

2022

State Priorities in the Meramec Region

An Issues Report For the Region's
Legislative Delegation

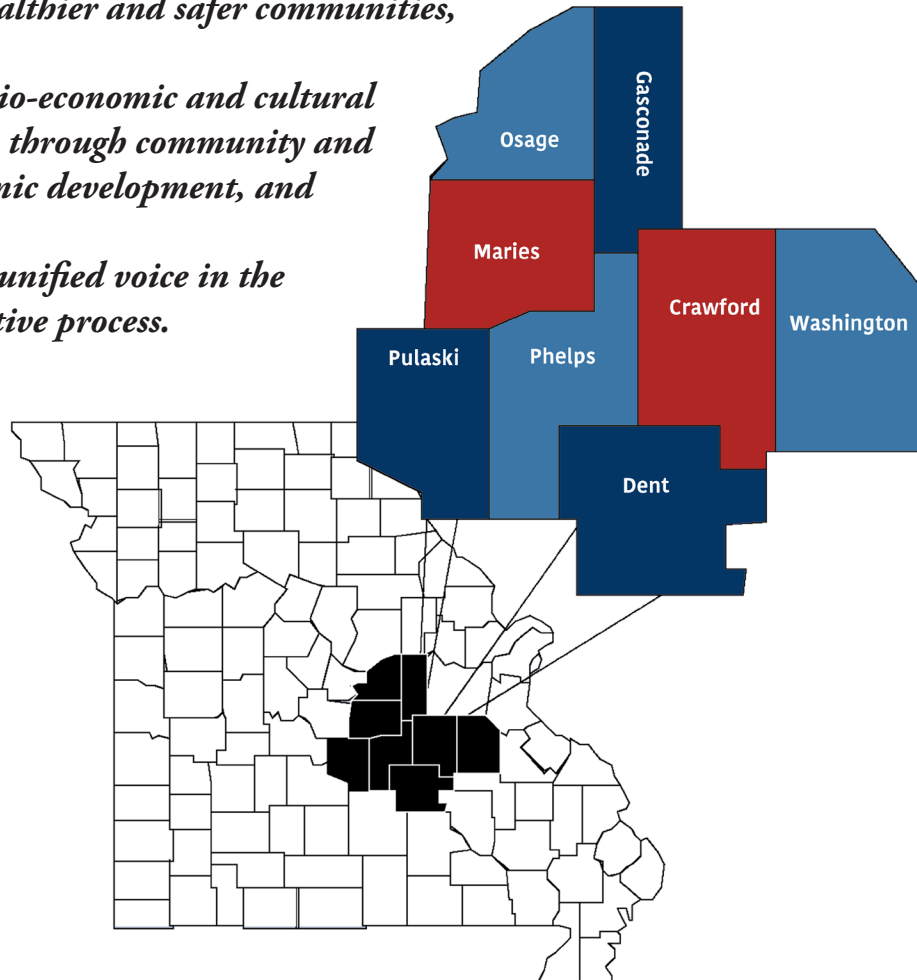
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The Meramec Regional Planning Commission's Mission

The mission of MRPC is to enhance the quality of life for residents of the Meramec Region. In pursuit of this mission, MRPC will bring about results in these areas:

- *Cleaner, healthier and safer communities,*
- *Greater socio-economic and cultural wealth through community and economic development, and*
- *A stronger, unified voice in the legislative process.*



The Meramec Regional Planning Commission is a voluntary council of local governments serving the Meramec area. The MRPC area includes the eight counties of Crawford, Dent, Gasconade, Maries, Osage, Phelps, Pulaski and Washington and their respective cities. Those cities are Bourbon, Cuba, Leasburg, Steelville, Sullivan, West Sullivan, Salem, Bland, Gasconade, Hermann, Morrison, Owensville, Rosebud, Belle, Vienna, Argyle, Chamois, Freeburg, Linn, Meta, Westphalia, Doolittle, Edgar Springs, Newburg, Rolla, St. James, Crocker, Dixon, Richland, St. Robert, Waynesville, Caledonia, Irondale, Mineral Point and Potosi.

2022 STATE LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES IN THE MERAMEC REGION

As the 2022 legislative session begins, the board of the Meramec Regional Planning Commission would like to share with you issues that are of interest to our organization as a whole and to our individual cities and counties. Each item is listed below with a brief explanation, in order of priority, as ranked by the MRPC board.

MRPC'S TOP STATE PRIORITIES

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION:

1. Fully support the MoDOT and MRPC planning framework process and the transportation priorities put forth each year. The top regional transportation priorities are: 1. Four-laning of Highway 63; and 2. Improvements to Highway 50.
2. Support a state appropriation to cities and counties to address local transportation issues including updating existing bridges, low water crossings and chip and seal roads to ensure access for emergency vehicles, school transportation and access to emergency services.
3. Assist in finding additional funding for Highways 63 and 50.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

4. Take a coordinated approach to the expansion of broadband and internet services in rural communities across the state to maximize the dollars available and reduce duplication of efforts with the goal being affordable high speed internet of at least 100 MBPS upload and download to all Missouri households.
5. Fully fund regional planning commissions. Most RPCs use their state planning dollars to leverage other funds. Currently, 19 RPCs/COGs share \$400,000.
6. Fully support Fort Leonard Wood and recognize that it is an economic development engine for Missouri.

HEALTH CARE/SOCIAL SERVICE:

1. Provide funding for more mental health programs and ensure access to those programs.
2. Provide funding for more senior services such as meals on wheels, elderly transportation and senior centers.
3. Increase state funding for Public Health at the local level.

ENVIRONMENTAL:

1. Support programs that provide incentives for market development and strive to establish more markets for recyclables in Missouri in order to create jobs and support local resource recovery programs.
2. Increase funding for Missouri State Parks through appropriations. Missouri State Parks receive half of 1/10 of one cent Parks and Water sales tax, which covers 3/4 of their budgets. The balance comes from user fees and federal funds.
3. Support efforts to eradicate feral hogs in Missouri. Feral hogs pose a serious threat to the state's number one industry - agriculture.

EDUCATION:

1. Ensure the state board of education is neutral politically and focuses on policies that will build and train an exceptional workforce for the industries of the future. Recognizing that traditional industries and jobs have to evolve with the new fields.
2. Many small school districts are unable to offer competitive salaries for teachers and staff due to comparatively low tax bases. Recommendation: Raise the state's per-student rate to the rural school districts by eight percent and additional state dollars would be allocated to teacher and staff salaries.
3. Continue expansion of technical education, certificate programs and two year colleges and degrees.
4. Conduct formal study of teacher salaries and develop a plan that would result in Missouri being in line with neighboring states.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (CITY/COUNTY):

1. Stop unfunded mandates. For those initiatives that must be passed down to local governments, include adequate funding to cover the full cost of implementation, including administration, of the mandate.
2. Provide more grants or low interest loans available to small municipalities with smaller operating budgets for things such as improving roads, cleaning up properties, updating sewer systems and updates to infrastructure.
3. Allow counties to amend their own budgets as they have a need and see fit.

GENERAL:

1. Work toward providing competitive salaries for state employees so that Missouri does not have the distinction of having the lowest paid public employees in the nation.
2. Ensure full disclosure of all political contributions.
3. Oppose efforts to reduce funding for law enforcement.
4. Repeal or lengthen term limits.

Highlights of 2021 Accomplishments

MRPC's Impact

The Meramec Regional Planning Commission had a strong year in 2020-21. Planning commissions continue to be a vital part in regional planning across the state. Working with various state and federal agencies, MRPC was able to continue implementation on several different programs that worked to address environmental, planning, tourism and the opioid crisis within an eight-county region that includes Crawford, Dent, Gasconade, Maries, Osage, Phelps, Pulaski and Washington counties. MRPC continued to adapt to work in the midst of a pandemic ensuring that program objectives moved forward and our cities, counties and regions had access to the services and programs they required.

Transportation

The partnership between Missouri regional planning commissions and the Missouri Department of Transportation continues to grow. Federal transportation legislation calls for increased local input into the state's planning programs and specifically mentions the regional development organizations as one of the means to involve local officials. The Planning Framework for Transportation Decision Making continues to be an important tool for increasing local input into transportation planning. This planning framework outlines the process for decision making and how local input, facilitated by regional planning organizations, affects transportation priorities.

MRPC's Transportation Advisory Committee held five meetings in 2020-21. The group continued to stress the importance of the region's top two transportation priorities—Highways 63 and 50 and provided input to MoDOT for the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) and their list of high-priority unfunded needs. The TAC also continued to make traffic counters available to perform traffic studies. MRPC staff prepared and distributed press releases and made social media posts related to transportation issues. The TAC also completed a road safety audit for the intersection of Hwy. 21 and Robart Road in Washington County. Through MoDOT, MRPC staff also worked with the Coalition for Roadway Safety with the goal of reducing fatalities in the region through awareness efforts. Staff continued working on five projects - Bourbon (reconstruction of main street), Pulaski County (bridge replacement), Linn (reconstruction of 1st and 5th streets) - on funding for transportation-related projects, Washington County (bridge replacement) and Washington County IDA (upgrade Ameren Road and Development Drive and extend the water main through the industrial park). Between the five, \$1,898,374 was granted to complete these projects on locally owned roadways.

Community and Economic Development

MRPC is a designated Economic Development District (EDD), and through its planning grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration, continues to work with its counties and cities to improve the infrastructure and economy of the region. With EDA planning funds, staff prepared funding applications for community and economic development projects. During FY 2020-21, \$3.9 million in federal and state grant monies flowed through the planning and development department for community and economic development projects. In FY 2020-21, staff assisted member communities with the

following funding opportunities:

- Missouri Department of Economic Development's (MoDED) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for Washington County to replace the bridge on Goose Creek (Funded);
- MoDED's CDBG for the city of Bland to complete major upgrades to the water system including a new water tower (Funded);
- Missouri Department of Public Safety's LLEBG to the Bland Police Department for a new patrol vehicle (Funded);
- Missouri Department of Public Safety's LLEBG to the Edgar Springs Police Department for adding and replacing equipment for the police department (Funded);
- Missouri Department of Public Safety's LLEBG to the Steelville Police Department for the replacement of in-car camera systems in four patrol vehicles (Funded);
- MoDED's CDBG to the city of Chamois for significant upgrades to the city's water system including two new wells, upgraded storage tank and main replacement (Funded);
- Missouri 911 Service Board's Financial Assistance Program to the Phelps County Emergency Services Board for collaboration on a 911 communications service project between Phelps and Maries counties that will improve 911 services in all of their jurisdictions as well as add needed redundancy and geo-diversity to the system (Funded);
- FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program for North Wood R-IV School District to construct a multi-purpose building that will serve as the school district's tornado safe room (Not Funded);
- MoDED's CDBG for the city of Steelville to upgrade the community center to make it more efficient and functional (Funded);
- Missouri Department of Transportation's (MoDOT) Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) for the city of St. Robert to upgrade and make ADA compliant the sidewalk on the north side of Eastlawn Ave. from Marshall Drive to April Drive (Not Funded);
- MoDOT's TAP for the city of St. Robert to add new sidewalks along east side of Marshall Drive and south side of Bosa Drive, from Eastlawn Ave. to Missouri Ave. (Not Funded);
- MoDOT's TAP for the city of Salem to upgrade and make ADA compliant the sidewalk on the south side of 4th St. from Iron to Main and both sides from Main to Washington (Funded);
- MoDED's CDBG for the city of Newburg to make significant improvements to the water system including new storage tank, well house, and distribution lines (Not Funded);
- Missouri Department of Natural Resources' (MDNR) Land and Water Conservation Fund for the city of Linn to replace an existing, outdated playground with a newer, larger, all-inclusive playground area (Not Funded);
- MDNR's Recreational Trails Program for the James Foundation to rehabilitate a portion of a trail at Maramec Spring Park, including updating to ADA accessibility standards (Not Funded);
- MoDOT's Highway Safety program for the Edgar Springs Police Department to increase enforcement for speeding, including additional officer hours and purchase of two car radar systems, two handheld radars and a speed trailer (Funded);
- MoDOT's Highway Safety program for MRPC to implement a children's pedestrian and cyclist education program (Funded);
- USDA's Rural Business Development Grant for the village of Caledonia to install six light poles

