

# CEDS Executive Summary

The Bear River Band of Rohnerville Rancheria Comprehensive Economic Development Committee, with the support of Points Consulting LLC, have developed the Bear River Band Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) to guide economic development for the Tribes over the next five years (published April 2024).<sup>1</sup> The Committee's priority goals for the Tribes in the coming years are those related to workforce, land use, internal collaboration, and wellness.

A CEDS is a planning tool developed by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) to assist regional economic development, promote economic resilience, encourage action from both private and public sections and allows Tribes to be eligible for EDA opportunity funds. Funding through the EDA can be used for planning, infrastructure projects, and forming programs that foster economic development. The strategy incorporates quantitative data related to both house-holds and businesses, input from residents gathered via town hall events, and an electronic community survey.

The CEDS will aid Bear River Band leaders navigate challenging economic times and build a future economy that is more robust and resilient to disruption. The CEDS serves as a justifiable foundation for funding opportunities, provides a roadmap for promoting economic resilience, and encourages action from both public and private sector leaders.

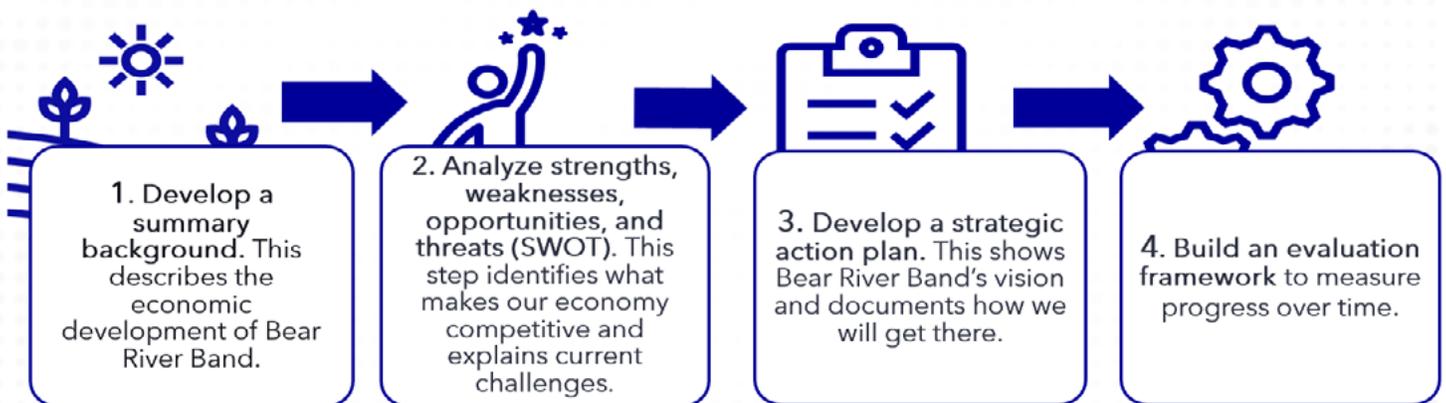


## Vision Statement

*The vision of the Bear River Band of Rohnerville Rancheria is shaping a secure, healthy future by responsibly exercising sovereignty, investing in our people, refining and evolving as a tribal organization, and preserving and revitalizing our culture while serving the best interests of all people.*



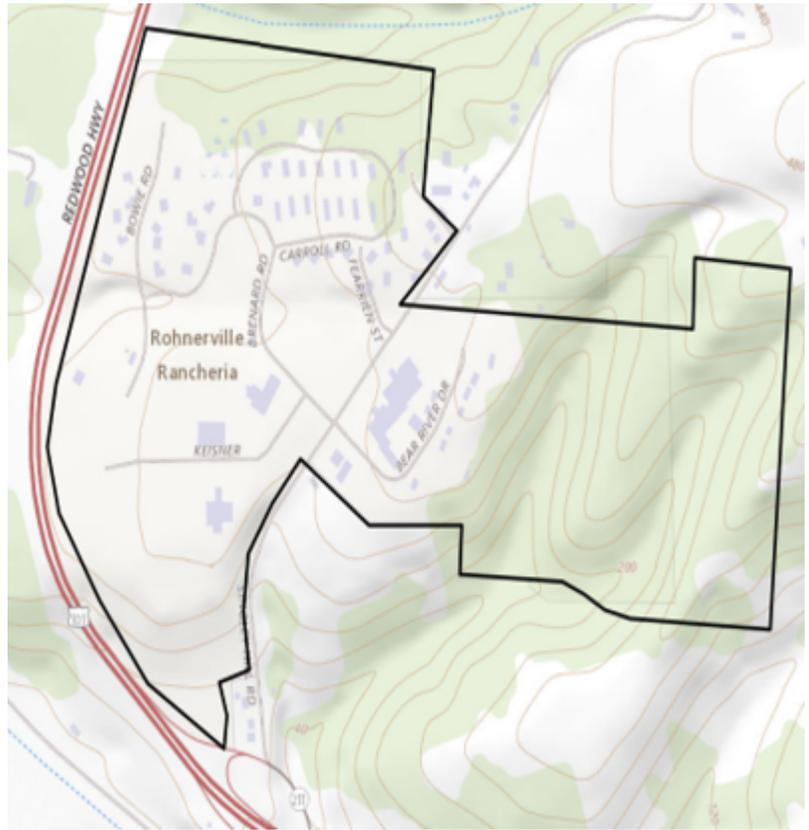
## CEDS Process:



<sup>1</sup> The full Bear River Band Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) can be read here: <https://points-consulting.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Bear-River-Band-CEDS-FINAL-4.5.2024.pdf>.

# Summary Background

The Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria base is located near Loleta, CA on a 173-acre parcel. The Bear River Band tribal members are those of Wiyot, Bear River and Mattole ancestry while other tribes such as Hoopa, Yurok and Tolowa are included by way of marriage or interrelationships. There are currently 664 enrolled members, 367 of which are 18 years old or older and the remaining 297 are under 18 years. Most of the members do not reside on or near the Rancheria, or within Humboldt County. Based off current data supplied by ESRI, the Bear River Band as of 2022 has an estimated total residential population of 213 within the Rancheria. It is important to note that individuals of Native descent and those without Native descent reside on tribal lands.

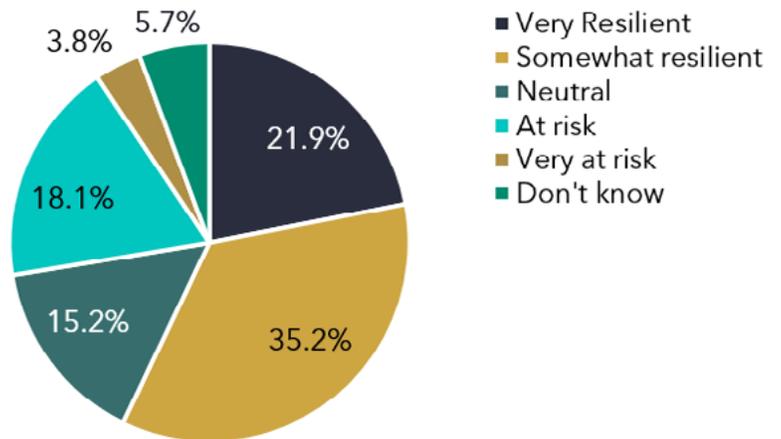


**Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria Reservation**

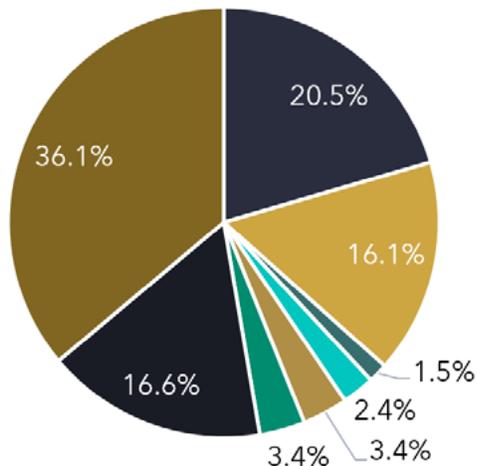
## Community Survey

A Community Survey ran from July through September 2023 to help determine the community's perceptions of the local economy and how it can be improved. Between both paper and electronic versions of the survey, a total of 131 qualified responses were received. 80 respondents were employees of Bear River Band department or enterprise.

### How resilient do you consider the Bear River Band community to be?

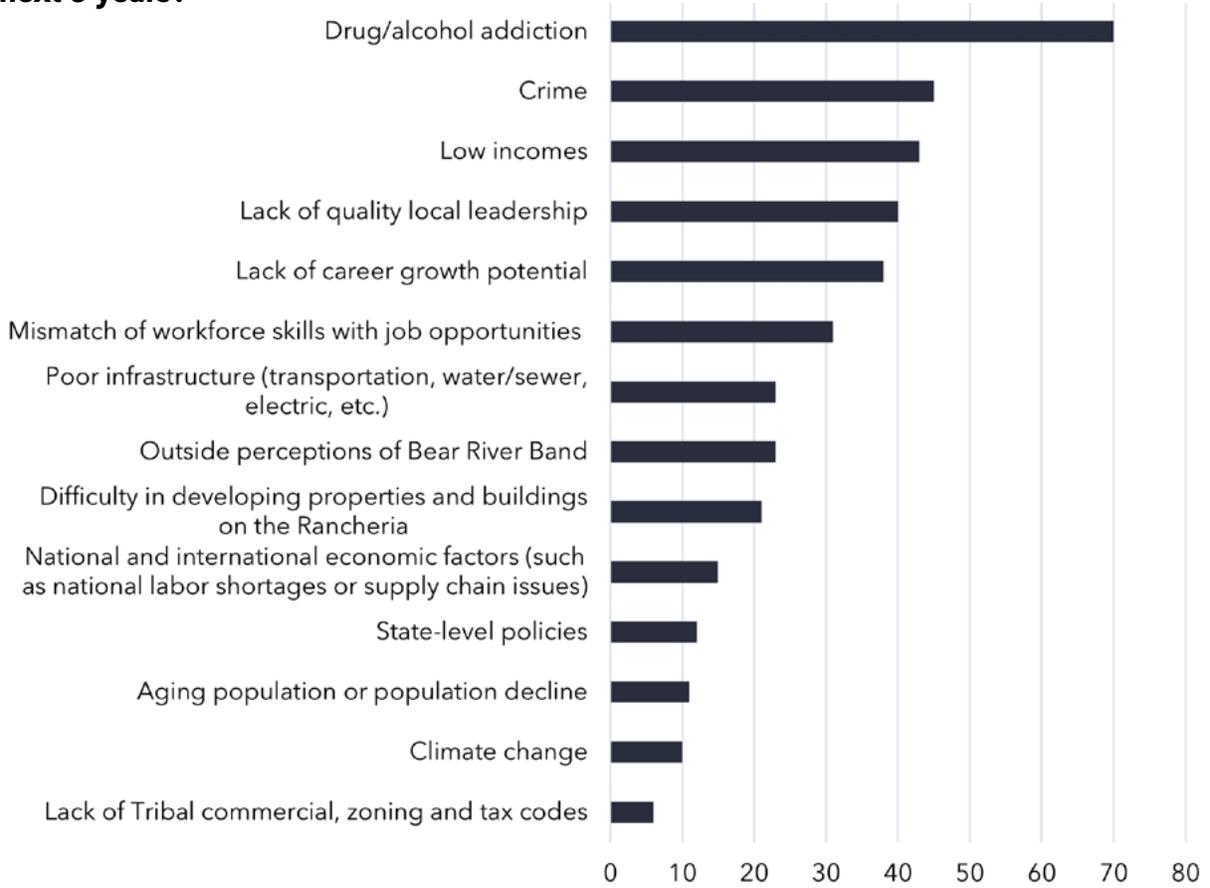


### Are you an enrolled member of the Bear River Band and/or live on the Rancheria?

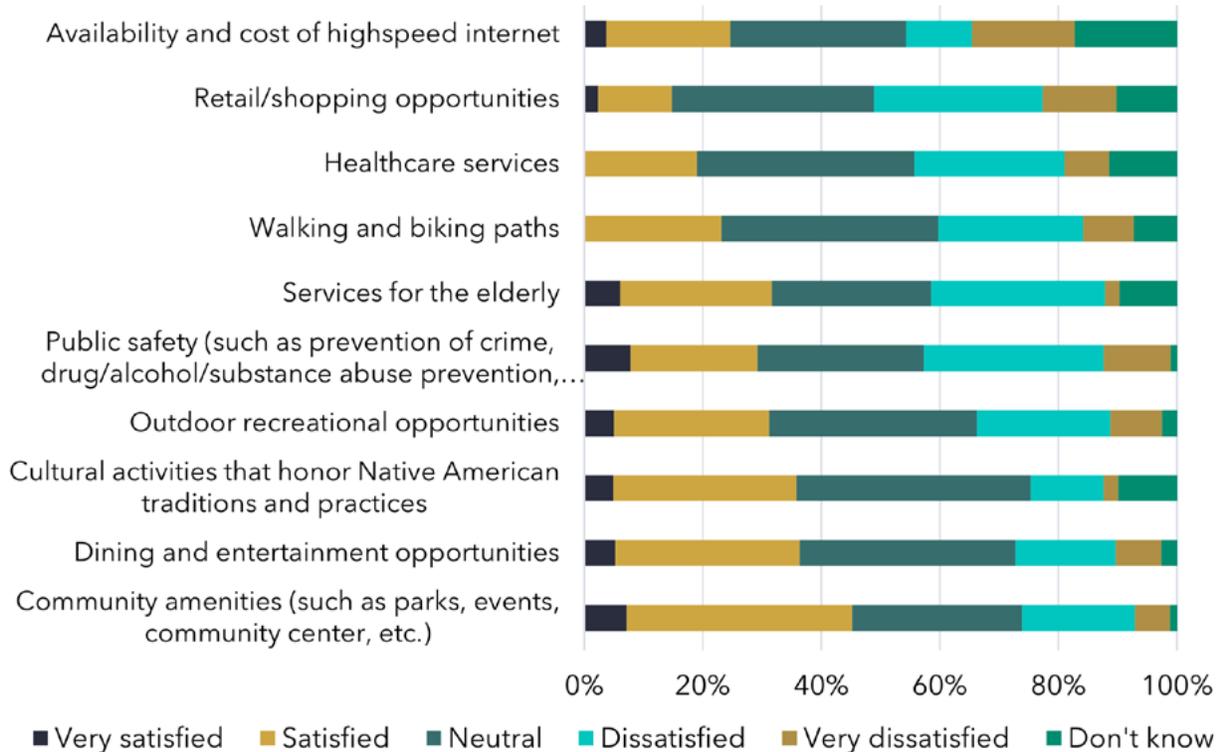


- Enrolled tribal member living on the Rancheria
- Enrolled tribal member living off the Rancheria
- Descendant living on the Rancheria
- Descendant living off the Rancheria
- Other Indian living on the Rancheria
- Non-Indian living on the Rancheria
- Non-Indian working on the Rancheria
- None of the above/just passing through

**What economic development activities does the Bear River Band community need most within the next 5 years?**



**How satisfied are you with the following economic factors in the Bear River Band community?**



## Economic Development Timeline



### 2005 - Bear River Casino

The Bear River Band built its first enterprise to bring in economic growth and expansion on the Rancheria

### 2012 - Bear River Hotel

The Bear River Casino expanded the facility to accommodate the addition of a hotel which provided a increase of local jobs and opportunities for further enterprise expansion



### 2014 - Bear River CEDS

Bear River Band developed their first CEDS report to begin the outlined process of addressing Goals & Actions of the Tribe for the next 5 years. Additionally, acquired a digital build board and developed a Strategic Energy Plan. The following year a Foods Survey was conducted for the Tribe



### 2016 - Bear River Recreation Center

Construction of the Bear River Recreation Center on the Rancheria as the Tribes next enterprise



### 2019 - Bear River Family Entertainment Center

The fourth enterprise, the Family Entertainment Center (FEC), for the Bear River Band was built. During this time a Community Survey and Healthy Families Survey were administered



### 2020 & 2021 - Energy Options Analysis Project

During peak years of COVID-19 pandemic, Bear River Band conducted an energy analysis for renewable energy use. Multiple surveys were organized during these years such as, Organizational Survey, Cultural Survey, and Funding Needs Survey



### 2023 - Development Plans

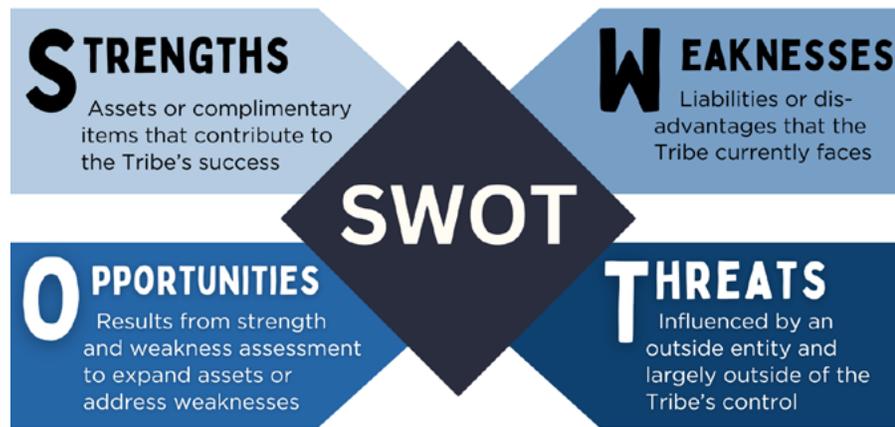
The Bear River Band assessed the capability to expand the FEC through a Feasibility Study Expansion, as well as began the process of a department oriented Strategic Plan, and a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)



### 2024 - Future Planning

The Bear River Band will be finalizing multiple economic and community development plans such as an updated CEDS report, Strategic Plan, and Master Plan. Future projects and developments will be created through these plans





## SWOT Analysis

A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis is a strategic planning tool which provides guidance for businesses, organizations, and other entities and a comprehensive understanding of their current situation.

### S

- Capacity of casino to have lodging and restaurants on the Rancheria
- Most robust casino & resources compared to other local tribes
- Catering department to use for events
- Proximity to US 101 (also one of the borders of the Rancheria)
- Humboldt County - outdoor opportunities (e.g.: tourism, hunting, etc.)
- Financially planning and practices- no debt, maintaining savings and distributing revenue so they can continue to invest
- Commercial real estate investments, 6 outside of the County (eg. Sacramento and Rocklin)
- Intergovernmental relationship with the state, exceptionally strong
- Partnering with state on co-management of lands (CA Fish and Wildlife, Child Welfare, others)
- Tribal Nation Grant Fund (TNGF) code- ability to launch and develop projects much faster and access to capital
- Stable and moderate climate
- Grants- ARP Act Child Care Stabilization Grants Program and Tribal Energy Development Capacity grant that is ongoing
- Regulatory opportunity and effect of being a sovereign nation (state has no or little jurisdiction), particularly a strong point in a high regulatory state
- Regulatory restrictions- cannot restrict national commerce for Tribes
- Natural Resources: coast, Redwoods, Six Rivers basin
- Competitive wages for the region
- Access to federal funding, in general
- Broadband internet access for many households
- Strong relationships with Hoopa and Yurok tribes

### W

- No independent tax codes
- Revenue dependent on gaming (and thereby dependence on disposal income and economic cycles)
- Current housing costs and crisis
- Seasonality of tourism
- Limited public transit access (two bus stops with an uphill walk)
- Walkability/bikability for getting to/from the Tribe is limited
- One dimensional supply chain (only highway, no port and no rail access)
- Higher cost, in general, in the County and region due to supply chains

- Limited retail availability without leaving tribal lands
- Itinerant and homeless populations unusually large
- Land availability - there is very little left for housing

## O

- Could have customized vacation packages (lodging plus hunting or ecotourism) to capture more recreational spending dollars
- Marketing fishing (steelhead and halibut) and other natural resources-based tourism
- Expanding economic diversity to ensure the viability and durability of the local economy
- Could develop own tax code (section 18 code), so they can exercise taxes on their own properties (e.g. sales and excise taxes), which other regional municipalities cannot do
- Capturing shoulder season traffic (fishermen could come in winter where there is no fishing elsewhere)
- Surrounding lands (100 acres) under application which could be brought under tribal trust
- Convert all existing owned lands into trust status
- Improved housing availability
- Cannabis industry (federal government cannot penalize tribes for utilizing cannabis), plus increases in industry growth and consumption
- Could develop cannabis tax for dispensaries even for off-site facilities
- Local medical facilities to help the local population continue to thrive in times of shock, crisis or disruption (also counter-cyclical b/c more people go on public healthcare during downturns)
- Offshore wind project (8.3K jobs), with hub in Eureka and associated impacts (coming next 4-5 years)
- Could use recent energy grant funding to pursue energy sovereignty goals related to protection of future energy resources
- Potential for port expansion following wind project- tourism, recreation, and industrial development
- Potential for more telehealth, online educational opportunities utilizing high speed internet capabilities
- Leadership (and members) interest in more balanced and consistent revenue streams that would continue to provide stability in the event of a downturn
- Considering tribe sovereignty, could focus on growth opportunities in a regional industry cluster like Tobacco and Flavored Vapes
- Could examine current spatial inefficiencies to resolve issues related to walkability/bikability and public transit station access
- Could increase equitable workforce participation and family health and wellness through continued investments within local child care community
- Could continue to strengthen relationships with partners such as the Hoopa and Yurok tribes in conservation and sustainability efforts streams

## T

- Natural disasters: forest fires and flooding, and air quality and supply chain effects
- Cannabis industry legalization has resulted in a less cash-rich environment.
- Crime and drug use, and associated property crime
- Operational cost and overhead of casino is ever present, even when tourism is down
- Closure of essential community services like daycares

# Strategic Action Plan & Evaluation Framework

The Strategic Direction & Action Plan accounts for the socioeconomic, community, and external factors uncovered during the SWOT analysis and aligns those factors with specific strategies and actions that community leaders can address. Ideally, over the next five years, community leaders will be able to return to these Goals and Objectives in order to measure performance of the community.

The Evaluation Framework component defines the standards by which Strategic Direction & Action Plan progress will be measured over the next five years. Each CEDS Annual Update will report progress according to these metrics. While some performance measures are strongly quantitative, others are more focused on development or improvement of a qualitative feature.

## Goal 1: Enhancing Continuing Education and Workforce Development

- Improvement of mentorship and continuing education functions for jobs within the Tribe such as: elements of training leaders in how mentor young professionals, inclusion of a budget for professional development (conferences, online courses, scholarships, etc.), and to build an infrastructure around it so people know exactly how to access the funds from the implementation of the State of Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI) grant **(1 year)**
- Promote education to tribal members on rights and sovereignty (could be seminars from external experts) **(as needed)**  
Establish Tribal Employment Rights Ordinances (T.E.R.O) program within the Rancheria **(2 years)**
- Assist Human Resources & Tribal Compliance department to facilitate resume and job coaching as a resource to help tribal members on developing resumes/cover letters, interviewing skills, etc. (Implement an organizational wide workforce development program) **(1 year)**
- Develop an internal tribal agency with equitable department leadership to communicate and bridge siloed projects and needs **(2 years)**
- Establish cross-training amongst entry and mid-level department personnel **(as needed)**

## Goal 2: Economic Development Planning

- Determine key industry partnership and events that will expand network and opportunities for economic development with other California tribes, native owned corporations, and state government agencies **(3 years)**
- Determine how to direct revenues from outside commercial real estate revenue into economic development promoting facilities locally (such as a Professional/Business Center, Coworking Space, or series of for-rent flex space buildings) **(3 to 4 years)**
- Explore opportunity for hosting baseball/softball tournaments using existing turf facilities in partnership with College of the Redwoods **(2 years)**
- Develop own tax code so excise taxes can be issued for certain products or services (particularly those consumed by transients/visitors to the casino) **(1 to 2 years)**
- Conduct feasibility study and survey of existing casino customers on events, programs and associated activities that would complement the casino and lead to sustained and non-cyclical tourist traffic (e.g.: fishing expeditions, concerts and special events, etc.) **(2 years)**

### Goal 3: Land Use and Best Practices

- Provide readily accessible maps to tribal members and interested economic development partners on land ownership and categorization (trust, fee simple, tribal trust, etc.) **(6 months to 1 year)**
- Identify aspiring entrepreneurs who could fill gaps for in-demand products and services that are currently going outside of the community (such as fitness, food service, retail) **(6 months to 1 year)**
- Survey community on top priorities for housing (market rate rentals, subsidized rentals, single-family owner-occupied, senior housing, various density levels, etc.) **(1 year)**
- Determine whether to utilize opportunities for flavored vaping on the BRR reservation and determine which outlets would sell such products **(2 years)**
- Develop 20-year plan for which additional strategic lands in proximity to BRR lands that could be acquired, and determine which will be used for commercial, industrial, and residential purposes, including those which can be leased to private parties which will remain in trust **(4 years)**

### Goal 4: Cultural and Internal Collaboration Development

- Survey younger tribal members (using relevant social media tools such as Snap Chat, Instagram, etc.) on what events and ceremonies would be most interesting for them to participate in **(2 years)**
- Provide classes on key skills for BRR culture such as basket-making, song dance and regalia, traditional cooking classes, etc. **(3 years)**
- Improve BRR website to become a central location for critical information (such as organization charts, summary of departments and programs, and opportunities for community engagement) **(1 year)**
- Explore how to increase utilizing tribe specific social media platforms (such as Rave) **(1 year)**

### Goal 5: Promoting Wellness

- Determine key stakeholders, nonprofit organizations, and partnering Tribes to facilitate readily accessible mental and behavioral health resources and programs for Tribal members **(3 years)**
- Assess current member workforce challenges with Human Resources, Tribal Court, and Public Works departments to determine critical needs **(1 to 2 years)**
- Improve walkability and bikability for residents between residential and commercial areas in Loleta and surrounding areas, include educational campaigns on importance of active lifestyles **(3 to 4 years)**
- Support local services, events, programs, and educational campaigns for residents and members which promote healthy and sustainable living (such as a community garden which include the tribes first foods) **(as needed)**

# Economic Resiliency

Economic resiliency refers to the ability of a regional economy to cope with hardship. According to the EDA, economic resiliency includes the following three attributes: the ability to recover quickly from a shock, the ability to withstand a shock, and the ability to avoid the shock altogether.<sup>1</sup> A partnership between local institutions, businesses, and neighborhoods is necessary to achieve true resiliency, along with coordinated regional-level planning. The Bear River Community is promoting resiliency via a number of initiatives, including: keeping a Community Emergency Response Plan, boosting levels of high-speed internet in the community, promoting social services, facilitating relations with other tribes, and planning for environmental shifts and preservation, to name a few.

The Bear River Band developed a Community Emergency Response Plan in 2018 to outline strategies that members can take in the event of both large-scale disasters as well as smaller emergencies.<sup>2</sup> This plan includes both a basic emergency plan that would be relevant for all kinds of emergencies, and a list of specific events the community might experience. The Response Plan notably guides individuals and households (not just community leaders) through the process of creating personal communication plans in the event of a crisis, and is key to the Tribe's resiliency.

Another strong indicator of any community's resiliency today is true post-COVID pandemic recovery. Over the past four years, economic shutdowns have highlighted the need for better internet infrastructure in a socially distanced world. Fortunately, high-speed internet is relatively accessible for the Bear River Band. According to data reported by the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, the percentage of Bear River Band households with high-speed internet surpasses that of households with high-speed internet in the US. Nevertheless, the number of reported Bear River Band households with a desktop computer or laptop was 21.4 Percentage points lower than US households as a whole.<sup>3</sup>

Bear River Band also offers many social services related to food security, health, and culture preservation. Social services are an often overlooked but integral component of a good resiliency plan. Some of the provisions made available through Bear River Band Social Services include:<sup>4</sup>

- Tribal Nutrition Assistance Program (TNAP) - a grant administered by the state of California which offers support to eligible members experiencing food insecurity
- Healthy Families Program - services such as monthly skill-building classes for tribal families
- Elders Program - support for elders including home visits, social/recreational activities, utilities assistance, cleaning programs, etc.
- Victim Services - relocation, emergency shelter, advocacy, and other services
- Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) Policy - care/treatment, resources, various grants, referrals for treatment, financial means to access detox

The Tribe has also adopted both a Climate Change Mitigation and Adaption Action Plan<sup>5</sup> and Sustainability Plan<sup>6</sup> in a steady long-term initiative to preserve the environment. The plans notate projected impacts of climate change in Humboldt County. They also look at the Rancheria's natural resources to provide general actions that can be implemented to mitigate climate change impacts.

---

1 US Economic Development Administration, "Economic Resilience," <https://www.eda.gov/grant-resources/comprehensive-economic-development-strategy/content/economic-resilience>.

2 2018 Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria Community Emergency Response Plan, [https://www.bearriverrancheria.org/files/ugd/c3beb0\\_eaa4b6fc6fa445d7acd3e74d70fbf458.pdf](https://www.bearriverrancheria.org/files/ugd/c3beb0_eaa4b6fc6fa445d7acd3e74d70fbf458.pdf).

3 Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, Reservation Profiles, 2013-2017 American Community Survey, <https://www.minneapolisfed.org/indiancountry/resources/native-community-data-profiles>.

4 2023 Bear River Band Fall Newsletter, <https://anyflip.com/oswfn/tjfc/basic>.

5 2018 Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Action Plan, [https://www.bearriverrancheria.org/files/ugd/c3beb0\\_3894c8591ba249e3a5dd2387ff53eb22.pdf](https://www.bearriverrancheria.org/files/ugd/c3beb0_3894c8591ba249e3a5dd2387ff53eb22.pdf).

6 Sustainability Best Practices Guide for the Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria, [https://www.bearriverrancheria.org/files/ugd/c3beb0\\_9fc43f02403a4d2a8bd93f379c6c5bdc.pdf](https://www.bearriverrancheria.org/files/ugd/c3beb0_9fc43f02403a4d2a8bd93f379c6c5bdc.pdf).