

# COLORADO COUNTY ECONOMIC RESILIENCE PROFILE

## Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Colorado County Overview .....             | 42 |
| Recent Disruptions to the Economy .....    | 42 |
| Economic Resilience Strategies .....       | 43 |
| Recommendations .....                      | 43 |
| Land Use and Demographics .....            | 44 |
| Housing .....                              | 46 |
| Economy .....                              | 47 |
| Education, Hazard Risks, and Commute ..... | 48 |
| Economic Clusters .....                    | 50 |
| Local Planning .....                       | 51 |
| Data Sources .....                         | 52 |

## Introduction

Economic resilience is the ability to withstand and prevent disruptions to the economy. The most common types of disruptions include downturns in the economy or in a key industry; the exit of a major employer; and natural or man made disasters.

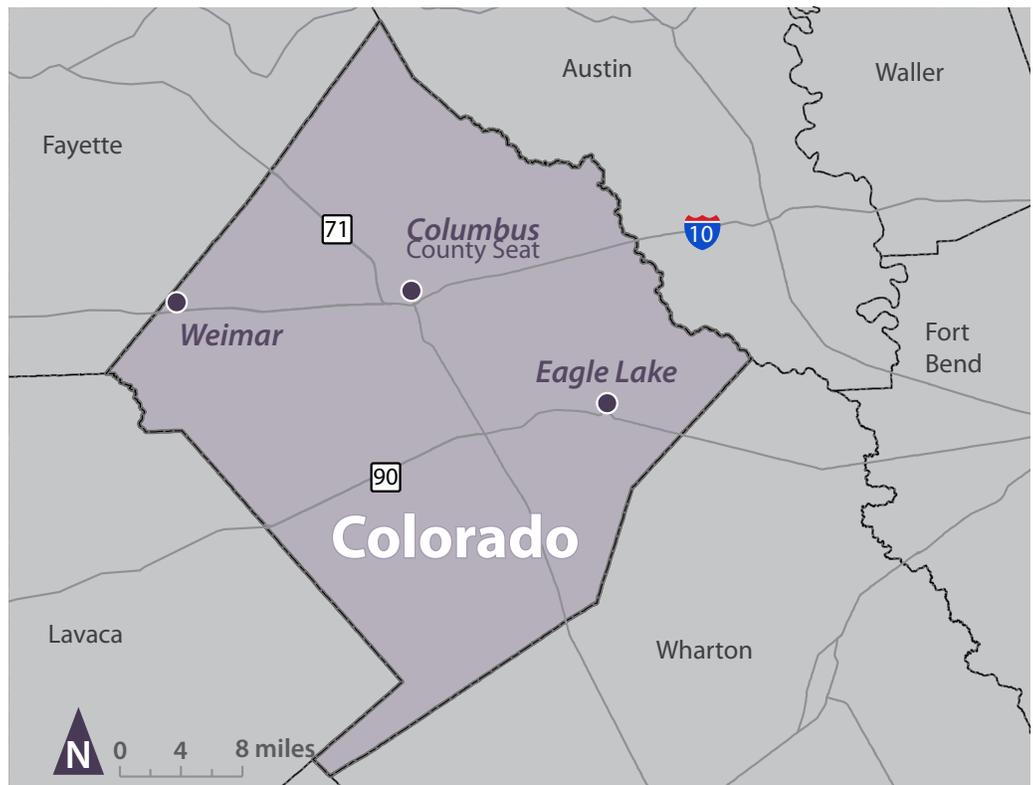
Creating a resilient economy requires the ability to anticipate risk, evaluate how risk can impact economic assets, and build the capacity to respond to disruptions.

This profile is intended to provide an overview of the factors affecting the future growth, development and resilience of Colorado County and it's economy by providing key data points on the economy, demographics, and other useful information.

## Colorado County Boundaries

- Colorado County
- Other counties
- Top 3 cities
- Major roads

County Seat: Columbus  
Largest City: Columbus



## Colorado County Overview

Colorado County, is home to three incorporated cities, Columbus, Eagle Lake, and Weimar. Columbus, the county seat, is roughly in the center of the county, where IH-10 and State Highway 71 intersect, 87 miles west of Houston; it has a population of 3,625. Eagle Lake, is in southeast Colorado County on U.S. 90, it has a population of 3,710. Weimar is in the far western portion of the County, with a population of 2,170. In addition to Interstate 10 and U.S. Highway 90, the county is served by State Highway 71 and the Union Pacific Railroad. Named for the Colorado River which bisects it northwest to southeast, Colorado County is mostly rural. The County's population has been generally stable for decades and is estimated to be 21,019, of which 11,514 live in unincorporated areas. Colorado County's economy is largely agricultural, the total value of products sold in 2012 was \$67,980,000. It is the third the largest producers of rice in the State, and is therefore highly dependent on irrigation from the Colorado River. Crop sales accounted for 65% of the total, and livestock sales for 35%. Other production includes cattle, corn, cotton, soybeans, sesame, and hay. Oil field services, oil and gas production, and sand and gravel mining companies have operations in Colorado County.

