following ranges includes your annual household income? Less than \$25,000

- \$25,000 to \$34,999
- \$35,000 to \$49,999
- \$50,000 to \$74,999
- \$75,000 to \$99,999
- \$100,000 to \$149,999
- \$150,000 to \$199,999
- \$200,000 or more

36. Which of the following best describe you? (Check all that apply)

- American Indian or Alaska Native or Indigenous or First Nations
- Arab or Middle Eastern or Northern African
- Asian or Asian American
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino/Latina/Latinx or Spanish origin
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- White or Caucasian or European American
- I prefer to self-identify: \_\_\_\_\_

37. Do you have anything else you would like to tell us relating to community and economic development in Humboldt County?

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## General Community Survey Findings

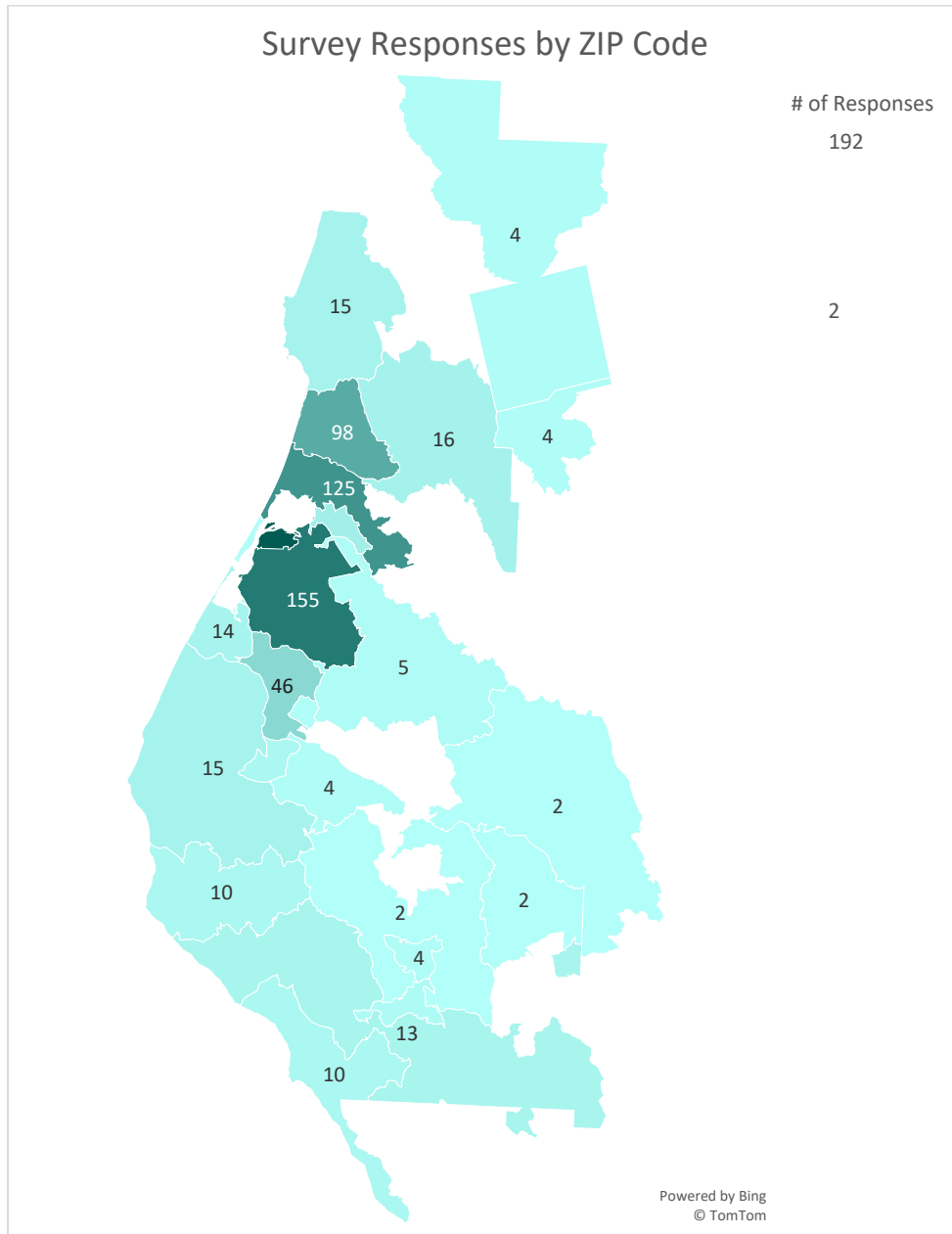
The public opinion survey was published on March 6th, 2025 and, after remaining open for approximately 3 weeks, closed on March 23rd. Over that period, 801 survey responses were collected. All responses were anonymous and data were evaluated in the aggregate. In total, the survey posed 37 questions. In addition to the English version of the survey, it was provided with a wide range of translations available including Spanish and Hmong. All versions could be accessed through the county's website and paper copies were distributed, as well.

Some of the questions were designed to collect information about the demographics of survey respondents; the remainder focused on a variety of topics related to local economic development. Respondents were asked to evaluate current conditions within the county, identify challenges faced by the community and prioritize general economic development initiatives to be advanced. In addition, respondents could indicate how the county might best support specific targeted industry clusters. After the survey was closed, an analysis of survey findings was undertaken. The key findings of the survey (that have not already been included in the Summary Background) are summarized in this section.

### Respondent Representation

Place of residence was self-reported by survey respondents and any ZIP code which was represented by at least 2 respondents is included in Figure 54: Survey Responses by ZIP Code. Source: Humboldt County Community Survey Findings, 2025. While many areas of the county were represented, the majority of responses came from people living around Eureka, Arcata, or McKinleyville. The highest concentration of responses (192) came from the 95501 ZIP code in Eureka.

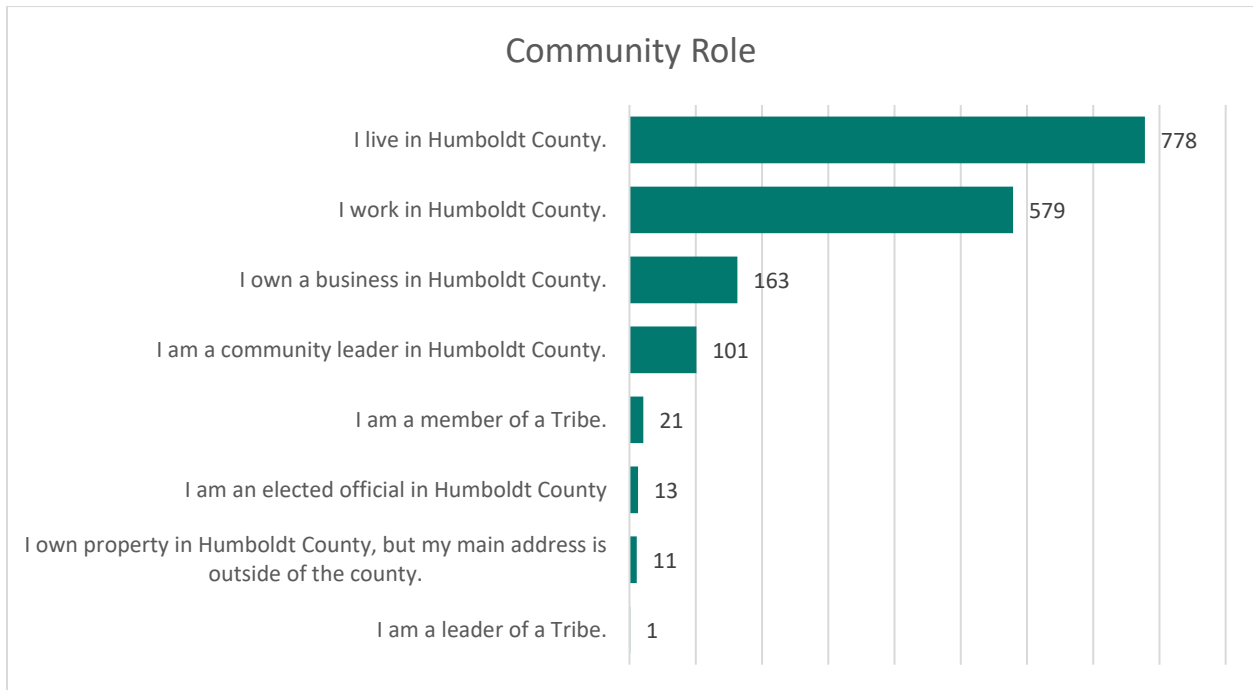
Figure 54: Survey Responses by ZIP Code. Source: Humboldt County Community Survey Findings, 2025



To understand their role in the local community, survey respondents were asked to select from a list of statements those which described them. Respondents could select as many descriptors as applied. Over 97% of respondents (778) lived in the county at the time of survey completion. 579 worked in the county and 163 reported owning a

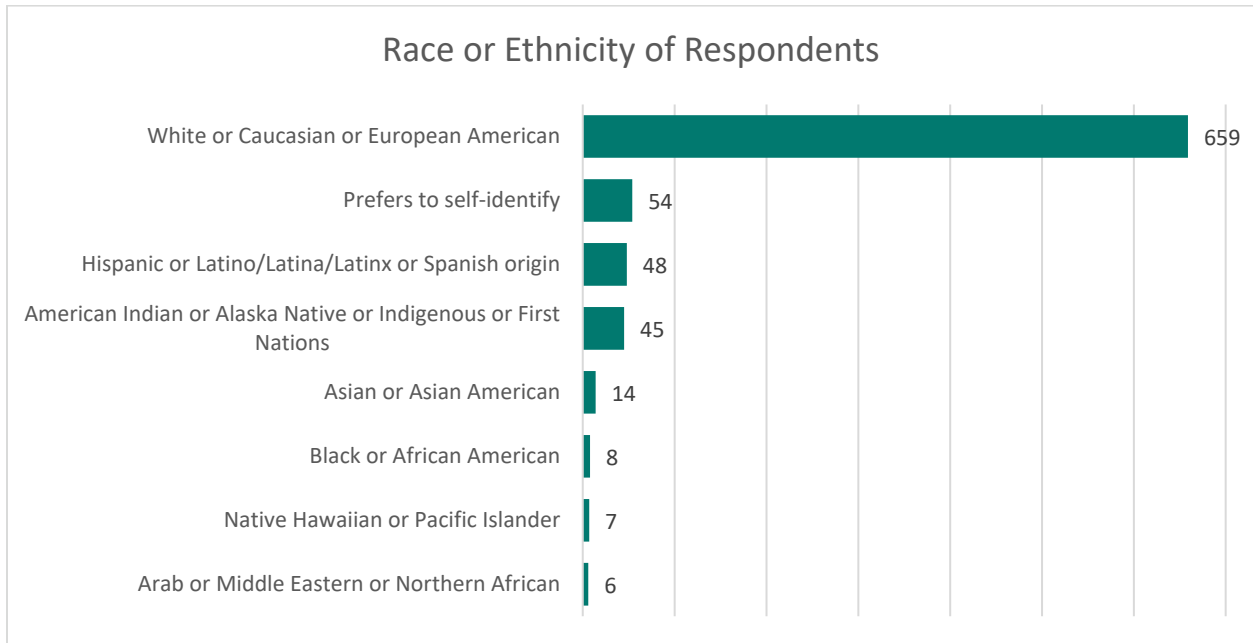
business in the county. 101 respondents identified themselves as community leaders and 13 elected officials completed the survey. 21 survey respondents identified themselves as members of a tribe, one of whom was a tribal leader. 11 respondents indicated that they own property in the county but primarily live outside of it.

Figure 55: Community Role of Respondents. Source: Humboldt County Community Survey Findings, 2025



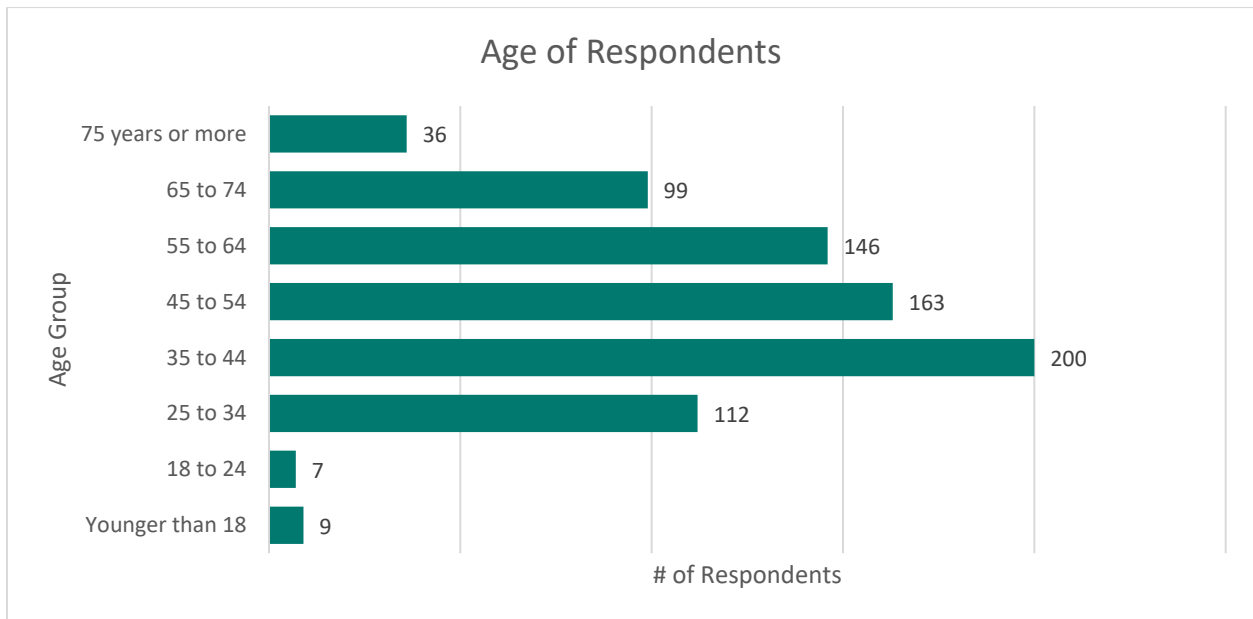
The majority of respondents (659), or about 82.3%, identified as ‘White or Caucasian or European American’. 48 individuals identifying as ‘Hispanic or Latino/Latina/Latinx or Spanish origin’ completed the survey, along with 45 individuals identifying as ‘American Indian or Alaska Native or Indigenous or First Nations’. Other racial or ethnic groups participated in the survey at relatively low rates.

Figure 56: Race or Ethnicity of Respondents. Source: Humboldt County Community Survey Findings, 2025



The majority of survey respondents were women, providing 469 of the responses. 276 respondents identified as men. In Humboldt County, 49.5% of the population is male; that only 34.5% of survey respondents were men indicates an underrepresentation of males. 21 respondents identified as non-binary and 24 preferred to self-describe. 114 respondents, or about 14.6%, reported having a disability.

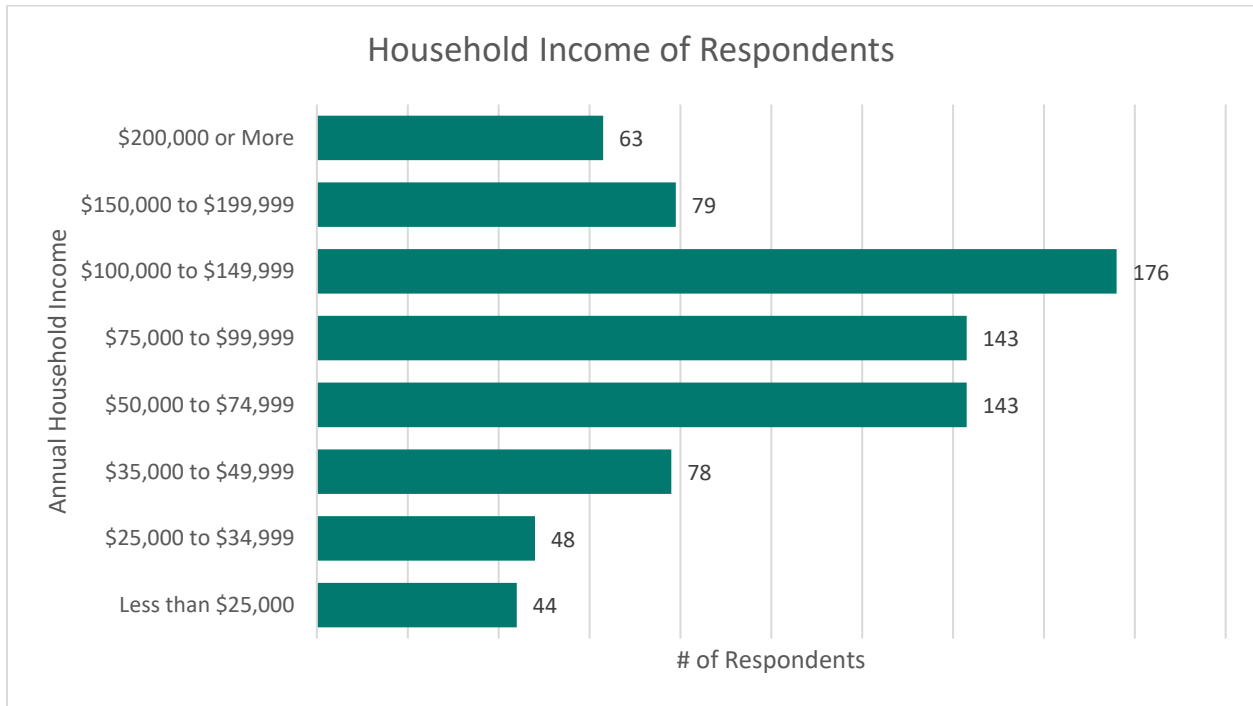
Figure 57: Age of Respondents. Source: Humboldt County Community Survey Findings, 2025



Households of varying financial ability were represented in the survey. The average household size reported by respondents was 2.48 people, with one respondent reporting 9 people living in their household. 502 respondents indicated that there were no children living in their household. 291 indicated that children did live in the household; in most cases, all or some of the children were under the age of 18 years.

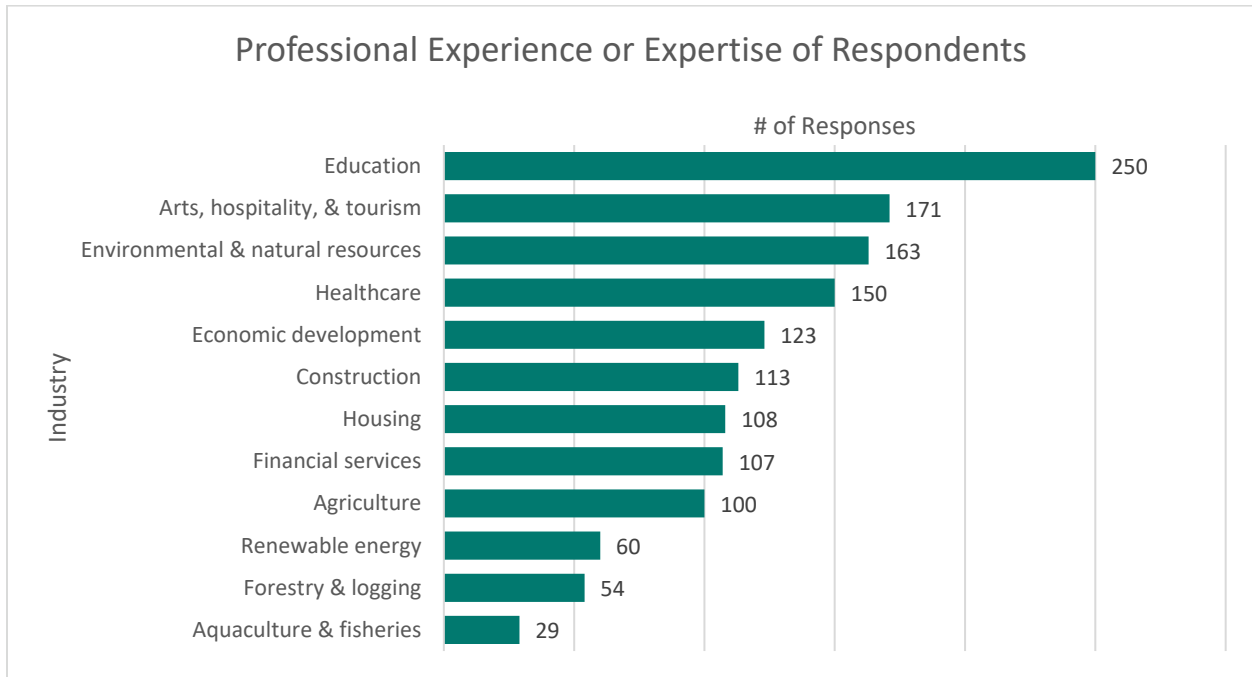
The majority of respondents reported living in households that earned between \$50,000 and \$150,000, annually. 63 respondents reported living in households that earned more than \$200,000 and 44 respondents reported living in households that earned less than \$25,000. Individuals of varying financial ability are likely to differ in their perspectives on the local community and a diversity of perspectives enriches the survey results.

Figure 58: Household Income of Respondents. Source: Humboldt County Community Survey Findings, 2025



When asked to select fields in which they had professional expertise or experience, respondents most commonly selected the 'Education' field. The next most common area of expertise or experience was in the 'Arts, hospitality, & tourism' and 'Environmental & natural resources' fields. Overall, survey respondents indicated having experience across a wide variety of professional fields, each of which contributes meaningfully to Humboldt County's local economy.