along Hwy. 21 to allow business activity beyond sunset (Funded);

- United Way's 2021 United Way Community Support Grant for MCEC to address structural and/or mechanical repairs to improve health and safety, or address identified ADA modifications needed in owner-occupied housing in the counties of Maries, Osage and Phelps (Not Funded);
- MoDED's Neighborhood Assistance Program for the St. James Caring Center to construction a new resource center for youth employment skills training on the St. James Caring Center campus using 70% tax credits (Funded);
- MDNR's Playground Scrap Tire Grant Program for the city of St. Robert to install pour-in-place mats under swings at Municipal Park and play area at Paddock Estates (Not Funded);
- HUD's Older Adults Home Modification Grant Program for MRPC to to implement aging in place program that allows up to \$5,000 for low-cost, high-impact home modifications for low-income homeowners, age 62 or older (Not Funded);
- Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines's Affordable Housing Program for Wentzville Senior Citizens Corporation to renovate a 66-unit senior apartment complex in Wentzville (Not Funded);
- Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines' Affordable Housing Program for The Golden Village to renovate a 16-unit senior apartment complex in New Bloomfield (Not Funded);
- Delta Regional Authority's SEDAP 2021 for the village of Mineral Point to improve public infrastructure including storm drainage and parking to facilitate the location of a new business (Not Funded); and
- Department of Justice's COPS Hiring Program for the Potosi Police Department to hire a school resource officer for the Potosi R-III School District (Funded).

Staff continued to disseminate funding information to member communities through grant alerts, workshops and community meetings. Additionally, staff continued to improve methods of resource research by placing more emphasis on searches via the Internet and expanded their knowledge on new funding opportunities, as well as maintaining an additional grant writer to address the increasing demand for those services. MRPC continued efforts to assist communities in meeting the need for affordable housing for low-to-moderate income families. Staff continues to work on an update to the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The CEDS is an important document for those requesting grant funds as a requirement for many grants is that the project be identified through an economic development plan.

Business Loan Programs

MRPC assists in developing the region's local economies by partnering to promote and assist the growth and development of businesses through innovative financing. Working in partnership with the Meramec Regional Development Corp., MRPC continues to manage a U.S. Small Business Administration Certified Development Company providing SBA 504 loan programs. Additionally, MRPC operates the region's revolving loan fund (RLF), which was created with an EDA grant and local matching funds. This fund was recapitalized in 2010 with \$375,000 of additional funding. In 2006-07, USDA provided a \$500,000 loan to MRPC to establish a new intermediary re-lending program, which was loaned out in 18 months. MRPC applied for, and received, an additional \$175,000 in IRP funding in 2010. MRPC was also awarded \$125,000 from the Missouri Department of Economic Development Microenterprise Grant fund.

Prior to June 30, 2020, MRPC was notified that it could be receiving \$780,000 for a new RLF

through the CARES Act due to COVID-19's impact on businesses. By July 2021, all \$780,000 had been loaned to 10 businesses who created nearly 60 jobs. These loan programs are important to rural Missouri as they provide much needed gap financing. Many rural banks are unwilling to make higher-risk commercial loans, however, the subordinated gap financing available through the SBA 504, the IRP and RLF reduce the banks' exposure. Loans are usually made in partnership with local private financial institutions. Eligibility for financing in these programs is dependent on creating and/or retaining jobs in the region, as well as financial stability and use of proceeds. The Meramec Region has used the SBA 504 program since 1991, the RLF since 1985 and the IRP since 2006, to assist in financing business start-ups and expansions.

Since 1991, SBA 504 loans have created or retained 1301 jobs in the Meramec Region for an average investment of \$20,972 per job. SBA's requirement is one job for every \$75,000 invested. Using the RLF program, which was established in 1985, the local development board has created or retained 1,117 jobs at a cost of \$4,019 per job. EDA's requirement is one job for every \$20,000 invested. The initial \$400,000 grant, plus 25 percent matching funds provided by member communities, has fully revolved. Some 77 loans worth \$4.49 million have been made through the RLF over the life of the program. Under the IRP program, which was established in 2006, staff has made 20 loans and created or retained nearly 199 jobs, an average cost of \$8,082 per job. The total amount loaned through the IRP is \$1,608,350.