## Recent Disruptions to the Economy

Hurricane Harvey caused historic flooding in Colorado County. The river crested at 50.2 feet; slightly below the 1913 crest of 51.6 feet. The Lower Colorado River Authority manages the level of the Colorado River with extensive infrastructure to control flooding. However, Hurricane Harvey's unprecedented rainfall caused water to back up into Columbus and nearly into Eagle Lake; damaging homes and businesses. The flooding destabilized the bank of the Colorado river, and endangered the City of Columbus' wastewater treatment plant. The 2010-2011 drought also had a significant impact on Colorado County, rice production fell dramatically, and many cattle producers were forced to take their stock to market and sell their herds off at low drought prices. Colorado County's oil field services firms were affected when the price of a barrel of oil fell from over \$100 in 2014 to below \$30 in 2016; shutting down much of the oil and gas exploration in the County. The Great Recession caused unemployment in the county to spike from 3.1% in April of 2008 to 8.6% in January of 2010. Colorado largely escaped the worst impacts of 2008's Hurricane Ike, which was so damaging to other parts of the region.



Downtown Columbus has a historic Main Street populated by local businesses

# Economic Resilience Strategies

Colorado County is in a prime location for light manufacturing and distribution due to its highway and rail infrastructure and central location between Austin, Houston, and San Antonio. In 1995, the City of Columbus created the Columbus Community Industrial Development Corporation (CCIDC) that administers half-cent 4-B sales tax revenues (4B sales tax is a provision under Texas law allowing for voter approved sales tax for economic and job creation projects). The CCIDC developed the Texas Crossroads Business Park, which is home to two businesses: Great Southern Wood Preserving and KW International (an oil and gas fabrication company). While the CCIDC serves the City of Columbus,

the County does not have the economic development infrastructure or political support needed to attract new employers to other areas. Rice production is dependent on irrigation, and sufficient water supply from the Colorado River is crucial to maintaining production. Oil production and oil field services are subject to the volatility of the international energy market. Eagle Lake is working to attract tourists with enhancements to its historic downtown and by building infrastructure to give the public access to the Eagle Lake, the largest private lake in Texas. Colorado County has limited access to high speed internet of sufficient quality to run an online business; hampering entrepreneurship and the establishment of start-up businesses.

## Recommendations

Colorado County's economy will be better able to withstand, avoid, and recover from disruptions if it is able to:

Develop a marketing plan to highlight tourist and outdoor recreation opportunities in Colorado County.

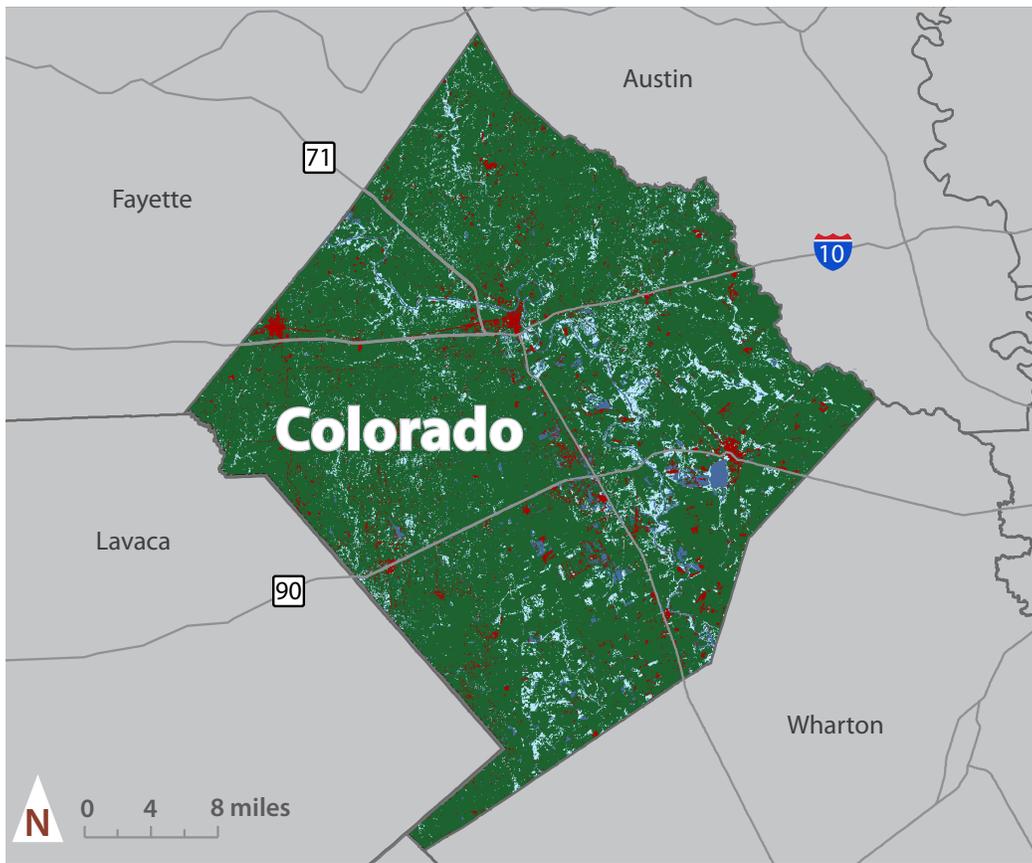
Form a countywide office of Economic Development to enhance opportunities for employment diversification.