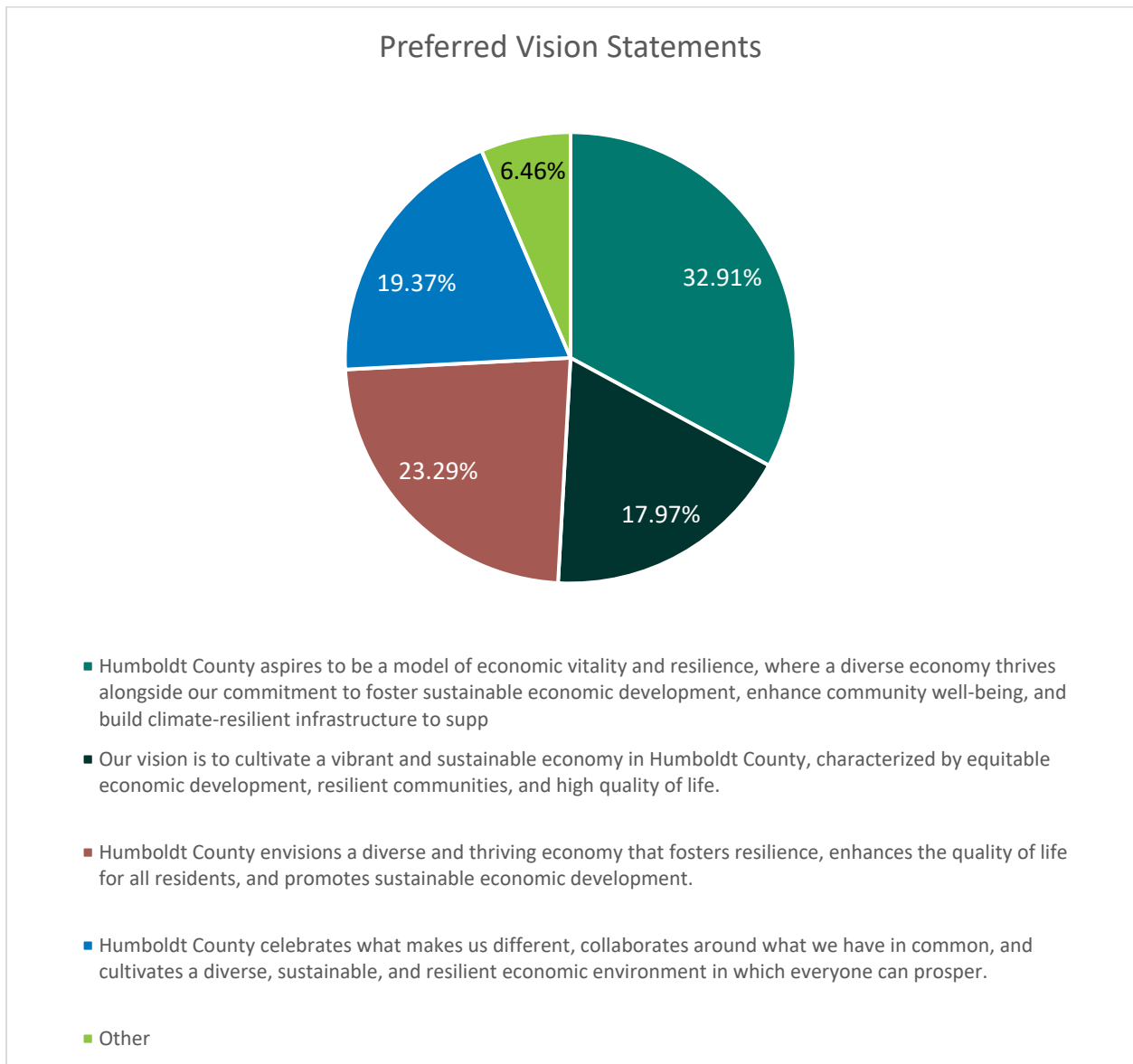
Figure 59: Professional Experience or Expertise of Respondents. Source: Humboldt County Community Survey Findings, 2025



## Community Vision & Challenges

Vision statements can be useful for forming the goals of an economic development strategy and respondents were asked to select one of four statements that most aligned with their vision of Humboldt County’s future (if none of the statements were appealing, they had an option to select ‘Other’). The most popular vision statement, which received the vote of nearly one third of survey respondents, was the following: “Humboldt County aspires to be a model of economic vitality and resilience, where a diverse economy thrives alongside our commitment to foster sustainable economic development, enhance community well-being and build climate-resilient infrastructure to support future generations.” The next most popular vision statement, “Humboldt County envisions a diverse and thriving economy that fosters resilience, enhances the quality of life for all residents and promotes sustainable economic development,” received 23.3% of votes.

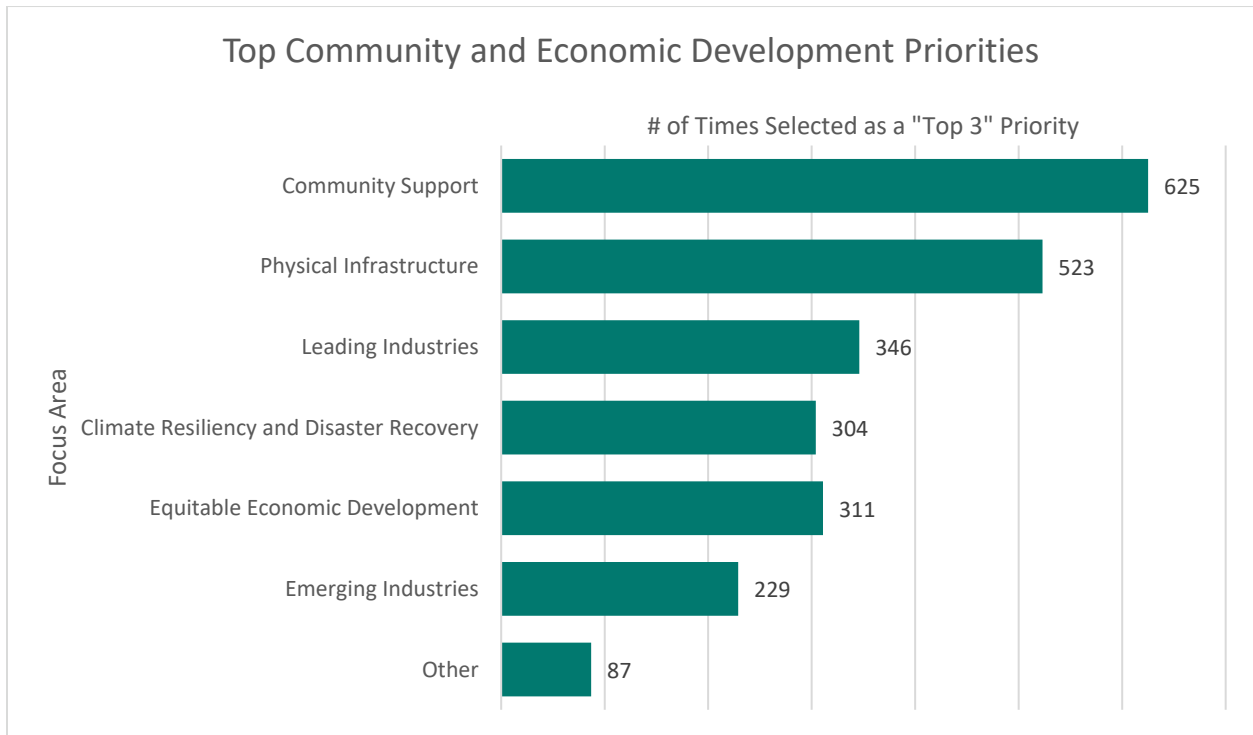
Figure 60: Preferred Vision Statements for Humboldt County. Source: Humboldt County Community Survey Findings, 2025



Respondents were provided with a list of economic and community development focus areas and they were asked to rank them in order of priority. Figure 61 illustrates the number of times each focus area was ranked as a “Top 3” priority. The top three most prioritized focus areas were ‘Community Support’ (education, housing, childcare, healthcare, workforce programs, etc.), ‘Physical Infrastructure’ (transportation, broadband, public utilities) and ‘Leading Industries’ (arts/culture,

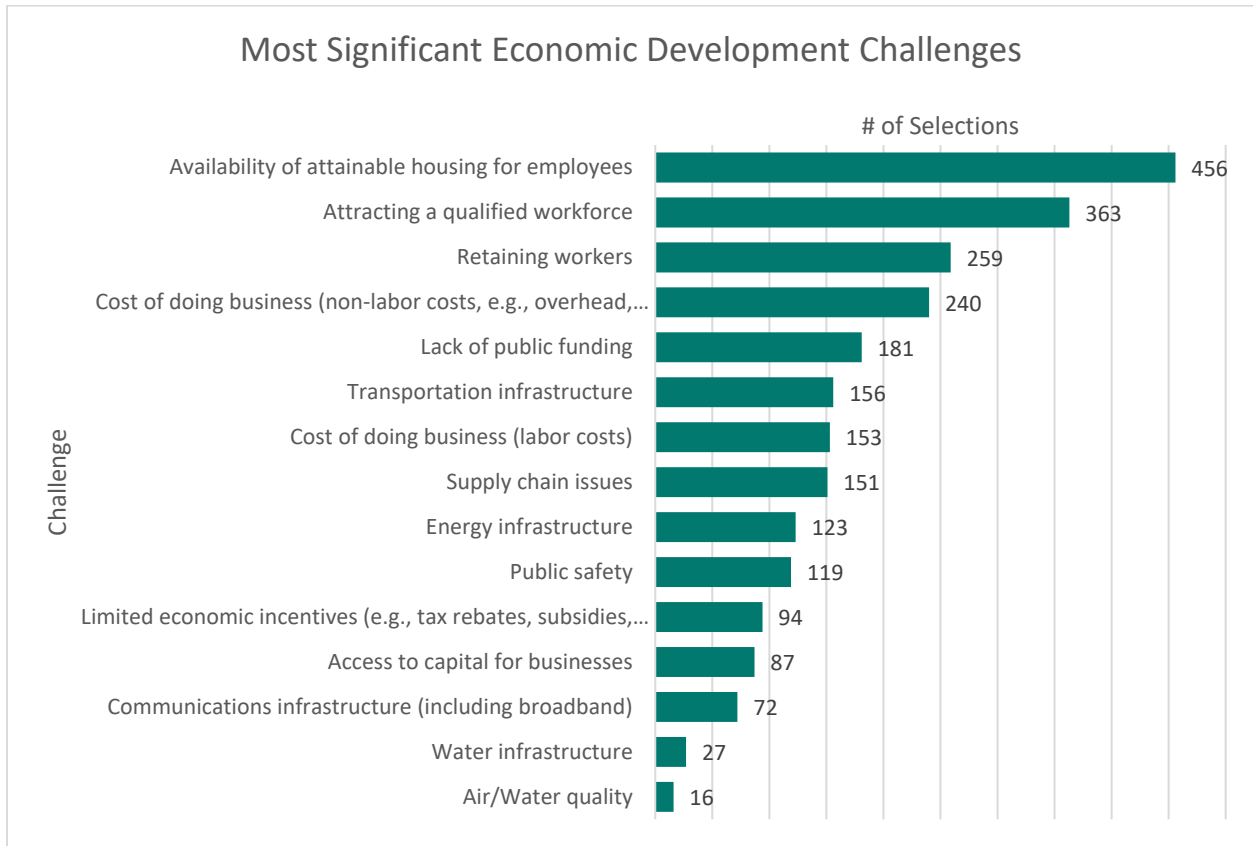
tourism, agriculture, forest products, food and beverage, etc.). 87 respondents included 'Other' in their "Top 3," many of whom listed priorities such as expansion of healthcare resources, greater resource provision for homeless individuals, or protection of the natural environment and recreational spaces.

Figure 61: Top Community & Economic Development Priorities in Humboldt County. Source: Humboldt County Community Survey Findings, 2025



When asked to select up to three of the most significant challenges faced by Humboldt County in terms of economic development, the 'Availability of attainable housing for employees' challenge was the most commonly selected. Attracting and retaining a qualified workforce was identified as a significant challenge, as well as the costs of doing business in the county. A variety of other challenges related to funding, infrastructure and other resources were also acknowledged to be significant challenges, albeit to a lesser degree.

