

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE CEDS

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for Southeastern Wisconsin: 2021-2025 was prepared under the guidance of *13 CFR Chapter III, Part 303, Section 303.7*. The purpose of the CEDS is to bring together members of the public and private sectors to develop a strategy-driven plan for regional economic development. Regions must prepare a new CEDS at least every five years for communities and organizations within the Region to qualify for funding through the U.S. Economic Development Administration's (EDA) Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance programs. In addition, adoption of a CEDS is required for EDA designation of the Region as an Economic Development District (EDD).

EDA Mission and Policies

The mission of EDA is to lead the federal economic development agenda by promoting innovation and competitiveness, preparing regions for growth and success in the global economy. EDA's investment policy is designed to establish a foundation for sustainable job growth and the building of durable regional economies throughout the United States. This foundation builds on two key economic drivers: innovation and regional collaboration. EDA maintains that innovation is key to global competitiveness, new and better jobs, a resilient economy, and the attainment of national economic goals, and that regional collaboration is essential for economic recovery. Regions are the centers of competition in the new global economy and those that work together to leverage resources and use their strengths to overcome weaknesses will fare better than those that do not. EDA focuses on strategic investments to foster job creation and attract private investment to support development in economically distressed areas of the United States, and in areas that require assistance to recover from emergencies and natural disasters.

CEDS ADOPTION AND FORMATION OF AN EDD

[To be completed after adoption of the CEDS by each of the seven county boards in the Region and by the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission later in 2021.]

CEDS COLLABORATION

The CEDS was led by the Milwaukee 7 Regional Economic Development Partnership (M7) and prepared in collaboration with the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC).

Milwaukee 7 Regional Economic Development Partnership

The Milwaukee 7 Regional Economic Development Partnership—or M7—was created in 2005 to provide a regional economic development platform for the seven Southeastern Wisconsin counties. M7’s founding partners were the Greater Milwaukee Committee (GMC), the Milwaukee Metropolitan Association of Commerce (MMAC), and the City of Milwaukee. The MMAC and its nonprofit affiliate, the Milwaukee Development Corporation, are the operating entities of M7. Funded by investors from both the public and private sectors, M7’s work is accomplished by a dedicated full-time staff housed in downtown Milwaukee at the MMAC offices. M7’s websites, www.choosemilwaukee.com and www.MKE7.com, provide a wealth of information about the Region and business resources for expanding and relocating companies. M7 also operates three linked resource centers—in Milwaukee, Racine, and Kenosha—powered by interactive tools used to recruit and assist businesses with relocation and expansion activities.

The work of the M7 team is overseen by an advisory council co-chaired by representatives or the chairs of the three founding M7 organizations as well as an at-large representative. This “Executive Partners” group includes representatives from many sectors of the regional economic base. Elected officials and economic development directors from all seven counties in the Region are also represented. The Executive Partners membership roster is listed in Appendix A.

The Southeast Wisconsin Regional Economic Partnership (REP) serves as the economic development practitioners council to M7 and consists of the primary economic development professionals from all seven counties, the City of Milwaukee, We Energies, M7, and SEWRPC. This “working group” operates on an informal basis and predates the creation of M7. The REP played an important role in overseeing the development process of the CEDS report, including providing details on each county’s ongoing economic development efforts and existing and planned economic development projects. The membership of the REP is listed in Appendix A.

The CEDS is informed by the regional *Framework for Economic Growth* strategic plan prepared by the M7 in 2014. Preparation of the *Framework for Economic Growth* plan was a collaborative process among business interests, educational institutions, and government representatives serving on a number of M7

advisory committees. The *Framework for Economic Growth* is continually refined based on changing economic conditions and new information, as most recently reflected in M7's *Prosperity 2025* campaign report.

The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission is the official areawide planning agency for the highly urbanized southeastern region of the State. The Commission was created to provide the basic information and planning services necessary to solve problems that transcend the corporate boundaries and fiscal capabilities of the local units of government comprising the Southeastern Wisconsin Region. The Commission consists of 21 members, three from each of the seven member counties.

The Commission's role in the collaborative effort to prepare the CEDS was to provide basic information to support the process and to help ensure that the CEDS reflects objectives and recommendations included in regional plans for the development of Southeastern Wisconsin. More information about the Commission can be found at www.sewrpc.org.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public participation opportunities were made available throughout the process of creating the CEDS. These included two series of public/stakeholder meetings that were held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During the process, information on the CEDS, including the draft CEDS reviewed during the second round of public/stakeholder involvement, was posted at www.sewrpc.org/CEDS. Public/stakeholder involvement opportunities were noticed through e-newsletters, eblasts to interested residents, social media, direct contact with regional stakeholders, and targeted outreach to organizations representing disadvantaged populations. A formal 30-day public comment period was held to specifically obtain comments on the draft CEDS. A summary of public comments and changes to the CEDS to address the comments is provided in Appendix B.

ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

The Region's economic prosperity is linked to its ability to prevent, withstand, and quickly recover from major disruptions to its economic base. Such disruptions could include general downturns that impact demand for locally produced goods and consumer spending; downturns in particular industries critical to the Region's economic activity; and/or other external shocks such as a natural or man-made disaster, exit of a major employer, or the impacts of climate change. Economic resilience is incorporated throughout this report. The Summary Background and SWOT analysis sections identify key vulnerabilities, while the Action Plan provides specific goals, strategies, and actions to counter those vulnerabilities.

It is important to note that the CEDS was prepared during the global COVID-19 pandemic. This was a time of unprecedented uncertainty as it relates to public health and the economy. While the long-term impacts are largely unknown, the CEDS documents short-term impacts and responses to the pandemic in the Region to the extent possible. While the pandemic presents many challenges to the regional economy, it also provides an opportunity to evaluate and improve the Region's economic resilience.