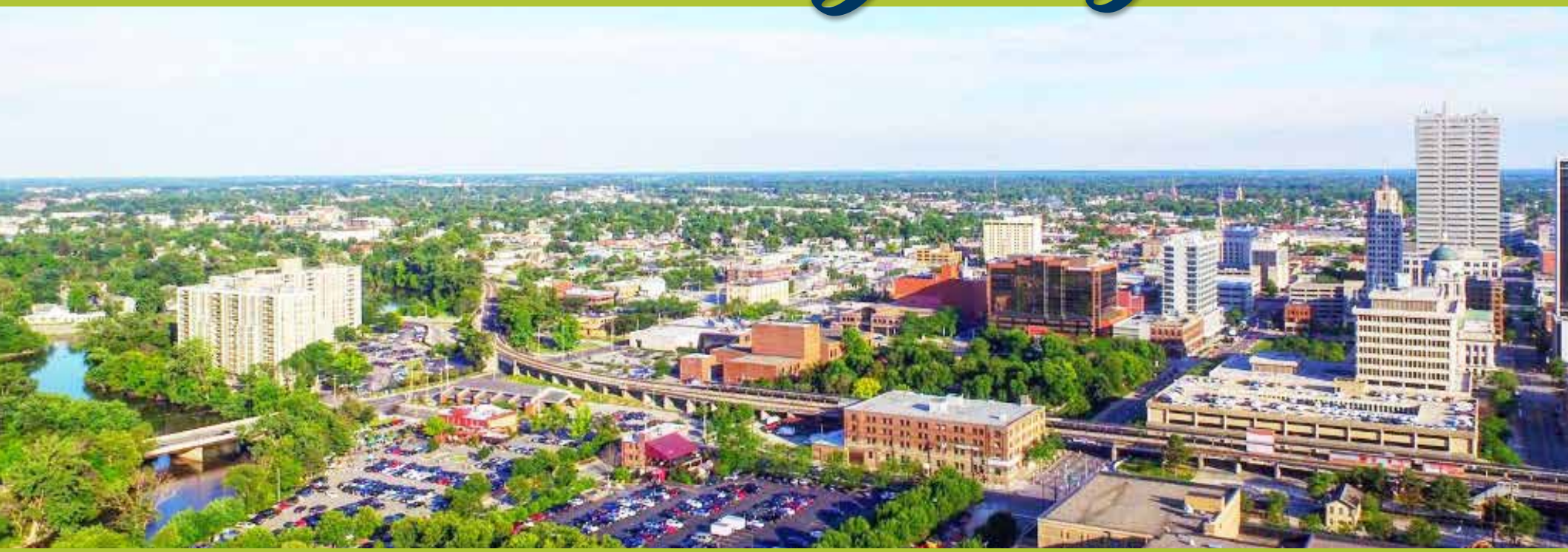


# ACT

## *Allen County Together*



AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN FOR GREATER FORT WAYNE INC. AND FORT WAYNE-ALLEN COUNTY, INDIANA



NOVEMBER 2021





# Allen County Together



Thank you for your interest in the Allen County Together (ACT) economic development action plan.

As we release this plan in January 2022, Allen County has incredible economic momentum:

- Fort Wayne was the fastest-growing metro in the Great Lakes region in 2020.
- We've seen more than \$1 billion in private investment in downtown Fort Wayne since 2009.
- We've become a magnet for talent and jobs, driving positive growth across Allen County and the surrounding area.

So, why this plan, and why now?

Because it's been 11 years since the last time Allen County developed a community-wide economic development plan. While we've come a long way as a community since then, we still have miles to go. To stay ahead of the competition, our plan must evolve to raise the bar, build on our momentum, and take advantage of new opportunities.

ACT goes beyond defining the destination and mapping out the path to get there. It makes a powerful statement—not just about where we're going, but about who and what we want to be: a high-growth, innovative, and inclusive community with economic opportunity for all.

I believe this is the right plan at the right time for the right community. Now it's time to put in the work to make it a reality. Make no mistake: this is the entire community's plan. If we want the entire community to thrive, we need the entire community to share in the efforts. We look forward to partnering with you on implementing ACT.

Once again, thank you for your interest and support. To learn more about ACT and schedule a presentation for your company, nonprofit organization, or anyone else, visit [act.gfwinc.com](https://act.gfwinc.com) or scan the QR code at the bottom-right corner of the page.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Urbahns".

John Urbahns  
President/CEO  
Greater Fort Wayne Inc.





# Acknowledgments

TIP Strategies would like to thank the many individuals who participated in the creation of the *Allen County Together* (ACT) plan. We are especially grateful to the project Steering Committee who generously gave their time, input, and expertise during the planning process. In addition, this plan was made possible by the financial support and sponsorship from the City of Fort Wayne, Allen County, and American Electric Power (AEP). We would also like to thank the leadership and staff of Greater Fort Wayne Inc. for their critical guidance, support, and feedback throughout the development of this plan.

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# Contents

- INTRODUCTION .....1**
  - MAJOR THEMES .....6
- PLANNING CONTEXT.....9**
  - ECONOMIC TRENDS ACCELERATED AND DISRUPTED BY COVID-19 .....10
  - KEY DATA FINDINGS .....14
  - REAL ESTATE PERCEPTION SURVEY KEY FINDINGS .....18
- ALLEN COUNTY TOGETHER.....21**
  - GUIDING PRINCIPLE 1. HIGH GROWTH .....22
    - HIGH-GROWTH BOLD PROJECTS ..... 23
    - HIGH-GROWTH STRATEGIC INITIATIVES ..... 24
  - GUIDING PRINCIPLE 2. INNOVATIVE .....32
    - INNOVATIVE BOLD PROJECTS ..... 33
    - INNOVATIVE STRATEGIC INITIATIVES ..... 34
  - GUIDING PRINCIPLE 3. INCLUSIVE.....40
    - INCLUSIVE BOLD PROJECTS..... 41
    - INCLUSIVE STRATEGIC INITIATIVES ..... 42
- CAPACITY AND RESOURCES .....46**
  - CAPACITY AND RESOURCES INITIATIVES .....47
- APPENDICES .....55**
  - APPENDIX A. MENTIMETER RESPONSES .....56
  - APPENDIX B. STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLES.....58
  - APPENDIX C. BEST PRACTICES.....59
  - APPENDIX D. SWOT ANALYSIS .....65

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# *Introduction*



## PURPOSE AND SCOPE

In February 2020, Greater Fort Wayne Inc. (GFW Inc.) began the process of crafting an economic development action plan for Fort Wayne and Allen County. The goal was to create a strategic plan that would guide the community's continued economic growth over the next 10 years. However, as with so many other planning initiatives at that time, the COVID-19 pandemic struck, and the process was delayed through most of 2020 during a prolonged period of stay-at-home orders and social distancing. Then finally, in November 2020, the planning process was reactivated, and GFW Inc. selected TIP Strategies, Inc. (TIP), an Austin-based economic development consulting firm, to help facilitate the creation of the plan. Throughout the planning process, the TIP consulting team worked closely with GFW Inc. to engage the community, gather input, and develop a plan to advance Fort Wayne-Allen County's economic development. Because of this tight-knit working relationship between GFW Inc., the project Steering Committee, and the consulting team during the engagement, a high level of public and private participation became a reality, even in a time of virtual meetings. In addition, new data sources and analysis helped ensure a shared base of information that would inform the strategies. Finally, the best practices of other communities were critical components of the strategies outlined in the plan. With COVID-19 still looming in the background, Allen County was feeling the immediate economic impacts of the pandemic, and the future had never appeared more uncertain, and yet, one conclusion remained clear: **Fort Wayne-Allen County is a community on the rise.**

## PROJECT APPROACH

Throughout TIP's more than 25 years of experience leading consulting projects across the country, the firm's three-phase Theory Into Practice planning model—discovery, opportunity, implementation—has proven flexible enough to address a variety of challenges and opportunities. As part of the discovery process for the project, the consulting team conducted 20 roundtables and dozens of individual interviews to gather information and ideas from more than 200 local stakeholders. These included business leaders, elected officials, educational leaders, developers, investors, community activists and advocates, and other stakeholders in Fort Wayne and Allen County. In addition to open discussion, a live polling tool (Mentimeter) was used to capture input from stakeholder meetings, with more than 1,400 qualitative data points. The consulting team

also gathered quantitative data from available public and private sources and delivered them in a data visualization tool (Tableau). These data included demographics, population migration, employment trends by industry and occupation, housing characteristics, commercial and industrial real estate market trends, and other economic indicators (see *Key Data Findings* on page 14). Finally, the consulting team developed a perception survey for regional and national real estate professionals (including site selectors, developers, and commercial brokers) and worked with GFW Inc. to distribute that survey to identified targets. The survey resulted in 50 responses—with a roughly equal amount of in-state and out-of-state responses—which were analyzed and delivered in a Tableau data visualization tool (see *Real Estate Perception Survey Key Findings* on page 18).

The planning process was participatory, inclusive, and transparent; it inspired community leaders to create a future-focused vision. The process evolved from highlighting numerous individual thoughts to discovering a collective focus. The shared understanding of priorities helped to create a strategic vision for the future of Allen County. *Allen County Together* (ACT) is the economic development action plan that will provide a 10-year strategic focus for the future. The name of the plan is meant to emphasize collaboration and inspire action. The plan is built on a framework of three guiding principles.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The *Allen County Together* plan charts a path to grow the Fort Wayne-Allen County economy through a collaborative effort to increase business growth, job creation, entrepreneurship, capital investment, and real estate development over the next 10 years (2022 to 2031). With this purpose in mind, the TIP consulting team worked with the ACT Plan Steering Committee to craft a set of three guiding principles to shape the planning process. These principles reflect the values of the community. In the context of an economic development action plan, they are a set of statements expressing how a community and its leaders define economic success. The plan's guiding principles are designed as crosscutting themes and reference points for strategies and actions. Each guiding principle is forward-looking and also serves to keep the community's focus on making Fort Wayne and Allen County a more vibrant, successful, and nationally recognized economy over the next 10 years.



FIGURE 1. ALLEN COUNTY TOGETHER GUIDING PRINCIPLES



## PROJECT VISION

By 2031, Fort Wayne-Allen County will maintain its momentum and accelerate its economic success by pursuing projects and strategic initiatives with **three guiding principles** in mind: **high-growth, innovative, and inclusive**.

*By 2031, Allen County Together (ACT) will solidify its position as the fastest-growing economy in the Great Lakes region and will rank among the top nationally recognized midsize metro areas; it will become a leading hub for innovation, built on technology-driven companies and entrepreneurial talent; and it will ensure equitable access to economic, workforce, and educational opportunities for all its people and communities.*

## PLAN FRAMEWORK

The plan's guiding principles form the foundation of the *Allen County Together* plan. Each of the three guiding principles is supported by three bold projects and three strategic initiatives designed to accelerate the momentum of Fort Wayne and Allen County's economic growth. Bold projects are the most aspirational, transformational, and high-impact opportunities from the action plan designed to take Fort Wayne-Allen County's economy to the next level. Strategic initiatives are the goals, strategies, and tactics—the set of actions GFW Inc. and its partners will undertake—that make up the action plan.

Broadly speaking, Guiding Principle 1 is about elevating the community's capacity for economic growth through site development, placemaking, and strategic infrastructure investments; Guiding Principle 2 is about creativity, entrepreneurship, and technology adoption in the private and public sectors; and Guiding Principle 3 is about investing in Fort Wayne-Allen County's people and communities through talent and workforce development, inclusive small business support, and targeted real estate development. While the initiatives and strategies outlined under each guiding principle differ, they are complementary and interconnected. Together, the guiding principles and the underlying bold projects and initiatives help advance the GFW Inc. mission of building a nationally recognized economy by growing jobs and wages, and attracting new business, talent, and capital. Guiding Principles 1, 2, and 3 describe what is necessary to build a high-growth, innovative, and inclusive economy in Fort Wayne-Allen County, regardless of the financial resources and organizational alignment that might be required. The *Capacity and Resources* section on page 46 addresses the funding sources, incentives, and organizational capacity needed to support implementation of the plan.



## GUIDING PRINCIPLE 1 *High-Growth*

ACT will accelerate the creation of quality spaces in Fort Wayne-Allen County's commercial, industrial, and mixed-use business districts to attract new jobs, investment, and a strong positive in-migration of talent from outside Indiana.

### BOLD PROJECTS

- Advance the development of a \$1 billion Riverfront in downtown Fort Wayne by 2031.
- Attract and grow 2,500 net new high-wage jobs by 2031 in research and development (R&D)-intensive, engineering-focused, and technology-driven growth industries and create new incentives to facilitate this goal.
- Pursue a major expansion of student housing—2,500 on- and off-campus units by 2031—and amenities associated with Purdue University Fort Wayne and other local higher education institutions to help Fort Wayne become a widely recognized college town.

### STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Expand and repurpose commercial, industrial, and mixed-use real estate.

1.1

Accelerate domestic and international business development.

1.2

Maintain and expand transportation assets and other key infrastructure.

1.3



## GUIDING PRINCIPLE 2 *Innovative*

ACT will develop a robust network of entrepreneurial support organizations, access to capital, real estate space, research and development, and creative and artistic talent to fuel growth in technology-driven companies in emerging and legacy industries.

### BOLD PROJECTS

- Become recognized as a Top 10 Music City by 2031 through expanded festivals, music venues, training and education, and music industry innovation and technology development.
- Become a premier Industry 4.0 automotive tech community through new collaboration between industry, government, and higher education. Add 2,500 net new jobs in the automotive tech sector by 2031 and create new incentives to facilitate this goal.
- Launch a \$10 million venture fund and accelerator by 2026, housed at Electric Works, to enhance Allen County's entrepreneurial ecosystem. Grow the venture fund to \$25 million by 2031.

### STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

2.1

Increase technology adoption, R&D, and public-private partnerships in legacy industries.

2.2

Drive the arts, entertainment, and tourism industries into the future.

2.3





## GUIDING PRINCIPLE 3 *Inclusive*

ACT will align business, government, education, and nonprofit partners to ensure equitable access to economic, workforce, and educational opportunities for all people and communities in Allen County.

## BOLD PROJECTS

- Expand local Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) capacity to deploy \$10 million in funding by 2026 and \$25 million in funding by 2031 to close the disparity gap, providing financing to underserved small businesses and individuals.
- Plan and execute catalyst development projects in Southeast Fort Wayne that attract \$100 million in capital investment by 2026 and \$250 million by 2031.
- Attract and grow 2,500 net new jobs in Southeast Fort Wayne by 2031 and create new incentives to facilitate this goal.

## STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Ensure equitable access to economic opportunities by targeting investments in real estate development and small business support.

3.1

Make Fort Wayne-Allen County a desirable place to live for diverse talent.

3.2

Expand the size and strength of higher education institutions and align workforce development and education efforts with economic opportunities.

3.3



## *Capacity and Resources*

Align local leadership and utilize existing and new funding from both public and private sources to facilitate explosive growth.

## STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Pursue external funding (federal, state, and philanthropic) for project and program development.

1

Dedicate new/expanded funding streams for economic development.

2

Leverage local wealth, including anchor institutions and high-net-worth individuals to invest in strategic priorities.

3

Leverage leadership changes at key partner organizations to encourage greater collaboration.

4

Enhance the effectiveness of existing incentives and create new incentives to encourage business growth and to facilitate development and redevelopment.

5

Ensure the staffing and capacity of key economic development departments at the City and County levels are sustainable and capable of supporting a high-growth economy.

6

## MAJOR THEMES

During the planning process, common themes began to emerge. Many community stakeholders mentioned these key themes explicitly and independently of one another. These comments helped inform the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis (see *SWOT Framework* in the Appendix on page 65) and the strategies outlined in the action plan.

### STRONG LEADERSHIP REQUIRED

The goals and strategies in this plan, organized around the three guiding principles, are especially ambitious. Many stakeholders candidly described the need for Fort Wayne and Allen County to coalesce around a plan that drives the community into the future at an accelerating pace. To make that happen, GFW Inc., local government leadership, educational institutions, and private sector partners must align efforts and commit their time, resources, and vision to the actions prescribed in the plan. GFW Inc. in particular has served as a positive force for economic development in Fort Wayne and throughout Allen County and has become a well-respected entity regionally. However, the organization cannot carry the entire burden of enacting this plan alone. Clear and unequivocal leadership across the area, including public-private partnerships, are required to make these lofty ambitions a reality. Implementation will rely on coordination among local partners—especially with implementation of the All in Allen Comprehensive Plan and the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Strategy—as well as with allies, such as the Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership, American Electric Power (AEP), and the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC), in particular.

### FOOT ON THE GAS

With its wealth of economic assets and consistent positive trajectory over the past few years, Fort Wayne-Allen County is poised to solidify its position as one of the premier growth centers in the Midwest. To achieve this goal, however, the community (driven by strong leadership) needs to be even bolder in its vision and brand, developing a unified voice that communicates to locals and outsiders alike that the area is a welcoming and exciting region. Large-scale funding for future projects will be necessary to maintain this momentum of recent years. As many stakeholders directly informed the TIP team, Fort Wayne-Allen County needs to find its “swagger” to achieve its full economic potential.

### WHAT'S GOING WELL

Residents of Allen County know that the downtown Fort Wayne area in particular is reaping the rewards of a 20-year commitment to quality of place. Projects like Electric Works and Riverfront Fort Wayne are transforming the look, feel, and economic strength of downtown. Arts and entertainment are central to the local culture, and the new Arts Campus will continue to bolster the success of the creative class. There is a palpable desire for Fort Wayne-Allen County to become a more innovative, entrepreneurial, and tech-driven community that can thrive in growth sectors and legacy industries. Outside awareness (and with it, the population) has been steadily rising in recent years. Fort Wayne-Allen County is well-positioned for a boom in sports tourism, and significant new venue construction (such as a youth sports complex to host national competitions) could transform event-based tourism. GFW Inc. has taken the organizational lead in many aspects of this ongoing economic development and has achieved significant successes, but a commitment to robust economic growth presents challenges.





## WHAT NEEDS WORK

Fort Wayne-Allen County can compete within the Midwest (and even at the national level) for companies and talent if the right measures are taken with the right assets; however, certain obstacles stand in the way. Leadership alignment (public and private sector) will determine the success of future bold projects, so more effective and ongoing collaboration between organizations like GFW Inc. and the Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership, combined with private industry having a seat at the table, will be critical. There is a pressing need for industrial sites and more commercial office space (particularly downtown Class A office space) throughout Allen County, but the question is: who will build it? There are conflicting perceptions among in-state and out-of-state site selectors and real estate professionals (see *Real Estate Perception Survey Key Findings* on page 18) but virtually all of them agree that the area has a significant need for more developed and redeveloped sites. Talent shortages limit the growth of existing employers and business attraction potential, but there is an opportunity for local higher education institutions to expand, thereby providing graduates with in-demand skills, as well as generating more top-tier research and development. Those prospective students, though, will need to feel at home in a more college town environment, meaning Fort Wayne-Allen County must invest in amenities for the under-30 crowd, such as a more vibrant nightlife. With the incoming population boom comes a catch: housing affordability is a growing concern, especially coupled with relatively low wage rates, so a continual increase in affordable housing stock will be crucial. Finally, Southeast Fort Wayne has been underserved and disengaged from the wider community for too long. It needs a sustainable, long-term commitment to truly thrive, with investments in housing, job creation, infrastructure (roads, rail, and utilities), public transportation, and quality-of-place amenities.







# *Planning Context*

# ECONOMIC TRENDS ACCELERATED AND DISRUPTED BY COVID-19

## WORK FROM HOME

It is no secret that COVID-19 changed the nature of work, but the question becomes: is more widespread remote work here to stay? Companies across the country transitioned to remote work for their employees to accommodate health and safety restrictions during 2020 and 2021, but a return to the office in some form is the most likely future scenario. An April 2021 survey of 275 executives produced some startling results. Although 94 percent of the companies surveyed were still either fully remote or working with a hybrid model, only 2 percent expected to remain remote indefinitely and 8 percent were unsure. Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of executives said they planned to return to the office to some degree during 2021. However, it is clear that full-time, in-office expectations have shifted significantly. More than two-thirds (68 percent) of executives said they would continue to operate with a hybrid model.<sup>1</sup> What does this mean? Commercial office real estate might take a hit, especially in metro areas with an outflow of corporate and professional jobs. At the same time, with a more sizable share of the labor force working remotely, millions of workers will have a lasting increase in their freedom and flexibility with regard to where they choose to live, creating new patterns of domestic migration that could benefit attractive, affordable locations like Fort Wayne-Allen County.

## K-SHAPED RECOVERY

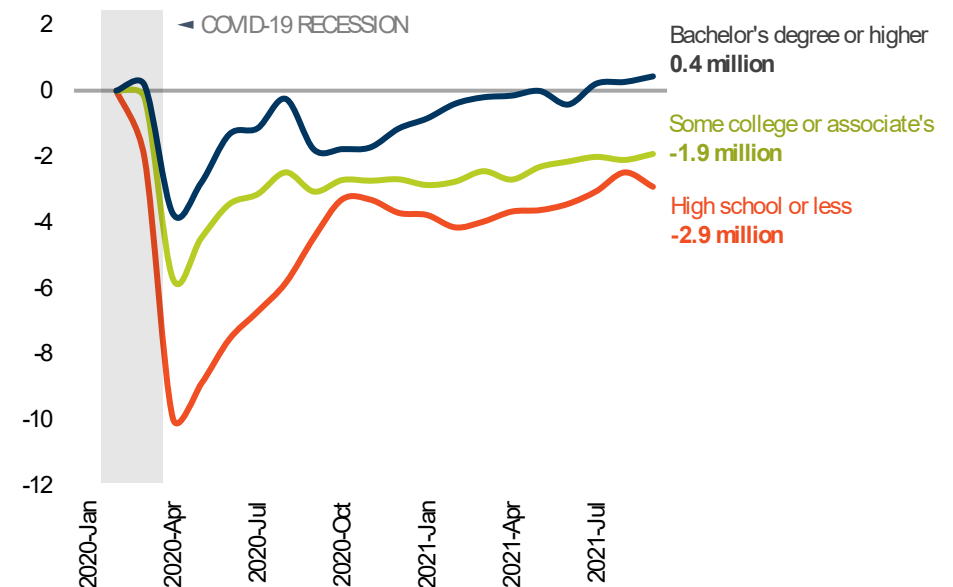
Numerous studies and reports have shown how COVID-19 has had disparate impacts on different socioeconomic and demographic groups, which is a continuation of a trend that's more than a decade old. An examination of the impacts of the Great Recession on employment show that those with a bachelor's degree or higher have gained 15 million jobs since December 2007, while those with some college experience have lost 1.3 million jobs, and those with only a high school degree or less have lost 8 million jobs.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Executives Share Their Plans for Returning to the Workplace." April 2021. Deloitte. [www2.deloitte.com/us/en/pages/human-capital/articles/2021-return-to-workplace-survey.html](https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/pages/human-capital/articles/2021-return-to-workplace-survey.html).

<sup>2</sup> US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Household Survey (Current Population Survey); National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER).

All workers were hit hard by the pandemic, causing significant job losses in the spring of 2020, but those with a bachelor's degree or higher have already gained back virtually all lost jobs, while the other populations have not. If Fort Wayne-Allen County wants to foster an equitable recovery, residents with lower educational attainment and opportunities need to be a primary focus. (See Figure 2.)

**FIGURE 2. K-SHAPED RECOVERY**  
THOSE WITH MORE EDUCATION SUFFER LESS IN THE US JOB MARKET



Sources: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Household Survey (Current Population Survey); National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER).

Note: Employment is seasonally adjusted and includes all workers age 25 and older. The current recession began in February 2020 and ended (officially) in April 2020.



## LENDING

In a swift and significant move, the Federal Reserve has slashed interest rates by 1.5 percentage points since March 2020, bringing the rate to near zero (0 to 0.25 percent). The decision was aimed at lowering the cost of borrowing on mortgages, auto loans, home equity loans, and other loans. The Federal Reserve also deployed \$2.3 trillion in lending to support households, employers, financial markets, and state and local governments. Moving forward, Federal Reserve leaders have assured markets that interest rates will remain low “until labor market conditions have reached levels consistent with the Committee’s assessments of maximum employment and inflation has risen to 2 percent and is on track to moderately exceed 2 percent for some time.”<sup>3</sup> These actions were designed to help the US economy overcome the pandemic downturn, similar to decisions made in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis. It translates to more lending possibilities for both businesses and individuals, which is a positive economic direction to take.

## FUNDING

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021 will deploy a total of \$1.9 trillion to boost the US economy during this tumultuous period. States are slated to receive \$195 billion, and local governments will receive \$130 billion. The State of Indiana has been allocated nearly \$3.1 billion from ARPA, while Allen County and the City of Fort Wayne have been allocated roughly \$74 million and \$51 million, respectively. The purpose of ARPA is to respond to the COVID-19 emergency and address its economic effects, including aid to households, small businesses, nonprofits, and industries, such as tourism and hospitality.<sup>4</sup> This enormous influx of federal funds stands to have a sizable impact on communities like Fort Wayne-Allen County. Although government bureaucracy can be difficult to navigate (and therefore, the funding might be tricky for governments to allocate and disburse), local governments will be able to address some of the serious negative impacts of the pandemic.

<sup>3</sup> Jeffrey Cheng, Tyler Powell, Dave Skidmore, and David Wessel. “What’s the Fed Doing in Response to the COVID-19 Crisis? What More Could It Do?” March 30, 2021. The Brookings Institution. [www.brookings.edu/research/fed-response-to-covid19](https://www.brookings.edu/research/fed-response-to-covid19).

<sup>4</sup> “American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.” March 9, 2021. National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). [www.ncsl.org/ncsl-in-dc/publications-and-resources/american-rescue-plan-act-of-2021.aspx](https://www.ncsl.org/ncsl-in-dc/publications-and-resources/american-rescue-plan-act-of-2021.aspx).

## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Artificial intelligence (AI) is more than an isolated trend affecting the tech sector. AI represents the potential for a major shift in manufacturing, medicine, communications, and entertainment. With the deployment of 5G and a major expansion of virtual reality platforms, every sector has the potential to undergo disruptions. A downside risk is that many low-skill jobs will give way to automation as AI becomes more widespread. However, new high-skill jobs will be created as a result. The international nongovernmental World Economic Forum predicts that demand will increase across industries for specialists in AI and machine learning, process automation, robotics, digital transformation, and the Internet of Things.<sup>5</sup> COVID-19 will add urgency to this movement. Pilots and large-scale implementations that would have normally taken years have taken place in weeks or months.

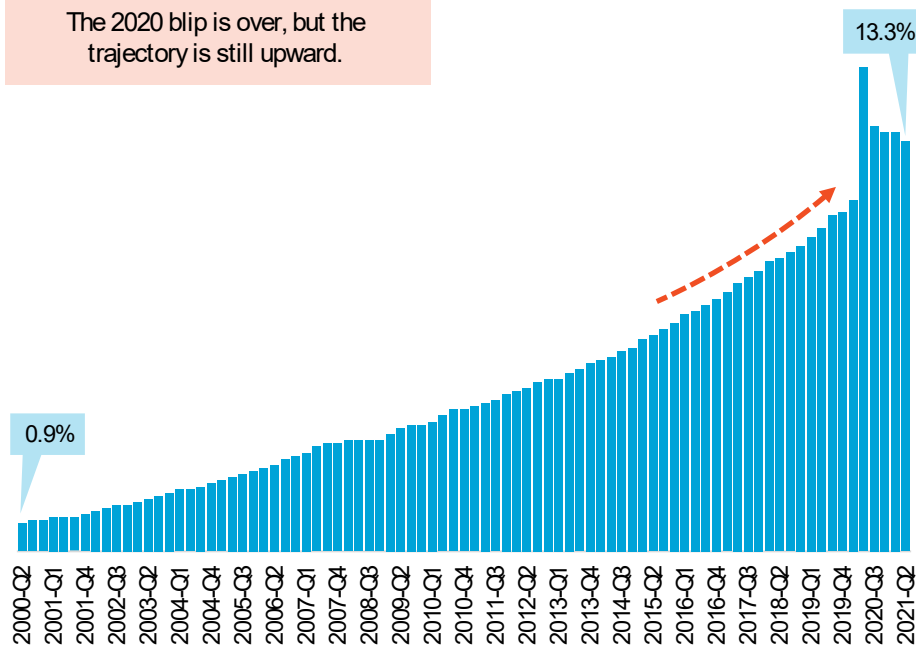
## ONLINE RETAIL

It is no surprise that the COVID-19 pandemic shifted sales from brick-and-mortar establishments to e-commerce. In Q4 of 2019, the US Census Bureau estimated that online sales represented less than 12 percent of total US retail sales. Just two quarters later in Q2 of 2020, online sales represented more than 16 percent of US retail sales, a level that would have taken several years without the disruption caused by COVID-19. The pandemic-induced spike in e-commerce activity has leveled off into 2021, but the long-term trendline is one of continued rapid growth (see Figure 3). The ongoing shift in sales from brick-and-mortar establishments to e-commerce will accelerate the decline of traditional retail outlets including malls, big-box chain stores, and small “mom and pop” retailers. At the same time, it creates many new economic development opportunities for the entire supply chain that supports e-commerce including the physical support systems (distribution, warehousing, transportation) and technology support systems (data centers, software, and financial technologies).

<sup>5</sup> Brian Solis, “AI and Automation Are Linchpins for Post-Pandemic Business Success.” January 8, 2021. CIO. [www.cio.com/article/3602812/ai-and-automation-are-linchpins-for-post-pandemic-business-success.html](https://www.cio.com/article/3602812/ai-and-automation-are-linchpins-for-post-pandemic-business-success.html).

**FIGURE 3. BACK ON TRACK AGAIN**  
ONLINE SALES AS A PERCENT OF TOTAL US RETAIL SALES

The 2020 blip is over, but the trajectory is still upward.



Source: US Census Bureau.

### SUPPLY CHAIN RESTRUCTURING

Trade policy and immigration restrictions were already slowing global supply chain growth. The effects of the pandemic will continue to influence the use of Chinese suppliers in particular and offshore sourcing in general. Reshoring benefits manufacturing companies by potentially reducing the total cost of their products, improving balance sheets, and making product innovations more effective. While many of these supply chains have operated less expensively in Asia and other overseas locations in the past, the COVID-19 crisis has underlined the societal risks of leaving this production offshore.<sup>6</sup> Reshoring of not only production but also professional and back-office functions is a significant opportunity for economic development in the short term to midterm.

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Fish and Honora Spillane. "Reshoring Advanced Manufacturing Supply Chains to Generate Good Jobs." July 23, 2020. The Brookings Institution. [www.brookings.edu/research/reshoring-advanced-manufacturing-supply-chains-to-generate-good-jobs](https://www.brookings.edu/research/reshoring-advanced-manufacturing-supply-chains-to-generate-good-jobs).

### TELEMEDICINE

While still in its infancy, telemedicine was already on an upward trajectory. A much greater reliance on virtual medical services can be expected in the future, especially for diagnostic appointments that do not require the physical presence of patients. Given Fort Wayne-Allen County's significant healthcare presence (Parkview Health, Lutheran Health Network, and Indiana University Health), telemedicine could have a sizable economic impact. While this trend is welcome in many respects, it also raises the specter of further inequities. Access to health insurance and quality healthcare was already a barrier for many low-income households, but now it could be exacerbated by the lack of access to broadband internet service.

### CLIMATE CHANGE

As global temperatures continue to rise and Arctic ice melts, the reality of current and impending climate change is an immediate and long-term issue. However, it is unknown whether businesses are prepared to make the necessary changes to their traditional operating models. A 2019 survey of 1,168 chief financial officers (CFOs) found that, although there is increasing pressure to act, most companies' climate responses are focused primarily on short-term cost savings, and a thorough understanding of climate risk is rare.<sup>7</sup> Still, certain industries are revolutionizing and innovating quicker than others. A notable example is the production of electric vehicles (EVs). The global electric car stock is growing exponentially, up from approximately 7 million in 2019 to over 10 million in 2020.<sup>8</sup> More specifically, General Motors (GM) recently announced its plan to phase out gasoline and diesel vehicles by 2035 as well as the new production of an all-electric Chevrolet Silverado, which could have a direct impact on workers in the GM Fort Wayne Assembly plant.

<sup>7</sup> Michela Coppola, Julian Blohmke, and Thomas Krick. "Feeling the Heat? Companies Are under Pressure on Climate Change and Need to Do More." December 12, 2019. Deloitte. [www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/topics/strategy/impact-and-opportunities-of-climate-change-on-business](https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/topics/strategy/impact-and-opportunities-of-climate-change-on-business).

<sup>8</sup> "Trends and Developments in Electric Light-Duty Vehicles." IEA. [www.iea.org/reports/global-ev-outlook-2021/trends-and-developments-in-electric-vehicle-markets](https://www.iea.org/reports/global-ev-outlook-2021/trends-and-developments-in-electric-vehicle-markets).



## SOCIAL EQUITY

In addition to the severe economic ramifications of the pandemic, 2020 was a year full of disruption in the social landscape. In the aftermath of the high-profile murders of people of color, cities nationwide exploded with passionate protests seeking relief from the burden of systemic racism and oppression. As communities look for ways to address social injustices, the effects of COVID-19 have only compounded the problem, causing significant inequities in the economic livelihood—and even health—of different demographics. Essential workers were inherently at higher risk of being exposed to COVID-19 due to the nature of their work, and they were disproportionately represented by racial and ethnic minority groups.<sup>9</sup> Fort Wayne-Allen County is not immune to these challenges, but the community has begun to address them. The United Front Initiative opened space for candid conversation about social issues, and it is vital for that positive work to continue. Inclusion efforts also cannot neglect the interests of the LGBTQ+ residents of Allen County, who are still trying to make a home for themselves and sometimes feel out of place in the community. In addition, Allen County's growing population of refugees and other immigrants are an important part of the community and must be actively engaged and welcomed by established residents. Intentional steps to move forward on social issues will only become more necessary in the years ahead.

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<sup>9</sup> Health Equity Considerations and Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups.” April 19, 2021. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/race-ethnicity.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/race-ethnicity.html).



## KEY DATA FINDINGS

As part of the discovery process for the project, TIP Strategies assembled an interactive economic explorer tool, visually illustrating information gathered from a variety of data sources. TIP then presented those data to the GFW Inc.

**FIGURE 4. ECONOMIC EXPLORER LANDING PAGE**



### GREATER FORT WAYNE ECONOMIC EXPLORER

This Tableau workbook allows users to view data describing the economic health of the Greater Fort Wayne region, including data on Adams, Allen, DeKalb, Huntington, Kosciusko, LaGrange, Noble, Steuben, Wabash, Wells, and Whitley counties as well as state and national benchmarks through interactive charts and figures. Charts are grouped into categories based on the content.

### HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

Navigate to a topic by using the menu on the right or tabs at the bottom. Each chart has tooltips that are shown by hovering the mouse over a chart element. Series in a chart may be highlighted or emphasized by clicking on an element in the chart or in the corresponding legend. Many charts also have interactive filters in the form of drop-down menus or sliding bars to change which geographies, years, or other metrics are displayed. Each chart also has a "Return to Menu" button in the lower-right corner that returns to this page.

### ABOUT THE DATA

Developed by TIP Strategies, Inc., for the Greater Fort Wayne chamber of commerce and economic development organization. Sources include the US Census Bureau's 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year average sample, US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Emsi, the Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD), and real estate reports from The Zacher Company. The US Census Bureau produces margin of error statistics (90% confidence intervals) for ACS measures. Users should exercise caution when using ACS estimates for small geographies, such as cities, as errors may be high.

in the form of an interactive Tableau data visualization file. Figure 4 illustrates the topics covered in the analysis. Some of the most important findings from that tool are described on the following pages.

KEY FINDINGS		
 <b>POPULATION &amp; DEMOGRAPHICS</b>	 <b>WORKFORCE CHARACTERISTICS</b>	 <b>MOVEMENT OF WORKERS</b>
Population	Labor Force	Top 10 Metro Sources
Population Drivers	Working from Home	Incoming Workers by Age
Age	Commute Time	Incoming Workers Map
Race & Ethnicity	Employment	Top 10 Metro Destinations
Household Composition	Regional Employment Change	Outgoing Workers by Age
Education	Employment Share by County	Outgoing Workers Map
Income	 <b>INDUSTRIES &amp; OCCUPATIONS</b>	Top Metro Regions by Net Flow
Poverty		Net Worker Flow by Age
Health Insurance Coverage		Net Worker Flow by Region
 <b>HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS</b>	Sector Employment	Net Worker Flow Map
	Regional Sector Employment	 <b>COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE OVERVIEW</b>
	Regional Sector Distribution	
	Sector Employment Change	
	Sector Location Quotients	
Housing Cost	Occupation Employment	Real Estate Dashboard
Affordability	Occupation Employment Change	Vacancy Rate Comparison
Occupancy	Worker Flows by Occupation	Vacancy: Office Subcategories
Housing Stock		Office Lease Rates
Connectivity		



## POPULATION

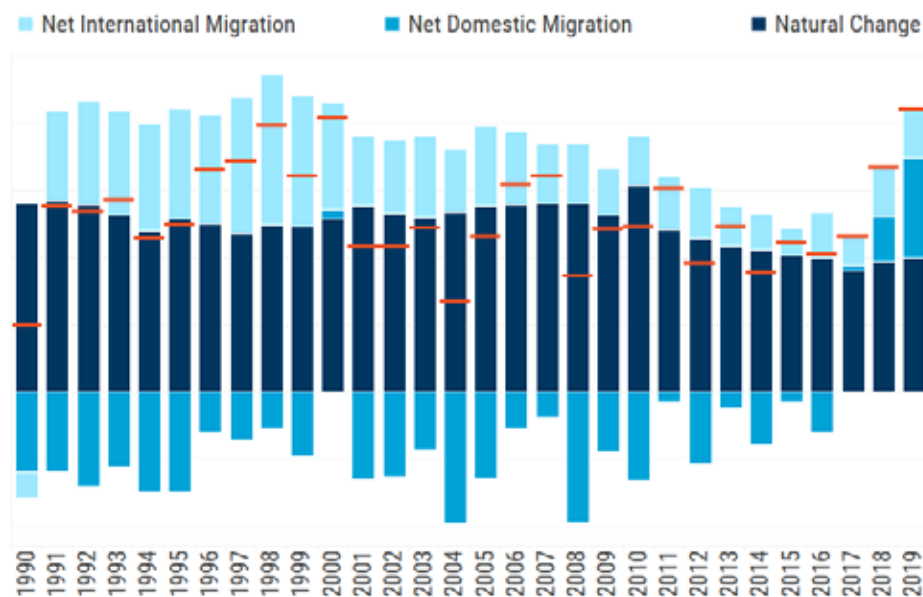
According to the 2020 Census, the US population has grown 7 percent since 2010, up to roughly 331 million, and the City of Fort Wayne has virtually matched this percentage with a growth rate of 6.8 percent over the past 10 years. The US population not only grew, but also became significantly more diverse (the share of the White population fell from 63.7 percent in 2010 to 57.8 percent in 2020) and older (the population of children under age 18 dropped from 74.2 million in 2010 to 73.1 million in 2020). The population of Allen County more broadly has been on a steady upward trend over the past three decades, increasing from 302,000 in 1990 to 379,000 in 2019. An uptick in net domestic migration that began in 2017 and accelerated in 2018 and 2019 has contributed significantly to the County's growth, with 4,220 net in-migration in the latter year alone, a reversal of long-term trends (see Figure 5). Based on this hard data, combined with information gathered from many stakeholder interviews, Fort Wayne-Allen County can expect this trajectory to continue and even accelerate. In fact, more recent data from 2017 to 2020 indicate that Allen County's population growth has been double of that of the state and nation. The "best-kept secret syndrome" of the City and County is beginning to change, with more residents of nearby Midwestern metros, like Chicago and Indianapolis, making the decision to move to this up-and-coming (but smaller) area. A primary downside of this population growth, however, is housing affordability.

## HOUSING

The Fort Wayne metro area is well-known for having a lower cost of living than its larger competitors. Although that is still the case to a degree, the aforementioned population growth, along with nationwide increases in construction and materials costs, will likely affect housing affordability. In 2019, 45 percent of renting residents in Fort Wayne spent more than 30 percent of their income (cost-burdened) on housing, compared with 47 percent in the state of Indiana and 52 percent in Indianapolis. The recent figures for owned units are encouraging. Only 17 percent of Fort Wayne homeowners were cost-burdened, compared with 28 percent nationwide, 19.5 percent in the state, and 24 percent in Indianapolis. Furthermore, the median price for a home in Allen County was \$129,000, versus \$217,500 in the US, \$142,000 in the state, and \$137,000 in Indianapolis. In other words, while the Fort Wayne metro area is still well ahead of the country regarding

housing affordability, the comparison with nearby locations is tighter and will likely continue to tighten. The need for more housing stock is also clear when considering vacancy rates. In Allen County in 2019, only 8 percent of all properties were vacant, while the rates in the state and the country were 11 percent and 12 percent, respectively. If the Fort Wayne area will be able to accommodate a population influx, it needs to increase housing stock proportionally. One specific area of concern is student housing.

**FIGURE 5. COMPONENTS OF POPULATION CHANGE: ALLEN COUNTY, IN**



Notes: *Natural Change* is the difference between annual births and deaths. 2010 components are estimated based on a 12-month projection of the 2nd quarter (the period between the Census and the mid-year estimate) that is not seasonally adjusted. Total population change includes a residual (a change in population that cannot be attributed to any specific demographic component) which is not shown here but is included in the net population change shown by the red bars.

Source: US Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program; Moody's Analytics; TIP Strategies, Inc.

## STUDENT ACCOMMODATIONS

Although Purdue Fort Wayne has historically been a commuter or part-time focused institution, feedback from stakeholder interviews indicated that the long-term plan is to evolve into a fully established four-year research university, and leadership is already taking steps to drive this transformation. While this change would be excellent news for the Fort Wayne-Allen County economy, it necessitates increased housing accommodation for full-time young students with limited or no income. The City of Fort Wayne's population with some college education is 2 percentage points higher than both the state and the nation. Young adults make up 22.3 percent of its residents, a higher share than the overall Indiana population. Combined with the above data regarding housing affordability and occupancy, these numbers and stakeholder input indicate a pressing need for new student housing development in Fort Wayne. Mirroring these housing construction needs is the trend in commercial real estate.

## COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

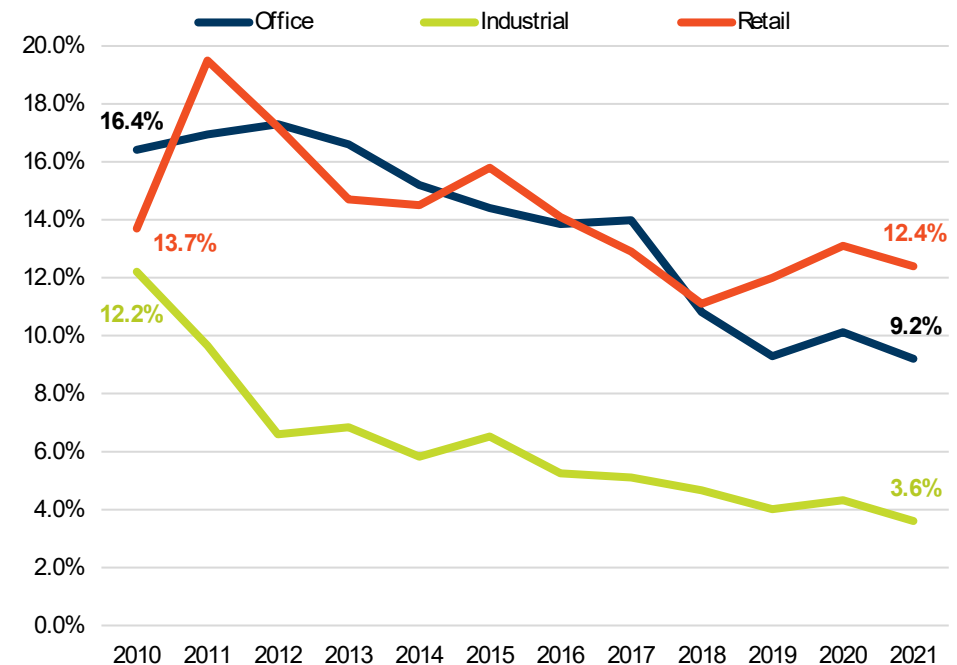
Following double-digit rates in 2010, industrial space vacancy in the Fort Wayne area real estate market has plummeted to 3.6 percent in 2021. Available office space followed the same downward trajectory, settling at 9.2 percent after creeping back up nearly a percentage point in 2020. Office vacancy rates have the potential to continue declining after businesses reevaluate work-from-home practices following the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to greater demand for commercial office space. (See Figure 6.) Total commercial office inventory has climbed only marginally in the past three years. New commercial office construction was certainly higher in 2020 than 2016 and 2017. However, if the City and County desire continued economic growth, further increasing office development will be necessary. Looking at employment and occupational trends dovetails with the real estate data.

## EMPLOYMENT AND OCCUPATIONS

Matching the County's population growth trends, employment figures by occupation are also trending upward. From 2015 through 2019, Allen County saw dramatic growth in several key occupational groups, including healthcare practitioners, business and finance, transportation, and maintenance and repair. (See Figure 7). During the same timeframe, the industry sectors that added the most jobs were healthcare (with more

than 4,500 net new jobs), and manufacturing (which added 2,500 jobs). The loss of more than 300 production occupations experienced during the same period illustrates the changing nature of manufacturing. Historically, these line-worker positions have been closely associated with the sector; however, modern manufacturing processes call for a much more diversified set of skills. In 2019, the County was a net importer of workers (commuters coming into the County from outside) in all major occupational categories except for production (office and administrative support and healthcare saw an inflow of over 2,500 workers in each of the two industries). Clearly, Fort Wayne-Allen County is growing across a broad base of industries and occupations. The challenge will be to maintain and accelerate this growth.

**FIGURE 6. VACANCY RATE IN GREATER FORT WAYNE MARKET**  
BY REAL ESTATE TYPE, 2010-2021

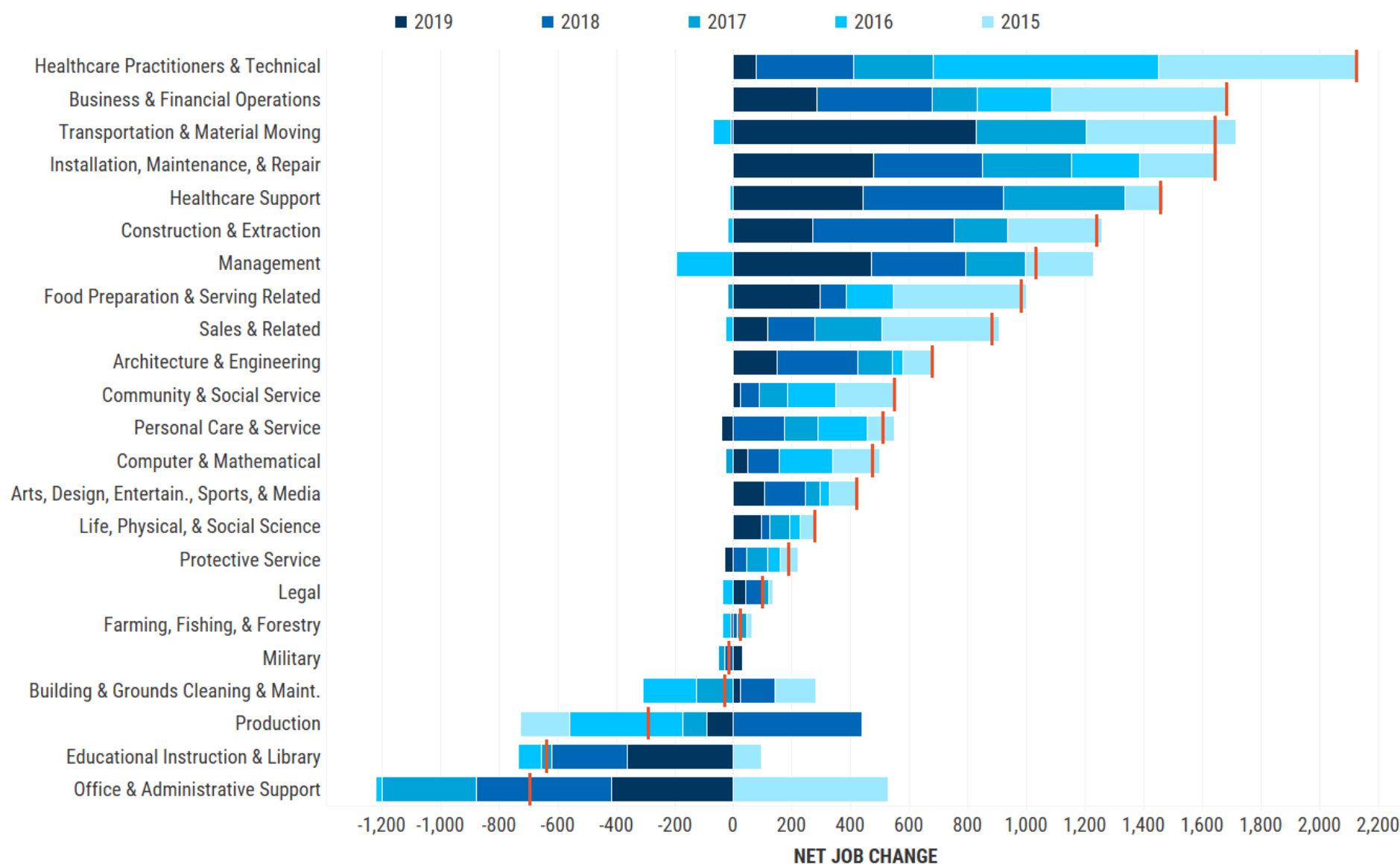


Sources: The Zacher Company, Fort Wayne Market Reports on retail, office, and industrial markets, 2019-2021; TIP Strategies.

Notes: Total Inventory is the total amount of space that can be rented by a third party or occupied by an owner/user. Vacancy Rate is the amount of unoccupied space (new, relet, and sublet) expressed as a percentage of total inventory.



FIGURE 7. NET EMPLOYMENT CHANGE FOR SELECTED PERIOD BY DETAILED OCCUPATION: ALLEN, COUNTY, 2014-2019



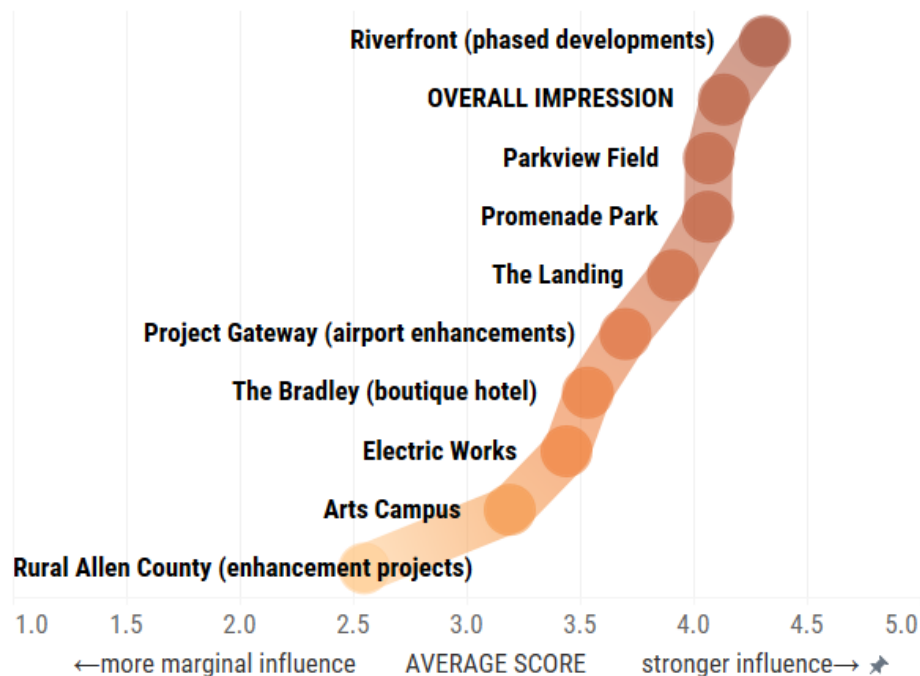
Notes: Year Range selection should include the previous year from the first year included in the visualization (e.g., to see 2015-2019, use the range 2014-2019). *Annual Employment* filters for occupations that have the minimum number of jobs in the specified range for a given region and year. Red bars indicate the total net change for the selected period. Northeast Indiana includes the following 11 counties: Adams, Allen, DeKalb, Huntington, Kosciusko, LaGrange, Noble, Steuben, Wabash, Wells, and Whitley counties.

Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics; Emsi 2021.1 – QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed; TIP Strategies, Inc.

## REAL ESTATE PERCEPTION SURVEY KEY FINDINGS

As part of the strategic planning process, TIP conducted an online survey of site selection, real estate, and economic development professionals familiar with Fort Wayne and surrounding Allen County. The survey was open for a three-week period between April 26 and May 14, 2021, and drew 50 respondents. The survey instrument opened with three basic questions about respondent demographics, location, and professional responsibilities. The remainder of the survey included 14 questions directed at respondents' perceptions of and experiences working with site location and development projects in the Greater Fort Wayne area. All responses were confidential. Question-by-question survey results are provided in a separate deliverable as an interactive Tableau data visualization tool.

**FIGURE 8. WHEN I THINK OF THE GREATER FORT WAYNE AREA'S BOLD INVESTMENTS... ON A SCALE FROM 1 TO 5, HOW INFLUENCED ARE YOU BY THE FOLLOWING BOLD INVESTMENTS IN THE GREATER FORT WAYNE AREA?**



Note: The scale indicates the average score, with 5 being the *highest* possible and 1 being the *lowest* possible.  
Source: Survey results compiled by TIP Strategies.

Nearly all respondents (98 percent) self-identified as having responsibility for site selection or development decisions. Roughly 45 percent of respondents (22 of 49 who answered this question) were located out-of-state, with the remaining 55 percent in Indiana. Gen Xers (18 of the 50 respondents) were the dominant age group in the survey, followed by Baby Boomers (14), Millennials (13), and older respondents (5). Though not designed to be a scientific sample, the pool of respondents is nevertheless a useful representation of site selectors and real estate professionals doing business in Fort Wayne and Allen County.

The following three primary themes emerged in the comprehensive results of the survey.

### **A STAR IS BORN—THE RIVERFRONT**

The Riverfront resonated with the survey audience. Respondents were asked to study and rate nine of the bold investments in the Greater Fort Wayne area. Of these nine featured investments, the phased upgrades to the Riverfront emerged as the overwhelming first choice of most of those answering the survey. (See Figure 8.) Among out-of-state respondents, it was notably more popular than the region's other bold investments. The visibility and positive impressions generated by the Riverfront developments to out-of-state real estate professionals is particularly notable because this group rated the overall package of bold investments an average of just 3.5 (out of 5), much lower than the average 4.6 score that in-state respondents provided for their overall impressions.

### **PICK YOUR INFRASTRUCTURE**

One of the latter questions in the survey asked respondents to identify specific areas of underinvestment that could or should be addressed. Infrastructure emerged as the top choice, though the responses often differed as to what type of infrastructure was the top priority. Roads, bridges, and utilities were often mentioned, with some respondents targeting specific issues, such as water/wastewater extensions along certain arterials, rail access to industrial sites, and optional power redundancies for tenants.



## 🔑 LAND, LABOR, AND CAPITAL—THE FIRST TWO ARE IN SHORT SUPPLY

Respondents were asked to consider factors that had tipped a development decision in favor of Greater Fort Wayne or against it. On the negative side, three tipping points stood out. Respondents bemoaned the lack of shovel-ready sites, modern spec buildings, and availability of skilled workers. (See Figure 9.) These

same themes were echoed in the other survey questions as well. Complaints about the dearth of available land and modern real estate product were directed mostly to the industrial sector, though some respondents did mention the lack of Class A and central business district (CBD) office space as constraints.

**FIGURE 9. POSITIVE / NEGATIVE TIPPING POINT FACTORS**

IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT FACTOR IN THE GREATER FORT WAYNE AREA'S DEVELOPMENT PROCESS HAS TIPPED A SITE SELECTION DECISION EITHER POSITIVELY OR NEGATIVELY?



Note: Larger font sizes indicate a higher frequency of responses.  
Source: Survey results compiled by TIP Strategies.





# *Allen County Together*



# GUIDING PRINCIPLE 1. *High Growth*

This guiding principle focuses on accelerating the creation of quality spaces in Fort Wayne-Allen County's commercial, industrial, and mixed-use business districts to facilitate new job creation, capital investment, and continued in-migration of talent. In addition to the bold projects listed below, strategies and initiatives that are encompassed in this idea include prioritizing and energizing major real estate developments, taking a more ambitious approach to domestic and international business development, and upgrading the transportation network and other infrastructure.

*ACT will accelerate the creation of quality spaces in Fort Wayne-Allen County's commercial, industrial, and mixed-use business districts to attract new jobs, investment, and a strong positive in-migration of talent from outside Indiana.*



## HIGH-GROWTH BOLD PROJECTS

### ***ADVANCE THE DEVELOPMENT OF A \$1 BILLION RIVERFRONT IN DOWNTOWN FORT WAYNE BY 2031.***

It's certainly no secret that Fort Wayne-Allen County has dedicated significant funding, time, and energy to the development of the Riverfront area of downtown Fort Wayne. Specific projects like The Landing are poised to take the City's amenities to the next level. Leadership cannot allow this momentum to slow down, but rather reemphasize to stakeholders that additional mixed-use development with housing and commercial spaces, public trails, and other cultural hotspots will catapult Fort Wayne's image and quality of place into the future. (See Initiative 1.1.1 on page 24.)

### ***ATTRACT AND GROW 2,500 NET NEW HIGH-WAGE JOBS BY 2031 IN R&D-INTENSIVE, ENGINEERING-FOCUSED, AND TECHNOLOGY-DRIVEN GROWTH INDUSTRIES, AND CREATE NEW INCENTIVES TO FACILITATE THIS GOAL.***

To succeed economically in the future, communities must adopt and pursue strategies focused on high-skill job growth. Fort Wayne and Allen County are poised to take advantage of both their existing industry assets and local institutions if their public and private entities establish the proper direction. R&D careers will play a vital role in the kind of trajectory GFW Inc. and its partners seek to maintain, and efforts to gain 2,500 net new R&D and engineering jobs over the next 10 years will require application of new incentives. This ambitious but achievable goal is intended to embrace the future of work with full force (see Capacity and Resources Initiative 5.3.2 on page 49).

### ***PURSUE A MAJOR EXPANSION OF STUDENT HOUSING—2,500 ON- AND OFF-CAMPUS UNITS BY 2031—AND AMENITIES ASSOCIATED WITH PURDUE UNIVERSITY FORT WAYNE AND OTHER LOCAL HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS TO HELP FORT WAYNE BECOME A WIDELY RECOGNIZED COLLEGE TOWN.***

For many years, Purdue Fort Wayne functioned primarily as a commuter university, largely populated by part-time and continuing education students. Recently, the school's leadership has taken steps to transform the institution into a more traditional four-year university, and that intentional transition has had some degree of success. However, in order for this adjustment to truly take off, collaboration between the university and City and County leadership must coalesce around developing new student housing on and near campus. If Fort Wayne wants to be recognized as a real college town, it needs to enhance the Purdue Fort Wayne experience for an influx of new matriculating students (see Initiative 1.1.5 on page 25). However, Purdue Fort Wayne is not the only higher education institution in the area. Others like Indiana Institute of Technology (Indiana Tech), the University of Saint Francis, Ivy Tech Community College Fort Wayne, and Indiana University Fort Wayne's medical satellite deserve attention as well.



# HIGH-GROWTH STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

## 1.1. EXPAND AND REPURPOSE COMMERCIAL, INDUSTRIAL, AND MIXED-USE REAL ESTATE.

Economic health and community culture go hand in hand. To attract and retain talent and businesses, communities need to cultivate a palpably engaging local atmosphere. Fort Wayne-Allen County has the potential to do just that. If it can focus on bold, forward-looking development and construction projects (including commercial, industrial, and mixed-use), the area is poised to become a truly exceptional place to call home.

**1.1.1.** Push the continued development of Riverfront projects into their next phases to facilitate a total investment of \$1 billion by 2031 in new public-private developments with space for new jobs, businesses, and residents.

**1.1.1.A.** Generate ongoing, regular collaboration with public and private partners to monitor and evaluate progress and drive individual projects from shovel-ready to completion.

- Communicate all progress updates on the GFW Inc. website.
- Work with local and regional news outlets via press releases to promote key “wins” as the projects develop.



**1.1.1.B.** Produce a comprehensive overview of publicly owned land across the Riverfront that could serve as the backbone for new public trails and parks, and mixed-use buildings to provide space for new jobs, companies, and residents in the Riverfront area.

**1.1.2.** Pursue an aggressive countywide site development strategy (in partnership with local governments, landowners, developers, and utility providers) designed to add 2,000 acres of land for new employment by 2031.

**DETAILS:** The All in Allen Comprehensive Plan has identified a need for an additional 2,000 acres of employment uses (and an additional 23,000 new housing units) by 2040. These projections are based on historic growth patterns. The ACT Plan calls for a less conservative stance and aims to achieve the job creation and land development milestones in a shorter timeframe. Based on this more ambitious growth assumption, this plan aims to chart a path for creating at least 1,000 acres of development-ready employment sites in Allen County by 2026, with at least 500 acres of new employment sites added in the immediate future (by 2023). Long-range planning for another 1,000 acres of employment sites should begin by 2026, with the goal of developing a total of 2,000 additional acres of employment uses by 2031.

**1.1.2.A.** Facilitate industrial site development in Southeast Fort Wayne, New Haven, Airport District, US-30 corridor, and other portions of Allen County to create 500 acres of development-ready employment sites over the next 12 to 24 months (by 2023).

**1.1.2.B.** Identify and prepare an additional 500 acres of development-ready employment sites across Allen County by 2026 (1,000 total from 2022 through 2026).

**1.1.2.C.** Begin long-range planning for an additional 1,000 acres of employment sites by 2031 (2,000 total from 2022 through 2031), with an emphasis on redevelopment and infill versus greenfield sites.



- 1.1.2.D.** Identify publicly owned properties and potential land banking opportunities that could facilitate redevelopment and encourage investment and job growth in specific areas, such as Southeast Fort Wayne.
- 1.1.3.** Work with landowners, brokers, and developers to identify, prioritize, and encourage the development of additional Class A commercial office space in both downtown and suburban areas.
  - 1.1.3.A.** Work with the City of Fort Wayne, Allen County, and other local partners to research the use of master lease agreements in other communities, informing a strategy to make spec office projects financially feasible by providing developer and financing certainty and which could also be used as an incentive to attract business expansion and relocation projects. (See Capacity and Resources Initiative 5.2.1 on page 48.)
  - 1.1.3.B.** Launch a public-private collaborative new spec building renovation program to repurpose “dinosaur” spaces.
- 1.1.4.** Pursue public-private partnership (P3) development offerings through a Request for Expression of Interest (RFEI) process that gauges demand and tests ideas from area developers for potential redevelopment of specific sites.
  - 1.1.4.A.** Market the RFEI to the local and national real estate development community.
  - 1.1.4.B.** Move to a Request for Proposals (RFP) from a shortlist of qualified developers that requires a more detailed development scenario, including conceptual site plans and pro formas for capital costs and operating costs.
  - 1.1.4.C.** Select a developer as a partner in a P3 to jointly develop the most promising sites for an agreed-upon mix of uses that activate underutilized properties with job creation potential, space for new and expanding companies, and revenue-generating capital investment for local governments.
- 1.1.5.** Position Fort Wayne-Allen County as a college town via increased student housing development and local nightlife.
  - 1.1.5.A.** Work with Purdue Fort Wayne and other higher education leadership to create a strategic plan to identify sites, financing (including incentives), and public-private partnerships to develop 2,500 new on-campus and off-campus student housing units by 2031.
  - 1.1.5.B.** Collaborate with the hospitality industry to expand the inventory of bars and other nightlife venues, both in downtown Fort Wayne and in close proximity to local college and university campuses.
  - 1.1.5.C.** Work with area higher education institutions, local governments, and transportation providers to create better and safer connections between downtown Fort Wayne and area college and university campuses.
- 1.1.6.** Enhance the image and appeal of major gateways and corridors into Fort Wayne-Allen County through proactive land use planning, landscaping, digital signage, public art installations, and other tactics.
  - 1.1.6.A.** Build on the All in Allen Comprehensive Plan to identify opportunities for proactive zoning updates at major gateways and along key corridors where existing zoning and land uses are mismatched with the vision of the community and redevelopment potential.
 

**DETAILS:** An example of an area where existing land uses and zoning should be changed are the used car lots, storage facilities, and other auto-oriented properties along the West Coliseum Boulevard corridor between I-69 and US-27, a major gateway into Fort Wayne from Chicago.
  - 1.1.6.B.** Create attractive gateways at major IH-69 exit ramps and other key highway corridors and interchanges leading into the community, with decorative signage, attracting landscaping, and digital signage/billboards showing events and accolades in Fort Wayne-Allen County.
  - 1.1.6.C.** Support the work of the Fort Wayne Public Art Commission to enliven and enhance the City’s vibrancy through promotion of artwork in the public realm.

**1.1.7.** Encourage additional investment in mixed-use and urban residential development in and around downtown Fort Wayne and along key commercial corridors leading to/from downtown.

**1.1.7.A.** Establish a City policy to incorporate a minimum share of condominium or other ownership residential units (such as 10 percent of all new units) for any future downtown residential projects to ensure an ongoing supply of comps—or comparable sales of recently sold homes in the same area that are similar in size, condition, and features—for the development and sale of additional residential units.

- Advocate for the use of tax increment financing (TIF) incentives for condo projects in accordance with Indiana State Board of Accounts guidance.

**1.1.7.B.** Support implementation efforts of key findings and recommendations included in the 2021 Zimmerman/Volk Associates Fort Wayne-Allen County housing study.

- Use the findings and analysis from this study to market Allen County as an investment and development opportunity to local, statewide, and national housing developers and real estate investors.
- Based on the results of the study, advocate for land use, zoning, or permitting changes at the City or County level to facilitate new housing investment and development.

**1.1.8.** Identify and eliminate unnecessary regulatory barriers to development in existing and planned commercial and industrial areas.

**1.1.8.A.** Conduct a review of planning and zoning requirements (including density regulations, height restrictions, floor-to-area ratios, and other development restrictions) in partnership with the Allen County Department of Planning Services, the City of Fort Wayne Community Development Division, and the City of New Haven City Plan Department.

**1.1.8.B.** Use the results to discuss potential solutions with area real estate professionals (developers, brokers, and real estate attorneys) and design professionals (urban planners, architects, landscape architects, and civil engineers).

## 1.2. ACCELERATE DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Fort Wayne-Allen County, according to multiple local stakeholders, needs to find its “swagger.” The area is growing, attractive, and welcoming, but it has not yet found a unified and confident voice to broadcast these qualities to the world outside. It suffers from “best-kept secret syndrome,” and that needs to change if Fort Wayne-Allen County is going to achieve the ambitious growth-oriented goals outlined in this plan.

**1.2.1.** Expand collaboration with existing industries and regional/state economic development allies—including the Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership, the IEDC, and AEP—to attract new investment from domestic and international companies.

**1.2.1.A.** Work with regional/state partners to focus business attraction efforts on GFW Inc. target industries, which represent the best opportunities for significant new investment and employment growth in Allen County.

- Develop marketing materials that speak to the strategic benefits of Fort Wayne-Allen County for decision-makers within target industries.





- 1.2.1.B.** Review local and regional business attraction efforts to ensure they are designed to generate increased marketing activity and a growing pipeline of business expansion/recruitment prospects from out-of-state companies seeking a new location.
- 1.2.1.C.** Explore collaboration with economic development organizations in Central Indiana, such as the Indy Chamber, to create a dual corporate campus environment for companies headquartered in the Indianapolis area, with an office in Fort Wayne-Allen County.
- 1.2.1.D.** Position Fort Wayne, the second largest city in Indiana, as the ideal location for major companies based in Indianapolis looking for a satellite or second office location within close proximity of the corporate headquarters (HQ).

**DETAILS:** Large corporations have increasingly employed dual campus business models. In some cases, the two corporate offices are across the country (e.g., Amazon's HQ in Seattle and its HQ2 in Northern Virginia). In other cases, dual corporate offices are located in nearby metro areas (CoStar has its HQ in Washington, DC, and its global research and operations center in Richmond, Virginia, with the two offices located at a 2-hour drive from each other). In some cases—especially in large, fast-growing metro areas—major corporations operate a dual campus model in different parts of the same metro area (Vrbo, Indeed, and Facebook offer downtown Austin and far north Austin campuses for their employees).

- 1.2.2.** Elevate the brand and image of Fort Wayne and Allen County at the regional (Midwest), national, and international levels.
- 1.2.2.A.** Develop and deepen relationships with site selectors, location consultants, and stakeholders influencing business location decisions in domestic and international markets.
  - Host regular Fort Wayne-Allen County familiarization tours (fam tours) for real estate developers, brokers, investors, corporate real estate executives, and site location consultants, hosting a small group of 10 to 15 real estate professionals in the community for a one- or two-day event.

- Focus on inviting developers based in the Chicago and Indianapolis areas and other major markets in the central and eastern US (such as Atlanta; Dallas-Fort Worth; Washington, DC; and New York) with a high concentration of real estate developers, investors, brokers, and site selectors.
- Use the event as an opportunity to expand networking for smaller, local developers based in Allen County—including businesses owned by people of color and/or women—so they can build relationships that lead to work in outside markets.
- Ensure the tour is focused on specific business opportunities and potential real estate development projects for the real estate professionals to provide input on (such as the Riverfront, areas adjacent to Electric Works, specific sites in Southeast Fort Wayne, or development of properties near Fort Wayne International Airport—FWA).

- 1.2.2.B.** Host national and regional (Midwest) conferences of real estate brokers, developers, investors, and related professionals.

- Invite major associations, including the Urban Land Institute (ULI), CoreNet Global, the Commercial Real Estate Development Association (NAIOP), and other associations to hold annual and semiannual events in Fort Wayne.
- Use these events as an opportunity to generate attention and interest for Fort Wayne-Allen County among major real estate development and commercial brokerage firms, with the end goal of putting Fort Wayne and Allen County “on the map” in the world of real estate investment and development.

- 1.2.2.C.** Enhance Fort Wayne-Allen County's online economic development presence to effectively communicate desired messages to target audiences.

- Review the GFW Inc. website, Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership website, Visit Fort Wayne website, City of Fort Wayne website, Allen County website, and other local partners' economic development websites to ensure each online presence communicates consistent positive messages and marketing themes.

- Focus on aligning messages to portray Fort Wayne and Allen County as a competitive and desirable place to live, work, visit, invest, and conduct business.
- Present in-depth profiles and descriptions of local business success stories and workforce strengths.
- Include testimonials from area business executives who endorse Fort Wayne-Allen County as a great place to do business. Extend this beyond the City of Fort Wayne and Allen County into surrounding areas in Northeast Indiana (and Northwest Ohio) where business owners can speak about the region's positive workforce and business climate attributes.
- Coordinate regularly with partners to maintain up-to-date, consistent messages and marketing themes focused on business development and talent attraction/retention.
- Actively manage other online sources with local information—such as the Wikipedia pages for the City of Fort Wayne, the City of New Haven, and Allen County—to ensure they depict an accurate and positive image of the region as a business location.

**1.2.3.** Strengthen business retention and expansion (BRE) efforts, focused on retaining large employers and enhancing the competitiveness of small to midsize companies that are ready and eager to grow.

**1.2.3.A.** Enhance the GFW Inc. business visitation program with site visits and surveys.

- Maintain a goal of conducting at least 500 onsite (or virtual) business visits each year through strategic collaboration between GFW Inc. and public sector and economic development partners.
- Work with the City of Fort Wayne, Allen County, the City of New Haven, the Downtown Improvement District (DID), SEED, the Fort Wayne Black Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Fort Wayne Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and the New Haven Chamber of Commerce to conduct business visits with small, midsize, and large employers.



**1.2.3.B.** Gather intelligence through BRE visits about how Allen County companies are adopting and using new technologies and innovative production techniques, especially in target sectors.

- Refine the business survey instrument to capture information about industry trends, new technologies, major disruptions, and potential supplier or service provider recruitment opportunities.
- Ask specific questions about the adoption of technologies and innovations during visits and record that information in the customer relationship management (CRM) instrument.

**1.2.3.C.** Create and distribute a survey targeted at local business owners to better understand their needs.

- Assemble the results of the survey, generate a summary memo, and distribute it to the community.

**1.2.3.D.** Regularly tell success stories that result from BRE visits and the BRE program.

- Continue highlighting success stories that result in new job creation, increased capital investment, or opening of new facilities (ribbon cutting events) for existing businesses.



- Highlight additional success stories that might be valuable to existing businesses, including assistance with permitting, workforce training, or infrastructure challenges.

**1.2.3.E.** Work with local companies and the Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership to launch an initiative to raise internal and external visibility of unique companies and products that are made, designed, or based in Fort Wayne-Allen County.

- Work with area media (print, television, radio, podcasts, and online publications) to develop and promote stories about companies that are at the heart of the Fort Wayne-Allen County economy.
- Launch a quarterly direct mail campaign to real estate brokers, site selectors, and business recruitment prospects that contains a locally made/designed product that ties in with their industry or a relevant community asset.
- Include examples, such as a model of a GMC Sierra or Chevrolet Silverado truck, a Vera Bradley tote bag or backpack, a musical instrument sold exclusively through Sweetwater Sound, a case of dry ice-preserved Dreyer's Grand Ice Cream, or a Hop River Brewing Company six-pack.
- Ensure the enclosed marketing materials tell the story of how the featured company found success in Fort Wayne-Allen County and how other companies can attain similar results. Use these messages to create a narrative about why Fort Wayne-Allen County is a great business location.
- Ensure that these messages highlight not only company-specific accolades, but also emphasize how Fort Wayne-Allen County has played a central role in the company's growth and expansion.

**1.2.3.F.** Work with the City of Fort Wayne, Allen County, and FWA to take the necessary steps to protect and grow the economic impact of the continued successful operations of the 122nd Fighter Wing of the Indiana Air National Guard, stationed at the Fort Wayne Air National Guard Base.

- Maintain and strengthen ongoing lines of communication between the military and the community. This should include regular reporting from the 122nd Fighter Wing to the Fort Wayne City Council and Allen County Board of Commissioners.
- Work with the 122nd Fighter Wing to host regular military appreciation events that bring together community leaders, business owners, military personnel, and other local residents to celebrate the positive role of the 122nd Fighter Wing.
- Work with the 122nd Fighter Wing leadership, the City of Fort Wayne, and Allen County to address infrastructure, zoning, and land use issues to ensure the ongoing successful operations of the base.
- Conduct and promote an annual economic impact analysis of the 122nd Fighter Wing to detail and highlight its importance to the local, regional, and state economy.
- Enhance the connections and relationships between the 122nd Fighter Wing and related industry partners. Partner with the Northeast Indiana Defense Industry Association and the Indiana Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) to encourage business development associated with contracting opportunities at the 122nd Fighter Wing.

**1.2.4.** Promote Fort Wayne-Allen County as a premier location for foreign direct investment (FDI) and international business development.

**1.2.4.A.** Amplify FDI messaging on the GFW Inc. website.

**1.2.4.B.** Map foreign-owned businesses in Allen County to highlight their strength and international presence in the region.

**1.2.4.C.** Market Allen County's Opportunity Zones, Foreign Trade Zones, and other special districts for business investment.

**1.2.4.D.** Leverage existing international connections of exporters and foreign-owned companies within Allen County.

- Explore opportunities for international trade, supplier, and investment linkages tied to the global trade of existing companies during interviews and surveys conducted as part of the BRE program.

- Ask if companies would be willing to assist in GFW Inc.'s international recruitment efforts.
- Identify individuals, organizations, and companies from the international community residing or working in Allen County that could assist in marketing and recruitment efforts.
- Coordinate with customs brokers and freight forwarders, such as CJ International, to address international trade issues.

- 1.2.4.E.** Strategically attend international industry events, trade shows, and virtual gatherings that bring together company executives within target industries.
- 1.2.4.F.** Conduct outreach to foreign consulates and international associations in Chicago, DC, New York, Atlanta, and other major metro areas in the Midwest and eastern US.
- 1.2.4.G.** Expand countywide efforts and resources dedicated to international business attraction.
- Increase the number of local economic development professionals involved in international business attraction.
  - Dedicate a full-time international trade specialist to provide administrative support on these issues.
  - Partner with The International Center in Indianapolis to facilitate international business development in Allen County.
- 1.2.4.H.** Create a FDI soft landing recruitment/accelerator program.
- Identify and customize a physical space for small, growing international companies.
  - Provide wraparound support services, including introductions to financial services and small grants/incentives to offset business costs.
  - Assist with initial key employee recruitment.

**DETAILS:** Examples of successful FDI soft landing programs include FDI programs from the Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development, the Charlotte Regional Business Alliance, and the Austin International Accelerator.

### 1.3. MAINTAIN AND EXPAND TRANSPORTATION ASSETS AND OTHER KEY INFRASTRUCTURE.

Amenities lose much of their value if the residents of a given community cannot easily access them. With its up-and-coming reputation, Fort Wayne-Allen County needs to ensure that its recent pattern of growth is coupled with increased mobility across, into, and within the area. Numerous stakeholders addressed concerns on this front, ranging from the insufficiency of public transportation to the need for the expansion of roads and airport terminals. Reliable and quality infrastructure is a key building block of economic success, and with the proper attention and care, Fort Wayne-Allen County has the potential to improve in this respect.

- 1.3.1.** Advocate for the expansion of US-30 into an interstate highway to promote and enhance travel between Allen County and the Chicago area.
- 1.3.1.A.** Work with key distribution sector employers to highlight the impact of this initiative on businesses located along the highway.
- Proactively involve these employers in the planning and advocacy process.
  - Ensure the presence of these employers at all major decision-making points.
- 1.3.1.B.** Focus government outreach on the promotion and enhancement of travel between Allen County and the Chicago area specifically.
- Advocate for the prospective interstate at the state level by emphasizing larger Midwestern synergies.
  - Position the future US-30 corridor as a passenger and freight smart corridor with the potential to accommodate autonomous vehicles, EV charging stations, and other advanced transportation technologies.
  - Work with local and regional partners to ensure the future US-30 route does not adversely affect local business districts in Main Streets, downtowns, and other key commercial corridors in Northeast Indiana.
  - Continue working with the U.S. 30 Coalition to advocate for state and federal funding for investments in the transportation infrastructure along the US 30 corridor between Northwest Indiana and Allen County.



- 1.3.1.C.** Reach out to major transportation and distribution employers without a current presence in Allen County to broadcast the strategic value of the US-30 expansion.
  - Coordinate these efforts with site selectors.
  - Create marketing materials that advertise the advantages provided by the expansion.
- 1.3.2.** Leverage I-469 by working with transportation and distribution companies, landowners, utility providers, and the real estate community along the entire I-469 corridor and along the Adams Center Road corridor to increase investment and development opportunities. (See also Initiative 3.1.3.A on page 42.)
  - 1.3.2.A.** Make public investments along the entire I-469 corridor to increase access and mobility at major interchanges and along primary arterial roads leading to and from I-469.
  - 1.3.2.B.** Work with transportation and distribution companies, landowners, utility providers, and the real estate community to evaluate and market the most promising development sites along the I-469 corridor in Allen County.
- 1.3.3.** Enhance passenger and freight air travel connectivity at Fort Wayne International Airport (FWA) and Smith Field Airport (SMD).
  - 1.3.3.A.** Work closely with FWA and SMD to pursue international business development opportunities and specific business recruitment targets that would benefit from an airport-adjacent location.
  - 1.3.3.B.** Partner with FWA to leverage Project Gateway to expand air travel options through the attraction of new nonstop flight destinations, especially to major markets not currently served by nonstop flights to and from FWA, such as Washington, DC; New York; Boston; Denver; and Los Angeles.
  - 1.3.3.C.** Partner with FWA and SMD to increase the amount of air cargo to and from Fort Wayne-Allen County.
  - 1.3.3.D.** Conduct an evaluation of potential new revenue backstops to encourage airlines to add more flights into and out of Fort Wayne.
- 1.3.4.** Maintain and expand critical basic infrastructure across Allen County, including electric and natural gas capacity, water and wastewater infrastructure, and telecommunications/broadband infrastructure.
  - 1.3.4.A.** Develop a comprehensive analysis of impending federal funds for infrastructure, specifically broadband expansion (see *Capacity and Resources* on page 46).
  - 1.3.4.B.** Work with broadband providers to ensure access and network resilience for local businesses and residents.
  - 1.3.4.C.** Facilitate rapid deployment of 5G mobile network technology across the County, especially in major employment areas and commercial corridors.
    - Engage in conversations with major telecommunications providers operating in Fort Wayne-Allen County about plans to invest in 5G infrastructure.
  - 1.3.4.D.** Create a set of local policy guidelines for the City of Fort Wayne, City of New Haven, and Allen County to encourage equitable deployment of 5G technologies to local businesses and residents.
  - 1.3.4.E.** Work with utility providers to make investments in expanded natural gas distribution infrastructure across Allen County.
    - Ensure existing industrial parks and major employment centers are equipped with adequate gas capacity to accommodate current operations and future growth.
    - Ensure new development-ready employment sites (1,000 acres by 2026 and another 1,000 acres by 2031) are served by natural gas capacity to accommodate large-scale industrial development.
  - 1.3.4.F.** Support intelligent and green infrastructure adoption throughout Allen County. (See also Initiative 2.2.3.)
    - Support Purdue University academic researchers to pilot Internet of Things (IoT) sensors on Bass Road.
    - Implement the use of a locally developed, American Concrete Institute (ACI) award-winning “green” cement mix on a larger scale.
    - Coordinate with Wave Logix Inc., a Purdue-based technology company, regarding the development of an IoT sensing platform and data analytics for infrastructure monitoring and management.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLE 2. *Innovative*

Forward-looking communities realize that it is no longer feasible to conduct business as usual. The "Innovative" guiding principle aims to carry Fort Wayne-Allen County firmly into the future. The bold projects are centered on ambitious yet achievable goals, including becoming a Top 10 Music City, transforming the automotive industry, and launching a large-scale venture fund and accelerator. In addition, the following strategic initiatives and tactics seek to build on strong existing assets in the community, such as the overall entrepreneurial ecosystem and prominent legacy industries like insurance, financial technology, and logistics and distribution. Lastly, in order to attract and retain creative talent, the community must also continue developing lifestyle amenities like the Arts Campus and new multi-purpose events spaces.

*ACT will develop a robust network of entrepreneurial support organizations, access to capital, real estate space, research and development, and creative and artistic talent to fuel growth in technology-driven companies in emerging and legacy industries.*



## INNOVATIVE BOLD PROJECTS

### ***BECOME RECOGNIZED AS A TOP 10 MUSIC CITY BY 2031 THROUGH EXPANDED FESTIVALS, MUSIC VENUES, TRAINING AND EDUCATION, AND MUSIC INDUSTRY INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT.***

Increasingly, Fort Wayne is becoming known as an appealing place to live for artists, musicians, and other creative professionals. If local stakeholders want to embrace creative talent and its economic potential, music should become a central facet of local arts and culture development. The area already has significant assets in this regard—especially Sweetwater Sound, GearFest, and the Middle Waves festival—that could be harnessed for this purpose. This goal is designed to build on these existing assets, including the music technology programs at the University of Saint Francis and Purdue Fort Wayne, vibrant live music venues (the Clyde Theatre, the Embassy Theatre, the Sweetwater Performance Pavilion), local bars and restaurants that host live music, and public spaces promoted by the Downtown Improvement District for live music events (Freimann Square, the Landing, the Patio, and Promenade Park). Leadership must adopt a future-focused mindset and work with key industry businesses and communities to innovate in the space, whether with technology R&D or creative ideas for new events and venues. (See Initiative 2.3.1 on page 37.)

### ***BECOME RECOGNIZED AS ONE OF THE PREMIER INDUSTRY 4.0 AUTOMOTIVE TECH COMMUNITIES THROUGH NEW COLLABORATION AMONG INDUSTRY, GOVERNMENT, AND HIGHER EDUCATION. ADD 2,500 NET NEW JOBS IN THE AUTOMOTIVE TECH SECTOR BY 2031 AND CREATE NEW INCENTIVES TO FACILITATE THIS GOAL.***

Fort Wayne-Allen County is an automotive manufacturing hub in the Midwest, thanks to the well-established General Motors plant and distribution corridors to surrounding metros. However, the future of the auto industry lies with Industry 4.0 innovations. Public-private partnerships must evaluate and plan around these new technologies, such as automation and electric vehicles.

Extensive collaborative efforts could transform Fort Wayne into a smart city, with pathways of charging stations and robotics in industrial facilities. Although manufacturers are certainly aware of these trends, political and higher education leaders need to support legacy industries in their pursuit of technological adaptation. (See Initiative 2.2.1 page 35.)

### ***ENHANCE THE ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM BY LAUNCHING A \$10 MILLION VENTURE FUND AND ACCELERATOR BY 2026, HOUSED AT ELECTRIC WORKS, FUNCTIONING AS THE EPICENTER OF FORT WAYNE-ALLEN COUNTY'S STARTUP AND INNOVATION LANDSCAPE. GROW THE VENTURE FUND TO \$25 MILLION BY 2031.***

The Electric Works campus has been at the forefront of Fort Wayne-Allen County's economic development efforts for several years, but prior successes are no excuse to stop moving forward. There is an excellent opportunity for Electric Works to serve as an epicenter of entrepreneurial activity for Allen County and all of Northeast Indiana. Organizations like the NIIC, Start Fort Wayne, and SEED would benefit from and contribute to a thriving network at the campus alongside established companies like Do It Best. The role of Electric Works as a business innovation and entrepreneurial hub cannot be complete, however, without providing the risk capital and accelerator support to help local startups become high-growth firms. Other Midwest communities, such as Green Bay and Grand Rapids, have launched community-based venture funds with upward of \$25 million of early-stage venture capital, helping local startups gain traction while also attracting high-growth firms from other states. Fort Wayne-Allen County is well-positioned to create a similar venture fund. With a commitment from locally based companies, high-net-worth individuals, and anchor institutions, the community can aim to launch a venture fund and accelerator, housed at the Electric Works campus, that attracts \$10 million by 2026 and grows to \$25 million by 2031 to fuel the growth of startups in Allen County and across Northeast Indiana. Such an ambitious venture fund and accelerator could also help Fort Wayne-Allen County attract high-growth firms from outside the state. (See Initiative 2.1.2 on page 34.)

# INNOVATIVE STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

## 2.1. STRENGTHEN THE ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM.

In the economies of the future, local success will come from generating explosive ideas that translate into equally explosive financial growth. To achieve an atmosphere of rapid generation and iteration, Fort Wayne-Allen County must foster an entrepreneurial ecosystem designed to nurture innovation. This development requires ongoing, active involvement by all decision-makers: political leaders, economic development partners, private sector stakeholders from large companies and small businesses, and a network of entrepreneur support organizations (ESOs). With the proper tactical approach, Fort Wayne-Allen County has the opportunity to become a leading innovation communities in the Midwest.

**2.1.1.** Support implementation of the Greater Fort Wayne Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Strategy (EES) spearheaded by the Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne and Start Fort Wayne, the first strategic planning effort that directly addresses entrepreneurship.

**2.1.1.A.** Work with stakeholders and leadership representing the NIIC, SEED, and Start Fort Wayne—the community’s largest ESOs—to identify options for transformational change to make Fort Wayne-Allen County a leading startup and innovation hub.

**2.1.1.B.** Engage in conversations about co-locating a presence of one or all of the community’s largest ESOs at Electric Works.

**2.1.1.C.** Work with the Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne and all ESOs (large and small) to advance the actions recommended in the EES.

**2.1.2.** Establish a new \$10 million venture fund and accelerator by 2026 to deploy investment capital to home-grown Fort Wayne-Allen County startups. Grow the venture fund to \$25 million by 2031.

**2.1.2.A.** Locate the venture fund and accelerator team at Electric Works.

**2.1.2.B.** Raise awareness of the new fund among high-profile local companies and high-net-worth individuals as soon as the plans for the fund are finalized.

**2.1.2.C.** Work with statewide higher education research institutions, such as Purdue University’s flagship campus in Lafayette, Indiana University’s flagship campus in Bloomington, and Notre Dame University to communicate the opportunity afforded by the fund to base new companies in Allen County.

**2.1.3.** Continue and expand the GFW Inc. Bridge Program to connect first-time entrepreneurs with experienced local business leaders for mentorship.

**2.1.3.A.** Expand promotion of the Bridge Program, featuring both the established companies and the startups involved in the program.

**2.1.3.B.** Incorporate a reverse pitch competition into the Bridge Program to engage large companies in Allen County with needs for innovation. Hold a reverse pitch event that invites established companies to present their most urgent unsolved business problems in need of an entrepreneurial solution to a group of local entrepreneurs and investors.

**2.1.4.** Strengthen networking for the entrepreneurial community in Fort Wayne-Allen County.

**2.1.4.A.** Create an entrepreneurial networking group specifically for young professionals.

**2.1.4.B.** Collaborate with chambers of commerce and other resource providers to create a program that assists business owners nearing retirement age to prepare their businesses for a successful transition.

**2.1.4.C.** Expand networking and collaboration opportunities within the Fort Wayne-Allen County entrepreneurial community and between the startup, tech, and innovation communities in Indianapolis, Lafayette, South Bend, Bloomington, and other Indiana regions.

**2.1.4.D.** Engage in conversations with economic development and entrepreneurial leaders in the Indianapolis region to provide more opportunities for networking and collaboration among



startups, investors, and entrepreneurship support organizations in the Fort Wayne and Indianapolis regions.

**2.1.5.** Target and recruit high-growth, early-stage firms in other Midwestern markets.

**2.1.5.A.** Conduct an annual review of the Inc. 5000 list (a national ranking of the fastest-growing private companies) and other sources to identify and target quickly expanding businesses in other communities.

**2.1.5.B.** Focus on attracting startups in the GFW Inc. target industries.

**2.1.5.C.** Track venture capital firms in Chicago, Columbus, Pittsburgh, Minneapolis-Saint Paul, Detroit, and other Midwestern metro areas that have recently funded high-growth, innovative startups.

- Pursue marketing tactics aimed directly at startup founders and executives that highlight Fort Wayne-Allen County's advantages as a business relocation/expansion destination, including the suite of services available to companies and the value of the community vis-à-vis larger, higher-cost locations.



**2.1.6.** Encourage local school districts to incorporate entrepreneurship curricula at age-appropriate levels to help build a culture of entrepreneurship at the K–12 level and create a future pipeline of Fort Wayne-Allen County startups.

**2.1.6.A.** Support Junior Achievement of Northern Indiana's partnerships with local school districts to incorporate real-world business concepts into high school education.

**2.1.6.B.** Work with local school districts to involve local businesses to mentor students and serve as guest speakers.

## **2.2. INCREASE TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION, R&D, AND PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS IN LEGACY INDUSTRIES.**

Fort Wayne and Allen County are proud to be home to a well-diversified set of legacy employment centers. With the presence of the General Motors manufacturing plant in particular, the community has benefited greatly over the years. However, relying on the continued strength of existing industries runs the risk of being left behind as significant innovations take over regional, national, and international economies. Fort Wayne-Allen County has experienced significant economic losses from relocation or plant closures associated with previous legacy employers, including International Harvester, Magnavox, General Electric, and Lincoln Financial Group. The community must commit to forward-looking strategies to prevent that stagnation from happening and carry these established pillars of the local workforce into a brighter and more well-positioned future. Rather than waiting for innovation to happen elsewhere, Fort Wayne-Allen County should be an active participant in driving innovation. Local government officials, utility partners, and industry leaders should work together to help the community become known as a proving ground and test market for new technologies.

**2.2.1.** Prepare for and cultivate a competitive environment for automotive technology, including electric vehicles (EVs), autonomous vehicles, and other advanced technologies on pace to disrupt the status quo of the automotive manufacturing industry. Set a goal of creating 2,500 net new high-wage jobs by 2031 in the automotive tech sector and create new incentives to facilitate this goal. (See Capacity and Resources Initiatives 5.1 and 5.3 on page 48 and page 49.)

- 2.2.1.A.** Work with General Motors and the area's automotive industry to prepare the community and the automotive industry for the fast-approaching transition to EVs.
- 2.2.1.B.** Work with local governments, Fort Wayne City Utilities, and AEP to invest in EV charging stations in high-traffic public and community gathering spaces in downtown Fort Wayne (such as Parkview Field, the Grand Wayne Center, the Allen County War Memorial Coliseum, other private venues, City Hall, and Allen County government offices), downtown New Haven, and other major commercial/entertainment areas around Allen County.
- 2.2.1.C.** Partner with major employers to incentivize rapid deployment of EV charging stations at large employer sites throughout Allen County, including large corporate offices, manufacturing plants, healthcare facilities, and area educational campuses.
- 2.2.1.D.** Partner with surrounding counties in Northeast Indiana to develop a coordinated regional network of charging stations.
- 2.2.1.E.** Leverage state and federal utility programs aimed at accelerating the deployment of EV infrastructure, including charging stations, to fund charging stations and other related infrastructure investments.
- 2.2.1.F.** Encourage automotive companies, their suppliers, and other manufacturers to work with area educational institutions to develop a pipeline of Industry 4.0 talent that is prepared for the occupations of the future.
- 2.2.2.** Drive improvements in insurance processes via financial technology (fintech). Establish a goal of making Fort Wayne-Allen County one of the top 10 insurance-tech hubs in the next 10 years, alongside leading insurance-tech hotspots like Hartford, New York, Des Moines, Columbus, and Silicon Valley.
  - 2.2.2.A.** Host a joint automotive and insurance tech summit that brings together company executives, startups, and professionals within the region's automotive, insurance, and related industries to discuss innovations and technology advancements affecting the future of automotive technology and insurance tech.
  - 2.2.2.B.** Use relationships and insights gained from the event to explore ways to position Fort Wayne-Allen County as a testbed for new technologies and innovation that benefits the automotive and insurance industries.
- 2.2.3.** Pursue forward-looking strategies and investments that position Allen County's logistics and distribution industry for growth in a future defined by automation and the Internet of Things (intelligently connected devices).
  - 2.2.3.A.** Invest in smart city sensor technology to develop an autonomous mobility environment in Fort Wayne and Allen County.
  - 2.2.3.B.** Advocate for Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) and local transportation departments to develop pilot projects and next-generation standards for the future of freight and passenger mobility, including autonomous vehicles.





**2.2.4.** Support the continued growth and diversification of the local healthcare industry presence.

**2.2.4.A.** Work with Parkview Health, Lutheran Health Network, and other major organizations in the local healthcare space to target service providers, suppliers, and other related companies for relocation or expansion to Fort Wayne-Allen County.

**2.2.4.B.** Host an educational conference centered around the rise of telehealth services.

**2.2.5.** Encourage the City of Fort Wayne and Allen County to set a goal of carbon neutrality to send a powerful message to local and external stakeholders (industry leaders, utilities, existing residents, prospective talent) that the Fort Wayne area is a forward-looking community.

**2.2.5.A.** Work with utility providers to increase investment in clean energy technologies.

**2.2.5.B.** Advocate for ambitious adoption of alternative energies and fuel sources at the local and state levels.

**2.2.5.C.** Highlight and promote Allen County companies that are driving sustainable innovation and environmentally sound practices.



## 2.3. DRIVE THE ARTS, SPORTS, ENTERTAINMENT, AND TOURISM INDUSTRIES INTO THE FUTURE.

As an up-and-coming destination in the Midwest, Fort Wayne-Allen County is uniquely positioned among its peers to be known as a vibrant cultural hub. This goal extends beyond making Allen County a great place to live to making it a great place to visit as well. Because the economic value of arts and culture is difficult to quantify, it is not always a priority for economic development efforts. From a visitor attraction perspective, however, its value in the community is clear. Although the area does (and should) pride itself on some existing assets, significant enhancements to the arts, entertainment, and tourism amenities in Fort Wayne-Allen County could radically transform its external perception. By leveraging the strong energy and desire of stakeholders to head in this direction, community and business leaders can capture this creative potential and turn it into action.

Sports-related economic activity is a significant part of Fort Wayne-Allen County's broader arts, entertainment, and tourism industry. Parkview Field has proven to be a valuable asset for the community, and its success should serve as a model for where the local economy could be headed. A thriving environment for youth sports competitions already exists, and the addition of a youth-specific sports complex (particularly turf sports) could expand Fort Wayne's national draw. Another concept to explore is the planning and construction of a new multipurpose arena in downtown that could host a variety of sporting events, as well as a soccer field just north of downtown that could potentially bring a new professional soccer team to the City. Leadership should create and conduct a comprehensive feasibility study for these major venue development projects as soon as possible.

**2.3.1.** Establish a goal of making Fort Wayne a Top 10 Music City by 2031.

**2.3.1.A.** Map local and regional music industry assets and events.

- Create a music industry alliance of relevant local business leaders.
- Develop a regularly updated information database of the music ecosystem in Fort Wayne-Allen County.
- Identify and promote regional music industry assets (artists, venues, events, music industry service providers and suppliers, etc.) across Northeast Indiana.

- Identify and promote music-related education programs in Fort Wayne-Allen County, including the degree programs focused on music and the music industry at Purdue Fort Wayne and the University of Saint Francis.
- Collaborate with educational institutions and employers who offer on-the-job apprenticeships to assess and support the capacity and output of the music-related skilled labor pipeline, such as technical light, sound, and video engineers and other music industry occupations.

**2.3.1.B.** Seek additional industry partners for the Sweetwater GearFest.

- Work with Sweetwater Sound corporate leadership to identify additional relevant music equipment companies, such as current vendors like Fender, Gibson, and Yamaha, that could participate.

**2.3.1.C.** Launch a national marketing campaign for the Middle Waves Music Festival to position the festival as the “younger sibling” of Lollapalooza in Chicago.

- Identify and recruit new sponsors for the festival.
- Connect Fort Wayne-Allen County’s economic development and destination marketing professionals with their counterparts in other major music centers (Austin, Nashville, Chicago, New Orleans, Asheville, and others) to explore the creation of a national event with several destinations. Such an event could be similar to global events in competitive sports that have multiple stops on a world tour, such as Formula One or the Volvo Ocean Race.
- Collaborate with Electric Works to further develop its East Campus to expand amenities for attendees and artists.

**2.3.2.** Gather, analyze, and update information that will inform leadership about the artistic community.

**2.3.2.A.** Develop a greater understanding of the role that arts and culture play in the local economy through efforts like an economic impact study of creative industries and individuals.

- Work with the Indiana Arts Commission to update the Creative Economy Report annually to measure the economic impact of creative industries and jobs in Allen County and Northeast Indiana.
- Partner with Traditional Arts Indiana to conduct a folk life study in Allen County to develop a better understanding of the presence, needs, and opportunities of traditional artists with diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, such as those who are Burmese, Black, Hispanic, and Native American.
- Benchmark the Allen County arts and culture sector, including the Arts Campus Fort Wayne, with the arts and culture sectors in peer communities.

**2.3.2.B.** Launch an exploratory committee to identify opportunities that leverage Fort Wayne-Allen County’s position as a leading music, e-commerce, and artist hub.

**2.3.3.** Support the advancement of Arts Campus Fort Wayne and address its long-term sustainability, so that facilities are aligned with the needs of arts and cultural organizations and the community’s long-term growth. Make the voices of local artists; arts program administrators; patrons with diverse interests, abilities, and backgrounds; and creative businesses a priority in the long-term vision for the Arts Campus and the contiguous and nearby development of the Urban Trail, Freimann Square, retail and storefronts, restaurants, and residential options.

**2.3.3.A.** Complete the renovation of the Arts United Center, an internationally recognized architectural landmark and the flagship building of the Arts Campus.

**2.3.3.B.** Support cultural assets, such as the Fort Wayne Museum of Art and the History Center, in their efforts to extend their cultural reach.

**2.3.3.C.** Solidify a partnership among Arts United, the City of Fort Wayne, Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation, the Downtown Improvement District, Visit Fort Wayne, and other partners to activate and integrate the Arts Campus into plans for downtown development.

**2.3.4.** Leverage established local employers to increase tourism.

**2.3.4.A.** Collaborate with Sweetwater Sound to make Fort Wayne-Allen County more amenable to traveling musicians.

**2.3.4.B.** Coordinate the ongoing efforts of Vera Bradley to develop new and improved hotel accommodations.

**2.3.4.C.** Identify successful bars and restaurants, and work to increase their patronage.

- Use local food and beverage tax data to identify top-performing establishments based on quarterly and annual sales data.
- Create a running list of the top 20 local food and beverage establishments by gathering and ranking Yelp and Google reviews.
- Coordinate with area hotels to include this list on their check-in materials.

**2.3.5.** Explore the use of a countywide Fort Wayne-Allen County sports commission to drive decisions about the sports industry across the County and act as the public-facing body responsible for growing the industry.

**2.3.5.A.** Generate an economic impact study of all existing sports-related venues, teams, and events in the area, such as Parkview Field, the Turnstone US Olympic and Paralympic Training Site, and youth sports competitions.

- Make the results of this study available on the GFW Inc. website.

**2.3.5.B.** Hold regular meetings of sports industry and tourism promotion leaders to establish ongoing and active collaboration.

**2.3.6.** Evaluate the potential for developing new multipurpose spaces for high-profile sporting events, concerts, and other events/festivals.

**2.3.6.A.** Conduct a feasibility study for the construction of a youth sports complex to draw national-level competition.

- Pursue development, if supported by the study, of a youth sports complex and associated amenities (restaurants, hotels, and related businesses).

- Promote the facility with nationwide marketing efforts.

**2.3.6.B.** Conduct a feasibility study for the construction of a multipurpose arena that can house large audiences for a variety of activities.

- Pursue development, if supported by the study, of a multipurpose arena.
- Explore options for local corporate sponsors (such as Parkview Health's naming rights for Parkview Field).
- Engage local creative professionals to attract entertainment acts.





# GUIDING PRINCIPLE 3. *Inclusive*

GFW Inc. recognizes the contributions of all people in Allen County and understands that inclusion is essential for economic development. This guiding principle focuses on making the local economy not just stronger in general, but creating opportunities specifically for the people and communities that need economic attention the most. The expansion of Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) capacity will provide access to capital, and targeted catalyst projects in the Southeast quadrant will attract 2,500 new jobs over the next 10 years. Furthermore, leadership must drive real estate development and small business support focused on underrepresented communities, make Fort Wayne-Allen County a vibrant home for diverse talent, and expand access to higher education and workforce development opportunities for all.

*ACT will align business, government, education, and nonprofit partners to ensure equitable access to economic, workforce, and educational opportunities for all people and communities in Allen County.*

## INCLUSIVE BOLD PROJECTS

### **EXPAND LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FINANCIAL INSTITUTION (CDFI) CAPACITY TO DEPLOY \$10 MILLION IN FUNDING BY 2026 AND \$25 MILLION IN FUNDING BY 2031 TO CLOSE THE DISPARITY GAP, PROVIDING FINANCING TO UNDERSERVED SMALL BUSINESSES AND INDIVIDUALS.**

Among the most important factors for the financial growth and sustainability of businesses is access to capital. All too often, underrepresented groups get left out and left behind when it comes to securing significant investment. To combat this deficiency, Fort Wayne-Allen County needs to leverage its financial institutions and other partners to create a CDFI that is targeted specifically at historically disadvantaged populations. This effort would create more opportunities for Black, Hispanic, and Asian business owners across Allen County to achieve greater economic prosperity. (See Initiative 3.1.1.A on page 42.)

### **PLAN AND EXECUTE CATALYST DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN SOUTHEAST FORT WAYNE THAT ATTRACT \$100 MILLION IN CAPITAL INVESTMENT BY 2026 AND \$250 MILLION BY 2031.**

For too long, Southeast Fort Wayne has been largely overlooked in major development projects. The community is perceived as blighted and ill-suited for significant real estate investment. That needs to change if Fort Wayne-Allen County wants to become a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive place to live and work. Once started, development will begin to accelerate. One or two major projects would prove critical to enhancing the community's strength. Whether they take the form of mixed-use space, a major employment center, or other amenities, catalyst development projects in Southeast Fort Wayne must become a priority for local decision-makers. (See Initiative 3.1.3 on page 42.)

### **ATTRACT AND GROW 2,500 NET NEW JOBS IN SOUTHEAST FORT WAYNE BY 2031 AND CREATE NEW INCENTIVES TO FACILITATE THIS GOAL.**

Job creation is a critical part of any healthy local economy. But access to jobs is every bit as important as job growth. An inclusive economy requires the active creation and attraction of new jobs into every major district of the community. In Fort Wayne, the Southeast quadrant has experienced far less employment growth than every other major part of the City. It is not enough to create jobs in downtown Fort Wayne or in activity centers anchored by major employers in other parts of the community. To build an inclusive economy, local leaders must commit to the attraction and creation of significant new job growth in Southeast Fort Wayne. Creating and utilizing new incentives to stimulate local job creation will be an important part of this goal. (See Initiative 3.1.4 on page 42.)



# INCLUSIVE STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

## 3.1 ENSURE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES BY TARGETING INVESTMENTS IN REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT AND SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT, WITH A FOCUS ON DIVERSE COMMUNITIES AND HISTORICALLY UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS.

Addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in economic terms requires actionable and measurable strategies. This is especially true when it comes to real estate development and supporting businesses owned by historically underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. Assistance needs to be linked with market realities and address historical inequalities. Southeast Fort Wayne has been overlooked for economic opportunities for far too long, and the following strategies are designed to confront this inequity head-on.

- 3.1.1.** Launch new business funds to grow startups and create opportunities for diverse communities.
  - 3.1.1.A.** Expand Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) capacity to deploy \$10 million in funding by 2026 and \$25 million in funding by 2031 to close the disparity gap, providing financing to underserved small businesses and individuals.
  - 3.1.1.B.** Support expansion and sustainability of efforts like Project Activate SouthEast (PASE) Fort Wayne that help local companies thrive.
  - 3.1.1.C.** Develop and launch a marketing campaign to broaden the reach of the PASE process.
- 3.1.2.** Enhance organizational alignment of different chambers, including women, Black, and Hispanic chambers, and the Fort Wayne Urban League.
  - 3.1.2.A.** Establish a working committee of local chambers and economic development partners to work collaboratively to establish goals for equitable and inclusive business practices.
    - Set goals around equitable and inclusive business practices and develop a work plan to achieve those objectives.
    - Develop a work plan to achieve objectives identified by the committee.

- 3.1.2.B.** Work with community partners (nonprofits, philanthropic organizations, etc.) to identify and engage underrepresented groups, such as the Burmese, Black, and Hispanic communities.

- 3.1.2.C.** Continue and expand on the success of the United Front Initiative with new programming that addresses DEI issues through the viewpoint of business, workforce, and economic development.

- 3.1.3.** Plan and execute catalyst development projects in Southeast Fort Wayne that attract \$100 million in capital investment by 2026 and \$250 million by 2031.

- 3.1.3.A.** Work with the City of Fort Wayne, Allen County, the City of New Haven, and area landowners to identify large sites (at least 100 acres, ideally up to 500 acres) in close proximity to residents of Southeast Fort Wayne and New Haven.

- Evaluate corridors with large tracts of land—such as the Adams Center Road corridor between Moeller Road and I-469—that have easy access to population centers in Southeast Fort Wayne, New Haven, and East Allen County and major transportation corridors, such as I-469; Highways 27, 30, and 930; and the Chicago, Fort Wayne & Eastern Railroad (CFE) freight rail line.
- Plan and execute a major public-private development project anchored by a large employer (such as a manufacturing plant, distribution center, or other large-scale employment facility).

- 3.1.3.B.** Work with the City of Fort Wayne, Allen County, and area landowners to identify well-located sites large enough (at least 20 acres) to accommodate a significant mixed-use development in Southeast Fort Wayne.

- Plan and execute a major public-private, mixed-use development with a range of uses, including multifamily and single-family residential, retail/restaurant space, commercial office space, and public amenities (parks, trails, and open spaces).

- 3.1.4.** Set a goal of creating 2,500 net new jobs in Southeast Fort Wayne by 2031.



- 3.1.4.A.** Work with the newly created state of Indiana Office of Equity, Inclusion and Opportunity to explore targeted state incentives for underinvested communities, piloting in Southeast Fort Wayne (see Capacity and Resources Initiative 5.1 on page 48).

## **3.2 MAKE FORT WAYNE-ALLEN COUNTY A DESIRABLE PLACE TO LIVE FOR DIVERSE TALENT.**

Even though Fort Wayne and Allen County are home to a significantly diverse population, there are still glaring inequities in quality of life and external perceptions that face community leadership and demand attention. Both Southeast Fort Wayne and rural East Allen County require increased focus over the next 10 years in order for the entire area to thrive more than ever before. Outsiders must perceive the entire community, rather than merely isolated areas, as fundamentally attractive for diverse talent. The Black and Burmese communities, in particular, could be embraced and strengthened via new housing development, transportation, and outreach efforts that seek to further unite all residents.

- 3.2.1.** Develop an array of housing options—single family and multifamily, market-rate and affordable/subsidized, student housing and senior/retirement communities—across all price points and geographies.

- 3.2.1.A.** Partner with landowners and developers to encourage the development of affordable, single and multifamily housing units in Southeast Fort Wayne.

- Propose and evaluate new incentives for construction in the Southeast area.
- Hold public forums in the Southeast community to identify pain points and highest priorities.

- 3.2.1.B.** Work with local governments, community organizations, and real estate industry professionals to support the creation of workforce housing that targets middle-income workers in professions, such as police officers, firefighters, teachers, healthcare workers, and retail workers.

- Form a collaborative taskforce of public and private stakeholders focused on workforce housing.
- Develop a long-term vision for the future of middle-income housing in all of Allen County.

- 3.2.1.C.** Create tax incentives for market-rate and affordable new home construction.

- 3.2.1.D.** Create a community land trust for housing development.

- 3.2.1.E.** Include affordability and anti-displacement measures in development projects owned, funded, supported, or approved by the County.

- 3.2.2.** Keep building and enhancing Onboard Fort Wayne, the GFW Inc. talent recruitment and retention initiative targeting young professionals, key occupations, remote workers, and diverse talent from all racial/ethnic backgrounds.

- 3.2.2.A.** Create a new brand for Onboard Fort Wayne—All Onboard Fort Wayne—to emphasize that the talent initiative is an inclusive effort that invites all groups to participate.

- Establish working groups of local business executives, professionals, and community leaders from diverse backgrounds to provide a customized “welcome wagon” experience for prospective talent considering Fort Wayne-Allen County as a place to live.
- Engage local groups, such as the membership of the Fort Wayne Black Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Fort Wayne Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, groups representing the Burmese and other Asian populations, and other local nonprofits with diverse populations, such as the Content Creators of Color Project and Bigger Than Us Inc.
- Work with the leadership and members of these groups to invite local talent to contribute to the All Onboard Fort Wayne initiative, both to encourage talent retention and to encourage talent attraction of diverse talent from outside the area.

- 3.2.2.B.** Evaluate the need for contracted outside assistance for the creation of a talent recruitment and retention campaign that expands the reach of All Onboard Fort Wayne.

- 3.2.2.C.** Seek private investment to augment the marketing budget for the campaign. Focus outreach on high-net-worth individuals and organizations or foundations with significant capital.

- 3.2.2.D.** Create and launch digital marketing campaigns aimed at college students and remote workers throughout Indiana and the Midwest, branding Fort Wayne and Allen County as an ideal relocation destination.
- Launch social media campaigns (focused on LinkedIn) to drive traffic to the GFW Inc. website. Target the 1.5 million enrolled college students at the 180, 4-year universities within 200 miles of Fort Wayne.
  - Pursue digital marketing efforts focused on attracting remote workers and tech talent from Allen County's top in-bound domestic migration markets starting with the Chicago metro area and then Detroit, Toledo, and Cleveland. Place digital ads aimed at current and potential remote workers residing in these areas searching for "work-from-home jobs."
- 3.2.3.** Build on the success of the United Front Initiative so that it becomes a central component of Allen County's talent attraction, retention, and development efforts.
- 3.2.3.A.** Work with local community and business leaders to ensure that the program's capacity (funding and staffing) is sustainable long term.
- 3.2.3.B.** Coordinate with leadership at major employers, like Parkview Health, to implement programmatic diversity, equity, and inclusion training and discussions for all employees, led by United Front.
- 3.2.3.C.** Facilitate collaboration between United Front and All Onboard Fort Wayne to develop a comprehensive strategy for reaching and recruiting diverse talent.
- 3.2.4.** Invest in transportation corridors and infrastructure that increase mobility and transportation choices for workers, students, and visitors while providing greater access to existing and planned employment centers.
- 3.2.4.A.** Advance solutions to address rural and first/last mile mobility challenges.
- 3.2.4.B.** Expand public bus routes to increase access for Southeast Fort Wayne residents into hubs like downtown and the Purdue Fort Wayne campus.

- 3.2.5.** Maintain the positive momentum of rural and small communities across Allen County by working with local, regional, and state partners to support the vision of these communities with a dedicated effort to align their economic and community development priorities.

- 3.2.5.A.** Work with Allen County to invest resources to promote rural and small community development.
- 3.2.5.B.** Work with other local, regional, and state partners to support the vision and priorities of rural and small communities.

### RURAL AND SMALL COMMUNITY RESOURCES

- Economic development partners, such as GFW Inc., the Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership, and the IEDC, should assist rural and small communities with business development work.
- Allen County and the Northeast Indiana Regional Coordinating Council should assist rural and small communities with planning and community development work.
- Allen County, INDOT, AEP, and the Northern Indiana Public Service Company (NIPSCO) should assist rural and small communities with maintenance and development of infrastructure to support economic development.
- Allen County, the Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne, and the Indiana Office of Community & Rural Affairs (OCRA) should assist rural and small communities with financial resources and technical assistance.

## 3.3 EXPAND THE SIZE AND STRENGTH OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND ALIGN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION EFFORTS WITH ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES.

Fort Wayne and Allen County benefit from a fairly robust higher education ecosystem, anchored by Purdue Fort Wayne, which has demonstrated the clear intention of becoming a more prominent 4-year institution. By building on this strength, particularly through a DEI lens, Fort Wayne-Allen County can expand and enhance its talent pool and support historically underserved demographics.

- 3.3.1.** Harness and enhance the strength of the local higher education system.

**3.3.1.A.** Facilitate increased full-time, 4-year degree enrollment at Purdue Fort Wayne.

- Promote the university to prospective students in other Indiana and Midwest metros as an up-and-coming institution and an affordable and high-quality alternative to competing college destinations.
- Create new scholarship programs for high-achieving high schoolers countywide.

**3.3.1.B.** Grow specific academic programs that address local industry needs, such as nursing.

- Collaborate with local employers to identify the highest-need occupations.
- Work with Purdue Fort Wayne, Indiana Tech, Ivy Tech, the University of Saint Francis, and Indiana University Fort Wayne to recruit and hire additional faculty in the identified fields.
- Use university career services to increase student awareness of in-demand jobs.

**3.3.1.C.** Increase public transportation access to enable movement of students from various areas of Allen County (especially Southeast Fort Wayne) onto campus and into downtown.

**3.3.1.D.** Support Indiana University Fort Wayne's future growth and expansion by encouraging enrollment growth, driving development of new facilities, and assisting with marketing and promotion efforts to increase the institution's internal and external visibility.

- Evaluate the relocation of the Indiana University Fort Wayne medical school building to a value-added site ready for development.

**3.3.2.** Expand employer engagement to address workforce issues (wages, retention, transportation, childcare, broadband) holistically.

**3.3.2.A.** Create an informal task force of key local business executives and meet regularly to discuss solutions to area workforce challenges and identify responsible organizations to solve these challenges.

**3.3.3.** Improve relationships between employers and local school districts.

**3.3.3.A.** Work with K–12 schools to raise awareness of available high-demand career paths (e.g. skilled trades).

- Continue and expand the MadeByMe program to build awareness among middle school and high school students about career opportunities in advanced manufacturing, construction, and skilled trades.
- Expand the MadeByMe model to provide local students with opportunities to learn about other in-demand career opportunities in growing fields, such as healthcare, financial technology, software, architecture, and engineering.
- Continue working with each K–12 school district in Allen County to support the development of career pipelines in health services, advanced manufacturing, trades, e-commerce, information technology (IT)/data analytics, and teaching.


**3.3.3.B.** Coordinate with employers to establish apprenticeship programs for high schoolers.

**3.3.3.C.** Work with local and state government bodies to adjust regulations regarding teenage employment.





# Capacity and Resources

A group of people are practicing yoga outdoors on a wooden deck. In the foreground, a woman with blonde hair tied back is in a seated position, performing a side stretch with her arms extended horizontally. Behind her, other participants are visible, some in similar poses. The background shows a blue canopy tent and lush green trees under a clear sky. A water bottle is on the deck to the left.

An economic development strategy is nothing without the financial backing and organizational alignment to implement it. To pay for the many bold projects and initiatives proposed in this plan, Fort Wayne-Allen County will need to leverage every monetary asset at its disposal. Fortunately, multiple sources of state and federal funding have become imminently available in the wake of COVID-19, including the \$500 million Regional Economic Acceleration + Development Initiative (READI) grant program from the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC) that offers regions up to \$50 million through a competitive application process designed to leverage other public and private funding sources. With the proper focus, Fort Wayne-Allen County can capture and use those funds for economic development projects and programs. At the same time, leaders must pursue additional private sources of funding as well. As these new public and private funds flow into the community, even more will come. However, money alone will not be enough. Leadership, both public and private, must coordinate and collaborate in new and significant ways to make the tough decisions that face Fort Wayne-Allen County over the next 10 years.

*Align local leadership and utilize existing and new funding from both public and private sources to facilitate explosive growth.*

# CAPACITY AND RESOURCES INITIATIVES

## 1. PURSUE EXTERNAL FUNDING (FEDERAL, STATE, AND PHILANTHROPIC) FOR PROJECT AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT.

- 1.1. Build a shared understanding of all available funding sources (federal, state, local, philanthropic) for economic and community development.
  - 1.1.1. Develop a regularly updated data repository to gather all sources in one place available to GFW Inc. and its partners.
  - 1.1.2. Develop a list of past or potential uses for major funding sources as part of the data repository.
  - 1.1.3. Support the development of a program to educate community leaders, decision-makers, elected officials, and the media on public funding systems and how they work.
- 1.2. Work with the rest of Northeast Indiana to apply for and use READI (state) and ARPA (federal) funding most effectively.
  - 1.2.1. Establish a tentative target of 50 percent of the Northeast Indiana pool of READI funds for projects and programs in Allen County, proportional to population.
  - 1.2.2. Identify the most effective organization(s) to implement incoming federal ARPA funding.

## 2. DEDICATE NEW/EXPANDED FUNDING STREAMS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

- 2.1. Form a public-private fiscal taskforce to evaluate existing “rainy day” reserves within local governments and advocate for their use.
- 2.2. Explore options for new funding, such as a modest increase to the local option income tax or a consumption tax (e.g., food and beverage), that draw revenue from visitors.
  - 2.2.1. Gauge public sentiment for such a tax with transparent communication and openness to feedback.

## 3. LEVERAGE LOCAL WEALTH, INCLUDING ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS AND HIGH-NET-WORTH INDIVIDUALS TO INVEST IN STRATEGIC PRIORITIES.

- 3.1. Create a futures council of local CEOs and investors to collaborate on potential projects that advance the community’s vision of building a high-growth, innovative, and inclusive economy.
- 3.2. Connect out-of-state former residents (of the Fort Wayne area or Indiana) who have become highly successful with relevant local investment opportunities.
  - 3.2.1. Use the futures council and education institutions as the primary mediators to make these significant connections.





#### **4. LEVERAGE LEADERSHIP CHANGES AT KEY PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS TO ENCOURAGE GREATER COLLABORATION.**

These include the Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership, the Summit City Entrepreneur and Enterprise District (SEED), the northeast Indiana innovation center (NIIC), Visit Fort Wayne, the Fort Wayne Urban League, and others.

- 4.1.** Initiate conversations with staff and board leadership of key local partner organizations to encourage stronger alignment of economic development, tourism, entrepreneurship, small business support, and community development programs.
- 4.2.** Increase collaboration with the Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership, the Northeast Indiana Strategic Development Commission, and local economic development organizations in surrounding counties to align business development efforts and more effectively address regional challenges.



#### **5. ENHANCE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EXISTING INCENTIVES AND CREATE NEW INCENTIVES TO ENCOURAGE BUSINESS GROWTH AND TO FACILITATE DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT.**

- 5.1.** Educate community leaders, both private sector and elected officials, on existing community development tools and how they can be leveraged and maximized for Fort Wayne-Allen County's benefit.
- 5.2.** Create new City of Fort Wayne incentive tools.
  - 5.2.1.** Explore the feasibility of using master lease agreements based on an evaluation of those used by other communities. (See Initiative 1.1.3.A.) If the concept is deemed feasible for Fort Wayne, create a master lease/spec office development incentive program to increase the amount of quality (Class A and Class B) commercial office space in downtown Fort Wayne and other areas.
    - Make incentives available to modernize and increase the competitiveness of aging and functionally obsolete downtown commercial office buildings.
    - Make incentives available for new construction of downtown commercial office space, dependent on a threshold of contiguous available downtown office inventory. For example, if the inventory of available Class A and Class B does not include contiguous spaces of at least 50,000 square feet, the incentive for new construction would be available.
    - Create a "dinosaur demolition" program for key sites where infrastructure is already in place, but the commercial office building (or other structure) is antiquated.
    - Work with SEED to make incentives available for new construction of small commercial office space projects (between 5,000 and 50,000 square feet) along commercial corridors emanating from downtown and in Southeast Fort Wayne. These could be stand-alone office developments or mixed-use residential developments with a small office component.
  - 5.2.2.** Work with SEED to incentivize the creation of small footprint, high-quality flex space for light manufacturing and warehousing (10,000- to 50,000-square-foot buildings).



- 5.2.3.** Establish new incentives that award business investment and expansion in R&D, engineering, and technology for advanced manufacturing and other key industries.
- Establish a minimum investment level or a minimum job creation level for consideration (such as \$10 million of capital investment and 50 jobs that pay at least 50 percent more than the prevailing area wage rate).
- 5.2.4.** Create new incentives for EV charging stations in high-visibility, high-traffic locations, such as downtown Fort Wayne, major employment centers, and commercial corridors.
- Provide subsidies to commercial property owners and businesses that invest in EV charging stations on their properties. This could work similar to a façade grant program, with a 50/50 match from the property owner.



- 5.2.5.** Create a small business growth fund, a dedicated incentive to help small- and medium-size businesses reinvest in their companies in ways that help make their businesses more competitive—staffing, professional services, training, marketing—but do not lead to significant capital investment in buildings or equipment.

**DETAILS:** This would provide a way for smaller companies to access public incentives to support their growth in a way that larger companies are able to access via tax abatements and other incentives that typically require a major capital investment.

This could be targeted to certain geographic areas, like downtown and Southeast Fort Wayne, and for businesses within specific industries.

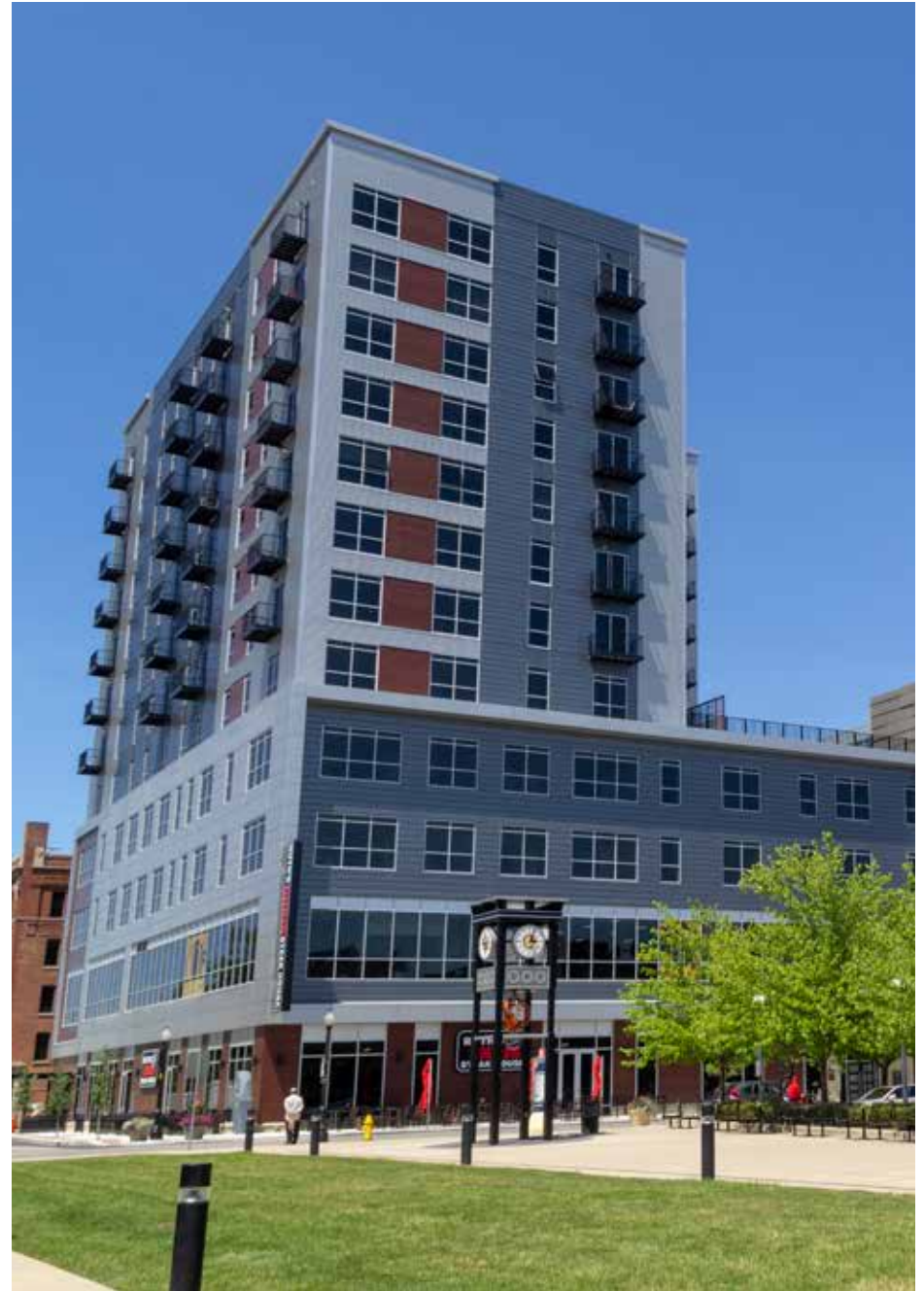
- 5.2.6.** Review contracting policies to ensure intelligent and green infrastructure projects are competitive with traditional infrastructure projects.
- 5.3.** Create new Allen County incentive tools.
- 5.3.1.** Create a façade grant program for Main Streets and downtown areas in unincorporated and rural communities.
- Work with the Northeast Indiana Regional Coordinating Council to create additional grant and community development assistance to unincorporated and rural communities in Allen County.
- 5.3.2.** Create a more streamlined permitting process for broadband internet infrastructure.
- Adopt a more efficient permitting process than the current parcel-by-parcel approach.
  - Waive fees associated with broadband infrastructure development.
- 5.3.3.** Create a site assessment and preparation fund to jump start development of new sites for industrial projects (similar to the AEP Quality Sites program).
- 5.3.4.** Develop a policy to determine City of Fort Wayne and Allen County participation on large-scale economic development projects (such

as projects with at least \$100 million of capital investment, and with jobs paying above prevailing wage rates) to create a more standardized City/County local incentive agreement.

- 5.3.5.** Create targeted incentives (tax increment financing and 100 percent, 10-year tax abatements) in designated portions of the County that mirror the City's SEED incentives.
- Include local income taxes paid within a designated tech park or industrial park to further incentivize high-paying jobs through investment in infrastructure (including telecommunications), workforce training, and investment in R&D, engineering, and advanced manufacturing.
- 5.3.6.** Create a local match for the state's Next Level Jobs employer training grant.

## ***6. ENSURE THE STAFFING AND CAPACITY OF KEY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENTS AT THE CITY AND COUNTY LEVELS ARE SUSTAINABLE AND CAPABLE OF SUPPORTING A HIGH-GROWTH ECONOMY.***

- 6.1.** Conduct a regular review of relevant economic development staff in partnership with area real estate professionals and utility providers to evaluate gaps in capacity related to business attraction and expansion projects. The review should occur at least once per year and should include staff dedicated to economic development, redevelopment, permitting, development review, and other related functions.
- 6.2.** Based on this review, advocate for increased or reallocated staffing at local economic development entities to support Fort Wayne-Allen County's continued growth.





# *Performance Metrics*





A critical component of a strategic plan is the set of metrics by which the plan's successful implementation can be tracked. The delta against the US economy must be incorporated into any metrics reflecting economic outcomes related to employment, income levels, capital investment. It will take years, not months, to regain the lost economic activity, business revenues, and employment levels due to the COVID-19 economic downturn. However, there have been some encouraging signs of partial recovery in the most recent data, and the end of the downturn is beginning to come into view.

It would be a mistake to commit Fort Wayne-Allen County to specific growth targets that depend on the growth of the broader US and global economies (as this plan would likely have called for prior to COVID-19). Instead, the 10-year plan recommends setting overall benchmark goals for Allen County to outperform the state and national economies, with more specific metrics to focus leadership on outcomes associated with implementing the bold projects. With its unique assets and recent trend of population and employment growth, Fort Wayne-Allen County is indeed poised to meet that goal of outperformance, and TIP encourages a healthy measure of optimism, while still maintaining an understanding of broader economic trends. This approach to metrics will allow GFW Inc. and its partners to maintain a more realistic view of progress, especially in light of the current national economic challenges. With that caveat in mind, the ACT Plan recommends the following metrics—organized by the plan's three guiding principles—be used to track progress toward implementation.

Two sets of metrics will be tracked for each guiding principle:

1. Specific metrics associated with bold projects
2. Community economic performance metrics



## GUIDING PRINCIPLE 1 *High-Growth*

### 1. BOLD PROJECTS METRICS

- A. \$1 billion of capital investment by 2031 (\$100 million/year on average) in the downtown Fort Wayne Riverfront district.
- B. 2,500 net new high-wage jobs by 2031 (250/year on average) in R&D-intensive, engineering-focused, and technology-driven growth industries.
- C. 2,500 new on- and off-campus student housing units by 2031 (250 units/year on average).

### 2. COMMUNITY ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE METRICS

- A. Educational attainment levels of residents age 25+ (including share of residents with associate's degrees and share of residents with bachelor's degrees or higher).
- B. Enrolled college and university students (overall and in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics [STEM] degree programs).
- C. Employment, unemployment, and labor force participation rates of working age (16–64) residents.
- D. Total new office space added to Fort Wayne-Allen County's office market (vacancy rates and median rental rates for existing office inventory).
- E. Total new industrial space added to Fort Wayne-Allen County's industrial market (vacancy rates and median rental rates for existing industrial inventory).
- F. Total new retail/restaurant space added to Fort Wayne-Allen County's retail market (vacancy rates and median rental rates for existing retail/restaurant space).
- G. Number of new hotel rooms added to Fort Wayne-Allen County's hotel market (occupancy levels and average rates for existing hotels).
- H. Number of new residential units added to Fort Wayne-Allen County's residential market (median sales prices and median rental rates for existing residential units).
- I. Average monthly passenger traffic at Fort Wayne International Airport (FWA) and number of nonstop flight destinations served by FWA.
- J. Average monthly passenger traffic on the public bus system.
- K. Average commute time for workers and employed residents in Allen County.
- L. [Walk Score](#) and [Bike Score](#) for the City of Fort Wayne as a whole and for individual neighborhoods.



## GUIDING PRINCIPLE 2 *Innovative*

### 1. BOLD PROJECTS METRICS

- A.** Listing of Fort Wayne among the Top 10 Music Cities in the US in multiple rankings from reputable sources, such as online travel publications, music industry associations, or similar lists.
- B.** 2,500 net new high-wage jobs by 2031 (250/year on average) in the automotive technology sector.
- C.** \$10 million venture capital fund and accelerator launched and fully funded by 2026 (\$2 million/year on average), \$25 million by 2031 (\$2.5 million/year on average).

### 2. COMMUNITY ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE METRICS

- A.** New business formation rates.
- B.** New capital investment (overall and within target industries).
- C.** Number and dollar value of venture capital and angel investment deals.
- D.** New patents/intellectual property registered.
- E.** Number of Inc. 5000 firms headquartered in Allen County.
- F.** Share of workers working from home in Allen County.
- G.** Annual visitors to the Arts Campus (once completed).
- H.** Annual visitors for youth sports competitions.
- I.** Annual ticket sales at Parkview Field.
- J.** Annual ticket sales for live music events.



## GUIDING PRINCIPLE 3 *Inclusive*

### 1. BOLD PROJECTS METRICS

- A.** \$10 million deployed by 2026 (\$2 million/year on average) through expanded Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) capacity, \$25 million deployed by 2031 (\$2.5 million/year on average).
- B.** \$100 million of capital investment by 2026 (\$20 million/year on average) and \$250 million of capital investment by 2031 (\$25 million/year on average) as part of catalyst development projects in Southeast Fort Wayne.
- C.** 2,500 net new jobs by 2031 (250/year on average) in Southeast Fort Wayne.

### 2. COMMUNITY ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE METRICS

- A.** Median household income.
- B.** Share of population in poverty.
- C.** Homeownership rates.
- D.** Housing affordability (including share of cost-burdened households spending more than 30 percent of their income on rent or mortgage payments).
- E.** Share of households with broadband connectivity.
- F.** New businesses founded by women and people of color.
- G.** Dollars of capital invested in businesses owned by women and people of color.
- H.** Number of new housing units constructed in Southeast Fort Wayne.







# Appendices

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## APPENDIX A. MENTIMETER RESPONSES

As part of the discovery process, TIP conducted numerous live polling surveys in stakeholder roundtables (see page 46 for a list). Below are sample responses to the five questions asked during those sessions. A complete Excel file listing the more than 1,400 data points was delivered to GFW Inc. as a separate deliverable.

### **WHICH CHALLENGES FACING GREATER FORT WAYNE'S FUTURE WORRY YOU THE MOST?**

- "My biggest fear is that we sit complacent on our current wins, and do not invest/risk in large projects to drive future growth. We have a history of doing this, and our current cultural make up enforces it. I hope that we can change this."
- "Shifting focus into modern technology industries—escaping being caught in our past."
- "Stagnating investment in advanced technology and R&D."
- "Political will and harmony to accomplish projects, enhanced public/private partnerships, continued public infrastructure investment (Allen County is 660 sq miles—largest in Indiana)."
- "The manufacturing base is strong, but how do we continue to bring up market wages and have the pool of employees to fill those jobs?"

### **WHICH OPPORTUNITIES TO ENHANCE GREATER FORT WAYNE'S FUTURE PROSPERITY EXCITE YOU THE MOST?**

- "We are in the midst of becoming a shining example not only for our state but for our country. We have all that people of any age want—at an incredible cost."
- "1. Additional growth/infrastructure downtown of new buildings. 2. Affordable minor league sports. 3. Central Midwest location. 4. Access to one major interstate and semi-close to another."

- "The overall downtown experience has really grown. How can we continue to connect the dots between amenities downtown?"
- "I like the idea of turning US 30 into a freeway. But other than that, I feel Fort Wayne has so much going for it now; and a lot of great stuff in the works."
- "The community infrastructure and sense of place we're building; very important to many young professionals in choosing to relocate."

### **WHICH BOLD PROJECTS CAN TAKE GREATER FORT WAYNE TO THE NEXT LEVEL?**

- "Of course, a major development in the Southeast part of town. With the help of Sweetwater making a splash as a music center in the Midwest."
- "We could become a music hub like Austin or Nashville. Strong local music scene. Although Middle Waves has been difficult to sustain financially, a major music festival could easily be a marquee event."
- "A local tech accelerator that 1) makes significant pre-seed investment (\$50K plus), 2) starts to build a supply of investable scalable startups here, and 3) seeds the interest in a top tier accelerator like Techstars establishing a program here."
- "Additional venture capital for startups."
- "Getting a large job creator company/center located in Southeast that includes job prep, training, education."

### **HOW CAN GREATER FORT WAYNE BUILD A MORE DIVERSE, EQUITABLE, AND INCLUSIVE ECONOMY?**

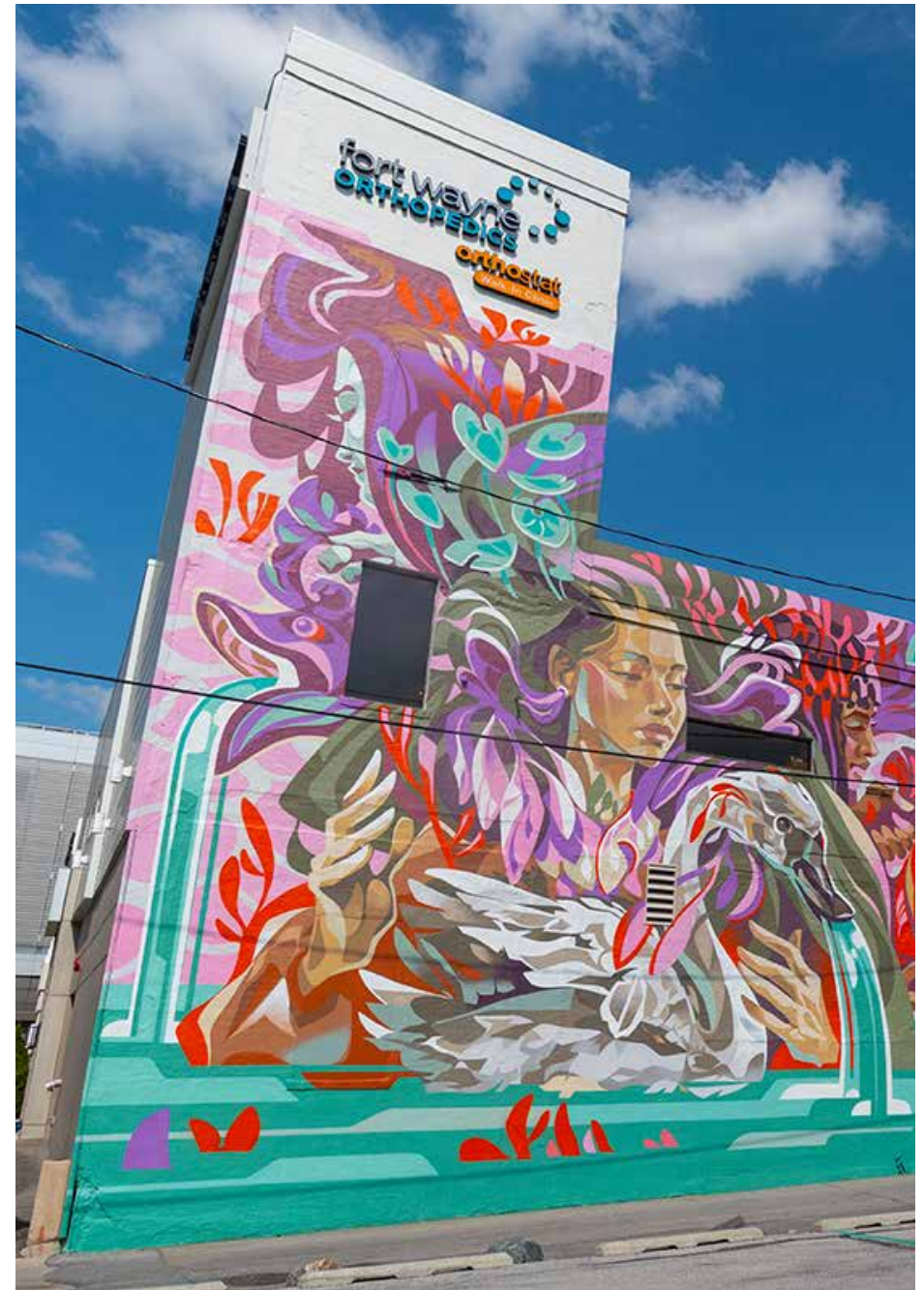
- "Education in the workplace and schools. Businesses should make an effort to recognize the weaknesses and inequalities and act accordingly."
- "Huge strides have been made with United Front—continuing community-wide education and growing them into community-wide standards."
- "Recognize that changing values takes a LONG TIME (greater than 5 years), but start taking actions toward being (and celebrating being) more open anyhow."



- “Continued investment in underserved areas; programs to assist people of color in their entrepreneurial efforts.”
- “Increase CDFI capacity in the community.”

## WHAT CAPACITY ISSUES ARE INHIBITING FUTURE GROWTH?

- “Unifying the city and county to have a true shared vision and commitment to implement transformative projects.”
- “Getting our hands dirty. We want to be fixed but shy away from fixing ourselves.”
- “People—though we have seen net in-migration the last couple of years, we need talented people.”
- “Arts, culture, restaurants, and other quality of life businesses and nonprofits have taken a serious beating in 2020 and 2021. They will need investment and support to rebuild and reactivate our awesome downtown spaces.”
- “The economy has succeeded so much that the workforce issues are made challenging. It is a great problem to have, but one that needs to be addressed. Population growth can help solve this.”





## APPENDIX B. STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLES

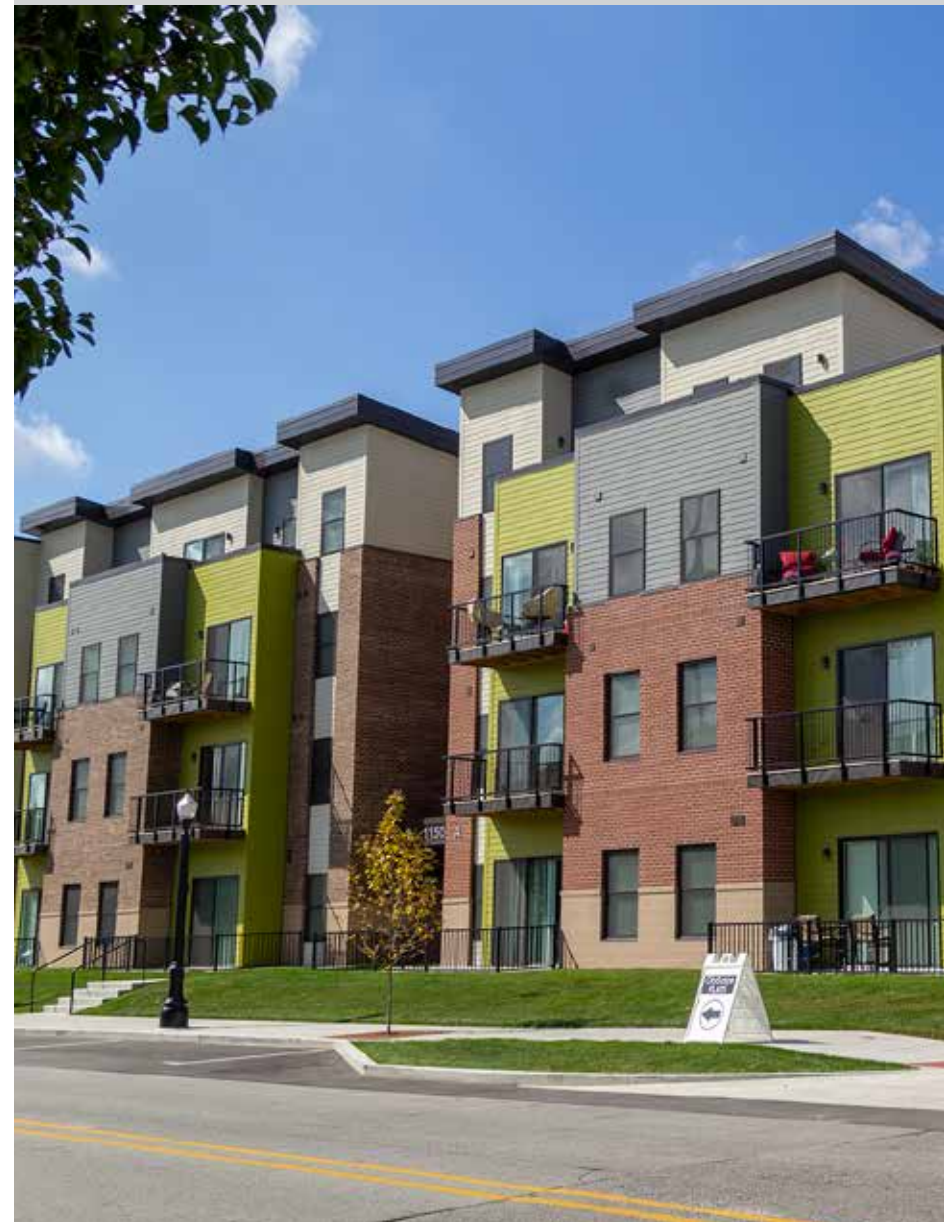
During the discovery phase of the planning process, more than 200 local stakeholders participated in 20 roundtables (categories listed below) and a total of 1,400 individual qualitative data points were collected using live polling.

### JANUARY 25–27, 2021

- Allen County Representatives
- City of Fort Wayne Representatives
- Commercial Brokers
- Developers and Investors
- Downtown
- Economic Development Partners
- Entrepreneurial Service Organizations (1)
- Greater Fort Wayne, Inc., Staff
- Industrial Expansions and Relocations
- Visionary Investors (1)
- Visionary Investors (2)

### MARCH 8–10, 2021

- Elected Officials
- Entrepreneurial Service Organizations (2)
- