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## Performance Progress Report

<b>Grantee:</b>	Old Colony Planning Council
<b>Project Title:</b>	Old Colony Economic Development District
<b>Project Number:</b>	ED19PHI3020031
<b>CEDS Performance Year:</b>	April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021
<b>Reporting period end date:</b>	March 31 <sup>st</sup>
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<b>Five-year CEDS Time Period:</b>	2020 to 2025

### Regional CEDS Updates

According to population data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Plymouth County was home to 530,819 residents in 2020. Since 2010, county population increased 7.25 percent (35,900 residents). MassDOT Demographic and Socio-Economic Forecast Population Projections indicate that Plymouth County will experience 9.3% population growth from 2010 to 2040 with an estimated increase of 36,201 residents. Areas of the highest population projections include Plymouth at 24.5 percent, Abington at 18.9 percent, and Kingston at 18.8 percent. Communities in OCPC's region have all experienced growth.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted nearly every business, industry, and community in the Old Colony Economic Development District. Healthcare, manufacturing, tourism, and other sectors have all seen an economic downturn, and recovery is slow.

During 2020-2021, businesses in the region were complying with capacity restrictions and social distancing requirements, which made business operations, especially in the restaurant and hospitality industry, difficult. Businesses operated less than fully staffed. Many workers were forced to leave the workforce due to stay-at-home and childcare requirements, and their return has been slow.

After record low unemployment rates, unemployment was just as high 'post'-COVID as it was during the Great Recession. In the summer of 2020, unemployment reached historic highs. The MA unemployment rate stood at 6.8 percent, higher than the U.S. unemployment rate of 6.0 percent. Most of the northeastern states were impacted first by the pandemic and these states were cautious with social distancing requirements, so unemployment rates lagged that of the rest of the country. Quarterly growth has outstripped that of the U.S. due the number of knowledge-based industries performing well, and this indicator has dropped throughout the state.

The unemployment rate 'post'-COVID is four times what it was 'pre-pandemic, with the OCPC EDD unemployment rate being 3.0 percent pre-pandemic and 12.1 percent post. The region

was hard hit by unemployment claims in terms of its share of the state's total claims and labor force with sectors that typically cannot accommodate remote work hardest hit by the pandemic (health care and social assistance, retail trade, accommodation, and food services). Some of the hardest hit sectors in the OCPC EDD region were the most dominate, education and health services (-11.5%), other services (-24.4%), and government (-6.2%).

Unemployment was highest among women and those with less than a bachelor's degree (77%), and those who are non-white (23%) or Hispanic/Latinx (6%). Of the OCPC EDD region, most unemployment claimants were women (52% v. men 48%) post-pandemic (v. 37% and 63% pre-pandemic). There was a spike for female unemployment (52%) mostly as a function of those industries most impacted, but some could be a function of labor-force participation. Analysis suggests this is due to the degree to which responsibilities of the household, caring for children or older adults, fall more on the female members of the household than the men.

Similarly, as it relates to education, trends in terms of who was most impacted, those with less than the bachelor's degree (65%) would see a very high unemployment rate. Unemployment was also highest among people of color and young workers in the 16-24 age group. Compared to their size of the labor force, people of color have been disproportionately impacted. Most claims come from white workers (70.3%) because the state population is predominately white. Proportionally there are more impacts for black and African Americans (9.4%) and Hispanic (13%) communities.

In the OCPC EDD, approximately 35 percent of residents were telework-capable workers. Massachusetts ranked fourth in the U.S. of states where at least one person in a household substituted some or all their typical in-person work for telework.

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## Summary of Accomplishments

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### PROGRESS TOWARD CEDS GOALS:

#### **Goal A: Support the development of infrastructure for economic development**

1. OCPC staff prepared the Main Street Corridor Study. The study examined the Main Street Corridor (approximately 5.2 miles) in Brockton and developed short term and long-term recommendations and strategies that seek to enhance circulation, mobility, and traffic flow efficiency, improve safety, and improve bicycle and pedestrian accommodation.
2. OCPC staff prepared the Route 139 Corridor Study. The study examined the Route 139 Corridor (approximately 4.5 miles) in Hanover and developed short term and long-term recommendations and strategies that seek to enhance circulation, mobility, and traffic flow efficiency, improve safety, and improve bicycle and pedestrian accommodation.
3. OCPC staff completed Integrated Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness and Hazard Mitigation Plans for the towns of Hanson, Halifax, and Whitman. These plans identified vulnerabilities and hazards in the community and actions for eliminating or mitigating impacts.
4. OCPC CEDS Committee hosted an informational webinar about the Commonwealth's new Community One Stop for Growth, a single application portal and collaborative review process of State grant programs that make targeted investments based on a Development Continuum.