Figure 62: Most Significant Economic Development Priorities in Humboldt County. Source: Humboldt County Community Survey Findings, 2025



# Appendix C

## Project List

Jurisdiction	Project	Completed	In-Process	Planning
Arcata	Happy Valley Business Park	-	X	-
Arcata	Behavioral Health Crisis Triage Center	-	-	X
Arcata	Community Life Wellness Campus	-	-	X
Arcata	Samoa Blvd Business Redevelopment Project	-	X	-
Arcata	Aldergrove Industrial Condominium Project	-	X	-
Arcata	Fiber Installation Project	X	-	-
Arcata	2018 Sanitary Sewer Infiltration Project	-	X	-
Arcata	Little Lake Redevelopment	-	-	X
Arcata	Strategic Infill Plan – Samoa to Alliance Corridor	-	-	X
Arcata	Foodworks – Phase II	-	-	X
Arcata	Digital 299/Data Center	-	-	X
Arcata	Heinden Rd Senior & Family Affordable Housing	-	-	X
Arcata	Bright and Green Reusable Program, Bright and Green Waste Reduction Management	-	-	X
Arcata	Redwood Coast Clayworks	-	-	X
Arcata	Rejuvenate Arcata	-	-	X
Arcata	Woodlab Designs & CPR Aquatics Inc.	-	-	X
Arcata	The Innovation Fund	-	-	X
Arcata	Humboldt Cardboard Shredders	-	-	X
Arcata	CR/Cal Poly Humboldt Health Education Hub	-	-	X
Arcata	Cal Poly Humboldt Transition from HSU	-	-	X
Arcata	Storage Tank 1C Project	-	X	-
Arcata	Isaacson Sustainable Transportation Infrastructure Project	X	-	-
Arcata	Phase One of the Arcata Wastewater Treatment Facility Improvement Project	-	X	-
Arcata	Old Arcata Road Improvements	X	-	-
Arcata	Arcata Ball Park Improvement Project	-	X	-
Arcata	Arcata Library Improvement Project	X	-	-
Blue Lake	Industrial Pretreatment	-	-	X
Blue Lake	Powers Creek Mixed Use Redevelopment	-	-	X
Blue Lake	RV Park and Campground	-	-	X

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>In-Process</b>	<b>Planning</b>
Blue Lake	Mixed Use Affordable Housing Development	-	-	X
Blue Lake	Blue Lake Rancheria Hula Health and Wellness Clinic	-	-	X
Blue Lake	Carving a Legacy: Tribal Traditions, Woodworking, and Workforce Development	-	-	X
Eureka	Food/Beverage Bottling Line	-	-	X
Eureka	Commercial Street Fuel Facility & Dock Upgrade	-	-	X
Eureka	Ice & Cold Storage Facility	-	-	X
Eureka	Dock B Reconstruction	-	-	X
Eureka	Marina Way Market	-	X	-
Eureka	Municipal Auditorium Renovation	-	X	-
Eureka	C2F Development	-	X	-
Eureka	Redwood Canopy Walk	-	X	-
Eureka	Humboldt Fisherman's Dockside Market	-	-	X
Eureka	Expand Capacity at Ida Emmerson Hospice House	-	-	X
Eureka	Liberated Futures Lab	-	-	X
Eureka	SeaForester	-	-	X
Eureka	Redwood Region Workforce Development Job Training	-	-	X
Eureka	Skyhorse International Hostel Hospitality, Lodging and Customer Service Training	-	-	X
Eureka	Rehab Center - Providence/ St Joseph	-	-	X
Eureka	Humboldt County Health Lab	-	-	X
Eureka	Workforce Training Center	-	-	X
Ferndale	Downtown Revitalization	-	-	X
Ferndale	Tourism-Trail Enhancement	-	X	
Ferndale	Industrial Hemp to Revitalize the Redwood Empire	-	-	X
Fortuna	John Campbell Memorial Parkway	-	X	-
Fortuna	Mill District	-	X	-
Fortuna	Thelma Street/Hwy 36 Connection	-	X	-
Fortuna	Rotating Art Installation	-	X	-
Garberville	Garberville Hospital	-	-	X
Hoopa Valley Tribe	Grocery Store Project	X	-	-
HBHR&CD	Water Trails – Improved Access for Boaters	-	X	-
HBHR&CD	Samoa Industrial Waterfront Development	-	X	-
HBHR&CD	Fields Landing Marine/Industrial Development	-	-	X

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>In-Process</b>	<b>Planning</b>
HBHR&CD	Redwood Marine Terminal-II Innovation Center	-	-	X
HBHR&CD	Offshore Wind Energy Upland Assembly & Multipurpose Dock	-	-	X
HBHR&CD	Sea Level Rise Material Beneficial Reuse Site	-	-	X
HBHR&CD	Hi-tech Center	-	-	X
HBHR&CD	Mariculture Upland Pre-Permitting	-	-	X
HBHR&CD	Mariculture Facility	-	-	X
HBHR&CD	Samoa Industrial Waterfront Transportation Improvement Project	-	-	X
HBHR&CD	Harbor Dredging Support Equipment	-	-	X
HBHR&CD	Water Trails	-	-	X
HBHR&CD	Dredging	X	-	-
HBHR&CD	Shelter Cove Commercial Fish Processing Facility	-	-	X
HBMWD	Chlorine System Upgrade to Hypochlorite	-	-	X
HBMWD	Hydro-Electric Plant	-	-	X
HBMWD	12 kV Switchgear Relocation Project	-	X	-
HBMWD	Blue Lake Fieldbrook Pipeline Crossing	X	-	-
Humboldt County	Red Cap Road Shoulder Improvements	-	-	X
Humboldt County	Downtown Garberville Improvements	-	X	-
Humboldt County	Hoopla Corridor Improvement	-	X	-
Humboldt County	Hammond & Annie Mary Trail	-	X	-
Humboldt County	Arcata/Eureka Trail	-	X	-
Humboldt County	McKay Tract to Harris Connector	-	X	-
Humboldt County	Broadband Infrastructure	-	X	-
Humboldt County	Honeydew Bridge Replacement	-	-	X
Humboldt County	Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Related Projects	-	-	X
Humboldt County	Hoopla Downtown Project	X	-	-
Humboldt County	Orleans	-	-	X
Humboldt County	Fortuna connectivity to Highway 36	-	-	X
Humboldt County	County Airport Electrical Grid Study	-	-	X

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>In-Process</b>	<b>Planning</b>
Humboldt County	Community Garden/Learning Center	-	-	X
Humboldt County	Youth Protecting the Outdoors	-	-	X
Humboldt County	BH Black Leaders Fellowship Program	-	-	X
Humboldt County	Rooftop and parking lot solar array potential	-	-	X
Humboldt County	Redwood Coast HRTC Rural Grant Accelerator Program	-	-	X
Humboldt County	North Coast Care Connect- Community Information Exchange	-	-	X
Humboldt County	Forest and Watershed Health Project (FWHP)	-	-	X
Humboldt County	Economic Fuel Incubators	-	-	X
Humboldt County	Redwood Region Revolving Loan Fund	-	-	X
Humboldt County	North Coast Wood Network	-	-	X
Humboldt County	Identifying Housing Solutions	-	-	X
Humboldt County	Eliminate Single Use Plastic	-	-	X
Humboldt County	North Coast Resilient Food System Network	-	-	X
Humboldt County	EcoCultural TREX Program	-	-	X
Humboldt County	Inter-Tribal Workforce Development program (IWDP)	-	-	X
Humboldt County	EcoCultural Stewardship Training Center	-	-	X
Humboldt County	Cooperative Agriculture Network	-	-	X
Humboldt County	Professional Seed Collection and Propagation	-	-	X
Humboldt County	Efficient sawmilling for small-diameter trees	-	-	X
Humboldt County	Regional Health Information Exchange	-	-	X
Humboldt County	The NorCal BioCompetes Fund	-	-	X
Humboldt County	Regional Destination Research Study	-	-	X
Humboldt County	North Coast Cultural Tourism Fund	-	-	X

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>In-Process</b>	<b>Planning</b>
Humboldt County	Travel Data Investment	-	-	X
Humboldt County	The Forest Health Fund & Loan Program	-	-	X
Humboldt County	Free Marketing Workshop Series	-	-	X
Humboldt County	Wool Scour Processing Facility	-	-	X
Humboldt County	Regional Compost Facility	-	-	X
Humboldt County	windLINK	-	-	X
Humboldt County	Redwood Region Works!	-	-	X
Humboldt County	The North Coast Elderberry Industry Project	-	-	X
Humboldt County	CalForest WRX Alliance: Catalyzing Organizational Development & Expanded Capacity	-	-	X
Humboldt County	Art and Culture Hub	-	-	X
Humboldt County	MOXY Manufacturing Facility	-	-	X
Humboldt County	Mattole Resilience, Education, and Research Center	-	-	X
Humboldt County	Masa Coop	-	-	X
Humboldt County	Cultural Resource Protection Advocacy and Education	-	-	X
Humboldt County	Klamath River Rural Broadband Initiative	-	-	X
Humboldt County	Hoopla Broadband Fiber to the Premises	-	-	X
Humboldt County	Arcata Bay Area Fiber to the Premises Project	-	-	X
Humboldt County	Potter Valley Dam Removal	-	-	X
Humboldt County	Heavy Lift Terminal	-	-	X
Humboldt County	BLBS GRID Workforce Training Tiny Home Construction and Renewable Energy Systems	-	X	-
Humboldt County	Career Pathways: Fire, Forests, Fish & Facilities	-	-	X
Humboldt County	Connecting Local Mass Timber Production to Regional Housing and Building Needs	-	X	-

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>In-Process</b>	<b>Planning</b>
Humboldt County	Developing a Climate Forward Workforce and Innovation Pipeline for Forest and Community Resilience	-	X	-
Humboldt County	North Coast Food System Network	-	X	-
Loleta	Dairy Regeneration and Innovation Center	-	-	-
McKinleyville	Purchase of New Water Tank Property	-	-	X
McKinleyville	Design & Installation of Water Supply Tank	-	-	X
McKinleyville	Reformation of Central Avenue Open Space Maintenance Zone	-	X	-
McKinleyville	We Are Up	-	-	X
McKinleyville	Life Plan Humboldt - A Senior Living Community	-	-	X
McKinleyville	McKinleyville Incorporation - Initial Feasibility Assessment	-	-	X
Orick	Community Wastewater Treatment System	-	X	X
Orick	Water System Improvements	-	X	-
Orick	Telecommunications Project	-	X	-
Orick	Restoration Center of Excellence-Heavy Equipment Training Center	-	-	X
City of Rio Dell	Humboldt-Rio Dell Business Park	-	X	-
City of Rio Dell	Eel River Riparian Recreation Trail	-	-	X
City of Rio Dell	Rio Dell Community Center and Plaza	-	-	X
City of Rio Dell	Public Infrastructure	-	-	X
City of Rio Dell	Public Art Installations-Tourism	-	X	-
Redway Community Services District	Solar Power Installation	-	-	X
Redway Community Services District	Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrades	-	-	X
Redway Community Services District	Water Availability Projects	-	-	X

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>In-Process</b>	<b>Planning</b>
Southern Humboldt Community Park (Non-Profit Organization)	Southern Humboldt Community Park	-	-	X
City of Trinidad	Local Coastal Program Update	-	X	-
Trinidad Rancheria	Diversified Business Enterprises	-	X	-
Weott	Well Development	-	-	X
Weott	Collection System Upgrade	-	-	X
Willow Creek	Downtown Wastewater System Project	-	X	-

# Appendix D

## Acknowledgments

### CEDS Committee

- Greg Foster, Executive Director, Redwood Region Economic Development Commission
- Michael Keleman, Chief Executive of Providence St. Joseph Hospital and Providence Redwood Memorial Hospital
- Wil Franklin, Center Director for North Coast SBDC
- Linnea Jackson, General Manager, Hoopa Valley Public Utilities District
- Matthew Simmons, Climate Attorney, Environmental Protection Information Center (EPIC)
- Susan Seaman, Program Director, North Edge Financing and Community Development
- Deanna Franklin SVP Commercial Relationship Manager, Redwood Capital Bank
- Angela Shull, Executive Director, Redwood Coast K-16 Educational Collaborative