Collaborate with the Lower Colorado River Authority, Texas Colorado River Floodplain Coalition, and the Texas Water Development Board to investigate opportunities to enhance water storage for agricultural irrigation during drought conditions

Investigate strategies for better coordinated countywide flood control.

Enhance broadband connectivity.

# Land Use and Demographics



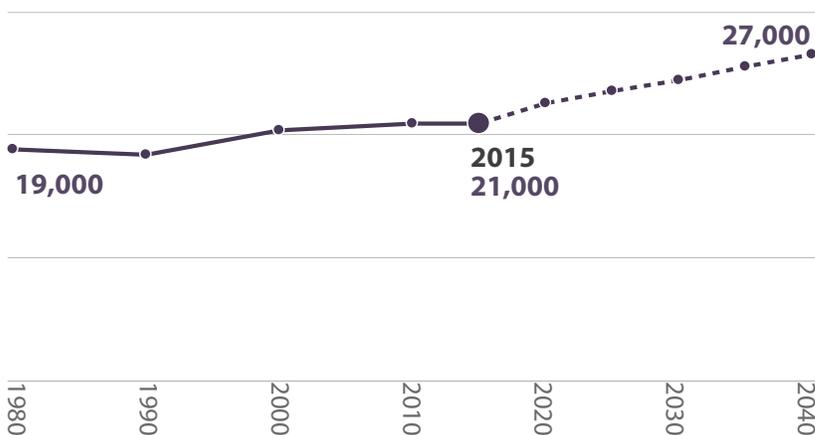
## Colorado County Land Use

- Other counties
- 1% Open water
- 4% Developed Land
- 7% Wetlands
- 88% Forest, shrubs, pasture, grasslands, barren lands, and cultivated crops

In the above map, the predominance of agricultural land can be seen, the Colorado River runs through the center of the county.

## Population Growth Forecast

Colorado County grew by 11% from 1980 to 2015 and is expected to reach 27,000 residents by 2040.



## Municipal Populations

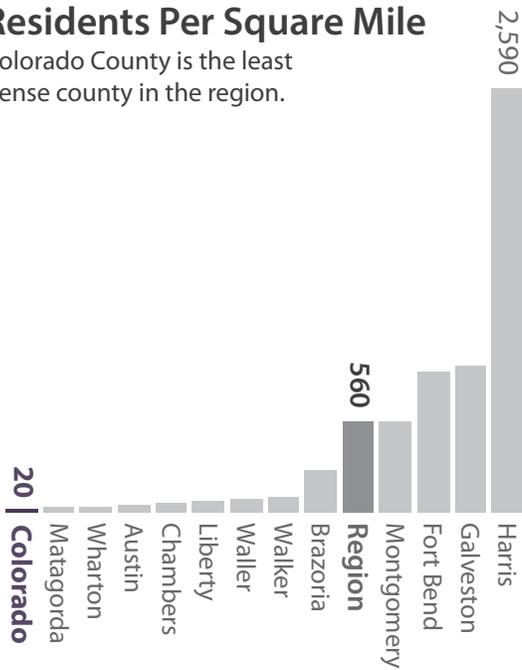
The City of Eagle Lake is Colorado County's largest incorporated municipality.

- 3,710 Eagle Lake
- 3,625 Columbus
- 2,170 Weimar
- 11,514 Unincorporated

# Land Use and Demographics

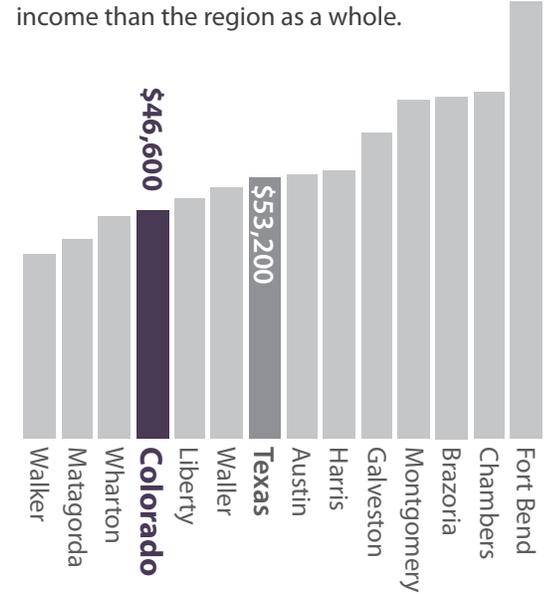
## Residents Per Square Mile

Colorado County is the least dense county in the region.