5. OCPC provided guidance to the Town of Plymouth on the development of a successful Economic Development Administration grant application for Manomet water infrastructure improvements. The town was awarded \$3,835,000 from the Economic Development Administration, which is being matched with \$1,300,000 of local funds. The investment is estimated to create 3,450 jobs.
6. The Old Colony Metropolitan Planning Organization prepared the FFY 2021-2025 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP serves as a prioritized listing of highway, bridge, and transit projects for implementation during the next five (5) federal fiscal years that reflect the needs of the regional transportation system.
7. The Old Colony Metropolitan Planning Organization funded the Avon - Intersection Improvements at Harrison Boulevard and Pond Street Project (\$4,969,007). The project consists of installing new traffic signal equipment, minor geometric improvements, and upgrading bicycle and pedestrian at the intersection.
8. The Old Colony Metropolitan Planning Organization funded the Brockton - Corridor Improvements on Route 123 (Belmont Street), from Angus Beaton Drive to West Street Project (\$7,778,744). The project includes resurfacing and box cut widening along Route 123 to provide a consistent roadway cross section, bicycle accommodating shoulders and accessible sidewalks. Traffic signals will be reconstructed to provide ADA accessible elements.
9. The Old Colony Metropolitan Planning Organization funded the Easton - Route 123 (Depot Street) Reconstruction from Newell Circle to Route 138 Project (\$10,502,923). The project is intended to address deteriorated pavement and multi-modal accommodation through reconstruction of the roadway (minor widening) to provide bicycle accommodation in addition to reconstructed sidewalks and extensions. The project is 2 miles in length. A traffic signal is proposed at the Depot Street/Center Street/Porter Street intersection. The project also includes drainage upgrades and new pavements markings and signs.

**Goal B: Promote entrepreneurship and preserve existing business and industry by providing planning assistance**

**-and-**

**Goal F: Meet the region's needs for financing and technical support available to troubled, expanding, start-up, or minority-owned firms**

1. OCPC participated in the South Shore Chamber of Commerce Transportation Advisory Group. The Group's goal is to "identify transportation priorities that are most closely tied to the region's economic future." Their recommendations will become a blueprint for the chamber's Transportation work and political advocacy for the next few years.
2. OCPC staff produced a Small Business Resource Guide listing funding and other resources available to help small businesses succeed.
3. OCPC secured a \$400,000 investment from the Economic Development Agency to fund a fulltime Economic Recovery Planner.
4. OCPC was awarded \$71,220 from the State's Local Pilot Program to support development of business directory apps for the towns of Avon, Easton, and Stoughton, and the City of Brockton.

5. OCPC staff mentored the founder of Black Owned Brockton, the city's first Black business advocacy organization founded in 2020. The organization's mission is to bridge the opportunity divide by ensuring that local black and brown businesses gain visibility, access to resources, and consistent support that will empower and improve economic sustainability.
6. The Town of Plymouth was awarded \$200,000 from the Economic Development Agency for an entrepreneurship center feasibility study.
7. Metro South Chamber of Commerce holds webinars to help business recover from the pandemic. Topics include marketing tools, grant and loan programs, and more.
8. Massasoit Community College's Corporate Education Department and SCORE South Eastern Mass (SEMA) partnered to offer a new program designed for existing businesses, aspiring entrepreneurs, and students alike. NextPhase Learning is a five-part series of business essential workshops covering key topics: marketing; finance; social media; entrepreneurship; and the restaurant/hospitality sector.

**Goal C: Work to maintain and enhance the region's quality of life**

1. OCPC staff prepared the Brockton-Taunton Fixed Route Transit Connection Study. The Study provided BAT with an assessment of operating service options between the cities of Brockton and Taunton, also examined potential deviations to service ridership generators, and ADA service requirements.
2. OCPC staff completed Open Space and Recreation Plans for the towns of Avon and West Bridgewater. These plans set out specific actions for advancing open space and natural resource protection in communities as well as improving recreation.
3. OCPC staff conducted an aging-needs assessment as part of the development of the 2022-2025 Regional Area Plan on Aging. Over 800 responses were received through a regional survey.
4. OCPC staff were awarded MA Department of Transportation funding to continue supporting Councils on Aging with funds to support local volunteer-driver transportation for older adults.