### Key Stakeholder Strategy Session Development Participants

- Richard Engel, Director of Power Resources, Redwood Coast Energy Authority
- Meredith Matthews, Executive Director, Arcata Chamber of Commerce and City of Arcata City Council Member
- Joe Davis, Rapid Response Coordinator, Norther California Indian Development Council
- Rosa Dixon, Executive Director, Humboldt Made
- Walt Geist, Vice President, American Ag Credit, President of North Edge and Treasurer of Headwaters
- Thomas Stratton, CEO, Foggy Bottoms Boys

- Portia Bramble, Executive Director, North Coast Growers Association
- Chrissy Holliday, Vice President, Enrollment Management and Student Success, Cal Poly Humboldt
- Tanya Trump, Director, Career and College Resource Department, Humboldt County Office of Education
- Angela Shull, Executive Director, Redwood Coast K-16 Educational Collaborative, Cal Poly Humboldt
- Calder Johnson, Arts/Culture/Tourism Sector Investment Coordinator, Redwood Region RISE
- D'Vaughn, Executive Assistant, Humboldt NeuroHealth
- Ara Pachmayer, Associate Professor, Cal Poly Humboldt
- Swan Asbury, Economic Development Manager, City of Eureka, Workforce Development Board Member
- Mandy Marquez, Senior AVP, Manager Business Services, Coast Central Credit Union
- Nancy Olson, CEO, Greater Eureka Chamber of Commerce and Redwood Coast Chamber Foundation
- Scott Thompson, Senior Project Manager, Nordic Aquafarms
- Cassandra Hesseltine, Film Commissioner, Humboldt-Del Norte
- Ashley Vellis, Owner, Ashley's Seafood
- Dan Dixon, Certified Plan Fiduciary Advisor, Kingsview Partners
- Amy Jester, Director of Policy, Advocacy, & Civic Leadership, Humboldt Area Foundation and Redwood Region CORE Hub
- Kerry Venegas, Executive Director, Changing Tides

# Appendix E

## Public Comments

Humboldt County issued a press release and notified stakeholders of the 30-day comment period. A virtual presentation was made to stakeholders to raise awareness about the public comment period, and they were encouraged to both participate and share the opportunity with their local personal and professional networks. At the end of the 30-day comment period, the CEDS Committee reviewed and evaluated each submitted comment. The CEDS Committee provided a response to each comment, explaining one of three actions (accepted, considered, or declined) applied.

## Action Codes

- **A – Accepted:** The CEDS Committee has accepted the comment and integrated the suggested change(s) into the document.
- **C – Considered:** The CEDS Committee has considered the comment and either integrated a portion or variation of the suggested change(s) or will consider integration in a future update.
- **D – Declined:** The CEDS Committee has declined to integrate the suggested change(s).

## Submitted Comments

Comment	Action/Response
<p>1. (Page 41) In the strengths section, it mentions the natural environment and specifically outdoor recreation (among other areas), and how it attracts investors. I would disagree with that last part. Yes, our natural resources attract people who are interested in outdoor recreation, but we have yet to see the type of investments that an area like ours could bring to support an economy driven by outdoor recreation. We are unfortunately missing out on the 1.2 trillion dollar and 5 million plus jobs that are tied to that industry. This is because while we have an amazing natural environment, our infrastructures near the "should be" gateway communities, like Orick, are almost non-existent. The county and the state have not made that a priority, so we are now playing catch up.</p>	<p><b>A</b></p> <p>The phrase "attracting investment" has been deleted from the 'Natural Environment' paragraph in the 'Strengths' section. In the SWOT Analysis Opportunities, language has been added under Developing a Consistent Community Marketing Strategy. It reads, "Investing in Humboldt County's tourism infrastructure can create a more welcoming environment, strengthen community marketing and generate economic activity. Improved infrastructure supports tourism-related businesses and amenities such as welcome centers, restrooms, signage, public art and attractions. Local investment alongside successful advocacy and collaboration with the state for expanded tourism infrastructure in gateway communities such as Orick, Garberville and Willow Creek could be transformational."</p>
<p>2. (page 190) While the project list is a great asset, it would be more valuable if it connected the projects to priorities of the plan, or even strengths that are being developed. This way, you can see what areas are underutilized.</p>	<p><b>C</b></p> <p>This suggestion would require considerable coordination, time and effort. It should be built over time through increased collaboration and included in future updates and/or reporting.</p>
<p>3. (page 83) Municipalities should include Orick and Garberville. They have both suffered tremendously and should be offered a seat at the table</p>	<p><b>C</b></p> <p>The referenced list includes incorporated areas of Humboldt County, however Orick and Garberville are unincorporated communities. To be inclusive, we have changed the heading on the list to "Communities" and added unincorporated communities throughout the county instead of specifically mentioning Orick and Garberville.</p>

Comment	Action/Response
<p>4. (page 32) I will make 2 comments here, and this may not be the exact page, but it was connected: 1) Focusing on marketing and a unified brand is one piece of the tourism/outdoor recreation economy, but it is not very valuable if we don't have the infrastructure to support the influx of tourists. And with social media, visitors share what worked and didn't work. For example, the county should support low low-impact camping area, as suggested by the recent bill AB 518. Focus on gateway communities that are primed for development, such as Orick. It is reprehensible that a town like Orick, located at the entrance of the prime outdoor recreation area has not been given more resources to develop its infrastructures. It could easily become like the entrance to Springdale, UT, Zion National Park, or Grand Lake, CO, entrance to the western side of the Rocky Mountain National Park. Both those towns are located far from metropolitan areas, but have developed their economy around the park. The presence of the tribes and their work in that area is fantastic and can be enhanced and supported by other projects that offer opportunities to non-tribal entities.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>C</b></p> <p>In the SWOT Analysis Opportunities, language has been added under Developing a Consistent Community Marketing Strategy. It reads, "Investing in Humboldt County's tourism infrastructure can create a more welcoming environment, strengthen community marketing and generate economic activity. Improved infrastructure supports tourism-related businesses and amenities such as welcome centers, restrooms, signage, public art and attractions. Local investment alongside successful advocacy and collaboration with the state for expanded tourism infrastructure in gateway communities such as Orick, Garberville and Willow Creek could be transformational."</p>
<p>5. (page 194) After reviewing the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), I believe the document does a commendable job of gathering and presenting data, and it clearly identifies key issues affecting economic development in Humboldt County. These insights, particularly the broad strokes of data and stakeholder input, are essential for informing strategic planning. However, while the CEDS lays a strong foundation, it falls short in providing a concrete, actionable strategy. The plan outlines what needs to be addressed and highlights extensive community engagement, but it lacks specificity in how we will move from vision to implementation. For true economic development to occur in Humboldt County, we must work closely with the developers and builders who will carry out much of this work. Given the level of engagement described, I had hoped to see more detailed proposals, such as clear incentives for housing construction or specific ideas on rezoning to support economic growth. Additionally, the mention of alternative building materials needs to be grounded in the reality that Humboldt County, like the rest of California, must adhere to state building codes. In summary, while the CEDS is strong in its data collection and framing of issues, it misses the mark on delivering a detailed and actionable strategy. More concrete steps are needed to translate this foundation into real, measurable economic progress.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>D</b></p> <p>The compliments are appreciated. We have added a section at the beginning of the Strategic Action Plan that addresses your concern. Because this is a comprehensive economic development strategy, it should not be construed as a work plan for the Humboldt County Economic Development Department. The implementation of the strategies must be driven by a wide variety of community partners. The Humboldt County Economic Development Department will align work plans with the CEDS and collaborate with partners to develop the more concrete steps throughout the next 5 years. It is the intent that the implementation steps will streamline existing and future planning efforts related to the strategies.</p>

Comment	Action/Response
<p>6. (page 11) The Humboldt County CEDS must incorporate locally relevant data to accurately inform its economic strategies. Page 11 references the importance of data-informed planning, but the current draft relies heavily on federal data sources (e.g., NAICS, BEA, BLS) that either exclude or severely underrepresent cannabis, the County’s largest agricultural sector by value. Two local data sets should be explicitly included in this section: Humboldt County Crop Report (2022 &amp; 2023). According to the County’s own Agriculture Commissioner, cannabis was valued at \$278.6 million in 2023, exceeding all other commodities combined. Omitting this data obscures the economic reality of Humboldt’s rural economy. Cal Poly Humboldt Cannabis Economic Impact Study (2023). This report, funded by the DCC and prepared in partnership with Dr. Robert Eyler and the Humboldt Institute for Interdisciplinary Marijuana Research, found that the North Coast region, including Humboldt, supports over 6,000 jobs and \$263 million in labor income from the legal cannabis supply chain. In Humboldt, these jobs are concentrated in small-scale, sun-grown cultivation and manufacturing, aligning closely with the CEDS emphasis on rural entrepreneurship and regenerative industry. Recommendation: Page 11 should explicitly recognize the limitations of federal data when it comes to cannabis and cite the Humboldt County Crop Report and the Cal Poly Humboldt study as critical data sources that fill this gap. This would support more targeted, inclusive economic strategies and accurately reflect the County’s leading role in California’s legal cannabis economy.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>D</b></p> <p>We recognize the significance of the cannabis industry on Humboldt County. The document discusses the impacts and trends of alternative agriculture. This document is prepared for consideration by a federal agency. Due to the limits of federal data for the cannabis industry and its current legal status at the federal level, more specific localized cannabis data will not be added at this time. This should not impede applications for funding projects related to the industry, should opportunities arise. We appreciate the mention of the additional resources, and we are including the corresponding letter in this appendix.</p>
<p>7. (page 16) To make this a truly effective strategic planning document, Humboldt County must clearly and emphatically articulate its housing needs and the barriers to meeting them. With the County currently falling short of its Regional Housing Needs Allocation, a bold and coordinated strategy is essential—one that recognizes that meaningful solutions across all sectors depend on a workforce that is adequately housed. Please consider the following adjustments: 1. Industry Elevation and Diversification, 1.2 Catalyze growth for Humboldt County’s emerging industries (Page 16-17): Add (1.2.3) develop housing to attract and retain employees of emerging industries. Providing adequate housing opportunities is critical to supporting the growth and long-term sustainability of emerging industries in Humboldt County such as offshore wind and healthcare. Acknowledging this need within the strategy creates alignment and reinforces the interconnectedness of economic development and housing.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>D</b></p> <p>The document dedicates narrative in the document to describing the relationship between housing and economic, community, and workforce development. Rationale and data around housing can be found within the Fundamental Community Needs focus area of the Strategic Action Plan. Strategic action 4.2 is “Enhance housing stock availability and quality at all income and market levels.” The last sub-action (4.2.8) is to “Evaluate the potential for dedicated housing or housing incentives to attract workers for target industries.” This includes both legacy and emerging industries.</p>

Comment	Action/Response
<p>8. (page 20) 2. Collaboration, 1.8 Leverage partnerships and marketing to attract and retain residents and workforce (Page 20): Add (1.8.7) collaborate with local organizations, tribes, developers, and public agencies to increase housing supply for growing workforce. Add (1.8.7.1) support tribal housing programs. 3. Natural Assets and Disaster Preparedness (Page 20-21): Consider adding to “The Reason” section that one of Humboldt County’s greatest assets is its natural beauty, and it’s important to be intentional about preserving it by avoiding unchecked sprawl.</p>	<p><b>C</b></p> <p>Strategic action 4.2 is focused on housing, including increasing housing supply. 4.2.8 says, “Evaluate the potential for dedicated housing or housing incentives to attract workers for target industries.” Strategic action 4.2.4 was changed to “Collaborate on the expansion and elevated impacts of the first-time home buyer program and tribal housing programs.” Language has been added to the approach to Fundamental Community Needs in the Strategic Action Plan.</p>
<p>9. (page 22) 1.10 Prepare for natural disasters (Page 22): Add (1.10.3) ensure housing and long term relocation for communities facing climate change displacement. Such communities include Fields Landing and King Salmon. 1.11 Balance increases in use and development with the protection of natural assets (Page 22-23): Add (1.11.4) encourage infill housing and dense, walkable communities to reduce urban sprawl and carbon emissions associated with vehicle travel. Supporting this will ensure that natural landscapes and wildlife are protected. These kinds of decisions are already encouraged in zoning and other regulations such as the Arcata Gateway Area Plan, Eureka General Plan, and proposed McKinleyville Town Center.</p>	<p><b>C</b></p> <p>Some language that addresses concerns in this comment have been added to the approach to Fundamental Community Needs in the Strategic Action Plan. Walkability is addressed in the Infrastructure section under Transportation. The plan references are appreciated. These have been added to the alignment section of Fundamental Community Needs.</p>

