



BIZ HARNEY

Opportunity
COLLABORATIVE

Harney County Opportunities and Impact



HIGH DESERT

Partnership



KELLEY
NONPROFIT CONSULTING

2021 – 2023

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About Harney County

Oregon's rural communities are flush with opportunity and boast bountiful natural resources, co-operative cultures, and tenacious resilience. Harney County is one such place - it teems with both resources and resilience. While remaining deeply rooted to this place and the past, many Harney County residents and organizations are also looking ahead, and the horizon remains as big and bright as the area itself.

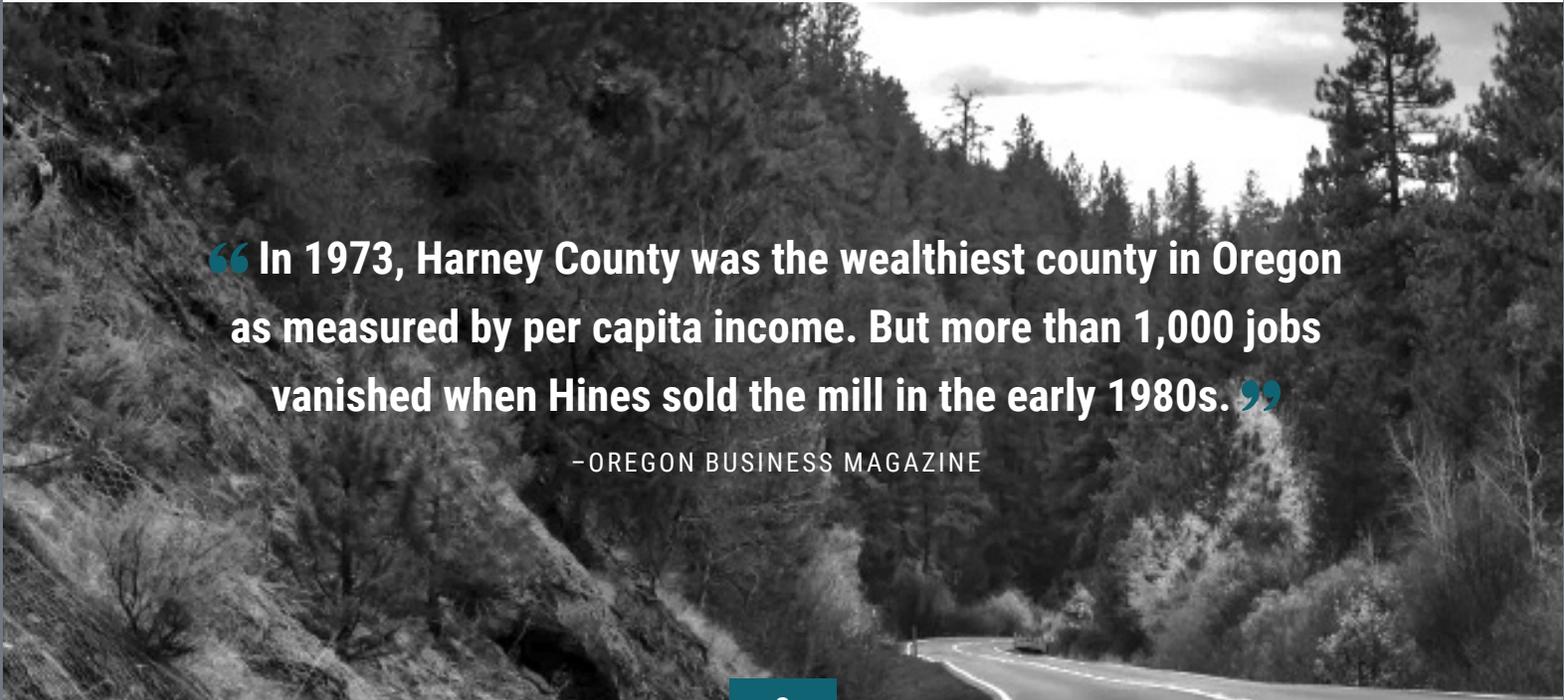
Among Oregon's most sparsely populated rural counties, though, Harney County faces challenges to developing its economy – for example, finding economic uses for the land while respecting the integrity of the landscape and its many flora and fauna. Agriculture is the backbone of the local economy, but the industry is being threatened by rapidly depleting groundwater levels, creating an urgent need to adapt. Rising costs, increasing regulation and a variety of other factors have completely eroded the formerly booming local timber industry. The final closure of the Louisiana Pacific lumber mill in 2007 led to employment and income shortfalls for which no large scale or single-source replacement has been found.

These factors and more have led to the classification of Harney County as one of Oregon's top five Distressed Counties by Business Oregon. Between 1976 and 2016, the number of jobs in Oregon grew by more than 74%, but in Harney County they dropped by 10% (Oregon Office of Economic Analysis, 1976-2016).

Yet, in Harney County, the possibilities feel limitless. As of 2021, Harney County's unemployment rate has fallen to 5.1%. The community holds a consistent message of "we can do this together," despite differences and fiercely-held independence.

Harney is also home to the federally-recognized Burns Paiute Tribal lands, and the Native American population of the region is more than double the state average. The Burns Paiute Tribe is comprised of ancestors from bands of 18 Northern Paiute tribes who shared the Great Basin culture. The traditional homelands of tribal members spanned 5,250 square miles from Nevada and California up to Idaho and across Central and Southern Oregon.

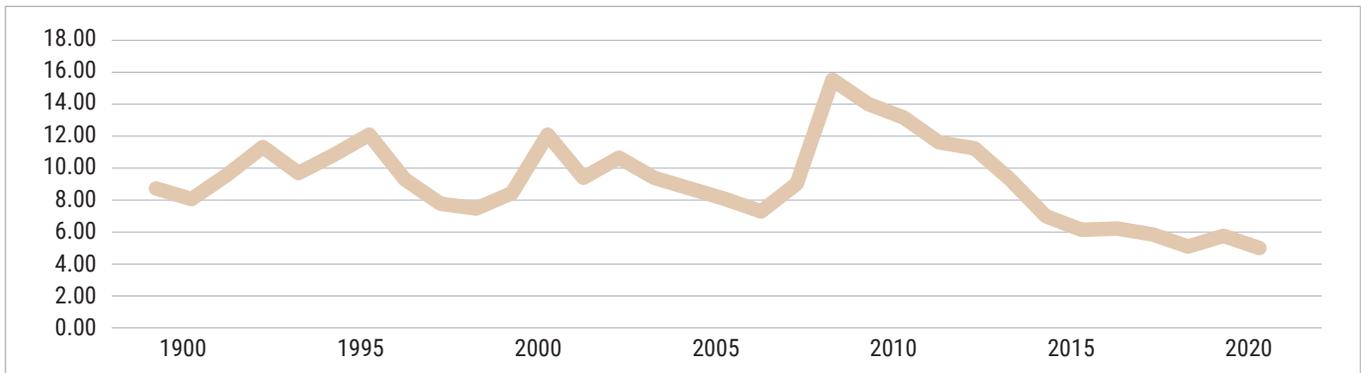
With a creative culture, energized new collaboratives and recent investments in entrepreneur-based economic development, many residents in Harney County feel the future is bright.



“ In 1973, Harney County was the wealthiest county in Oregon as measured by per capita income. But more than 1,000 jobs vanished when Hines sold the mill in the early 1980s. ”

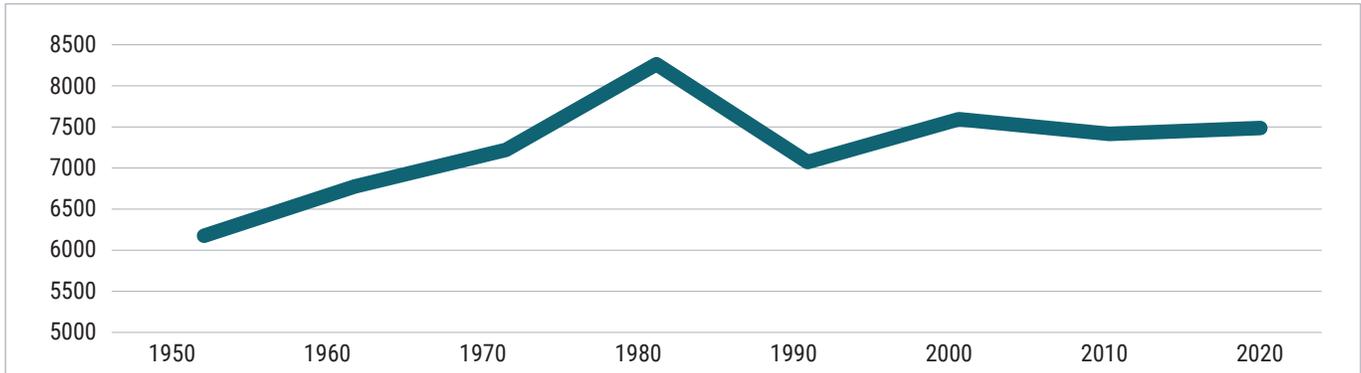
– OREGON BUSINESS MAGAZINE

Harney County Unemployment Rate



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics

Harney County Population



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics

Key Facts

- Harney County's total population is 7,495. Of these residents, 58.8% live in the county's two major towns of Burns and Hines. *(2020 Census Economic Opportunity Analysis Harney County 2021)*
- Harney County is one of the largest and least densely populated counties in Oregon and the United States, with only 0.7 people per square mile. *(Census Quick Facts)*
- The Burns Paiute Tribe has 402 enrolled members, over 50% of whom are under the age of 18. *(Burns Paiute Tribe, 2022)*
- Harney County's median age is 45.1 years, higher than Oregon (39.5 years) and the United States (38.1). Additionally, 25% of Harney's population is 65 years of age or older, significantly higher than the statewide rate (18%). *(US Census Bureau via datacommons.org and census quickfacts)*
- In Harney County, 86.4% of residents identify as White (10% higher than the state of Oregon) and 4.4% identify as American Indian/Alaska Native (more than double the rate in Oregon state-wide). 5.1% identify as Hispanic/Latino (almost 1/3 of Oregon's rate). *(Census.gov quickfacts)*
- Harney voters skew politically conservative. Of the 4,518 ballots tallied in the 2020 Presidential election, 77.5% went Republican, 19.9% went Democrat and 2.6% went to 3rd party and write in votes. 75% of eligible voters cast their ballots. *(Harney County General Election Abstracts, 2020)*
- Harney County's population growth is nearly stagnant, with a change from 7,422 in 2010 to 7,495 in 2020. However, this is reversal of population decrease over the previous 10 year period. *(US Census)*

The unique opportunities in Harney are influenced by a variety of factors, whose combined impacts defy much of the conventional wisdom around economic development. Residents of Harney County are faced with the challenges of moving beyond the present obstacles, while also fully leveraging the area's existing strengths, values, and resources. This will demand creative, specific solutions.

This assessment synthesizes the most recent county-level statistics and community feedback to highlight specific areas for improvement and possible solutions to spur new economic development. Particular attention is given to the factors that support entrepreneurship and the development of a new natural resource economy.