**Goal D: Pursue a policy of sustainable development**

1. OCPC staff continued work on the Climate Change Transportation Vulnerability Assessment project. This project builds off previous OCPC studies, including municipal-level stormwater mapping and roadway drainage projects, hazard mitigation plans, municipal vulnerability plans, and regional hazard mitigation and climate change impact studies. The project will result in recommendations for the mitigation and management of climate change impacts on the transportation system.
2. OCPC staff began working with the Town of Plymouth to help the community achieve Green Communities Designation. Once part of the program, the town will reduce energy use and costs by implementing clean energy projects in municipal buildings, facilities, and schools.
3. OCPC staff worked with several towns in the region to reduce municipal energy use through municipal building and vehicle fleet improvements, funded through the State's Green Communities program.

4. OCPC advised the Town of Plymouth and their nonprofit partners on the development of a successful grant application. The project will assess the vulnerability of the Plymouth-Carver Sole Source Aquifer to saltwater intrusion and educate the public about water resource protection.

**Goal E: Improve the education and skills of the region's workforce**

1. OCPC continued their student internship program, helping train the planners of tomorrow.
2. MassHire Greater Brockton Career Center held job fairs and recruitment events for healthcare workers, veterans, and more.
3. MassHire Greater Brockton Workforce Board offered training programs for banking and finance, IT essentials, machining and manufacturing, emergency medical technician, and more.
4. Massasoit Community College is partnered with Brockton High School and South Shore Vocational Technical High School to offer a new pathway for students to earn stackable college credits and industry credentials before they graduate from high school. The Network Security Pathway will allow students to enter high-demand occupations and seamlessly continue their education at Massasoit with a significant head start towards an associate degree. The initiative is supported with a Career and Technical Education Partnership grant from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.
5. Massasoit Community College launched a new, 12-week Information Technology (IT) program that includes virtual instruction, hands-on lab work, and test preparation for the CompTIA A+ certification – a globally-recognized industry credential. Students will also learn Google's IT Support Professional Certificate curriculum. Those who successfully complete the program will receive a certificate from Massasoit, a certificate from Google, and be eligible to sit for the CompTIA A+ exam. Passing the CompTIA A+ certification exams will earn students a dual credential from CompTIA and Google.
6. Bridgewater State University and the CONNECT Partnership continue to address the skill and curriculum gap in Southeastern MA, collaborating with OCPC and other regional planning agencies and EDDs, regional Workforce Boards, chambers of commerce, and others. The Massachusetts Workforce Skills Cabinet convened a regional planning meeting of the Southeast Region to develop solutions.

**Goal G: Encourage expanding housing investments and housing choices**

1. OCPC staff produced Housing Production Plans for the towns of Avon and Stoughton. These plans provided a comprehensive housing needs assessment and included recommendations for meeting those needs.
2. OCPC staff advised the Town of Plympton on development of affordable housing strategies.
3. OCPC staff worked with the Town of Easton to develop a local Age-friendly Action Plan that, in addition to transportation and communication, focused on housing and how best to meet the needs of an aging population.

4. The City of Brockton and the towns of Bridgewater, Easton, Plymouth, and Stoughton received Housing Choice Designation from the MA Department of Housing and Economic Development. The communities are now eligible for Housing Choice Grants.

## PROGRESS ON PRIORITY PROJECTS

### **Abington**

- Improving Mass BioReady Rating from Bronze to Silver: No progress.

### **Avon**

- Installation of public sewer in Avon Industrial Park: In discussion with the City of Brockton for potential connection to the city's wastewater system.

### **Bridgewater**

- Sewer extension to Business District: Design complete, awaiting funding.
- Bridgewater State University logistics training: In progress.

### **Brockton**

- CSX Yard redevelopment: In planning. Requested additional assistance from MassDevelopment for help coordinating development, including site acquisition and infrastructure needs. Pursuing funding for studies related to flood storage.
- West Downtown structured parking: In planning. Feasibility study being prepared for site that would include small parking garage, housing, retail, and an indoor agriculture business.
- Downtown restaurant loan fund: First loan made to Brockton Beer Company, to open in 2022.
- Small business loan fund: No progress due to limited staff capacity.
- Downtown site acquisition and pre-development activities: In planning.
- Sycamore Grove multi-use festival space: Plans completed for permanent outdoor space that would accommodate five or six restaurants and pop-up retail.
- Downtown national historic district: Amended application submitted.
- Co-work, incubator, and fab lab space: No progress. Feasibility study needed.
- Upgrade Mass BioReady Rating from Gold to Platinum: Lovett Brook Master Plan completed. City working with Good Samaritan Hospital on space needs.
- Downtown traffic plan and circulation improvements: Engineer/designer selected, applying for funding.
- Route 28 economic development activities: Some progress. Rezoning needed.
- Silver Lake water transmission main: No progress, seeking funding.