Comment	Action/Response
<p>10. (page 25) Humboldt County must be a leader in transitioning to a green economy, and this means a just transition to industries that do not further contribute to the climate crisis. It is commendable that the CEDS for acknowledges that climate change is the biggest long-term threat to the economy.</p> <p>However, much of the CEDS focuses on the need to increase legacy industries such as logging and agriculture. Increasing these industries, especially in sensitive biological areas, will only do more harm and will delay a needed transition to greener industries. In particular, logging at the levels we are currently logging at, with a focus on commercial logging, destroys carbon reserves and biodiversity and is not sustainable.</p> <p>Mature forests store significantly more carbon than those that have been logged. Moreover, logging is increasingly unsustainable, as climate change—along with its cascading impacts like rising pest infestations and disease—is already slowing forest regrowth. Assuming trees will regenerate quickly enough to justify higher logging rates is flawed. Any investments in Humboldt County’s agricultural industry should focus on diversified, regenerative, climate-friendly agriculture.</p> <p>The County should not invest in expansion of high output industrial agriculture that consumes unsustainable amounts of water, and leads to degradation including air and water pollution, significant greenhouse gas emissions, soil depletion, and loss of biodiversity. It’s wiser to invest in greener infrastructure and begin a gradual transition away from industries that contribute to costly climate impacts. This includes prioritizing truly sustainable building materials.</p> <p>Our focus should shift toward job creation in restoration forestry and carbon-sequestering industries—efforts that support a healthy, productive landscape for future generations.</p> <p>Furthermore, statutes such as the Endangered Species Act, Forest Practices Act, and California Environmental Quality Act and their counterpart regulations remain among the few safeguards for wildlife and forest ecosystems. The logging industry has already benefited from significant regulatory streamlining and does not require further rollbacks.</p> <p>For these reasons, please consider the following changes: 4. Fundamental Community Needs, 1.13 Enhance housing stock availability and quality at all income and market levels (Page 25): Revise 1.13.3 to “Support growth in the construction industry to increase supply of sustainable and alternative building materials and increase skilled workforce for housing development, especially infill multifamily housing development.”</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>C</b></p> <p>The CEDS considers long-term shifts toward more environmentally sustainable and responsible practices. Strategic action 4.2.3 has been revised to “Support sustainable growth in the forestry and construction industries to increase the supply of alternative and regenerative building materials and increase skilled workforce for housing development.”</p>

Comment	Action/Response
11. (page 35) 4.2 Enhance housing stock availability and quality at all income and market levels (Page 35): Revise 4.2.3 to “Support growth in construction industry to increase supply of sustainable and alternative building materials and increase skilled talent for housing development.”	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>D</b></p> <p>This comment is duplicative of the suggested changes in comment #10. The revision of Strategic Action 4.2.3 is described in the response to comment #10.</p>
12. (page 44) Strong Legacy Industries (Page 44-45): Revise last sentence in second paragraph to “With deep local expertise and infrastructure, the forestry sector is well positioned for future innovation in restoration forestry, carbon sequestration, and providing for sustainable building materials.	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>A</b></p> <p>This suggested revision has been completed.</p>
13. (page 50) 3. Opportunities, Diversification of Legacy Industries (Page 50): Revise last sentence in first paragraph to “Similarly, innovations in forest management, including carbon sequestration and forest restoration, can be sustainable, address climate goals, and create new jobs.”	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>A</b></p> <p>This suggested revision has been completed.</p>
14. (page 55) Regulatory Burdens on Key Industries (Page 55): Remove third to last and last sentence in first paragraph.	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>A</b></p> <p>This comment was considered and partially integrated into the document. The paragraph has been updated to say, “A complex and overlapping regulatory environment affects economic development across key industries in Humboldt County. While regulations play a vital role in protecting the environment, worker safety and public health, they also create high compliance costs—particularly for small and mid-sized businesses with limited administrative capacity. Sectors such as agriculture and forestry are especially affected. For instance, California farmers face some of the highest regulatory costs in the nation, with small farms bearing a disproportionate burden.”</p>

Comment	Action/Response
<p>15. (page 27) The CEDS must recognize dense urban communities as a climate mitigation and resiliency strategy that will boost our local economy. Research from Cities Alive by Arup highlights that creating dense, walkable urban environments can boost small businesses, street markets, and startups by improving accessibility and visibility for consumers. Similarly, economist Joe Cortright found that Portland’s 20% reduction in driving led to a \$1.2 billion “green dividend” that stayed in the local economy—demonstrating how walkability can drive economic resilience and support thriving local communities. Moreover, suburban sprawl is costly, largely due to the long-term infrastructure maintenance it requires—often more expensive than urban upkeep—partly because suburban tax bases are less stable and efficient. In contrast, dense urban development not only eases fiscal strain but also benefits the climate by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The Arcata Gateway Plan, Eureka General Plan, and the proposed McKinleyville Town Center all encourage denser communities. Thus, please consider the following changes: Strategic Action Plan, 5. Infrastructure, 1.15 Develop and maintain transportation infrastructure that supports local industries and increases access for residents (Page 27): Add (1.15.8): Invest in infrastructure and urban design improvements that promote walkability—such as expanded sidewalks, pedestrian-only zones, safe crossings, and mixed-use development—to reduce car dependency and encourage foot traffic in commercial areas.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>A</b></p> <p>This recommendation was considered and mostly integrated into the document. It overlaps with the intent outlined in 5.1.2. This has been revised to the suggested language with the slight change to replace “walkability” with “multi-modal transportation.” The new strategic action reads, “Invest in infrastructure and urban design improvements that promote multi-modal transportation—such as expanded sidewalks, pedestrian-only zones, safe crossings, and mixed-use development—to reduce car dependency and encourage foot traffic in commercial areas.” The supporting research mentioned has not been incorporated, however the local plans mentioned have been reviewed. Alignment with those local plans is important to the CEDS process.</p>
<p>16. (page 41) To ensure a just and forward-looking economic strategy, the CEDS must emphasize Humboldt County’s critical role in advancing clean energy—particularly offshore wind—while acknowledging the need to transition away from climate-harming industries and avoid investing in false solutions. The CEDS must highlight to the fullest extent, Humboldt County’s opportunity to be a leader in offshore wind development. A study by the California State Lands Commission showed that the Humboldt Bay Heavy Lift Marine Terminal in particular is essential to offshore wind development. Offshore wind development cannot be understated as one of the least environmentally impactful and yet most powerful sources of energy that we can pursue, which is critical as we shift from reliance on fossil fuels. Relatedly, it is important for this document to acknowledge that some industries will need to be phased out due to their contributions to climate change. Finally, we cannot invest in false solutions such as industrial scale biomass, which is not only related to deforestation, but is also a significant source of pollution. Please consider the following changes: SWOT Analysis (Page 41-53): Include a section under either Strengths or Opportunities that emphasizes Humboldt County’s strategic advantage in supporting offshore wind development, given its abundant wind resources and available space for port infrastructure.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>C</b></p> <p>Offshore wind and port infrastructure development are discussed in many places in the document, both directly and indirectly. In the Strategic Action Plan’s Infrastructure section, 5.1.5 and 5.2.2 take actions to support these opportunities. In the SWOT analysis, language about the emergence and importance of offshore wind currently exists in the Opportunities section under Diversification of Legacy Industries as well as Expansion and Diversification of Local Construction Industry. Offshore wind is also discussed in the Summary Background within the Natural Assets and Disaster Preparedness (Natural Resources) and Infrastructure (Renewable Energy) sections.</p>

Comment	Action/Response
<p>17. (page 56) 4. Threats, Climate Change (Page 56-58): This section should address the fact that some industries such as natural gas, logging, biomass, need to transition to alleviate their contributions to climate change - we need to decrease the County's reliance on natural gas, internal combustion vehicles, and industrial forestry.</p>	<p><b>C</b> The CEDS discusses the economic opportunities related to the concerns outlined in this comment. Language has been strengthened in the SWOT Analysis under Diversification of Legacy Industries.</p>

Comment	Action/Response
<p>18. (Pages 138-139) Can you include Open Door Community Health Centers in the employment sections on Appendix A? Data is available through HCAI SIERA Utilization Reports (page 2 has FTE by staff type with total FTEs)  - <a href="https://reports.siera.hcai.ca.gov/">https://reports.siera.hcai.ca.gov/</a> Contact Natasha Wood, CFO  - Sites - <a href="https://opendoorhealth.com/locations/">https://opendoorhealth.com/locations/</a></p> <p>(Page 24-26) Sections 1.12 and 1.14 align well with the RRRISE Activation Plan &amp; align with most of the strategies outlined in the RRRISE Strategic Plan Part II. 1) Determine How to Best Address the Limited Access to Healthcare and Caregiving Services in our Redwood Region, 2) Support and Expand Capacity, &amp; 3) Address System and Policy Issues</p> <p>Can you add a description of the “healthcare hubs” that you have listed in 4.1.3?</p> <p>Additional short-term to mid-term activities to consider adding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help support CR and CalPoly-Humboldt as they develop new health education programs and expand existing health education programs to meet high growth, high needs healthcare careers (ex: RN, social work, radiologic tech, CHWs, speech pathology)</li> <li>• In alignment with 1.14.1 - Explore ways to support clinical placements for hands-on learning and training experiences necessary for educational attainment.</li> <li>• 1.14.4 - Invest in coordinated recruitment and retention programs and services (ex: Home in Humboldt)</li> <li>• 1.14.6 – Can you add expansion of subsidized dual enrollment and STEAM education opportunities to include remote and underserved schools (currently dual enrollment at CalPoly limited to a few Humboldt Bay area schools).</li> <li>• Aligned with 1.14.6 - There is a model in Mendocino where high school students are being educated and trained to be CNAs by the time they graduate  - <a href="https://empoweredaging.org/healthcare-career-pathway/">https://empoweredaging.org/healthcare-career-pathway/</a> What are similar models we can develop and deploy in Humboldt?</li> </ul> <p>Additional longer-term activities to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate community benefit funding set-aside or special tax districts to fund core healthcare and childcare infrastructure</li> <li>• Explore including healthcare and childcare services as a necessary component for establishing new, large businesses, as well as zoning, land use and housing &amp; commercial development planning.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>C</b></p> <p>For the purposes of data consistency, we have chosen to rely on employment data provided by the California Employment Development Department (EDD) for private sector employers and the California State Controller’s Office for public sector employers.</p> <p>The CEDS must cover a broad range of higher-level strategies that strengthen other ongoing efforts. The alignment with RRRISE and other current plans is intentional to promote more streamlined collaboration to achieve shared goals. The CEDS Committee has chosen not to amend section 4.1 of the Strategic Action Plan at this time. The activities listed in this comment align well with the existing strategies and could still be used by those collaborative partners to implement the strategies outlined in the document.</p> <p>A definition for “healthcare hubs” has been added as a footnote to 4.1.3. It reads, “The hub model organizes health care services around a central facility that coordinates with smaller, connected satellite campuses. This structure helps streamline patient care and resource management across the network.”</p>