Homeownership and Housing Renovation

One of the major barriers to economic development in Missouri is the availability of affordable housing, and Meramec Community Enhancement Corporation and MRPC have an established history of working together to provide homeownership opportunities to the region's low-income families.

Because MRPC employs a housing inspector with lead, mold and asbestos certification, MRPC also offers inspection services as well as code enforcement services for a fee to local governments and the private sector.

Solid Waste Management

Ozark Rivers Solid Waste Management District (ORSWMD) is a seven-county area that includes Crawford, Dent, Gasconade, Maries, Phelps, Pulaski and Washington counties. ORSWMD contracts with MRPC to provide solid waste management programs across the Ozark Rivers region and manage day-to-day district operations.

Originally seven landfills served this area. These have all closed, and the region now has three transfer stations and two landfills. Solid waste management is now more crucial than ever for rural areas. The state of Missouri has targeted a 40 percent reduction of waste being landfilled, and the district has played a role in that effort. Efforts have been achieved through emphasis on education, expanding recycling opportunities, providing technical assistance and providing grant monies for local needs.

Since 2007, Ozark Rivers has awarded 183 grants, totaling \$3.24 million, to support local and regional projects. These grants have targeted businesses, local governments, schools and non-profits. The 2021 grant cycle provided funding for a school district's recycling program, a pilot program for anaerobic digestion of cafeteria food waste, provided staff salary and equipment maintenance for a community-based recycling center, and purchased recycling bins and educational material for a city-based recycling program. The Meramec Regional Planning Commission's grants provide for collection of illegally

dumped tires along county roads, illegal dump prevention and cleanup program and prioritization of potential clean-up projects, Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) collection sites in the cities of Rolla and St. Robert, special waste collections (appliances, electronics, tires), increased collection of alkaline batteries by providing drop boxes in public spaces and educational programs for schools and community outreach and assistance. Each of these projects is consistent with the district's plan and goals.

In partnership with Ozark Rivers, MRPC has established two satellite HHW collection facilities, and they have been in operation in Rolla and St. Robert since 2008. Batteries, automotive fluids, fertilizers/pesticides, and flammable materials are some of the materials collected. To curb expenses, latex paint was removed as an accepted material in 2017, as latex paint is technically not a hazardous waste. HHW services collected 3.8 tons from 800 residents at an estimated cost of \$9,320 during 2021. The Missouri Recycling Association (MORA) and the solid waste districts are currently working with the Product Stewardship Council to educate retailers and further implement a paint stewardship initiative where paint may be returned to the point of purchase. Currently, legislative research has received documents and will move forward with writing a paint stewardship bill. While the bill has a legislative sponsor, additional sponsors are needed.

Since the Missouri Department of Natural Resources Scrap Tire program was eliminated in April of 2016, an MRPC grant project has financially assisted counties in the Ozark Rivers district with transporting and recycling 220 tons (20,000 tires) of illegally dumped tires collected by county road crews. The cost to date is \$42,293.

Through the Ozark Rivers Solid Waste Management District's grant program, MRPC has organized 64 special waste collections since April 2003. These subsidized collections have recycled 613.04 tons of residential electronics, appliances and tires. It is of vital importance for every county to host a special collection to help reduce the occurrence and costs of illegal dumping and clean-up.

In the early 2000s, a region-wide survey was completed for illegal dumps in the region. As a follow-up to that survey, MRPC secured funds from USDA Rural Development to implement a dump cleanup program. This project takes a watershed approach by educating the public on how illegal dumping can endanger water resources. Since 2004, more than 152 dump sites have been cleaned up, partnerships have been built and the region-wide survey has been updated. In doing so, an estimated 918 tons of trash has been removed and properly disposed; and 19,690 tires have been collected for recycling. The district has recruited 1,756 volunteers to assist with these cleanups. Through the efforts of many people and implementation of these vital programs, the ORSWMD continues to provide valuable services that improve the quality of life for area residents.

Hazardous Materials Planning

MRPC provides staffing and administrative services for the Meramec Emergency Local Planning District (MELPD), formerly the Meramec Regional Emergency Planning Committee, which is responsible for maintaining and updating the region's (excluding Pulaski County) hazardous materials response plan and Community Right-to-Know records. The MELPD also applies for training grants and coordinates educational opportunities for emergency responders and local elected officials in the region. The group, with the help of MRPC, has also completed commodity flow studies for Highways 47, 32, 42, 8, 100, 72, 63, 50, 19, 21, 28, 68, 89, 133, State Route A in Washington county and I-44 transportation corridors, as well as three railroads and all of the pipelines in the region.

Homeland Security Program

In 2006, MRPC entered into a contract with the State Emergency Management Agency to provide planning and administrative support to the Region I Homeland Security Oversight Committee (HSOC). This local committee of volunteers is tasked with determining needs and recommending homeland security grant fund awards in the six-county region, which includes Crawford, Dent, Maries, Phelps, Pulaski and Laclede counties, and serving as a conduit between local emergency responders, local governments, schools and the state-level Homeland Security Advisory Committee. The state program is now operated through the Department of Public Safety-Office of Homeland Security.

When the relationship between MRPC and HSOC began in FY2005, the first grant awarded to the project was \$506,593. Since then, grant funds consistently decreased to as low as \$49,354 in FY2012, before it increased to \$106,494 in FY2014, but decreased again in FY2015 and FY2016 when it awarded MRPC with a \$90,497.47 grant each year. Between 2016 and 2018, Region I saw a slight increase in funding; unfortunately, the grant program has seen a decrease in funding from \$93,959.39 in FY2018, \$90,930.58 in FY2019, \$90,963.60 in FY2020 and \$89,918.12 in FY2021. As fiscal agent and regional administrator, MRPC has fiscal responsibility for all grant funds and is responsible for all procurement and payment of vendors and coordinating quarterly and special meetings of the local HSOC.