### **Duxbury**

- Hall's Corner development strategy/market analysis plan: Completed.
- Repairs to seawalls and revetments: Planned, seeking funding.

### **East Bridgewater**

- Clean-up of brownfields sites downtown, including the former Grant Steel and Precise Engineering sites: Seeking funding.

## **Easton**

- Installation of public sewer for Queset Commercial District: Completed August 2019.
- Installation of public sewer for Five Corners District: Completed August 2020.
- Installation of public sewer for Easton Industrial Park: In planning. In discussion with the City of Brockton for potential connection to Brockton wastewater system.
- Phase II of North Easton Village revitalization: No longer prioritized. Funding not available.

## **Hanover**

- Environmental clean-up of former National Fireworks Factory: In progress.

## **Hanson**

- Former Plymouth County Hospital reuse study: Preliminary plan submitted and awaiting Board of Selectmen action.

## **Kingston**

- Repairs to seawalls, revetments, and jetties: Seeking funding.
- Improve wastewater and water service infrastructure to support economic development: Designs completed, waiting for finalization of funding.

## **Plymouth**

- Water Street promenade: In planning.
- Leyden Street and Town Square: In planning.
- Court Street with Burial Hill ramp/steps: In planning.
- Jenney Bypass and pond: In planning.
- Depot Square: In planning.
- Stephen's Field: In planning.
- Waterfront walkway: In planning.
- Infrastructure improvements to aid redevelopment of Cordage Park: In planning.
- Multi-modal center: In planning.
- Closure of nuclear power plant: closed and in planning.
- Town airport improvements: Planned.
- Cranberry Crescent: Planned.
- Manomet Pressure Zone water main upgrades: In planning.
- Pine Hills interconnection project: In planning.
- Repairs to seawalls, revetments, breakwater, and jetties: Planned, needing funding.
- Upgrade Mass BioReady Rating from Gold to Platinum: No progress.

## **Plympton**

- Business Park wastewater treatment and water distribution: In final design stage.

## **Stoughton**

- Industrial Park: 2018 study completed, in planning.
- Park Street/Campanelli Park sewer expansion: Awarded \$2,500,000 MassWorks grant for South Stoughton Sewer Expansion. The town will expand its municipal sewer system to activate nearly \$36 million in proposed building expansions for commercial and

industrial uses. New public infrastructure will include 8,700 feet of gravity sewer piping, 4,300 feet of sewer force mains, and a pump station to service properties in and around Route 27 and the Campanelli Business Park. This expansion will eliminate existing dependencies on septic systems for numerous commercial, industrial, and residential sites and is expected to catalyze over 200,000 square feet of proposed building projects and create an estimated 240 new permanent jobs across five commercial and industrial properties. This award leverages over \$5 million in local funds.

### **West Bridgewater**

- Widening of West Center Street: In planning.
- Upgrade Mass BioReady Rating from Bronze to Silver: No progress.

### **Whitman**

- Clean-up and marketing of former Regal Shoe brownfields site: Received grant from MassDevelopment to do site assessments; work ongoing. Seeking funding for clean-up.
- Creation of Economic Development Commission to review downtown improvements: No progress.
- Water main improvements: In planning.

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## **Challenges and Mitigation**

The region continues to recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which was declared on March 27, 2020. Impacts were not uniform – communities with higher concentrations of poverty, people of color, and immigrants experienced more significant and lingering COVID-19 impacts, including higher unemployment rates. The challenge is to ensure equitable recovery in the coming years. OCPC will continue to broaden its public participation practices and advocate for inclusive boards, committees, and other decision-making bodies in the region.

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## **Next Steps**

OCPC's economic development team will continue working toward the achievement of goals outlined in the CEDS. The primary focus for the next year will be on strengthening the organization and representation of the CEDS Committee and ensuring capacity-building webinars cover what municipalities in our region most need help with. In addition, OCPC will continue connecting and collaborating with regional stakeholders on the best use of federal and state dollars coming into our region.

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## **Client Success Stories**

Noted in the Accomplishments section.

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## **EDA Assistance-Needed**

1. Updates on federal funding opportunities.
2. Updates on good practices for Economic Development Districts and regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies.
3. Training opportunities for economic development professionals.



E.D.A staff member Debra Beavin continues to be a much-appreciated resource to OCPC and her assistance in learning E.D.A. programs and navigating the grants process has been invaluable, and no doubt is contributing to success in the region.

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**Press Engagements/Opportunities**

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None at this time.