Comment	Action/Response
19. Correct numbering of figures and update narrative references to those figures.	<b>A</b> The figure numbering sequence and corresponding narratives have been updated.
20. (page 98) Correct typo. There is a missing space: “anxietyand”	<b>A</b> The typo has been corrected by changing “anxietyand” to “anxiety and”
21. (pages 190-195) To Appendix C, add Humboldt County projects listed in the RRRISE Project Inventory Spreadsheet. Add projects from the RRRISE Preliminary Catalyst Awardees Summary Packet. Add current construction projects from the City of Arcata’s website.	<b>A</b> The projects have been added to the list in Appendix C.
22. (page 7) Tribal Names from Page 42 need to be listed on Page 7 under history.	<b>A</b> This suggested revision has been completed.
23. (page 129) Hoopa Valley Tribe is the applicant.	<b>A</b> This suggested revision has been completed.
24. We have received a conditional award from DOE that is still going through programmatic review.	<b>A</b> The narrative has been updated to reflect the inclusion of RCEA, conditional award, and programmatic review.
25. (page 150) The Hoopa Valley Tribe is a federally recognized tribe with over 3,500 enrolled members. The Tribe has been federally recognized since 1864, following the signing of a treaty giving the Hupa people writes to a 141-square mile area, less than a third of their ancestral lands. The Tribe has worked to regain parts of that area over time, most recently purchasing 10,395 acres of land on the western boundary of the Tribe’s Reservation. The Hoopa Valley Tribe operates a number of Tribal enterprises, such as the Hoopa Valley Public Utilities District (HVPUD), Lucky Bear Casino, Hoopa Shopping Center, Hoopa Forest Industries and the K’ima:w Medical Center. To further economic development, the Tribe has established the Hoopa Development Fund, a Native Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), to provide financial services and promote entrepreneurship in the community. The Hoopa Valley Tribe is one of a small group, estimated to be 10% nationwide, of Tribes with their own Tribal Business Codes.	<b>A</b> The changes to the first sentence were made as suggested.
26. (pages 190-191) Grocery Store Project, Hoopa Downtown Project are complete	<b>A</b> The status of those projects has been updated.
27. (page 193) Hoopa Valley Public Utilities District (Valley missing)	<b>A</b> This correction has been made.

# Letters Submitted for Public Comment

## RCCER



June 13, 2025

Humboldt County Economic Development Division  
825 Fifth St #112  
Eureka, CA 95501  
[GoHumCo@co.humboldt.ca.us](mailto:GoHumCo@co.humboldt.ca.us)

Dear Humboldt County Economic Development Division,

The Redwood Coalition for Climate and Environmental Responsibility (RCCER) expresses its general support for the County's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs), particularly its attention to housing and climate resilience, adaptation, and mitigation. The mission of RCCER is to ensure that local elected officials and government agencies on California's North Coast take robust, just, and equitable actions to address the climate crisis and other key environmental issues. Please note that these comments have also been submitted via the Humboldt County CEDs 2025-2030 Public Comment Form.

I. The Strategic Action Plan and Evaluation Framework Must Strongly Advance Housing Needs

To make this a truly effective strategic planning document, Humboldt County must clearly and emphatically articulate its housing needs and the barriers to meeting them. With the County currently falling short of its Regional Housing Needs Allocation, a bold and coordinated strategy is essential—one that recognizes that meaningful solutions across all sectors depend on a workforce that is adequately housed. RCCER thus recommends the following adjustments to the Strategic Action Plan:

- 1. Industry Elevation and Diversification, 1.2 Catalyze growth for Humboldt County's emerging industries (Page 16-17): **Add (1.2.3) develop housing to attract and retain employees of emerging industries.** Providing adequate housing opportunities is critical to supporting the growth and long-term sustainability of emerging industries in Humboldt County such as offshore wind and healthcare. Acknowledging this need within the strategy creates alignment and reinforces the interconnectedness of economic development and housing.
- 2. Collaboration, 1.8 Leverage partnerships and marketing to attract and retain residents and workforce (Page 20):

- **Add (1.8.7) collaborate with local organizations, tribes, developers, and public agencies to increase housing supply for growing workforce.**
  - **Add (1.8.7.1) support tribal housing programs.**
- 3. Natural Assets and Disaster Preparedness (Page 20-21): **Consider adding to “The Reason” section that one of Humboldt County’s greatest assets is its natural beauty, and it’s important to be intentional about preserving it by avoiding unchecked sprawl.**
  - 1.10 Prepare for natural disasters (Page 22): **Add (1.10.3) ensure housing and long term relocation for communities facing climate change displacement.** Such communities include Fields Landing and King Salmon.<sup>1</sup>
  - 1.11 Balance increases in use and development with the protection of natural assets (Page 22-23): **Add (1.11.4) encourage infill housing and dense, walkable communities to reduce urban sprawl and carbon emissions associated with vehicle travel.** Supporting this will ensure that natural landscapes and wildlife are protected. These kinds of decisions are already encouraged in zoning and other regulations such as the Arcata Gateway Area Plan, Eureka General Plan, and proposed McKinleyville Town Center.

RCCER also recommends adjustments to the format of the tables within the Evaluation Framework to ensure that implementation of the Strategic Action Plan is successful. Within the tables, there needs to be a way to convey when each action will start. For example, on page 35 the timeline for “4.2.2 Encourage the development of a range of housing types suitable for a range of income levels, including market rate, moderate income, low income, mixed income, single-family, multi-family, ADUs and mixed-use housing” is “Long-term 4-5 years.” This overlooks the fact that housing development is already underway—though progressing too slowly—and is hindered by challenges such as high development costs and individuals expressing opposition to local projects, underscoring the need for active support and encouragement. There needs to be a way to convey urgency and immediacy of certain actions.

The Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats (SWOT) analysis narrative needs to be direct and clear in talking about the housing crisis in Humboldt County. While the Housing Needs section of the Summary Background (Page 105) explicitly links the relationship between housing affordability and supply, the SWOT analysis is lacking in this regard. Section 2. Weaknesses, Housing Availability, Affordability, and Quality (Page 47-48) presents the issues of housing supply and housing costs as disconnected. Recent research consistently shows that increasing housing supply helps reduce or slow rent growth regionally and, in some cases, locally—without increasing displacement—and creates a ripple effect that opens up housing

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<sup>1</sup> Humboldt County Government, *Fields Landing and King Salmon Coastal Resiliency Projects*, <https://humboldt.gov/3621/Fields-Landing-and-King-Salmon-Coastal-R#:~:text=These%20two%20communities%20on%20Humboldt.potential%20risks%20to%20these%20communities> (last visited June 11, 2025).

options across the income spectrum.<sup>2</sup> The first sentence in the second paragraph of the Housing Availability, Affordability, and Quality should be revised to state “Rising housing costs caused by limited housing supply exacerbates stalled economic growth in Humboldt County.”

## II. Climate Change Mitigation Compliments Economic Growth in Humboldt County

Humboldt County must be a leader in transitioning to a green economy, and this means a just transition to industries that do not further contribute to the climate crisis. We commend the CEDS for acknowledging that climate change is the biggest long-term threat to the economy. However, much of the CEDS focuses on the need to increase legacy industries such as logging and agriculture. Increasing these industries, especially in sensitive biological areas, will only do more harm and will delay a needed transition to greener industries. In particular, logging at the levels we are currently logging at, with a focus on commercial logging, destroys carbon reserves and biodiversity<sup>3</sup> and is not sustainable. Mature forests store significantly more carbon than those that have been logged.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, logging is increasingly unsustainable, as climate change—along with its cascading impacts like rising pest infestations and disease—is already slowing forest regrowth.<sup>5</sup> Assuming trees will regenerate quickly enough to justify higher logging rates is flawed.

Any investments in Humboldt County’s agricultural industry should focus on diversified, regenerative, climate-friendly agriculture. The County should not invest in expansion of high output industrial agriculture that consumes unsustainable amounts of water, and leads to degradation including air and water pollution, significant greenhouse gas emissions, soil depletion, and loss of biodiversity.<sup>6</sup>

It’s wiser to invest in greener infrastructure and begin a gradual transition away from industries that contribute to costly climate impacts. This includes prioritizing truly sustainable

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<sup>2</sup> Vicki Been, Ingrid Gould Ellen & Katherine M. O’Regan, *Supply Skepticism Revisited*, SSRN Elec. J. (Jan. 2023), <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4629628>.

<sup>3</sup> Bartowitz KJ, Walsh ES, Stenzel JE, Kolden CA and Hudiburg TW (2022) Forest Carbon Emission Sources Are Not Equal: Putting Fire, Harvest, and Fossil Fuel Emissions in Context. *Front. For. Glob. Change* 5:867112. doi: 10.3389/ffgc.2022.867112 <https://static.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/ffgc.2022.867112/full>

<sup>4</sup> Dellasala, D., Kormos, C., Keith, H., Mackey, B., Young, V., Rogers, B., & Mittermeier, R. (2020). Primary Forests Are Undervalued in the Climate Emergency. *BioScience*, 70. <https://doi.org/10.1093/biosci/biaa030>

<sup>5</sup> Battles, J. J., Robards, T., Das, A., Waring, K., Gilles, J. K., Biging, G., & Schurr, F. (2008). Climate change impacts on forest growth and tree mortality: A data-driven modeling study in the mixed-conifer forest of the Sierra Nevada, California. *Climatic Change*, 87(1), 193–213. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-007-9358-9>; <https://agupubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1029/2010JG001471>

<sup>6</sup> Cal. Dep’t of Water Resources, *Statewide Agricultural Water Use Data 2016–2020* (Excel Application Tool), California Natural Resources Agency, <https://data.cnra.ca.gov/dataset/agricultural-water-use-data-2016-2020> (last visited June 12, 2025); Leo Horrigan, Robert S. Lawrence & Polly Walker, *How Sustainable Agriculture Can Address the Environmental and Human Health Harms of Industrial Agriculture*, 110 *Envtl. Health Persp.* 445 (May 2002); U.S. Env’tl. Prot. Agency, *Agriculture Sector Emissions*, <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/agriculture-sector-emissions> (last visited June 12, 2025).

building materials. Our focus should shift toward job creation in restoration forestry and carbon-sequestering industries—efforts that support a healthy, productive landscape for future generations. Furthermore, statutes such as the Endangered Species Act, Forest Practices Act, and California Environmental Quality Act and their counterpart regulations remain among the few safeguards for wildlife and forest ecosystems. The logging industry has already benefited from significant regulatory streamlining and does not require further rollbacks. For these reasons, RCCER recommends the following adjustments to the CEDS Strategic Action Plan.