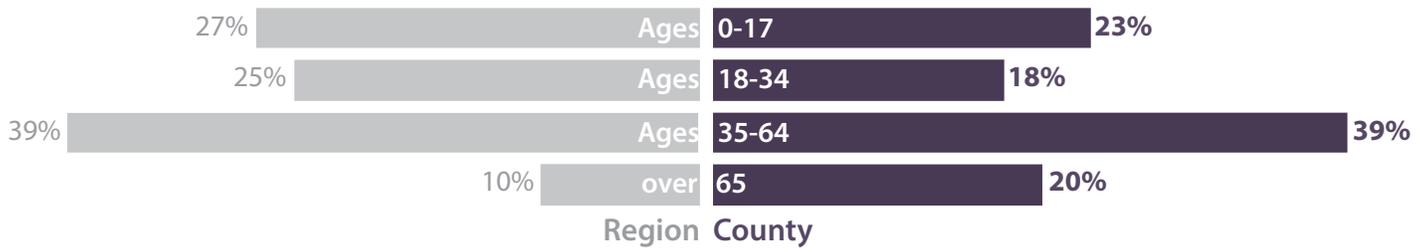
## Median Household Income

Colorado County has a lower median household income than the region as a whole.



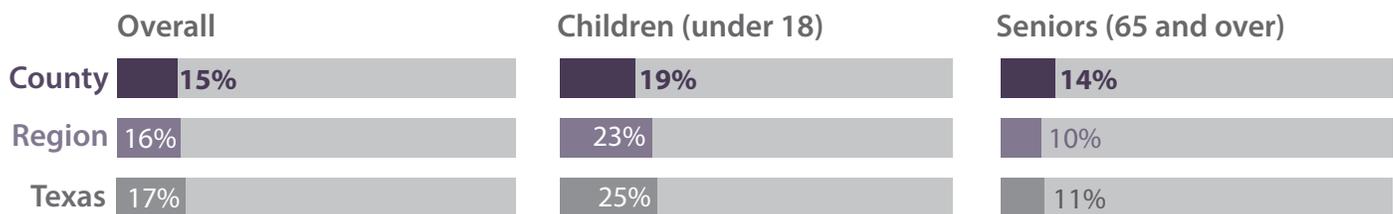
## Age

Colorado County has an older population than the region as a whole.



## Poverty Rate

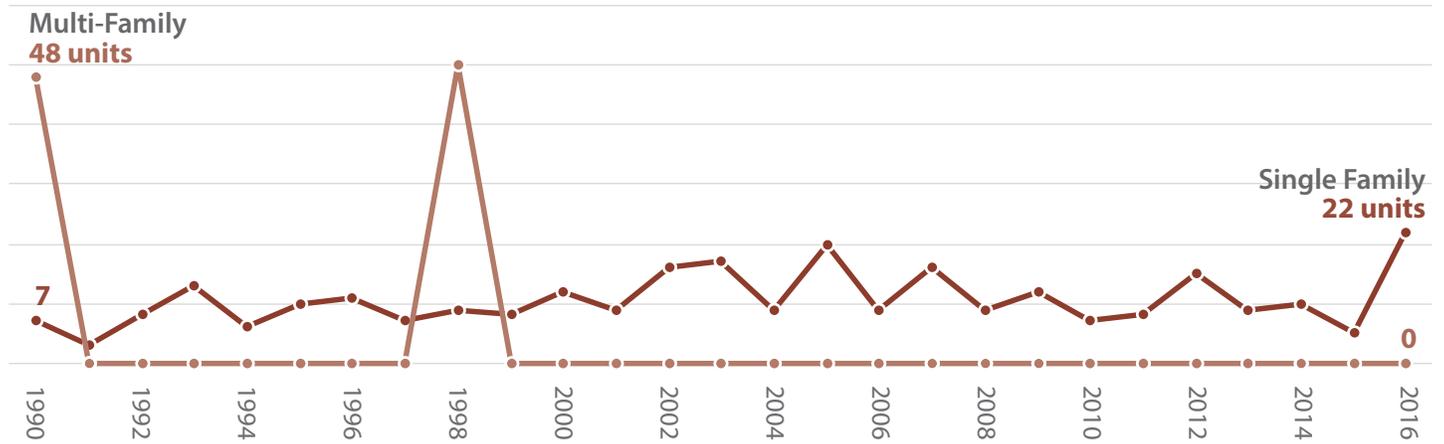
Colorado County has a lower rate of poverty than the region, except for seniors.



# Housing

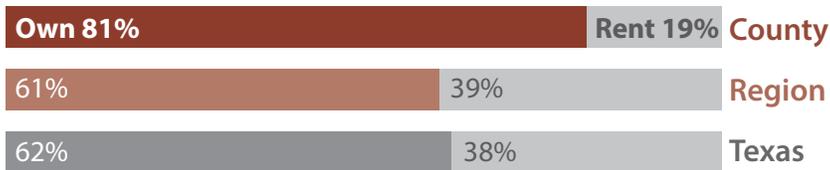
## Building Permits Issued

Single-family construction remains intermittent, while multi-family development permits have not been issued since the late 1990s.



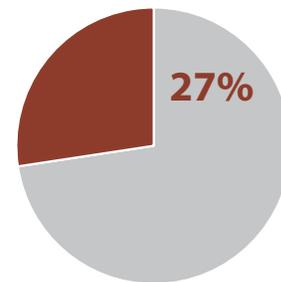
## Housing Tenure

Colorado County has a far higher rate of homeownership than the region or the state.



## Vacant Housing Units

Over one-quarter of Colorado County's housing units are vacant.



## Housing Type

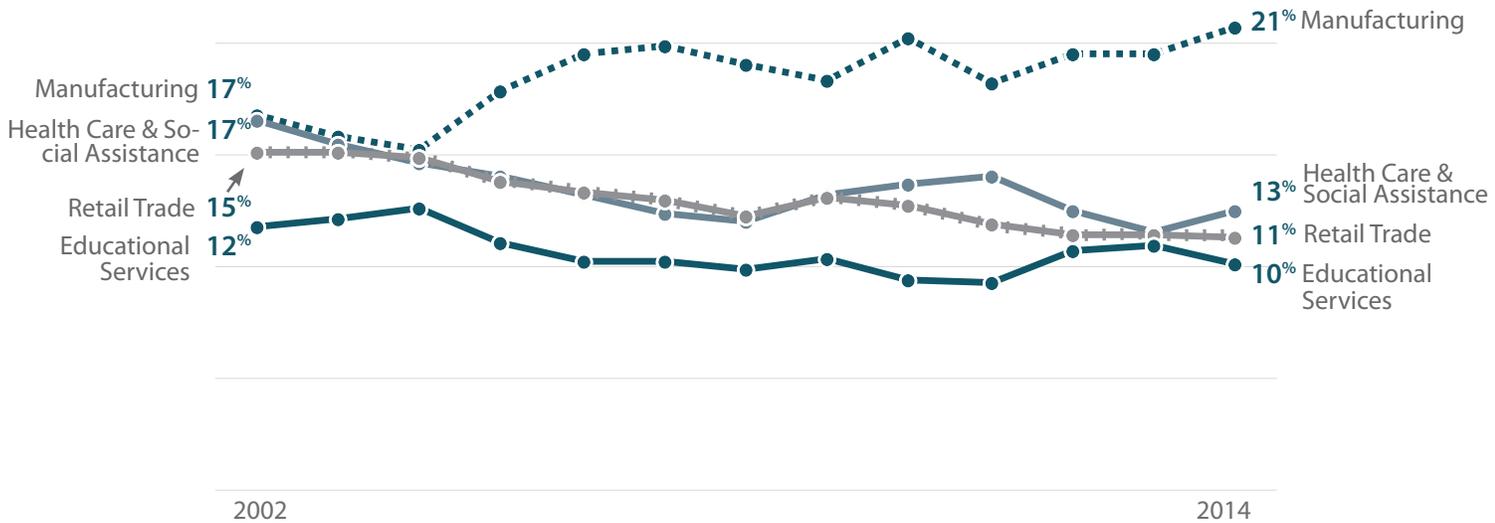
Colorado County has a higher rate of single family homes, RV, boat and mobile homes than the region and state.



# Economy

## Top Industries by Percent of Overall Jobs

Employment in the Manufacturing industry in Colorado County has increased as a portion of the county's workforce between 2002 and 2014 while other top industries have declined in their portion of the workforce.



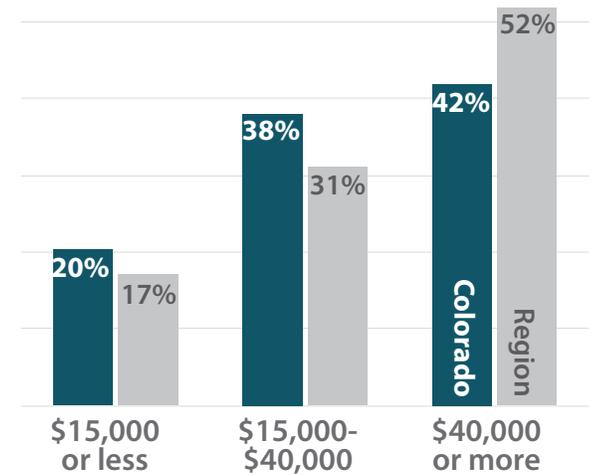
## Unemployment Rate

Colorado County's unemployment remained lower than the national average between 2006 and 2016.



## Earnings of Residents

Around 40% of Colorado County residents earn over \$40,000 a year, a lower percentage than the region.