From that grant program, MRPC was awarded funds to continue training CERT teams in each of the six counties and to provide ID badges for the use of county first responders. In 2020-2021, MRPC worked with Rolla Emergency Management/Fire Department, Waynesville Police Department and Salem Memorial District Hospital to purchase MOSWIN capable radios and worked with the Office of Homeland Security to update inventory listings.

Hazard Mitigation Planning

In 2020, MRPC began working to update the Gasconade County Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP), using grant funds through the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) and county funds. The Pulaski and Phelps counties hazard mitigation plans were adopted in 2020 and 2021, respectively. Gasconade County's plan was also approved in 2021. Staff began work on the Crawford, Osage and Washington counties plans in 2021. The purpose of these plans are to help jurisdictions become less vulnerable to natural hazards such as tornadoes, flooding and winter storms. To be eligible for hazard mitigation grants, counties must maintain a current plan, which means updating every five years.

HUD Housing Choice Voucher Program

In 1976, MRPC began operating the HUD Section 8 Housing Program through the Phelps County Public Housing Agency. The program provides very-low income families with greater access to decent, safe and affordable housing in the six original counties. (Osage County is served through the Boone County housing agency. Pulaski County is served by Missouri Ozarks Community Action, Inc.) Through the Housing Choice Voucher program in FY2020-21, MRPC assisted, on average, 739 families each month by providing over \$3.2 million in rental assistance for the year. PHA staff also performed 1,106 tenant inspections.

HUD Section 8 Homeownership

In 2006, the Phelps County PHA, which is administered by MRPC, began the Section 8 Homeownership Program. The homeownership program allows first-time homeowners to use their voucher subsidy to meet their monthly mortgage payment and other homeownership expenses. Clients have pur-

chased homes in Phelps and Crawford counties. Laclede, Franklin and Pulaski counties allow the Phelps County PHA to administer the program in their counties. To date, 27 homes have been purchased by clients through the Section 8 Homeownership program.

Family Self-Sufficiency

The HUD Family Self-Sufficiency program, administered by MRPC through the Phelps County Public Housing Agency, empowers participants to become free of welfare assistance. Once a participant signs up, a housing/FSS coordinator aids that participant in assessing current and future needs, then assists in the development of an action plan. This plan will enable the family to reach the ultimate goal of self-sufficiency. Participants are contacted frequently to ensure they progress toward their goals. Employment and enrollment in vocational training or post-secondary education, which leads to higher paying professional positions, is encouraged for participants.

The FSS program also offers an incentive program that establishes an escrow account in the participant's name. As a participant pays more in rent, HUD makes a contribution equal to the increase in the portion of the rent paid by the participant. This savings account has the potential to grow into thousands of dollars. Upon successful completion of the contract, this money is paid to the participant. Of the 73 families in the FSS program, 29 families have escrow accounts, totaling \$85,990. In FY 2020-21, 13 clients successfully completed their FSS contracts and received their escrow accounts, which had a combined total of \$17,713.

Naturally Meramec Consortium

MRPC continues to work with the Naturally Meramec Consortium in the eight-county region to promote local agri-tourism businesses and producers/buyers in the region. This project is funded through USDA. The Meramec Region has a plethora of options for tourists visiting the region and the consortium works to ensure the region is a destination spot for potential and returning visitors through online and print advertising on social media and in magazines such as *Missouri Life*. The consortium strives to increase the use of local products and services to grow jobs and to be a destination where visitors stay for more than a day. This year, MRPC held a virtual speed-date event that helped to connect local producers and buyers. Additionally, the consortium coordinated an entrepreneurial workshop, one MO Extension training, and established a new regional agri-tourism trail for the website (www.naturallymeramec.org).

MRPC Rural Opioid Initiatives

The Meramec Region's Opioid Affected Youth Initiative was awarded funding in October 2019 for all eight counties in the Meramec Region through a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. The consortium was solidified in February 2020, and is comprised of stakeholders from the region, including approximately 12 professionals from healthcare and behavioral health organizations. The consortium advised MRPC project staff on the needs, resources and data from the region as it pertains to opioid misuse. In Fiscal Year 2020-21, the OAYI initiative worked to provide "Too Good for Drugs" curriculum in Cuba, St. James, Rolla, Belle and Potosi schools, coordinated two youth seeking safety programs in Linn and Rolla, provided two seeking safety programs for at-risk families through the 25th Judicial Circuit, hosted eight awareness walks (one in each Meramec Region county), held four community conversations, coordinated two Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Opportunities: Breaking the Cycle of Opioid Misuse program, provided 362 backpacks to 11 regional Head Start programs full of essential care items and published three video testimonials with the

Stories from Our Region - The Opioid Epidemic project.

The Meramec Rural Opioid Program was awarded funding in September 2018 for Phelps, Maries, Crawford and Dent Counties through a grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration. The consortium has continued work in the community to help educate and inform the public of the effects of opioids and how/where to seek help. MRPC continued teaching the “Seeking Safety” curriculum to the Maries County jail residents where they learned coping mechanisms to help them deal with addiction and trauma in their daily lives. Additional work includes partnering with Invent Yourself, LLC to work with inmates in regional jails and local recovery groups on recovery, resumes, and re-entering into the workforce once released, hosting four awareness walks in Belle, St. James, Steelville and Salem, and partnered with Prevention Consultants to provide the “Too Good For Drugs” program to reach 1,661 students in Crawford, Dent, Maries and Phelps counties.