- 4. Fundamental Community Needs, 1.13 Enhance housing stock availability and quality at all income and market levels (Page 25): **Revise 1.13.3 to “Support growth in the construction industry to increase supply of sustainable and alternative building materials and increase skilled workforce for housing development, especially infill multifamily housing development.”**

RCCER also requests the following adjustments to the Evaluation Framework:

- 4.2 Enhance housing stock availability and quality at all income and market levels (Page 35): **Revise 4.2.3 to “Support growth in construction industry to increase supply of sustainable and alternative building materials and increase skilled talent for housing development.”**

RCCER also recommends the following changes to the SWOT analysis sections:

- Strong Legacy Industries (Page 44-45): **Revise last sentence in second paragraph to “With deep local expertise and infrastructure, the forestry sector is well positioned for future innovation in restoration forestry, carbon sequestration, and providing for sustainable building materials.”**
- 3. Opportunities, Diversification of Legacy Industries (Page 50): **Revise last sentence in first paragraph to “Similarly, innovations in forest management, including carbon sequestration and forest restoration, can be sustainable, address climate goals, and create new jobs.”**
- Regulatory Burdens on Key Industries (Page 55): **Remove third to last and last sentence in first paragraph.**

The CEDS must recognize dense urban communities as a climate mitigation and resiliency strategy that will boost our local economy. Research from *Cities Alive* by Arup highlights that creating dense, walkable urban environments can boost small businesses, street markets, and startups by improving accessibility and visibility for consumers<sup>7</sup>. Similarly,

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<sup>7</sup> Arup, *Cities Alive: Towards a Walking World* (Feb. 2019), <https://www.arup.com/en-us/insights/cities-alive-towards-a-walking-world>.

economist Joe Cortright found that Portland’s 20% reduction in driving led to a \$1.2 billion “green dividend” that stayed in the local economy—demonstrating how walkability can drive economic resilience and support thriving local communities.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, suburban sprawl is costly, largely due to the long-term infrastructure maintenance it requires—often more expensive than urban upkeep—partly because suburban tax bases are less stable and efficient. In contrast, dense urban development not only eases fiscal strain but also benefits the climate by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>9</sup> The Arcata Gateway Plan, Eureka General Plan, and the proposed McKinleyville Town Center all encourage denser communities. For these reasons RCCER requests the follow adjustment to the CEDS:

- Strategic Action Plan, 5. Infrastructure, 1.15 Develop and maintain transportation infrastructure that supports local industries and increases access for residents (Page 27):
  - Add (1.15.8): **Invest in infrastructure and urban design improvements that promote walkability—such as expanded sidewalks, pedestrian-only zones, safe crossings, and mixed-use development—to reduce car dependency and encourage foot traffic in commercial areas.**

### III. Align Renewable Energy Investments with Climate Change Mitigation Goals

To ensure a just and forward-looking economic strategy, the CEDS must emphasize Humboldt County’s critical role in advancing clean energy—particularly offshore wind—while acknowledging the need to transition away from climate-harming industries and avoid investing in false solutions. The CEDS must highlight to the fullest extent, Humboldt County’s opportunity to be a leader in offshore wind development. A study by the California State Lands Commission showed that the Humboldt Bay Heavy Lift Marine Terminal in particular is essential to offshore wind development.<sup>10</sup> Offshore wind development cannot be understated as one of the least environmentally impactful and yet most powerful sources of energy that we can pursue, which is critical as we shift from reliance on fossil fuels. Relatedly, it is important for this document to acknowledge that some industries will need to be phased out due to their contributions to climate change. Finally, we cannot invest in false solutions such as industrial scale biomass, which is not

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<sup>8</sup> Joe Cortright, *Portland’s Green Dividend*, City Observatory (Oct. 16, 2018), <https://cityobservatory.org/portlands-green-dividend/>

<sup>9</sup> Charles Marohn, *Is a Street an Asset?* Strong Towns (Aug. 19, 2014), <https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2014/8/19/is-a-street-an-asset.html>; Charles Marohn, *What Strong Towns Really Says About Infrastructure Spending*, Strong Towns (July 22, 2024), <https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2024/7/22/what-strong-towns-really-says-about-infrastructure-spending>.

<sup>10</sup> California State Lands Commission, *AB525 PORT READINESS PLAN, Final Report*, July 7, 2023, [https://slcprdwordpressstorage.blob.core.windows.net/wordpressdata/2023/07/AB525-Port-Readiness-Plan\\_acc.pdf](https://slcprdwordpressstorage.blob.core.windows.net/wordpressdata/2023/07/AB525-Port-Readiness-Plan_acc.pdf)

only related to deforestation, but is also a significant source of pollution.<sup>11</sup> Thus, RCCER recommends the following changes to the CEDS:

- SWOT Analysis (Page 41-53): **Include a section under either *Strengths* or *Opportunities* that emphasizes Humboldt County’s strategic advantage in supporting offshore wind development, given its abundant wind resources and available space for port infrastructure.**
- Strong Legacy Industries (Page 44-45): **Revise last sentence in second paragraph to “With deep local expertise and infrastructure, the forestry sector is well positioned for future innovation in restoration forestry, carbon sequestration, and providing for sustainable building materials.”**
- 3. Opportunities, Diversification of Legacy Industries (Page 50): **Revise last sentence in first paragraph to “Similarly, innovations in forest management, including carbon sequestration and forest restoration, can be sustainable, address climate goals, and create new jobs.”**
- 4. Threats, Climate Change (Page 56-58): **This section should address the fact that some industries such as natural gas, logging, biomass, need to transition to alleviate their contributions to climate change - we need to decrease the County’s reliance on natural gas, internal combustion vehicles, and industrial forestry.**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the CEDS, we look forward to seeing improvements to the document and appreciate all your work on this.

Sincerely,

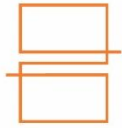


Melodie Meyer, RCCER

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<sup>11</sup> Sami Yassa, *No, Burning Wood Fuels Is Not Climate-Friendly*, NRDC (Oct. 2021), <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/no-burning-wood-fuels-not-climate-friendly>; L. Clarke et al., Energy Systems in IPCC, 2022: Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change. Contribution of Working Group III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [P.R. Shukla et al., (eds.)], Cambridge University Press at 646 (2022), doi: 10.1017/9781009157926.008.

## Humboldt County Growers Alliance



# HUMBOLDT COUNTY GROWERS ALLIANCE

June 12, 2025

Humboldt County Economic Development Division  
Re: Public Comment on Draft Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)  
2025–2030

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of the Humboldt County Growers Alliance (HCGA), thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment on the draft Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for 2025–2030. We appreciate the County’s commitment to inclusive and forward-looking economic development, and we offer the following feedback to ensure that the final CEDS reflects the full scope of Humboldt’s economy—past, present, and future.

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### **Recognizing Cannabis: Clarity Beyond “Alternative Agriculture”**

We understand that the CEDS uses the term “alternative agriculture” to accommodate federal funding restrictions on naming cannabis directly. However, we urge the County to be as clear and specific as possible in acknowledging that licensed cannabis cultivation and manufacturing are a distinct and significant sector of Humboldt’s economy.

Over time, HCGA’s long-term goal is to see cannabis treated like any other agricultural crop. But we are not there yet. Cannabis is still not treated like “just ag.” Licensed operators face a regulatory framework that is far more burdensome than any other form of agriculture, with separate zoning, licensing, taxation, and enforcement regimes—all under federal prohibition and in the context of a rapidly collapsing market.

Until true regulatory parity is achieved, we cannot afford to treat cannabis as a footnote or euphemism. This is not an “emerging” sector—it is a foundational one. Cannabis built Humboldt’s rural economy, and with proper support, it can be a pillar of rural revitalization once again.

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### **Replace Incomplete Federal Data with Local Economic Reality**

The CEDS relies heavily on federal data sources (e.g., NAICS, BEA, BLS) that exclude or undercount cannabis. Without integrating local data, the CEDS risks presenting an inaccurate picture of Humboldt’s economic landscape and missing opportunities for targeted support.

We urge the County to supplement federal data with locally grounded sources, including:

- **Humboldt County Crop Reports** – cannabis exceeded all other commodities combined in 2021, with an estimated value of \$278 million, compared to \$251 million for all other commodities combined.
- **Economic Impact of Cannabis Study** (Cal Poly Humboldt / SSU / DCC, 2023) – Humboldt’s regional cannabis supply chain supported over 6,000 jobs and \$263 million in labor income.
- **Project Trellis reporting** – local grant and equity investment data.
- **State excise tax and license data** – from CDTFA and DCC.

Grounding the CEDS in local economic truth is essential to building policy that is honest, equitable, and effective.

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### **Missed Opportunity: Cannabis in Buy Local and Tourism Strategies**

The CEDS includes thoughtful goals related to tourism, collective branding, and “Buy Local” campaigns—but omits cannabis from these discussions. This is a missed opportunity to align with existing regional efforts, such as:

- **Ask for Humboldt** – a local branding and market development campaign run by HCGA.
- **Cannabis tourism development** – a natural complement to Humboldt’s broader regenerative and agricultural tourism goals.
- **State-level branding and regional economic identity** – where cannabis should be included as both a historic and future-facing component.

We recommend the final CEDS explicitly include cannabis in:

- Regional procurement and branding strategies
- Tourism development and promotion plans

- Business support and grant eligibility
- Sector-specific workforce and permitting streamlining efforts

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### **Rebuilding from Collapse: A Rural Recovery Strategy**

The CEDS references the need to support industries facing disruption—but fails to mention the economic collapse of Humboldt’s licensed cannabis sector.

Since 2021, we have seen:

- Hundreds of cannabis farms shut down
- A surge in property foreclosures in cultivation zones
- Declines in employment, supplier business, and consumer spending
- Drops in local tax revenue from cannabis

This is not just a market correction—it is a rural economic crisis. While compliance has always been important, the weight of Measure S, market saturation, and inadequate state enforcement have pushed many small farms to the brink.

To address this, we urge the County to incorporate cannabis into its economic recovery priorities, including:

- Transitional support for farms in crisis
- Regulatory reform and cost reduction
- Access to economic development and equity grants
- Support for diversification and value-added opportunities

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### **Cannabis Is Not the Past—It’s the Path Forward**

Since 2017, cannabis farmers in Humboldt have paid over \$55 million into the County's general fund through Measure S. Beyond revenue, this sector has supported families, funded environmental restoration, and kept rural communities afloat.

But cannabis is not plutonium. It's a plant. And it's time we stop penalizing it.

If Humboldt wants legal cannabis to survive, we must normalize—not stigmatize—this industry. That means acknowledging its role, supporting its future, and ensuring it has a seat at the table in every economic development conversation.

Thank you for your consideration and for your work on behalf of our community.

Sincerely,  
Natalynne DeLapp  
Executive Director  
Humboldt County Growers Alliance (HCGA)

## Blue Lake Rancheria

### BLUE LAKE RANCHERIA

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June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Elishia Hayes, CAO  
Humboldt County  
825 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
Eureka, CA 95501

RE: Humboldt County CEDS 2025 – 2030

Dear CAO Hayes:

I am writing in response to Humboldt County's open comment period for the 2025 – 2030 draft Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Blue Lake Rancheria welcomes the opportunity to discuss long-term strategic economic development strategies and continued partnerships with the County of Humboldt.

Blue Lake Rancheria appreciates the inclusion of several of our strategic initiatives in the County's draft CEDS, including the Toma Resilience and workforce training campus, microgrid deployment and the proposed TERAS project, and broadband development. BLR believes that these projects are a critical driver of resiliency and prosperity for the Tribe and its members as well as the broader community. BLR also appreciates County partners and staff who have worked to support many of these and other efforts.

The recognition of Tribal initiatives in County planning is critical and belies the need for increased regional government to government coordination. Increased uncertainties in market conditions and government budgets will require coordination and consultation to improve utilization of existing local resources, reduce siloed and duplicative efforts, and increase efficiencies. As such, BLR recommends the execution and adoption of a comprehensive Tribal consultation and partnership plan as a much-needed component to successful economic development. BLR is happy to share best practices and expertise with County partners as you consider your Tribal consultation efforts.

I appreciate your critical economic development planning efforts and look forward to continuing our partnership. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please call my staff, Ciara Emery, at (707) 713-9696.

Sincerely,

Jason Ramos  
Chairman  
Blue Lake Rancheria

# Appendix F

## Approval and Adoptions