# Education, Hazard Risks, and Commute

## Median Earnings by Educational Attainment

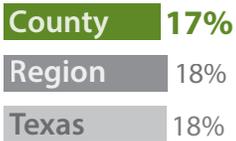
A Colorado County resident with a graduate or professional degree makes, on average, \$32,300 more than a resident with less than a high school education annually.



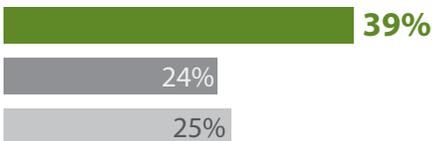
## Educational Attainment

A lower percentage of Colorado County residents have obtained education after high school than the region and state.

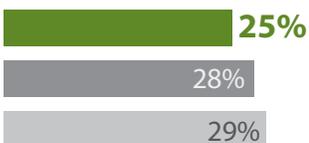
### Less than High School



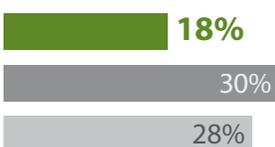
### High School or Equivalent



### Some College or Associate's

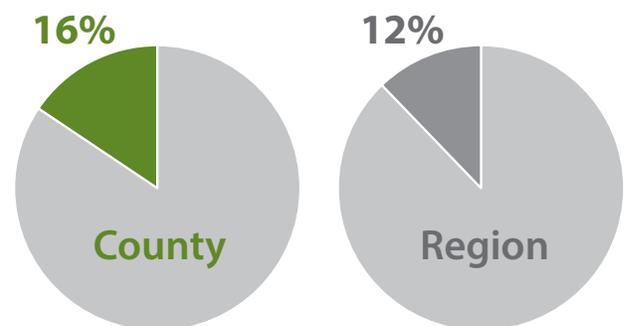


### Bachelor's Degree or More



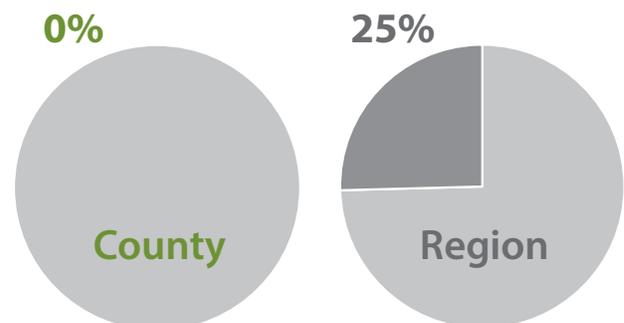
## Residents in 100-year Floodplain

A larger percentage of Colorado County residents live in a 100-year floodplain than the region.



## Residents in Hurricane Evacuation Zone

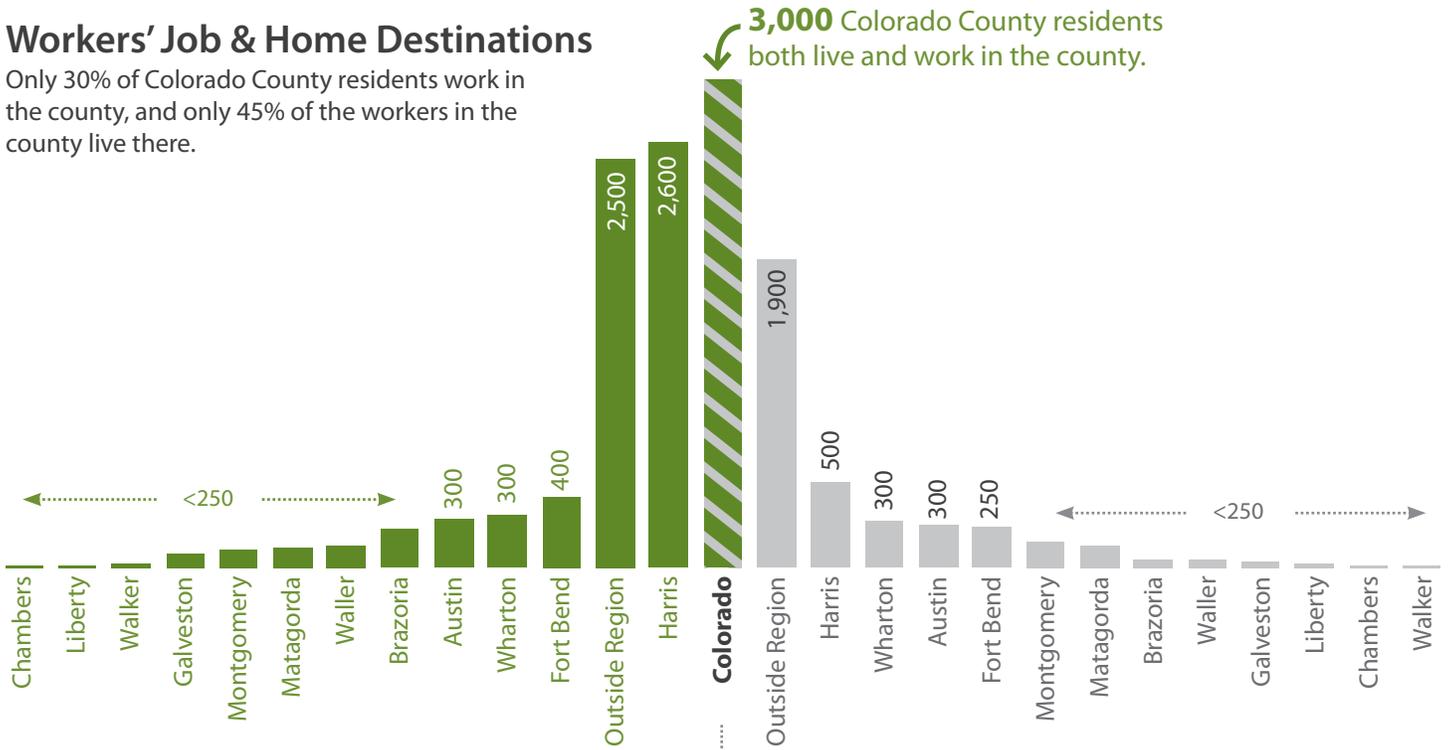
No Colorado County residents live in a hurricane evacuation zone, as opposed to 25% of the region's residents.



# Education, Hazard Risks, and Commute

## Workers' Job & Home Destinations

Only 30% of Colorado County residents work in the county, and only 45% of the workers in the county live there.

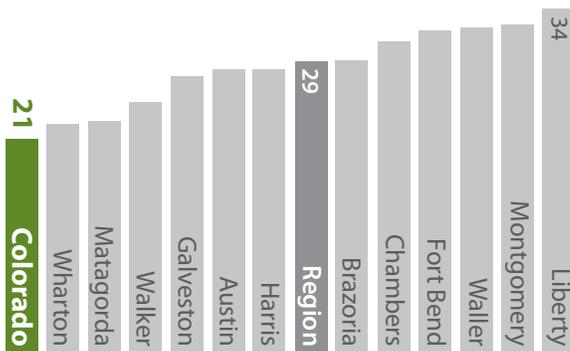


County residents who work elsewhere

Workers in the county who live elsewhere

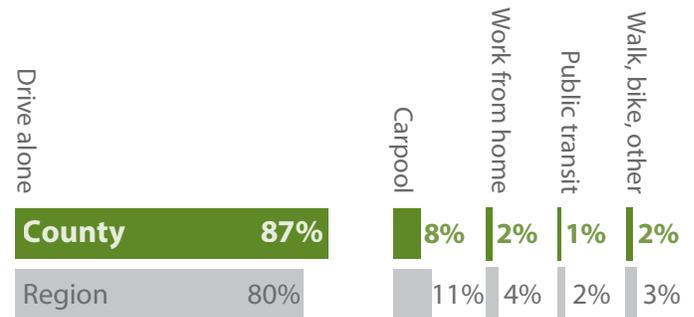
## Mean Commute to Work (minutes)

Colorado County workers have the shortest commute time to work in the region.



## Commute Mode to Work

A higher percentage of Colorado County workers drive to work compared to the region as a whole.



# Economic Clusters

A cluster is a concentration of related businesses that make the area more competitive in those industries. Clusters exist where a set of related industries in a given location reach critical mass. Clusters enhance productivity and spur innovation by bringing together technology, information, specialized talent, competing companies, academic institution, and other organizations.

Traded clusters are groups of related industries that serve markets beyond the region in which they are located. Local clusters, in contrast, consist of industries that serve the local market. They are prevalent in every region of the country, regardless of the competitive advantages of a location.

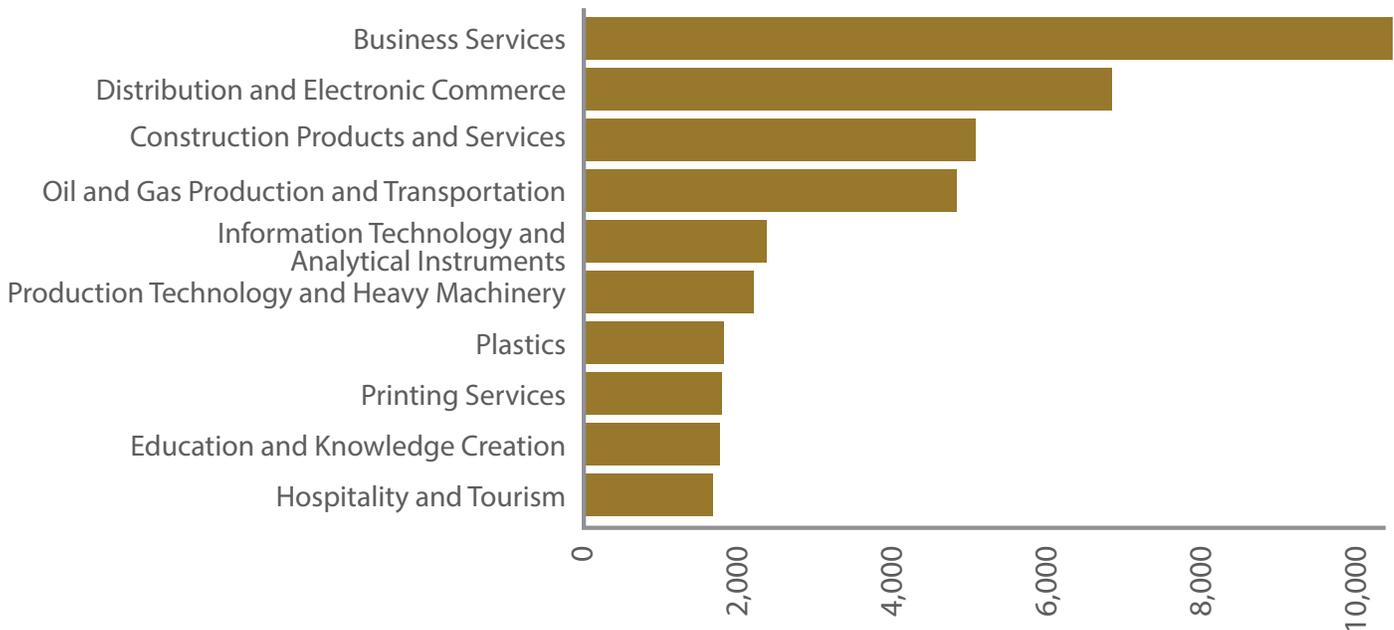
## Traded v. Local Clusters

This diagram demonstrates the county's split between the traded and local sectors of the economy, based on 2014 data from the U.S. Census.



## Employment by Cluster

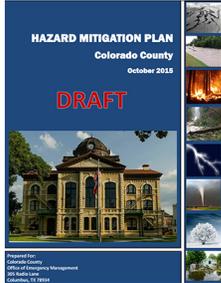
This bar graph demonstrates Colorado County's employment by each cluster. It is based on 2014 data from the U.S. Census.



# Local Planning

This plan highlights efforts in Colorado County to plan for disaster recovery and economic resiliency. The economic elements of the plans are identified.

## Colorado County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update



Colorado County and its communities participated in previous hazard mitigation plans as part of the Texas Colorado River Floodplain Coalition. The guiding principle for the Colorado County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update is to reduce or eliminate the long-term risks to loss of life and property damage

in Colorado County from the full range of natural disasters. The Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan is crucial in determining the vulnerabilities faced by each of the jurisdictions in Colorado County. examines the urban design elements of the town and recommends best practices from similar communities. Downtowns represent crucial physical and social infrastructure that need planning. This plan examines the flood plain, but is focused on how to improve the downtown.

# Data Sources

## Colorado County Overview

1. U.S. Census
2. U.S. Census
3. U.S. Census
4. Houston-Galveston Area Council
5. U.S. Census
6. USDA Census of Agriculture
7. USDA Census of Agriculture
8. USDA Census of Agriculture

## Recent Disruptions to the Economy

9. US Geological Survey
10. Federal Reserve Bank of Saint Louis, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

## Economic Development Strategies

11. City of Columbus
12. City of Columbus
13. Texas State Historical Association

## Graphics

- County Boundaries Map. Houston-Galveston Area Council, 2017.
- County Land Use Map. Houston-Galveston Area Council, 2017.
- Population Growth Forecast. Houston-Galveston Area Council, 2017.
- Residents Per Square Mile. Houston-Galveston Area Council, 2017.
- Age. U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, Table B01001.

Median Household Income. U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, Table S2503.

Poverty Rate. U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, Table S1701.

Building Permits Issued. U.S. Census Bureau, Building Permits Survey, 1990-2015.

Housing Tenure. U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, Table DP04.

Vacant Housing Units. U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, Table DP04.

Housing Type. U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, Table DP04.

Living Costs. Center for Neighborhood Technology 2013 H+T® Index.

Top Industries by Percent of Overall Jobs. U.S. Census Bureau, 2002-2014, OnTheMap Application, Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics Program.

Unemployment Rate. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, 2006-2016.

Earnings of Residents. U.S. Census Bureau, 2014, OnTheMap Application, Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics Program.

Median Earnings by Educational Attainment. U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, Table B20004.

Educational Attainment. U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, Table S1501.

Residents in 100-year Floodplain. Houston-Galveston Area Council, 2017.

Residents in Hurricane Evacuation Zone. Houston-Galveston Area Council, 2017.

Workers' Job & Home Destinations. U.S. Census Bureau, 2014, OnTheMap Application, Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics Program.

Mean Commute to Work (minutes). U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, Table S0802.