Services to Local Governments

Ordinance Codification: Since 1975, MRPC has provided ordinance codification services to cities — including Rolla, Potosi, Vienna, Newburg, Cuba, Bland, and Freeburg — for a fee. Staff prepare an electronic version of all ordinances, indexes and tracks their history and updates them on a schedule selected by the city. MRPC also makes the ordinances available online for the ease of residents, contractors and developers.

Floodplain Management: MRPC serves as the floodplain coordinator for three counties and two cities. Staff handles public awareness and outreach and processes floodplain permit requests in Crawford, Phelps and Maries counties and the cities of Meta and Salem.

Inspection Services: MRPC offers lead, mold and asbestos inspection services to its member governments and private industry. MRPC also assists the city of Belle and Bland with code enforcement issues, under contract.

GIS Services: MRPC offers GIS services to local governments on a contractual basis. MRPC has a full-time GIS specialist on staff.

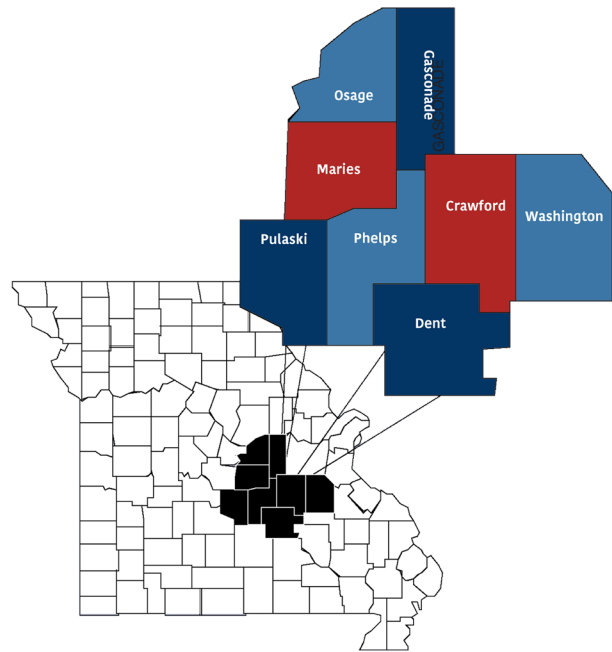
Meramec Region Facts

The Meramec Region is an eight-county area located in the southeast-central portion of Missouri. The area covers over 5,131 square miles and includes 36 municipalities. The region is marked with gently rolling hills, deep valleys and plateaus. Numerous rivers and streams transverse the region, creating a natural draw for outdoor enthusiasts. Many of the small towns are industrial havens, yet the small farmer is still prevalent. Many wineries dot the countryside, making it a popular draw for tourists.

General Demographics

In 2020, the eight-county Meramec Region was home to 196,084 people, reflecting a decrease of 5,170 people from the 2010 decennial census. Individual 2020 estimates county populations range from a low of 8,432 in Maries County to 53,955 in Pulaski County. Pulaski County saw a increase of 3.2 percent in the 2020 Decennial Census from the 2010 census. However, all counties in the region, except for Pulaski, showed a decrease in population as reported in the 2020 census data compared to the 2010 census data. Comparing the 2010 census data to the 2020 census data, the state of Missouri is estimated to have grown by only 2.8 percent.

The largest city in the region continues to



be Rolla, the county seat of Phelps County. It has 20,169 people by 2019 ACS estimates, up from 19,559 in 2010. The smallest city is Morrison in Gasconade County with 85 residents.

The region's population in 2019 showed slightly more males than females, just as it did in 2010. The region's median age in 2019 was 40.4 years, which is slightly older than the median age in the state and nation. The median age in the region has been steadily increasing.

The region is predominantly white with a 14.7 percent minority population according 2020 census data. This is up from 9.2 percent in 2010. Pulaski County is the region's most racially diverse county. It is home to the Department of Defense's Fort Leonard Wood.

Income, Poverty and Unemployment

Incomes in the Meramec Region continue to be lower than the state or nation. The region's median income, based on 2019 Census infor-

Demographics 2020

Population.....	196,084
White	85.3%
Black.....	4.2%
Asian.....	1.8%
American Indian.....	0.6%
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific.....	0.2%
Some Other Race.....	1.2%
Two or More Races	6.7%

Source: 2020 Decennial Census Data

mation, was \$48,726. The state median income was \$55,461 while the U.S. median income was \$62,843.

The region's median income is 87.9 percent of the state's rate and only 77.5 percent of the nation's rate. The majority of families in Missouri and families in the nation make \$35,000 or more a year, as well as the majority of the families in the Meramec Region, according to 2019 ACS data.

The region's poverty rate also runs higher than the state and nation's. Meramec residents living in poverty in 2019 numbered 31,388, which represents 15.8 percent of the population. This is a decrease from 2018's 17.3 percent, but still higher than the state and national percentage, which both decreased in 2019. Some 13.3 percent of all Missouri residents live in poverty while 13.1 percent of all U.S. residents were living in poverty in 2019.

Median Household Incomes

Meramec Region	\$48,726
Missouri	\$55,461
U.S.	\$62,843
Region as % of State	87.9%
Region as % of Nation	77.5%

Source: 2019 ACS 5-year estimates and MRPC Analysis

Household Income

Households in the region	73,273
Under \$10,000	8.2%
\$10,000-14,999	6.1%
\$15,000-24,999	11.7%
\$25,000-34,999	10.7%
\$35,000 & over	63.4%

Source: 2019 ACS 5-year estimates and MRPC Analysis

Persons in Poverty

Meramec Region	15.8%
Missouri	13.3%
U.S.	13.1%

Source: 2019 ACS 5-year estimates and MRPC Analysis

Population by Age

Under 5	5.8%
0-17	22%
18 & Over	78%
65+	15.6%
Median Age	40.4 years

Source: 2019 ACS 5-year estimates and MRPC Analysis

Phelps County had the highest poverty rate in the region with 19.2 percent. The lowest was Osage County with 7.2 percent.

The region, for several decades, has been plagued with high unemployment rates. Washington and Dent counties experienced mine closings while other counties lost shoe and textile manufacturers. For the past few years, the region's counties have experienced decreases in their unemployment rates. Despite COVID-19 layoffs, the November 2021 unemployment rate for the region was 2.5 percent, slightly lower than the state average at 2.6 percent, and even lower than the 3.6 percent in 2020. The U.S. average for Jan.-Nov. 2021 was 5.52 percent. This is a good sign for the region as far as employment is concerned, especially during a pandemic.

Unemployment

Employed	77,997
Unemployed	1,963
Total Labor Force	79,960
Region's unemployment rate	3.71%
State's unemployment rate	4.03%
U.S. unemployment rate	5.52%

*All data compiled with Jan. to Nov. 2021 data.

Source: Missouri Department of Economic Development, MRPC

Housing

The Meramec Region has 86,737 total housing units with 73,833 occupied, according to the 2020 census data. The average number of individuals per unit in the region is 2.45 people, which is slightly higher than the state average of 2.41 people

according to the 2019 ACS number.

The number of occupied housing units in the region appears to be increasing, as there were 73,273 in 2019 and 73,833 in 2020.

Of the 73,273 occupied units in 2019, 48,963 are owner occupied while 24,310 are renter occupied, according to the 2019 ACS five-year estimates. In 2019, the median value of a home in the region was \$129,400, compared to a state average of \$157,200. The average monthly rent for a home in the region in 2019 was \$646.75 while the state average was \$830. The majority of the housing stock — 78.5 percent — was built in 1960 or later, as indicated by the 2019 ACS five year estimates. These numbers remain the newest most accurate

Education Levels

2019 percent of adults 25 years and older with at least a high school diploma.

Meramec Region	86%
Missouri	89.9%
U.S.....	88%

Source: 2019 ACS 5-year estimates and MRPC Analysis

estimates at this time.

Education Levels

Some 86 percent of the region's population aged 25 and older have at least a high school diploma, according to the 2019 ACS five-year estimates. This percentage is 3.9 percent less than the state and 2 percent less than the U.S. When compared to the 2010 percentage of 81.6 percent, the region improved in the percentage of adults 25 years and older who had at least a high school diploma by 4.4 percent.

The region's most educated county in 2019 was Pulaski, with 92.8 percent of adults with high school diplomas or higher education level.

The Economy

Over the years, the region has diversified its economy—after taking hard hits in the mining and

Housing at a Glance

Number of housing units in region..	89,276
Number occupied	73,273
Number owner occupied.....	48,963
Number renter occupied	24,310
Vacant units	16,003
Persons per unit in region	2.45
Persons per unit in state	2.41
Median value in region	\$129,400
Median value in state.....	\$157,200
Median monthly rent in region	\$646.75
Median monthly rent in state	\$830
Housing units in region	
built before 1939.....	8,235
Housing units in region	
built 1940-59.....	10,968
Housing units in region	
built 1960-1979.....	22,399
Housing units in region	
built 1980-99.....	27,212
Housing units in region	
built 2000 and after.....	20,462

Source: 2019 ACS 5-year estimates and MRPC Analysis

textile industries 25 to 35 years ago. In the region, services was the largest employment sector with over 36,000 employees, followed by manufacturing and retail trade.

Health care, education and social assistance are the highest employment sectors in the region with 20,392 employees, which makes up 25.7 percent of employment in the region, according to 2019 ACS five-year estimates.

The number of manufacturing firms in the region has decreased slightly.

The 2021 Missouri Directory of Manufacturers listed 471 manufacturing firms in the region, compared to 473 in 2020.

The major public employer in the region is Fort Leonard Wood with more than 12,000 day-time jobs followed by the Missouri University of

Science and Technology with 2,000 full-time and part-time employees and Phelps County Regional Medical Center with more than 1,700 employees. The region's top major private employer is Quaker Window Products with 800 plus employees. Quaker has facilities in Maries and Osage counties.

While the number of jobs in the region increases, many residents still travel outside their home county to work outside the region.

Transportation

Three federal highways pass through the region: Interstate 44, U.S. 63 and U.S. 50. Interstate 44 bisects the region in a northeast to southwest direction and serves as the major highway between St. Louis and Springfield with Rolla as the half way point.

U.S. 63 connects Vienna and Rolla with Jefferson City, and U.S. 50 runs east and west through Gasconade and Osage counties. Most highways in the region are state highways, and most are narrow, winding and curvy.

Several Meramec communities have airports. The Waynesville-St. Robert Regional Airport at Forney Field in Pulaski County is located on the Fort Leonard Wood military base and is accessible to the public. The airport offers commuter jet service and is the only airport in the region featuring an air traffic control tower.

The Rolla National Airport, located at Vichy and operated by the city of Rolla, and the Sullivan Airport, operated by the city of Sullivan, are defined as B-2 airports and are used primarily by airplanes with approach speeds up to 120 knots and wingspans up to 79 feet. Other airports in the region—Washington County, Salem, Cuba, Owensville, Hermann and State Technical College of Missouri at Linn—are classified as B-1s, which means they serve airplanes with approach speeds up to 120 knots and wingspans up to 49 feet.

Three railways serve the region. Burlington

Regional Industrial Employment

Employed persons 16 and over.....	79,370
Agriculture, forestry, fishing & mining	1,964
Construction	5,283
Manufacturing.....	10,546
Transportation/warehousing & utilities	3,432
Wholesale trade.....	1,167
Retail trade	10,403
Information.....	1,062
Finance, insurance, real estate & rental/leasing	2,886
Professional, scientific, mgmt., admin. & waste mgmt. ser.	4,839
Educational, health & social ser.....	20,392
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation & food ser.....	7,549
Other services	3,449
Public Administration	6,398

Source: 2019 ACS 5-year estimates and MRPC Analysis

Northern operates the most miles of track in the region. That rail line follows the general route of I-44 through Crawford, Phelps and Pulaski counties.

Rail service in the region is not as prevalent as it once was. Several miles of the former Rock Island rail have been neglected since the early 1990s. In 2015, Missouri Central Railroad railbanked the line in December 2021, the state of Missouri accepted the 144 miles of railbed, making it a part of the Missouri State Parks system. The development of a walking and biking trail is moving forward.

Amtrak also crosses the Meramec Region and stops at its very northeast point at Hermann.

Navigable water transportation is provided at three locations in the region, all on the Missouri River. Those sites are Hermann, Gasconade and Chamois.

Meramec Regional Planning Commission's Board of Commissioners

CRAWFORD COUNTY

Cody Leathers, mayor of Cuba
Vacant, representing for-profit
Mary Heywood, representing the unemployed
Margie Brine, representing the mayor of Bourbon
Terry Beckham, mayor of Steelville
Leo Sanders, presiding commissioner

DENT COUNTY

Earl Brown, representing people with disabilities
Ray Walden, representing the mayor of Salem Kim
Steelman
Vacant, representing tourism
Darrell Skiles, presiding commissioner
Robert Parsons, representing Farming/Agri Business
Gary Brown, representing for-profit

GASCONADE COUNTY

Larry Miskel, presiding commissioner
Mark Farran, representing the mayor of Bland Lee
Medlock
Shannon Grus, mayor of Rosebud
John Kamler, mayor of Owensville
Debbie Green, mayor of Gasconade
Jason Koenigsfeld, representing the mayor of
Morrison Melissa Strobe
Ron Kraettli, representing for-profit
Patricia Heaney, representing the mayor of Hermann
Bruce Cox

MARIES COUNTY

T.C. James, mayor of Vienna
Ray Schwartz, representing for-profit
Vic Stratman, presiding commissioner
Steve Vogt, representing the mayor of Belle Josh
Seaver

OSAGE COUNTY

Rich Eisterhold, representing for-profit
Dr. Don Claycomb, representing education
Tammy Massman, mayor of Westphalia
Emily Sommerer, mayor of Meta

Darryl Griffin, presiding commissioner
Darryl Haller, chairman of Freeburg
Jan Haviland, representing industry
Dwight Massey, mayor of Linn
Ryan Davis, chairman of Argyle
Elise Brochu, mayor of Chamois

PHELPS COUNTY

Dave Selzer, representing healthcare
Terry Austin, mayor of Edgar Springs
Jake Harlan, representing for-profit
James Poucher, mayor of Newburg
Tom Coots, representing the mayor of Rolla Lou
Magdits
John Meusch, representing lending institutions
Doug Smith, mayor of Doolittle
Shane Anselm, representing labor
Randy Verkamp, presiding commissioner
Janet Walker, representing minorities
Jim Fleming, representing the mayor of St. James
Rick Krawiecki

PULASKI COUNTY

Brenda Doyle, representing seniors
Michael Dunbar, representing for-profit
Mike Null, mayor of Dixon
Jerry Brown, mayor of Waynesville
Glen Smith, mayor of Crocker
Gene Newkirk, presiding commissioner
George Lauritson, mayor of St. Robert

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Vacant, representing for-profit
John Casey, representing transportation
Mary Pat West, representing the mayor of Potosi
Joseph Blount
T.R. Dudley, representing the chairman of Mineral
Point Tom Degonia
Greg Bates, mayor of Irondale
John Robinson III, chairman of Caledonia
Dave Sansegraw, presiding commissioner
Laurel Boisonault, representing small business

2022 MRPC Leadership

Board & Staff

Chairman:Steve Vogt, Representing the City of Belle
Vice Chairman:.....Mary Heywood, At-Large Unemployed
Treasurer:Darryl Griffin, Osage County Presiding Commissioner
Secretary:Larry Miskel, Gasconade County Presiding Commissioner
Executive Director:Bonnie J. Prigge
Assistant Director:Tammy Snodgrass
Fiscal Officer:Linda Loughridge
Environmental Programs Manager:Tammy Snodgrass
Project Development Manager:Kelly Sink
Housing Programs Manager:Donald Keeney
Planning Manager:Anne Freand

2022 Associate Members

PLATINUM MEMBERS

Archer-Elgin
First Community National Bank
Phelps County Bank
Legends Bank
Pulaski County Sewer District #1

GOLD MEMBERS

None

SILVER MEMBERS

Argyle Catering

EXCHANGE MEMBERS

Hermann Area Chamber of Commerce
Owensville Area Chamber of Commerce
Rolla Area Chamber of Commerce
St. James Chamber of Commerce
Salem Area Chamber of Commerce
Vienna Area Chamber of Commerce
Washington County Chamber of Commerce

2022

State Priorities in the Meramec Region



*A voluntary council of local governments
serving the Meramec Region*

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT

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