About High Desert Partnership

High Desert Partnership is a 501(c)3 nonprofit that brings people together to solve problems cooperatively through collaborative decision-making. HDP facilitates and supports collaboration that brings positive change in Harney County to ensure the health of the region's forests and wetlands, mitigate wildfire, create positive experiences and opportunities for youth, and enhance the local economy. HDP believes collaboration—the simple practice of working together—is the best way to find common ground solutions for the benefit of the community. HDP creates opportunities to listen and be heard, fostering understanding, building trust, and helping forge unexpected relationships. Through this work, creative and innovative solutions are identified to reshape 'business as usual' in Harney County. This is known as the Harney County Way, and it ensures that the local economy, natural environment, and rural lifestyle can thrive for generations to come.

Working together isn't always quick or easy, but that's ok—HDP is in this for the long-haul. The future of Harney County and preserving its rural way of life is counting on everyone in the community to get this right. This Assessment is a tool to help that happen—so grab some coffee, pull up a seat, and let's get to work!



“Building consensus is slow work, but if you're going to fight about it, we don't have that time either.”

—BRENDA SMITH,
HIGH DESERT PARTNERSHIP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO

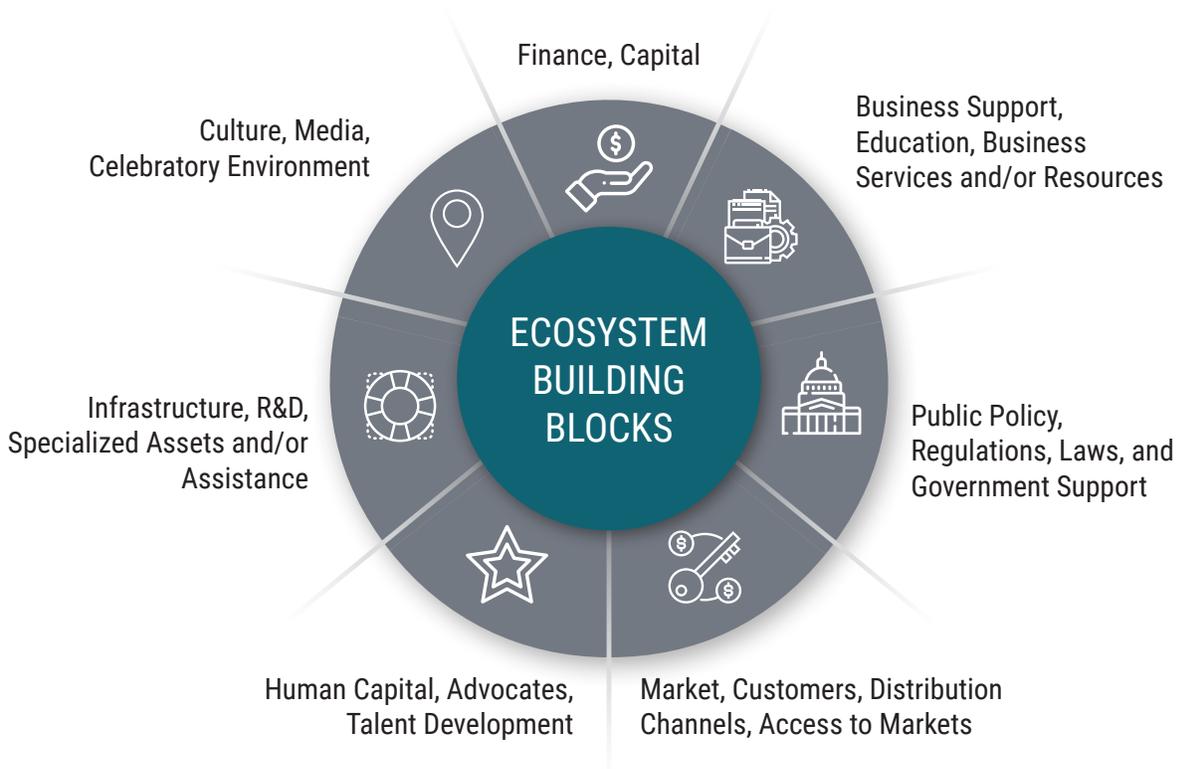
Assessment Framework

Entrepreneurial ecosystems are defined as “the factors that interact to create an environment that favors (or does not favor) entrepreneurial and small businesses development” (Rural Opportunity Initiative Factsheet, 2018). The objective of this Opportunities and Impacts assessment is to provide an overview of the conditions, resources, and regulations that influence the ability to start and operate a business in Harney County, Oregon.

Developed in partnership with the Business Oregon Rural Opportunity Initiative, this document is modeled after a state-based framework developed to holistically analyze the local environment in which businesses start up and operate. This assessment’s categories were drawn from commonalities in previous entrepreneurial ecosystems utilized by Business Oregon and other regional partners including the Kauffman Foundation. These focus components build on the work of these hard-working allies and were selected in order to inclusively observe the Harney County economy in a format that allows each component to be assessed for strengths and weakness singularly and as they overlap with one another.

This framework has seven areas of focus:

- **CULTURE:** Culture, Media, and Celebratory Culture
- **CAPITAL:** Finance, Capital
- **SUPPORTIVE SERVICES:** Business Support, Education, Business Services and Resources
- **POLICY:** Public Policy, Regulations, Law, Government Support
- **MARKET:** Market, Customers, Distribution Channels, Access to Markets
- **PEOPLE:** Human Capital, Advocates, Talent Development
- **INFRASTRUCTURE:** Infrastructure, R&D, and Specialized Assets and Assistance



Assessment Format

This assessment focuses primarily on county level conditions, though also includes state-level factors as they apply. Each section provides a comprehensive reflection on the status of each Ecosystem Building Block within Harney County. Qualitative observations from community surveys have also been included to provide a full picture of economic life in Harney County.

The development of this Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Assessment was supported by a grant from Business Oregon's Rural Opportunity Initiative, awarded to High Desert Partnership in partnership with Harney County Court and Harney County Economic Development. The goal of Business Oregon's Rural Opportunity Initiative is to build capacity among rural communities as they strengthen entrepreneurship-based economic development. The initiative is intentionally structured to catalyze local opportunities that amplify local priorities and resources and create prosperity across rural Oregon.

This document is intended as an internal resource, compiling the latest research available in combination with community input, to identify strengths and opportunities within the ecosystem that can be targeted to improve the environment for new business development and existing business expansion. For some components, major obstacles have been identified, and examples of recent community action to address these impediments are highlighted. For others, the lack of available information remains itself a barrier to progress, and this assessment suggests areas of research for further exploration.

In addition to the quantitative and demographic information, this assessment collected original data via community surveys and personal interviews conducted with key Harney County business, government, Tribal, and community leaders. Interviewees were asked to discuss each component of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Harney County from their perspective and to rank each component in relation to the others. Community feedback (and key highlighted quotes) represent personal input to provide a variety of perspectives about Harney County's economy.

In recent years, Harney County has been the recipient of a variety of resources (funding and otherwise) from the federal, state, and county levels. Each of these resources is tied to its own advisory and action committees consisting of local residents, success metrics, program components, and more. Many of these efforts have shared goals, which results in the community often coming together to answer questions, gather data, and move the needle forward on a multitude of initiatives. Yet, the data from, and results of, these meetings and initiatives can be disjointed, and are not always shared or accessible. This means it can be difficult for residents to see the impact of their work.

This report will serve as a central place where cross-sector, county-wide information can live (all in one place!) and be easily available to all. It will also help us collectively gauge, as a community, the success of our combined efforts. Overall, it is the aim of High Desert Partnership to consistently update this document to 1) reflect new data, and 2) best support the efforts of community changemakers. By using this assessment tool to highlight improvement areas through the organization's collaborative decision-making framework, we as a community can make large-scale, innovative shifts to the Harney economic ecosystem.



Culture

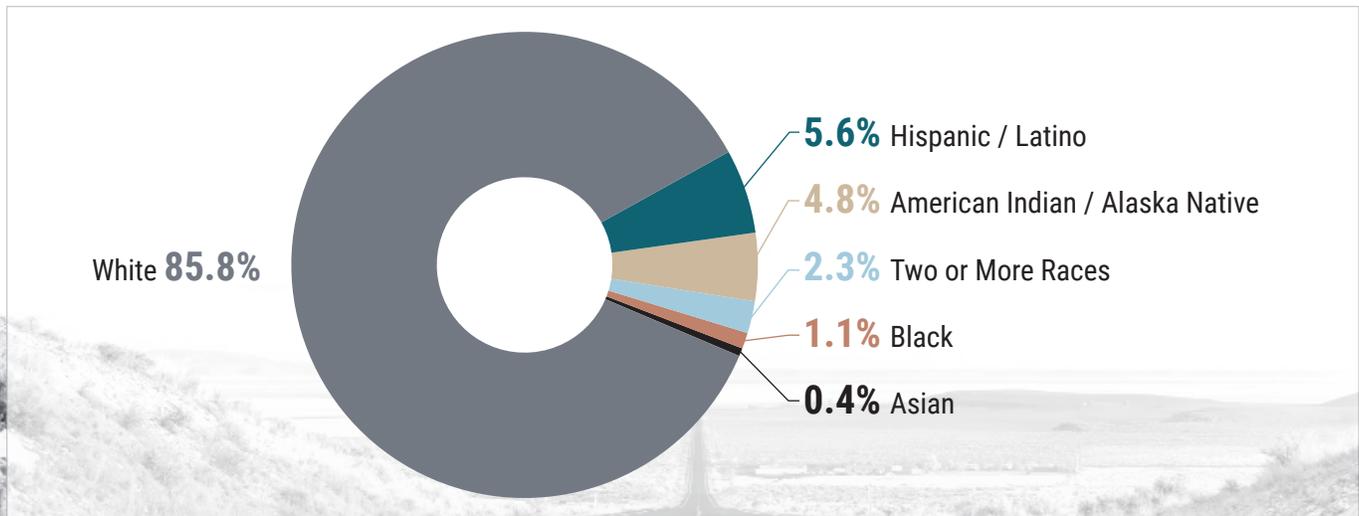
New Growth

Since our last report, median household income has increased by 10%, but this gain has been outpaced by a 19% increase in the cost of living. Revitalization of downtown Burns main street has continued, with an additional \$200,000 grant from Oregon Parks and Rec, and the Burns Main Street Task Force is working to assist more businesses with accessing this funding. Additionally, the Harney County events calendar has filled up again, with COVID-related closures ending and in-person events returning.

Key Facts

- The median household income in Harney County is \$43,387, about 2/3rds of the Oregon state median and a 10% increase from 2019. *(Census.gov quickfacts)*
- The median home value in Harney County is \$140,300, a 53% increase from 2019. *(Census.gov quickfacts)*
- The annual cost of living for a two-parent, two-child family in Harney County is \$92,019 per year, about \$7,000 - \$18,000 lower than the metropolitan areas of Oregon, and an 18% increase from 2019. *(Living Wage Calculator, MIT.edu)*
- 4.8% of residents identify as Native American, a 50% increase from the previous census and more than 2.5x the statewide rate. *(US Census Bureau, July 20)*

Harney County Demographics



“I feel the Harney County community is one of the best kept secrets in the state. I really can't imagine living anywhere else. I couldn't be prouder of my community and the resiliency it has demonstrated in face of a myriad of significant challenges. Our community has demonstrated an unmatched willingness to consistently choose communication and collaboration over contention to address those challenges.”

- DUSTIN JOHNSON, RANGE SCIENTIST WITH OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION SERVICES



What We Know

STRENGTH | Main Street Revitalization

The Burns Main Street Task Force was created in 2016, in order to apply for funding through the State of Oregon Parks and Rec department. Since then, Burns Main Street has received a \$100,000 grant in 2017 to renovate the Central Hotel (originally built in 1929), \$200,000 in 2019 to restore historic storefronts in downtown Burns including Spark Mercantile, and \$200,000 in 2022 to renovate the corner of Highway 20 and Broadway. These efforts are supporting the tourism economy by providing places to stay and shop, which each effort preserving historic buildings and improving capacity for small businesses. This is a biennial funding opportunity, with the next application open for 2023 (the 2021 opportunity was delayed to 2022, with 2023 returning to the regular schedule). This opportunity is open to buildings with a façade on Broadway, no further north than D Street.



STRENGTH | Encouraging Inter-Business Support

In a recent survey, many local business owners reported that the business culture in Harney County had noticeably grown in the last several years. They reported a desire to maintain small businesses, rather than big box retailers from outside the community, and that businesses in Harney thrive on trust and personal relationships. While this is a great asset, it also creates barriers to entry for newer firms, who may lack the trust of established owners and struggle to be accepted into the business community. These cultural barriers to entry are obstacles, but the tight-knit business community of Harney has potential to be a strong asset if channeled effectively.



STRENGTH | Helpful Local Allies

Entrepreneurs in Harney County can find strong support from established businesses. Many of the business owners surveyed reported that they were willing to help as needed, demonstrating authentic passion for helping new entrepreneurs. There is real interest in helping the community as a whole. One business owner, whose business was only a few years old, reported that the network of supports already feels better for new businesses.

STRENGTH | A CULTURE OF COLLABORATION

One of the great strengths of Harney County is the willingness of its people to work together collaboratively to solve complex issues. This collaboration, bringing together the diverse voices of ranchers and businesses, ecologists and conservationists, youth and adults, and representatives from the Burns Paiute Tribe, ensures that everyone has a seat at the table. It has led to important developments in forest stewardships, business development, and more.

OPPORTUNITY | Cross-Cultural Connections

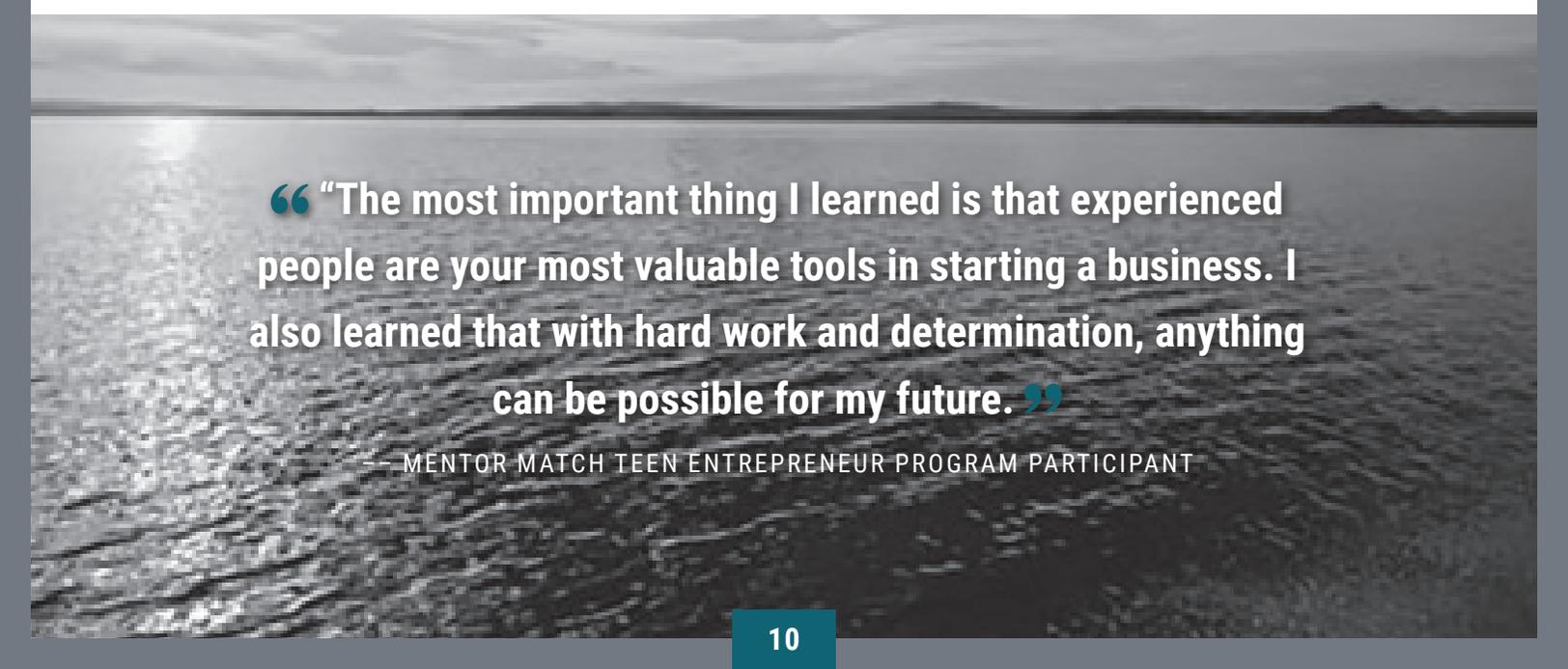
One goal of the Burns Paiute Tribe's 2025 Comprehensive Plan is incorporating "significant improvements in our ability to demonstrate our culture to a broader audience as well as sustain our historically significant heritage for the future." This goal dovetails with High Desert Partnership's strong stance of inclusion for marginalized community members, and HDP worked with the Burns Paiute Tribe to secure funding from Business Oregon to further this goal by supporting the development of Native-owned businesses. In their first year of funding, the BPT registered 3 new LLCs with the State of Oregon. As Tribal Council Member Tracy Kennedy said, "the idea that Tribal members have the skills and abilities to own their own businesses has been life changing."

OPPORTUNITY | Unifying Shared Interests

Among survey respondents, we found a strong desire for economic development strategies, but little consensus on what these are. A great opportunity for High Desert Partnership's collaborative decision-making is the development of strategic plans that unify the varied but overlapping visions for Harney's economic future.

OPPORTUNITY | Enhancing Celebratory Culture for Entrepreneurs

Harney County is home to recurring events that drive tourism dollars to the area. Many event organizers expressed unfilled vendor spaces at recent events: Working with these event organizers to enhance these events' support of small businesses in Harney's Entrepreneurial Ecosystem represents an opportunity to build more support into the region's existing cultural assets. Unfilled niches for event support also exist, event coordinators rely on companies outside Harney County for fair amusements and supplies.



“The most important thing I learned is that experienced people are your most valuable tools in starting a business. I also learned that with hard work and determination, anything can be possible for my future.”

— MENTOR MATCH TEEN ENTREPRENEUR PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

Looking Ahead

High Desert Partnership's Biz Harney Opportunity Collaborative initiative is working to build a culture that is conducive to entrepreneurial activity and business growth, by supporting sustainable business start-ups with coaching, connections, and advocacy to regional policymakers. This assessment pulls together the available resources, opportunities, and strengths within Harney County.

ENTREPRENEURIAL EVENTS CALENDAR

This table lists events within Harney County that offer vending opportunities for businesses and bring in tourism dollars. This list is designed to help small businesses find year-round market spaces for their goods and services. Actual dates vary by year.

January	February	March
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Harney Chamber Banquet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central Oregon Flea Market in Burns http://centraloregonflea.com/burns-event/ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4-H Fundraiser Dinner, Burns Elks Lodge RMEF Banquet & Auction
April	May	June
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Harney County Migratory Bird Festival migratorybirdfestival.com Women's Circle 100 Striped Sock Walk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trail of Hope 5K Run (Harney District Hospital) Seneca's Annual Oyster Feed Crane Union High School Graduation Burns High School Graduation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skull 120/60/30 Grind Race AdventureHarney.com High Desert Fiddlers Country Music Jamboree facebook.com/highdesertfiddlers/ Free Fishing Day Pioneer Day Obsidian Days Archaeology Roadshow & Cultural Crawl
July	August	September
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Burns Bike Brew Facebook.com/burnsbikebrew Hines Community Junket Ranch Rodeo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demolition Derby Co.Harney.OR.US Frenchglen Jamboree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Harney County Fair and Rodeo Harneyfairgrounds.com
October	November	December
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Xi Delta gamma Annual Harvest Festival, Chili Cook-off, and Apple Pie Contest HarneyCounty.Chamber Master.com Trick or Treat Street Parade Central Oregon Flea Market in Burns http://centraloregonflea.com/burns-event/ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pioneer Presbyterian Church Annual Harvest Festival and Bazaar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Home Spun Craft Bazaar Burns Downtown Christmas Jamboree and Parade

Capital

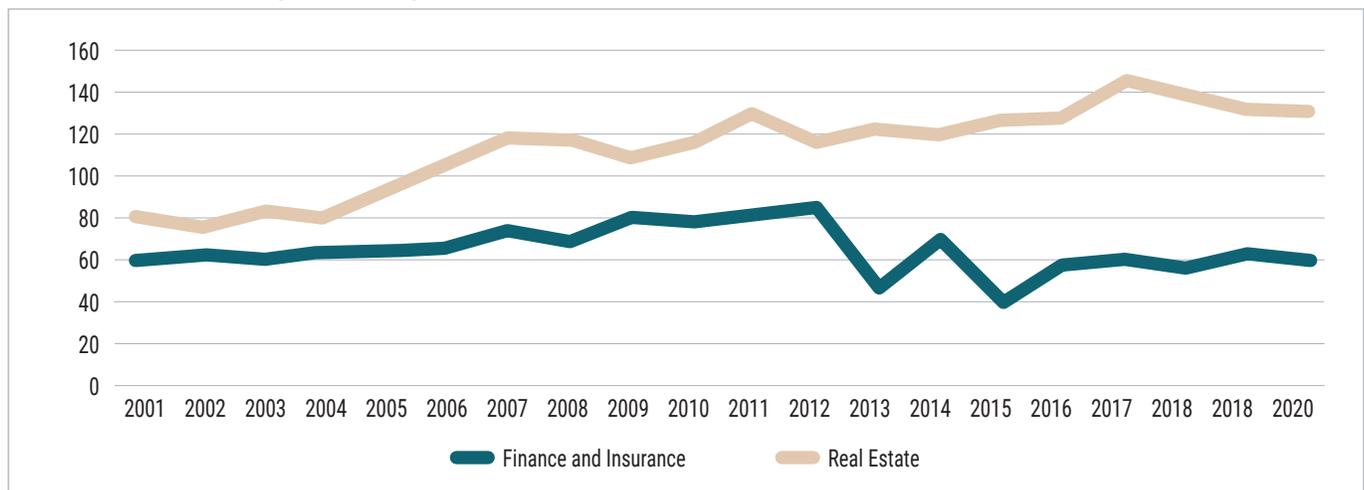
New Growth

Since our last report, the number of small businesses in Harney County has been increasing. New and varied storefronts are going up, representing a growth of capital in the community. However, the capital industry (finance, insurance, and real estate) has remained fairly stagnant. Growing this vital industry to support these new businesses remains an important opportunity.

Key Facts

- Business banking and finance options for Harney County include Bank of Eastern Oregon, Harney County Farm Bureau, Country Financial, SELCO Community Credit Union, Old West Federal Credit Union, Umpqua Bank, and U.S. Bank. *(Harney County Economic Development, 2019)*
- The finance/insurance/real estate industry employs 19% of the workforce in Burns. *(Economic Opportunities Analysis for Burns and Hines in Harney County, ECONorthwest 2019)*
- The Harney County workforce had 60 finance and insurance jobs in 2020 – the same number as in 2001, though down from a peak of 85 in 2012. *(Bureau of Economic Analysis)*
- The real estate industry in Harney grew from 81 jobs in 2001 to 131 jobs in 2020, a 62% increase.

Number of Jobs by Industry



“It’s hard sometimes to get a bank’s attention for a relatively small loan or a project that seems too risky or too complex. Craft3 exists to make loans banks can’t. So long as there is a reasonable plan to repay, we’re able to consider making a loan.”

—ANA INCLAN, CRAFT3. DJC OREGON

What We Know

STRENGTH | Nonprofit Lenders Provide Capital

Craft3, a nonprofit lender dedicated to supporting marginalized communities, recently overhauled its underwriting process, allowing for lower equity contributions, higher debt-to-income ratios, and considering years in business when evaluated requests. Craft3 also helps their clients work to become qualified for traditional loans in the future. Craft3 made significant loans to Harney-based initiatives in 2017 (the Biomass Cooperative) and 2019 (Silver Sage Farms wood pellets facility). Applying for loans through Craft3 represents a huge opportunity for Harney County businesses. Another nonprofit lender opportunity is Kiva Loans, which provides crowdfunded loans to people who lack access to traditional finance.

OPPORTUNITY | New Capital Pouring into Harney County

Several survey respondents noted the breadth of new businesses starting in Harney County recently, after a long period of little change. This represents an influx of capital into the region, and if these new businesses can be sustained, they would have long-lasting ripple effects throughout the county.

OPPORTUNITY | More Financing Options Needed

Some interviewees noted instances of local residents relying on financing from outside of the financial industry, including selling property or borrowing money from friends and family member to finance business expenses. This willingness of community members to support each other financially is a strong sign of community cohesion, though is most likely driven by a perceived lack of other options, and the low property values in Harney County limit the effectiveness of this capital strategy. This limits new business expansion and may offer an illusion of strong financing opportunities when, especially for those without the support of friends or family, those options are in fact minimal. There is also an opportunity for organizations supporting entrepreneurs to offer courses on financing and management to lessen entrepreneurs' reliance on alternative, often less stable, loan options.

OPPORTUNITY | Finance and Insurance Industry Growth

Along with the drying up of the timber industry, the finance and insurance industries have shrunk in Harney County. These are important services that make up the backbone of a thriving local economy; as new businesses start to grow, there's opportunity for banks and credit unions to set up shop in Harney County. The growth of this sector would have a mutually beneficial relationship with Harney County businesses as a whole.



Looking Ahead

More information is still needed about financing and capital availability in Harney County. Future initiatives might explore state- and nation-wide data on alternative financing options or consultation with regional community-founded credit unions to explore opportunities that would unite citizen sentiment for new financial options. Harney County Economic Development (HCED) currently helps community members leverage a full list of financial incentives and resources.

FINANCIAL SERVICES

Bank of Eastern Oregon

(541)573-2006
293 N. Broadway, Burns, OR 97720
www.beobank.com

First Community Credit Union

(541)573-3533 ext. 3401
524 S. Monroe, Burns, OR 97720
www.myfirstccu.org

Old West Federal Credit Union

(541)573-3143
937 Oregon Ave, Burns, OR 97720
www.oldwestfcu.org

Selco Community Credit Union

(541)312-1829
743 Hines Blvd. Burns, OR 97720
www.selco.org

US Bank

(541)573-2051
493 N. Broadway, Burns, OR 97720
www.usbank.com

INSURANCE

AmeriTitle

(541)573-2039
111 W Washington St, Burns, OR 97720
<https://www.amerititle.com/teams/location/?company=2&location=Burns>

Country Financial

541-573-1166
531 N Broadway Ave, Burns, OR 97720
<https://representatives.countryfinancial.com/debbie.ausmus>

Farmers Insurance

(541)573-6064
761 Ponderosa Vlg, Burns, OR 97720
<https://www.farmers.com>

State Farm Insurance

(541)573-2008
446 N Alder Ave, Burns, OR 97720
<https://www.statefarm.com>

Steens Mountain Insurance

(541)573-6021
397 N Broadway Ave, Burns, OR 97720
<https://insurance-agent.safeco.com/find-an-insurance-agency/agency/2203531222035312>

“The Shop Harney program is an opportunity to help stimulate spending in Harney County. It matters where we spend our money and shopping with our local businesses is a great way to show support to our community.”

—ANDREA LETHAM, SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER

FEDERAL PROGRAMS

- **Aggie Bonds:** financing to new farmers.
- **Brownfields Redevelopment Fund:** incentives for development in contaminated areas.
- **Business & Industry Loan Guarantees (via USDA):** Offers loan guarantees to lenders for their loans to rural businesses.
- **Community Connect Grants (via USDA):** provides financial assistance to applicants that will provide broadband service in rural, economically challenged communities where service does not exist.
- **New Markets Tax Credits:** helps finance investments and create jobs in low-income communities.
- **Rural Energy for America Program (via USDA):** provides guaranteed loan financing and grant funding to agricultural producers and rural small businesses for renewable energy systems or to make energy efficiency improvements.

REGIONAL PROGRAMS (ADMINISTERED BY GEODC)

- **Native American Entrepreneur Revolving Loan Fund:** up to \$20,000 in financing for federally recognized tribe businesses.
- **Microbusiness Revolving Loan Fund:** up to \$20,000 financing for businesses.

STATEWIDE PROGRAMS

- **Business Retention Services Program:** consulting services to assist companies facing difficult times.
- **Business Expansion Program:** an incentive program for existing companies expanding operations in Oregon or new businesses coming into the state.
- **Capital Access Program (via Business Oregon):** Helps lenders make more commercial loans to small businesses and provides capital for start up or expansion.
- **Credit Enhancement Fund (via Business Oregon):** A loan insurance program available to lenders to assist businesses in obtaining access to capital.
- **Eastern Oregon Business Development Fund:** long-term, fixed-rate financing for land, buildings, equipment/machinery, and permanent working capital
- **Entrepreneurial Development Loan Fund (via Business Oregon):** direct loans to help start-ups, micro-enterprises and small businesses expand or become established in Oregon.
- **Oregon Business Development Fund (via Business Oregon):** fixed-rate financing for land, buildings, equipment, machinery, and permanent working capital.
- **Oregon Capital Access Program:** helps lenders make more commercial loans to small businesses.
- **Oregon Credit Enhancement Fund:** a loan insurance program available to lenders to assist businesses in obtaining access to capital.
- **Oregon Industrial Development Bonds:** tax-exempt bonds issued by the State of Oregon.
- **Oregon Royalty Fund (via Business Oregon):** An alternate financing solution for projects that aren't yet bankable, but are more like angel or venture capital deals.
- **Small Manufacturing Business Expansion Program:** forgivable loans related to expansion projects for small manufacturing businesses.

Support

New Growth

Biz Harney Opportunity Collaborative is creating a comprehensive “Idea to Ownership” entrepreneurial pipeline, to support Harney County residents in launching and sustaining their businesses. Since our last report, Biz Harney Opportunity Collaborative has strengthened the pipeline through launching the CO.STARTERS program and a youth entrepreneur camp, as well as expanded youth internships (now including internships in the natural resource stewardship economy) and one-on-one support for small businesses. The entrepreneur pipeline is currently in development, with some programs fully operational and others in the planning process.

Key Facts

- Harney County School District 3 spends \$14,043 per student per year.
(National Center for Education Statistics)
- In a nine-month span (September 2021 – June 2022), 33 Harney County businesses received one-on-one Technical Support from Biz Harney Opportunity Collaborative.
- Treasure Valley Community College, with a main campus in nearby Ontario, OR, serves Harney through an outreach center in Burns, where students can take distance learning classes including college coursework, adult basic education, and GED prep.
- In 2022, 12 youth participated in a summer entrepreneur camp, and 3 participated in extended Harney internships.

Percent of CO.STARTERS participants who said...	Before	After
I know how to start and lead a venture	33%	78%
I have the resources I need to move my venture forward	56%	78%
I know how to market or sell my products/services	44%	89%
I understand business financials	33%	78%
I know how to get and use customer feedback to improve my venture	44%	100%
I know how to turn my ideas into reality	56%	89%
I feel connected and supported by the local community in launching my venture	56%	89%
I know my next steps	22%	100%

“ I always wanted to be a business owner but now have access to technical assistance venues that have helped me along the way. ”

–LOCAL BUSINESS OWNER

What We Know

STRENGTH | Entrepreneur Training Program and Business Supports

Through the Biz Harney Opportunity Collaborative, High Desert Partnership offers the CO.STARTERS Core program, a cohort program that trains entrepreneurs in the knowledge and skills they need to launch a new business, transition a hobby into a sustainable venture, or pivot into something new.

STRENGTH | Youth Training Programs

HDP's Youth Changing the Community Collaborative has implemented several programs to train Harney County youth in the knowledge and skills necessary to launch businesses and join the Harney County business community, including a Mentor Match program, an internship program, summer entrepreneur camps, and, in partnership with the Lomakatski Restoration Project, an ecological stewardship job skills program. Youth programming serves Tribal youth from the BPT and non-Tribal youth in Harney County. The goal of these programs is to support the next generation of Harney County businesses and help keep youth in the community.

OPPORTUNITY | Overcoming K-12 School System Shortfalls

Residents express concern that Harney County has an underfunded school system, including classes only four days per week and a high rate of staff and leadership turnover. This is not only a concern for current residents but a potential deterrent for prospective employees and employers looking to relocate. A concentration of residents with low incomes (or poverty "hot spots") poses additional challenges for Harney public schools. In addressing the school funding issues, Harney County has the opportunity to increase its ability to recruit entrepreneurs and business development.

OPPORTUNITY | Create Flexible Pathways to Vocational Careers

A lack of contractors, electricians, plumbers, and other vocational careers can make it difficult for residents and other businesses to find certified labor. State regulation to certify professional tradespeople is prohibitive to new individuals pursuing vocational trades in Harney County, which has no trade schools and limited certified professionals required to train others. The county is serviced by one plumber and two electricians. This gap in certifiable vocational education in Harney County's entrepreneurial ecosystem requires further study and work in the future. There are emerging opportunities with Crane Union High School and Baker Technical Institute to offer career technical education.

OPPORTUNITY | Technical Assistance for Small Businesses

Small business owners have several resources available that offer Technical Assistance services, including the Harney County Economic Development office (<https://www.harneycountyoregon.com/>), the Treasure Valley Community College Small Business Development Center (<https://www.facebook.com/sbdctvccharneycounty/>), and through Biz Harney Opportunity Collaborative. These services are available to help with business planning, resource navigation, HR support, and more.

Scenes from the 2022 summer youth entrepreneur camp



Looking Ahead

Developing Harney County's partnerships with other regional business service providers to strengthen nonprofit and community support of local businesses is a main priority of High Desert Partnership's work with Business Oregon and other community partners. Moving forward, HDP's Biz Harney Opportunity Collaborative initiative is creating a comprehensive Entrepreneur Pipeline, which will support businesses at every stage, from youth internships and training to Technical Assistance for established businesses, and everything in between.

Harney County Internship – Success Stories

In 2021 Burns High School Senior Alicyn Hoke interned for Sparks Collaborative and Sage Design Works, a local artist collaborative that specializes in graphic design work, advertising, and logos. The internship allowed her opportunities to design a variety of logos and become familiar with two design platforms, Canva and AirTable. The experience taught her how to utilize design-based technology in appealing to her target advertising audience. She now has more skills to add to her resume as well as valuable connections to people who will continue to support her future in this career field. Alicyn is grateful that this internship gave her experience and a head start into her chosen career. In addition to her work for Spark Collaborative, Harney Intern Alicyn Hoke designed and painted an art installation on the wall of the historic Central Hotel's bar, based on the theme "Well behaved women rarely make history!".



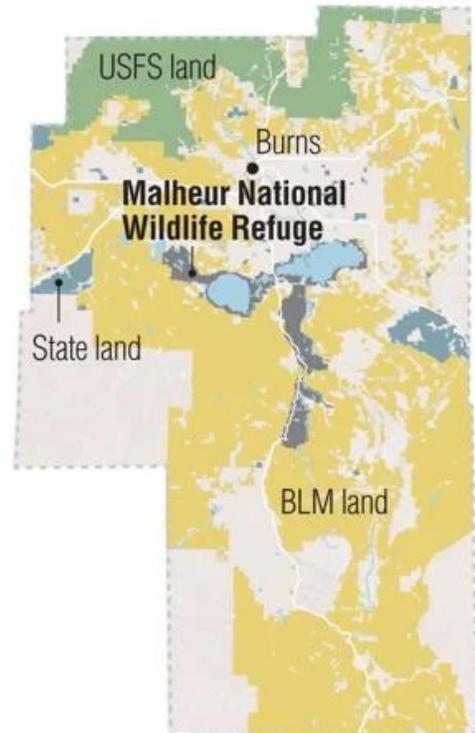
Policy

New Growth

Since our last report, Harney County has increased its levels of partnership with state, federal, and private entities. The County received over \$1.2 million in COVID-19 relief funds, which helped the community recover from the economic impacts of the virus and mitigation efforts. Additionally, progress has been made on establishing public/private partnerships to build more housing and commercial developments.

Key Facts

- Harney County received more than \$1.2 million in COVID-19 relief funds from the State of Oregon, to support small businesses, the school, and the hospital. (*"COVID-19 Relief Funds Grant Recipients," Business Oregon.*)
- Properties in Harney County experience an average effective tax rate of \$9.57 per \$1,000.
- More than 75% of Harney County's 10,226 square miles is made up of public lands. Many ranchers graze their cattle on public lands, in accordance with permits issued by the federal government.
- A variety of incentives and tax credits are available to businesses in Harney County, including the Enterprise Zone and Rural Enterprise Zone tax abatements. (*Business Oregon*)



Source: Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Carli Krueger /
The Bulletin

“From the time I was a little kid, I loved the land, the fish, the trees. When life was hard, my sanctuary was the little wooded creek beyond the apricot orchard behind our house. When I learned that such places were in danger of pollution, degradation and more something in my heart vowed that I would work to change that. It wasn't a conscious choice—more like a deep sense that I had a duty to take care of the land that had taken care of me.”

—PAM HARDY, WESTERN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW CENTER

What We Know

STRENGTH | Harney County Community Response Team

Harney County Economic Development takes an involved role in supporting Harney County's entrepreneurial ecosystem. The county's website links entrepreneurs to local and regional tools and programs for businesses, including tax incentives, a list of available commercial properties, connections to industry-specific resources, and one-on-one support. This support includes the Harney County Community Response Team (CRT), a group representing a wide range of organizations and professional associations in the region. The CRT holds public meetings monthly to record progress on specific initiatives that improve Harney's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

OPPORTUNITY | Advocate for State Laws/Regulations to Match Rural Circumstances

Part of the disconnect felt by Harney County citizens regarding regulation is a pattern of state-level "solutions" that do not account for rural realities. For example, land use regulation allows significant opportunity inside Urban Growth Boundaries (UGB) and very limited development outside. Harney County has less than 1,000 acres inside UGB and 6.1 million acres outside. The one size fits all approach does not work for residents of Harney County, who must be able to design what will work for their entrepreneurs. In order to grow, Harney County must not be limited to all unique businesses being inside the UGB. This demonstrates the need for Harney and similar communities to have more representation in statewide economic advocacy to achieve economic parity for rural communities.

OPPORTUNITY | Public/Private Partnerships Offer a Path to Development

Historically, the responsibility for housing and commercial developments has fallen solely to the private sector. However, there is an opportunity to change this and focus on public/private partnerships, in order to spur new development that could help revitalize the community. The planned Miller Springs Development is one example, a partnership between a private developer and the City of Burns to develop the Miller Springs property just NW of Burns, bringing in new housing, entertainment, and commercial space.

OPPORTUNITY | Collaborations Between State/Federal Agencies and Local Community

Many interview respondents expressed frustration with state-level regulation that is seen as inhibitory to rural economic development and formed without input from smaller rural communities. This stance is echoed by community members who attribute the downturn of the region's timber industry to increased state and federal environment protections. While this anti-regulation sentiment can be problematic for sustainable development, the shared feeling of non-inclusion in state-level decision-making also serves as a conversation starter and an opportunity for strength-in-numbers and across sectors to engage community owners to work together for common local interests

OPPORTUNITY | Continued Partnerships Between Tribe and County

While respondents from the Burns Paiute Tribe and local government agencies report positive opinions of one another's work, both groups note that a lack of regular inter-agency communication has occasionally led to program redundancy and repeated efforts. There is potential to improve overall communications by developing working partnerships around specific programs that meet shared goals of the Native and non-Native regional populations. Collaborations between entities also expands the likelihood of funding from outside supporters to help continued development of Harney's entrepreneurial ecosystem in the face of current or potential county budget shortfalls.



Looking Ahead

High Desert Partnership has identified many ways to make changes to how policy is implemented, and how non-local government entities can provide greater support for Harney County's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

The Harney County Forest Restoration Collaborative , Harney Basin Wetlands Collaborative, and Harney County Wildfire Collaborative, along with diverse partners that include many community members as well as those who share a love and concern for Harney County work to address the complex challenges of managing natural resources while also creating sustainable jobs that steward the county's natural resources. Significant projects include:

- \$5 million from the Oregon Department of Forestry to improve the wildfire resiliency of our landscape
- Stewardship agreement with the US Forest service to harvest small-diameter timber from the Malheur National Forest, to be turned into clean biomass fuel.
- Prescribed burning in Southern Malheur forest
- Restoration of perennial grasslands to reduce wildfire fuel
- Restoration of Malheur Lake

Planning Resources

The Harney County government offers several resources to help individuals navigate the regulatory landscape.

Land Use Application Flow Chart

<https://www.co.harney.or.us/index.php/doing-business/planning-development-services>

Land Use Permits and Zoning

<https://www.co.harney.or.us/index.php/planning-documents>

Harney County GIS Maps (including land use, fires, water rights, and more)

<https://harney-county-maps-harneycounty.hub.arcgis.com/>

Building Permits

<https://www.co.harney.or.us/index.php/building-program>

Business Incentives and Tax Credits

<https://www.harneycountyoregon.com/incentives>



“ We’re actually working to try to make a shift in how rural economies work. We’re trying to work with people to build businesses around the idea of collecting and cleaning and storing and farming native seeds so that it becomes an industry that’s helping rural economies survive and grow through diversifying businesses and offering more options for producers.”

—ROGER SHELEY, ECOSOURCE BOARD MEMBER

Market

New Growth

Since our last report, Harney County has made significant steps in growing its natural resource stewardship economy. EcoSource Native Seed and Restoration, a nonprofit that collects native seeds for local businesses, has developed from an early-stage plan to a fully-operational organization. The biomass facility, operated by High Desert Biomass Cooperative, is in the process of expanding to new properties, and High Desert Partnership has secured a stewardship agreement with the US Forest Service to harvest small-diameter timber from the southern Malheur National Forest, in order to fuel the biomass facility. Youth are getting involved in the stewardship economy through the Harney internship program. The stewardship economy is beginning to thrive, and as it grows it will create more opportunities for the county.

Key Facts

- Agriculture comprises about 20% of the county's economy. 532 farms operate in Harney County, with an average size of 2,927 acres. Alfalfa hay (35% of total farm receipts) and cattle ranching (63%) comprise the majority of the agricultural market. These statistics predate the federal legalization of industrial hemp in December 2018. Harney was Oregon's 3rd largest hemp producer in 2019, at 4,200 acres. *(USDA National Agriculture Statistics Service, 2017; Oregon Department of Agriculture, 2019)*
- The number of cattle in Harney is slowly decreasing, from 105,000 in 2017 to 97,000 in 2021. *(Oregon Agricultural Statistics and Directory 2022)*
- In 2018, approximately 121,000 visitors spent a total of \$18.3 million visiting Harney County, supporting 350 jobs and \$6.8 million in earnings within Harney County. *(Oregon Travel Impacts: Statewide Estimates, March 2019)*
- Harney County has 29 retail businesses and 30 food/accommodation businesses. *(US Census Bureau Economic Census 2017)*
- Retail and hospitality cover 23% of employment in Harney County. *(2019 Economic Opportunities Analysis for Burns and Hines, ECONorthwest)*
- 75% of tourism earnings in Harney County went to food and hospitality, while 16% went to arts/entertainment/recreation, and 9% to retail. *(Oregon Travel Impacts: Statewide Estimates, March 2019)*
- Retail trade increased nearly 50% from 2012 to 2017. *(US Census Bureau Economic Census 2017)*
- Net cash farm income increased 42% from 2012 to 2017. *(USDA 2017 Census of Agriculture)*

MARKET CHANGE		
Industry	2017 Revenue (in thousands)	Change from 2012
Retail Trade	\$160,795	+ 49.9%
Real Estate and Rental/Leasing	\$2,403	+ 14.6%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	\$4,287	+ 52.6%
Health Care and Social Assistance	\$36,398	+ 22.2%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	\$430	- 69.5%
Accommodation and Food Services	\$13,155	+ 14.2%

SOURCE: US Census Bureau Economic Census 2012 & 2017

What We Know

STRENGTH | Harney County can Offer a Lower Cost of Living

The cost of housing in Oregon has skyrocketed, causing difficulty for residents throughout the state. Harney County has an opportunity to be competitive in this market by offering a lower cost of living. However, to take full advantage of that, Harney County will have to increase its supply of available housing. One upcoming opportunity is the proposed Miller Creek development, a multi-use project of housing, business, and recreation just northwest of Burns.

STRENGTH | Development of a New Stewardship Economy

Through its six multi-sector High Desert Partnership collaboratives, Harney County is building a new natural resource stewardship economy, based on restoring and stewarding natural ecosystems, improving their resiliency and increasing their agricultural potential. Two key examples of this stewardship economy in Harney County are EcoSource Native Seed and Restoration and High Desert Biomass Cooperative. EcoSource is a nonprofit organization that collects, cleans, produces, and stores genetically-appropriate native plant seeds, and it's working to stimulate the economy by contracting with smaller businesses who want to grow seeds and restore native grasslands. High Desert Biomass Coop is a project that restores the health and fire resistance of forests by thinning small-diameter trees, which are then converted into clean energy for the town. There's ample opportunity for entrepreneurs and established businesses to venture into the stewardship economy.

STRENGTH | Shop Harney Program Stimulates the Local Economy

In an effort to support the small frontier businesses of Harney County, a new program emerged: Shop Harney. Through shopharney.com, customers can purchase digital gift cards, which can be used at more than 40 local businesses in Harney County, including restaurants, retail shops, cafes, healthcare providers, and more. Jan Oswald, a retired main street business owner in Burns, said "We're participating in Shop Harney because it's an opportunity for all small businesses owners to work together, support each other and encourage Harney County to shop local. It's a positive act for our community."

OPPORTUNITY | COVID-19 Recovery

At 487 deaths per 100,000 people, Harney County had the highest rate of COVID-19 death of any county in Oregon, Washington, and California, likely due in part to high levels of poverty. Additionally, the pandemic had a strong negative impact on the county's economy, with many businesses shutting down temporarily (or permanently). However, there's also an opportunity to invest in new businesses and reimagine the economy.

OPPORTUNITY | Regional Co-Branding

A regional branding effort to highlight the place-based, unique qualities of the region of goods produced within it. Over the last 20 or more years, there have been outstanding advances in Harney County toward implementing environmentally-sound, ecologically based ecosystem management throughout the region. There is an opportunity to commercialize, capitalize, and create access to new markets for businesses; enhance the desirability of visiting Harney County; and, explore the natural High Desert ecosystems and associated conservation-based agro-ecosystems. High Desert Partnership's Biz Harney Opportunity Collaborative is currently working with a consultant to develop a personalized branding for the county.



“It’s been a long time coming for the county to truly look at the ecosystem as a whole and figure out how we can be better.”

–TRACY KENNEDY, BURNS PAIUTE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR

STRENGTH | Diversifying Agriculture

The arrival of hemp as a large-scale alternative for Harney County agricultural producers holds great significance for diversifying agricultural production in the area and raising per-acre income for farmers. With an estimated \$40,000-\$50,000 an acre annual gross revenue (much higher than the estimated annual \$600-800 an acre for current leading crop of alfalfa hay production), the impact of this new market has yet to be fully realized in the Harney County entrepreneurial ecosystem. The Burns Paiute tribe has invested in a full-spectrum hemp extraction facility capable of processing hemp from the region and beyond into value-added products, increasing the local revenue and job opportunity potential for Harney’s hemp economy. However, a moratorium on new agricultural wells in the area to curb groundwater resource depletion may impose limits to how quickly the industrial hemp industry can expand.

The USDA’s most recent statistics note a strong predominance of large farms focusing on industrial commodity crop and beef cattle production. Support for further diversification of Harney County’s agricultural markets through partnerships with the local Agricultural Extension has potential to unlock new food economy niches for local producers and improve the overall sustainability of Harney County’s local food system.

OPPORTUNITY | Nature Tourism

The confluence of nature-driven tourism and geographic position between the regional hubs of Salem, Spokane, and Boise creates possibilities for recreational, agritourism, and adventure businesses to flourish in Harney’s rugged landscape. Businesses focused on these niches are not identified in national economic census data and bear a deeper local inventory to explore ways in which economic development entities can support them. The Oregon State University Community Service Center prepared a 2017 report with findings on the state of the “New Natural Resource Economy”, linked in the source list appendix at the end of this assessment.

Looking Ahead

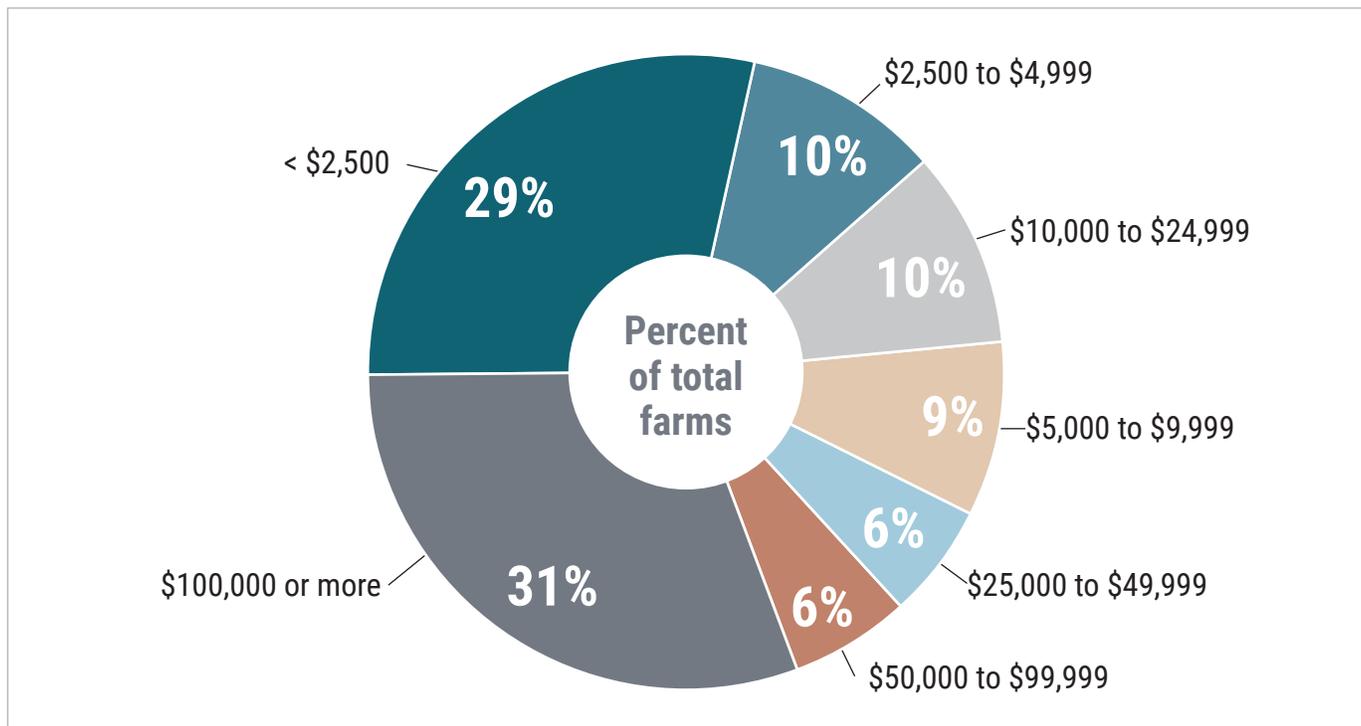
Survey respondents widely reported development of new markets to be among their highest priorities. Though obstacles exist, the region has plentiful opportunity to increase customer markets and business to business markets, as well as build access to government contracts to support business growth.

Farming and Agriculture

FARM SNAPSHOT		
	2017	Change from 2012
Number of Farms	532	+ 7%
Acres of Farmland	1,557,103	+ 3%
Market value of products sold	\$82,296,000	- 7%
Net cash farm income	\$20,142,000	+ 42%

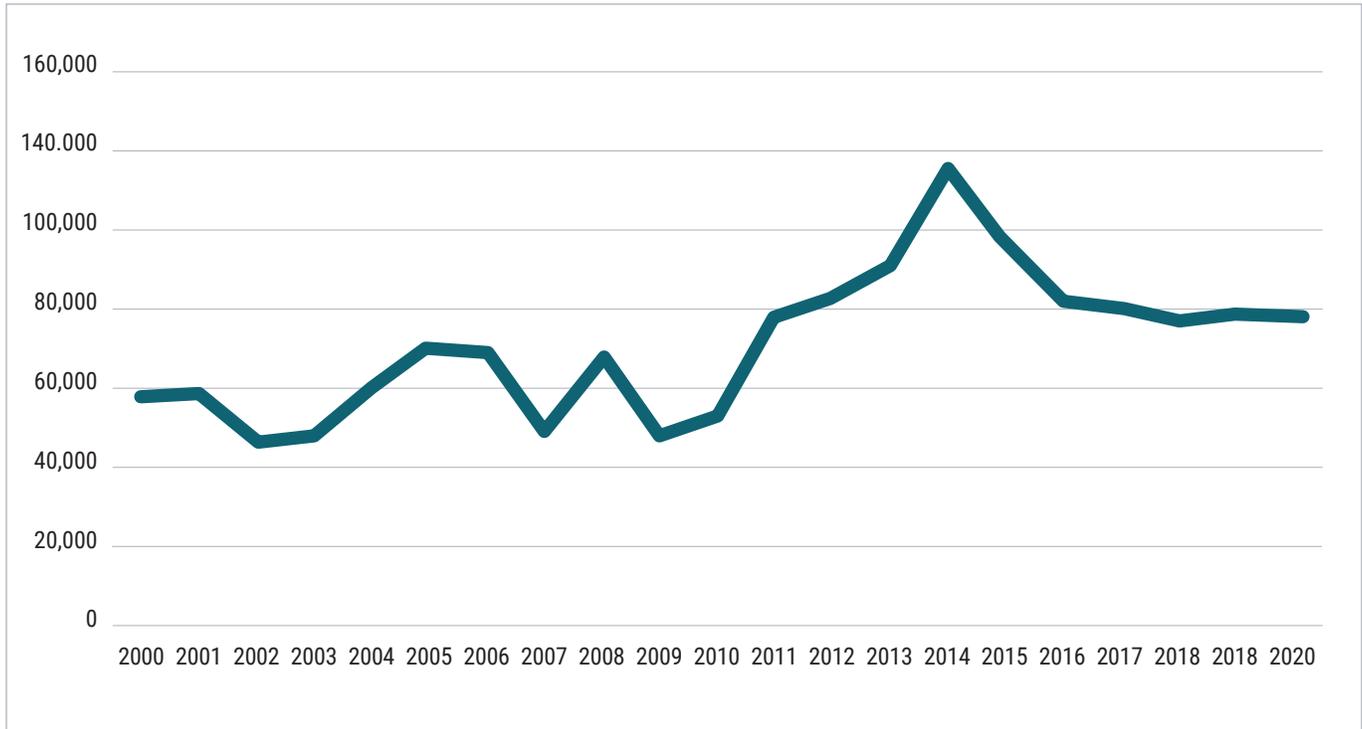
SOURCE: USDA 2017 Census of Agriculture

Farm Sizes – Value of Sales



SOURCE: USDA 2017 Census of Agriculture

Cash Receipts from Farming, Adjusted for Inflation (in Thousands)



SOURCE: US Bureau of Economic Analysis & US Bureau of Labor Statistics

“The business culture has become noticeably more active and robust over the past few years. Business owners are becoming more skilled and informed in smart operations as they have had to be so flexible in how they deliver. Overall, I feel there is a lot of optimism developing in the business community, with maybe a few growing pains.”

-LOCAL BUSINESS OWNER

People

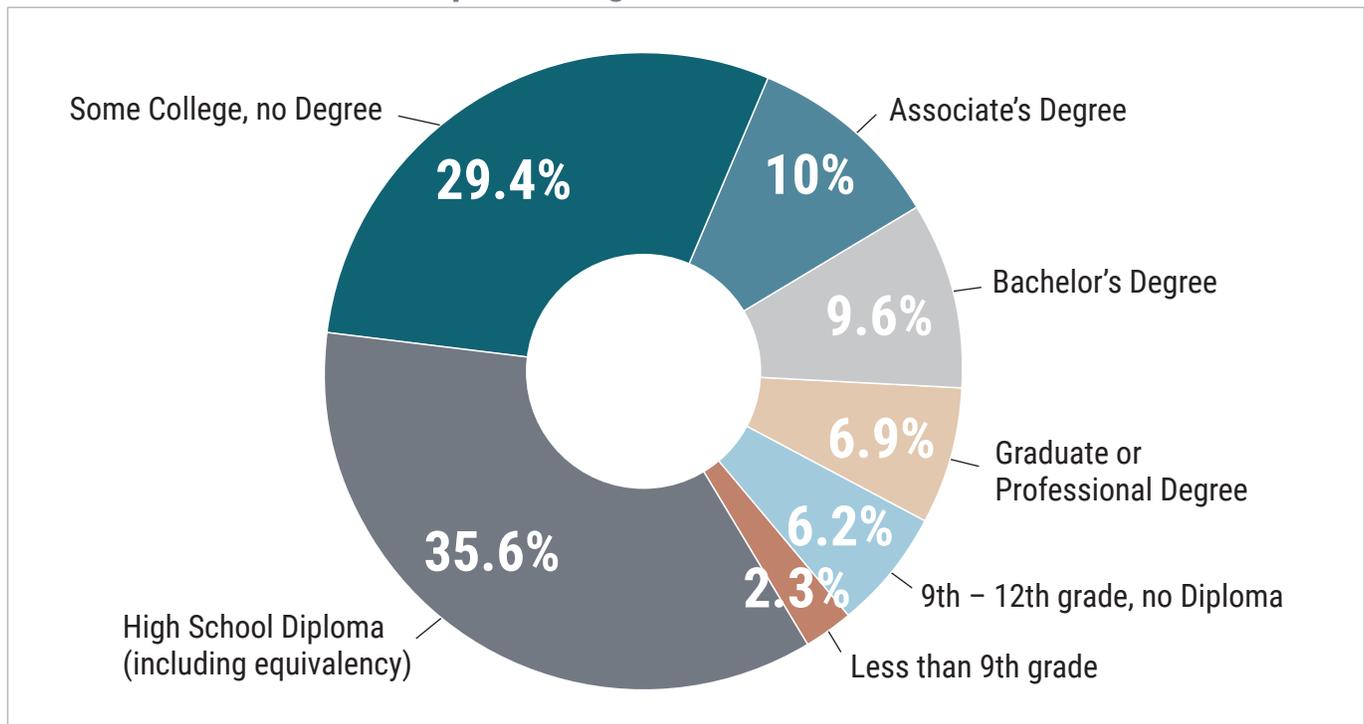
New Growth

Harney County's population has not changed significantly in the time since our last report, with most demographic statistics remaining static; however, the percent of Harney County residents living below the poverty line has dropped significantly, from 17.5% to 12.5%. This is a dramatic decline, and all the more notable considering it occurred during the economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key Facts

- Harney County's median age is 45.1 years, higher than Oregon (39.5 years) and the United States (38.1). Additionally, 25% of Harney's population is 65 years of age or older, significantly higher than the statewide rate (18%). *(US Census Bureau via datacommons.org and census quickfacts)*
- In Harney County, 12.5% of persons live below the poverty line. This is slightly above the statewide rate (11%), **and a significant improvement from 17.5% in 2017.** *(Census quickfacts)*
- 24.5% of Harney County workers are employed by the government, while 41.1% are employed by private businesses and 34.4% operate as proprietors. *(Bureau of Economic Analysis 2020)*
- In 1980, the Hines Lumber Company began laying off workers after the loss of a bid for federal timber. By February 1981, Harney County unemployment was over 30%. Today, unemployment in Harney County is at 13.1%, almost double the state average of 6.5%. *(Oregon Encyclopedia, 2018)*
- Of the population 25 or older, 91.6% have at least a high school diploma, but only 16.5% have a bachelor's degree or higher. *(US Census Bureau)*

Educational Attainment of Population Aged 25+



SOURCE: US Census Bureau

What We Know

STRENGTH | Robust Seasonal Employment Cultures

Employment in Harney County's major sectors rises and falls seasonally. Beyond seasonal tourism, agriculture, and hospitality jobs, survey respondents noted a strong culture of fluctuating government employment opportunities available in the region. Regional agencies including the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service all employ crews of firefighters to control seasonal wildfires. These positions provide living-wage employment for 8-9 months of each year for close to 50 County residents, supplemented in the off months by entrepreneurial pursuits and unemployment benefits. Incubating off-season entrepreneurialism for fire crew workers and other seasonally employed residents has potential to help account for yearly fluctuation and stabilize income and employment.

STRENGTH | Value-Added Advantage in the Hemp Industry

Regulatory action to slow groundwater depletion may limit the development of Harney's local hemp industry, but the investment by the Burns Paiute tribe into a large-scale hemp extraction facility provides opportunity to process hemp products from material grown outside the county, creating a value-added hemp export market that allows Harney to derive economic value from the hemp economy beyond farm production.

OPPORTUNITY | Remote Work Opportunities

The growing availability of at-home and remote work could benefit the area's entrepreneurial ecosystem by appealing to remote workers interested in Harney's low cost of living. Workforce recruitment campaigns focused on this niche could also help develop Harney County's base of skilled workers providing financial, legal, consulting, and other business support services. Additional technological infrastructure required to support remote workers is a worthwhile area for future, specific exploration.

OPPORTUNITY | Supporting Youth Participation

Focusing on the long-term, High Desert Partnership's Youth Changing the Community Collaborative works with local schools and to create opportunities for youth through two programs: the Harney Internship Program and Mentor Match. Harney Internships connect youth to local businesses for paid mentorships, while Mentor Match pairs up youth and local business owners, who teach them the essential knowledge and skills they need to open their own businesses. By building positive experiences in their hometown, this collaborative gives youth a sense of pride and opportunities to shape Harney to support their future.

Looking Ahead

To provide career development and summer work opportunities for Harney County young adults, High Desert Partnership is facilitating summer internships with businesses and agencies within Harney County. Many of these involve work in the growing stewardship economy, learning job skills that restore the local ecosystems. This work includes invasive carp removal at Malheur Lake, mapping potential fire control lines in sagebrush rangelands, vegetation sampling and wildlife surveys. Soon, this will be expanded to include thinning of small-diameter timber in the Malheur National Forest, to improve wildfire resiliency and provide clean, renewable fuel for the Biomass energy facility in Burns.

Small Business Spotlight

Plectrum Music Company

It's been said that every small business in rural communities, like those you find in Harney County, are essential businesses, and we can put Dan & Misti Porter's Plectrum Music and Quiriosity Art in that category. Plectrum Music Company is a guitar retail store specializing in stringed instruments, a luthier service, and what Dan calls "musician's commodities" like picks, strings, and straps. "We opened in December of 2020, directly in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was not a difficult choice to make because I knew that it could be a success with everyone at home needing something to do, a new hobby, or even supplies for the instruments they already had", shared Dan. Quiriosity Art is Misti's brand for her unique artworks that incorporate 3D elements on flat canvases.

Dan came to Harney County from Boise in 2013 while Misti grew up in Burns on a ranch south of town on McCanna Road. Dan and Misti met at a local poker game and what started as a friendship, turned into a love story. *"I'm fourth generation Harney County and while I tried to leave, home called me back. But while away, my travels gave me insights into what Burns was missing in ways of arts, music and theater and when Dan had the idea for the music store, I was excited to help him on this venture."*



As Dan shares: *"It was here that I met Howie Roozeboom and joined the Desert Roze Band in 2018. Desert Roze Band brought me out of retirement and triggered my love of music again. I've been a musician for thirty-five years playing bass guitar in several bands and performing on hundreds of stages for audiences sized well into the tens of thousands. I've also had a career as a professional DJ and experience in the backstage production of music. I worked at Rock the Mountain music festival in the Boise area that hosted forty plus bands on two stages over the course of two days. Rock the Mountain inspired Plectrum Music Company's own Beer and Brats Music Festival, which I hope to make an annual event."*

"Owning a business in a small community is beneficial in that we know many of the business owners and we all try to help each other out; the small community comes together to create a friendly environment and a system of support and encouragement."

Like so many in Harney County, having one business or one place of employment isn't enough. That's true for Dan and Misti, they are very involved in the community. Misti has been involved for many years, especially when her kids were little. She coached t-ball, led Girl Scouts, and volunteered at the local library. Upon returning home from a four-year stint in Klamath Falls, Misti is looking to expand the arts and culture district in Burns, Hines, and throughout Harney County.

Dan and Misti chair the Community Revitalization Team's Small Business Committee as they wanted to reach out to other businesses and get to know them better. Dan is also the Treasurer on the Chamber of Commerce Board and as shared previously he planned and made happen the Beer and Brats Music Festival. Dan and Misti have also gotten involved with the Biz Harney Opportunity Collaborative Opportunity Collaborative providing essential voices as small business owners. *"We feel that Biz Harney Opportunity Collaborative is a great fit for us because they work toward the same goals we do – to unite the community and businesses within Harney County."*

Dan & Misti's hopes for entrepreneurship and small business in Harney County? *"100% success and that they flourish. If an individual can make a living doing what they love, whether it's reclaiming the lumber of an old house and turning it into furniture, using old beams from the mill and making something beautiful, selling unique clothing, or building a guitar – we wish them success. We also hope that new businesses are not afraid to ask for help from other owners around town, from the Small Business Committee or Biz Harney Opportunity Collaborative, because we are all here to support each other. This community is wonderful in that businesses willingly assist each other in their endeavors. This is a wonderful sight to see, and could set a standard for other communities out there."*

Dan and Misti do keep busy with their businesses and volunteer work. When they do have 'off' time they love a spontaneous trip to the coast or Boise or Bend for a day. During the winter months, Dan plays shows with the Desert Roze Band. Otherwise, the two of them are home, remodeling their home, lounging with the animals, Dan making music, and Misti making art.

Infrastructure

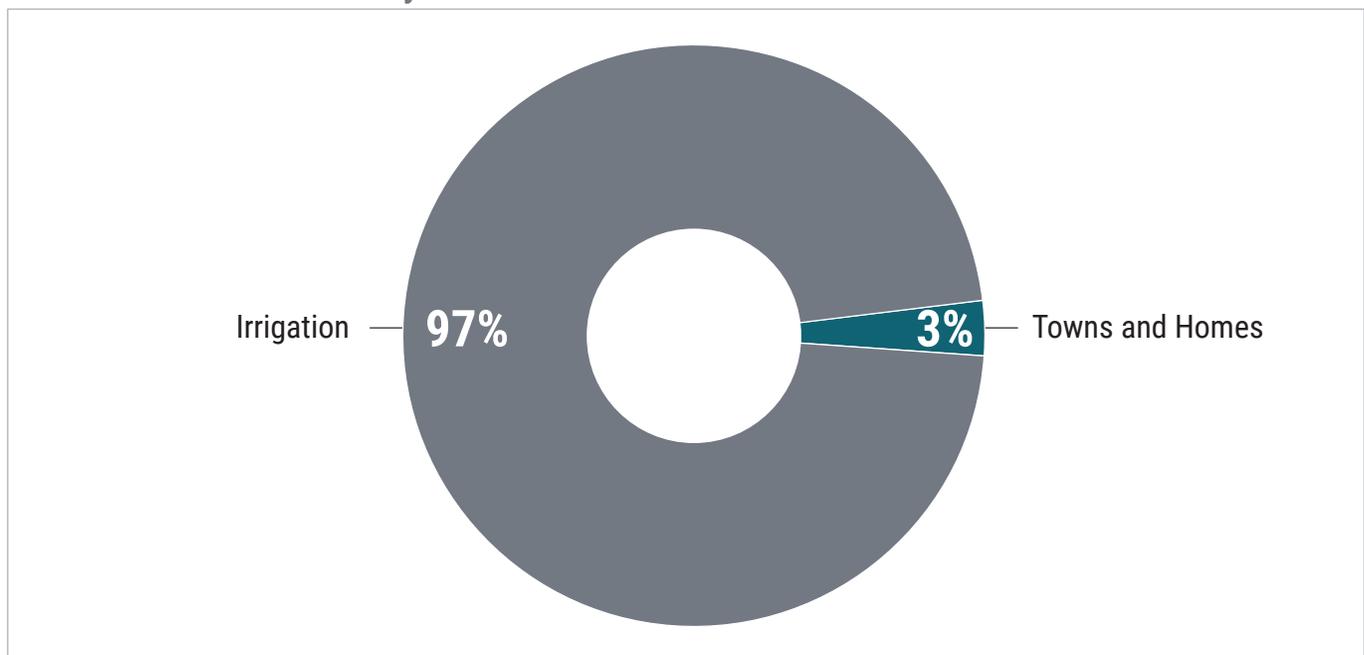
New Growth

Since our last report, Harney County has improved several aspects of its infrastructure. The number of residents with broadband internet has increased by about 10%, the High Desert Biomass Cooperative has made significant strides in expanding its facility to heat more of the town of Burns, and the Harney County Wildfire Collaborative has worked to mitigate the risk of extreme wildfire. However, there are still significant challenges to solve. Groundwater is running low, and Harney County is facing a shortage of housing units.

Key Facts

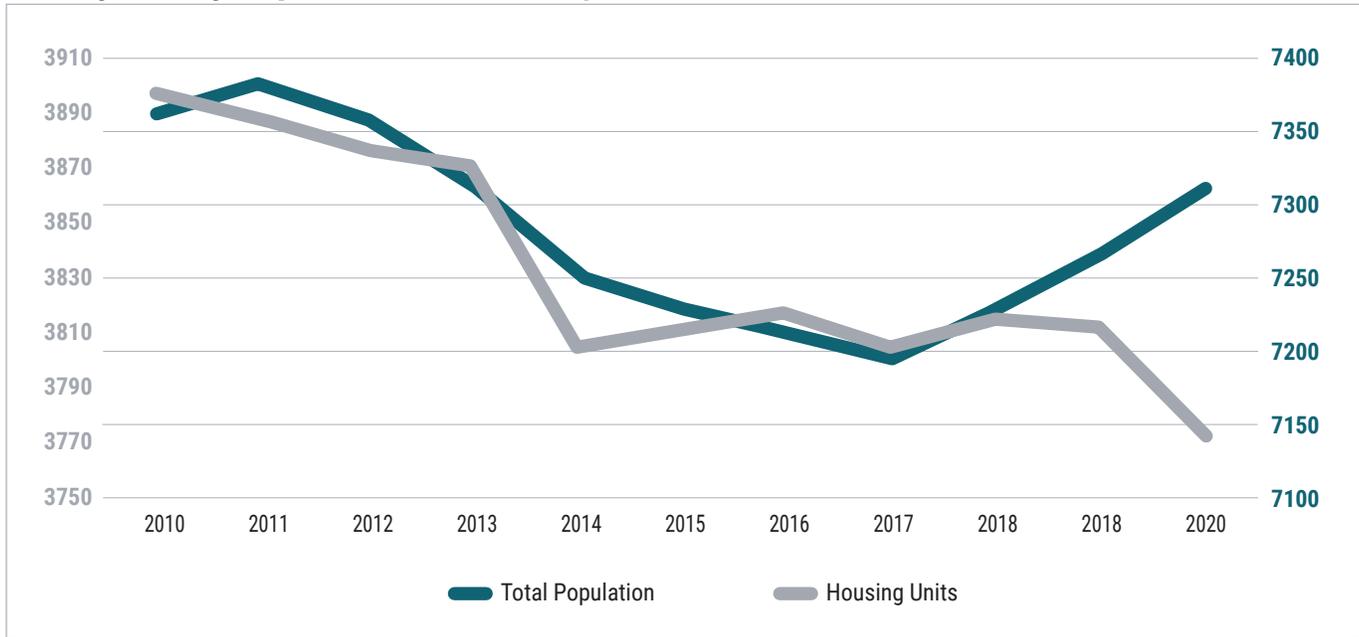
- In 2020, 80.7% of Harney County households had broadband internet, **up from 70.9% in 2018**. This is slightly lower than the statewide rate of 88.1%. *(US Census Bureau Quickfacts)*
- In 2019, the American Society for Civil Engineers gave Oregon a C- grade for overall infrastructure, including D+ for dams, D+ for energy, D+ for levees, and D- for wastewater. *(Infrastructure Report Card, 2019)*
- In 2016, the Oregon Water Resources Department stopped permitting new groundwater rights in Harney County, due to concerns of groundwater depletion. *(Oregon Public Broadcasting, 2019)*
- A 2021 report rated the federal-aid system roads in Burns as 50% good and 50% fair. *(2021 Oregon Transportation Infrastructure Condition Report)*
- Harney County is one of the fastest warming counties in both Oregon and the nation. During the heat dome in 2021, Harney recorded a high temperature of 99 degrees Fahrenheit. *(Washington Post, 2019; The Oregonian 2021)*
- Several buildings in Burns are heated through an innovative biomass facility, which provides clean, renewable, and reliable energy. This system is poised to expand to more properties in the town.
- The typical commute in Harney County is 15.7 minutes. *(US Census Bureau Quickfacts)*

Groundwater Use in Harney



SOURCE: Oregon Public Broadcast, 2019

Harney County Population and Housing Units



SOURCE: US Census Bureau

“ I love the people, the landscape, the lifestyle. I love raising my kids here. I love that they get to spend lots of time with their grandparents. I love that I was able to take them out to the cemetery at Silver Creek a couple weeks ago and show them where their great-grandparents, their great-great- grandparents and their great-great-great-grandparents are buried.”

—ZOLA RYAN, NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

“ The water conversation started in earnest in 2015, that was probably my drive to get involved in politics. Could I be a voice for agriculture as we’re going through challenging times? What does this mean for me, what does this mean for my neighbors? I’ve been very blessed and very fortunate to help my community start to work through some of these conversations.”

—PSTATE REPRESENTATIVE MARK OWENS

What We Know

STRENGTH | Ecosystems Resilient to Threat of Wildfire

The Harney County Wildfire Collaborative unites diverse partners with a stake in preventing and suppressing the threat of catastrophic wildfires in both critical sagebrush steppe ecosystem habitat and dry pine forest and restoring these lands to be resistant and resilient to potential wildfire. This collaborative, formed in December 2014, has helped secure outside funding to support wildfire reduction and reduce the burden fires pose to Harney County's public utilities. High Desert Partnership plays a facilitation and support role to help ranchers and other partners share the planning, and implementation of coordinated wildfire resiliency measures.

OPPORTUNITY | Increase of Housing Stock to Spur on More Development

In the last several years, the population of Harney County has grown, while the available housing stock has decreased. However, two new projects should help meet this need – and pave the way for more developments within Harney. First is the upcoming Miller Springs Development which, in addition to building housing units and providing jobs, is planned to include commercial properties, entertainment and sports venues, and as access to outdoor recreation. This will help Harney County attract workers in high-need industries, such as healthcare and education. Additionally, the Veteran's Village is a planned apartment development for veterans, with all units being reserved for residents with incomes at 60% or below the area's median income.



OPPORTUNITY | Historic Federal Infrastructure Dollars

The Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act, passed by Congress and signed into law in 2021, will put at least \$4.5 billion dollars in infrastructure investments into Oregon. This represents an enormous opportunity for Harney County to invest in and improve its infrastructure.

OPPORTUNITY | Community Input on Water Usage

Over the past several years, groundwater usage has become a contentious issue throughout Eastern Oregon, and in Harney County in particular. In 2016, the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) stopped permitting new groundwater rights, due to concerns of groundwater depletion; in some parts of the basin, the water table is dropping up to eight feet per year. OWRD began a collaborative process to come up with solutions in coordination with members of the community. This presents the opportunity for the Harney County community to work together on a collaborative solution to their water issues.

OPPORTUNITY | Improving Computer and Internet Access

Though the situation is improving, Harney County still experiences a lack of access to high-speed internet, as well as office space, computers, printers, internet, and administrative resources. Developing a community technology hub offering co-working spaces for entrepreneurs is a potential opportunity to target with future grant requests submitted by High Desert Partnership and its partners. Harney County's recent designation as a federal Opportunity Zone, providing new tax breaks to help businesses invest in infrastructure development, supported this opportunity. A new agreement with MiWave, a local internet service provider business, is designed to increase broadband service availability for businesses and homes.

OPPORTUNITY | Innovative Biomass Heating System Poised to Expand

Originally opened in 2016, High Desert Biomass Cooperative's facility in Burns uses small-diameter timber to produce clean, renewable, and reliable thermal energy. Currently, the biomass facility heats four buildings in Burns, including Slater Elementary School. In 2022, High Desert Biomass Cooperative was awarded a grant to expand the biomass facility, improving its ability to store and process fuel and running an additional pipeline to the planned Veteran's Village apartment complex. Additional plans are underway for further piping.



*Biomass boiler (red); piping and connected buildings (orange); potential future connections with installed piping tees (blue).
Graphic credit: Wisewood Energy*

Looking Ahead

A recent technical assistance study, The Harney County Workforce Housing Road Map 2019, identified a target goal of building five new \$200,000 - \$250,000, 3-bedroom, 2-bathroom houses each year for five years within city urban growth boundaries in Harney County. This path would address specific housing inventory needs as well as reset the local housing inventory to a healthy market supply. Exploring options to help support construction contractors overcoming barriers around capacity and profitability will be key.

Future initiatives plan to:

- Map and link existing community initiatives focused on water usage, housing for seniors, and other vulnerable groups, and main street revitalization.
- Help certify local contractors to perform energy analysis, asbestos abatement, and other needed certifications to meet housing goals.
- Identify and list the types of housing blight in Harney communities to determine remedies.
- Explore best practices in other rural Oregon communities (e. g. City of Bend's "Cottage • Cluster" code) for applicability to Harney County, among other solutions.

Harney County Maps

Harney County's website hosts a variety of interactive and customizable maps to help you explore the landscape, infrastructure, and policies that affect development. [View the maps here.](#)

Updating and Maintaining this Resource

To maintain this Assessment as a current resource for entrepreneurs and service provider, this document is designed to be updated regularly by High Desert Partnership and its Biz Harney Opportunity Collaborative collaborative, and as significant changes to Harney County's entrepreneurial ecosystem occur. Annual updates will allow the document to remain a relevant guide for economic work in the region, be a catchall for activities, and build continuity between past, current, and future progress.

To suggest an update, please contact Brenda Smith, Executive Director at brenda@highdesertpartnership.org.

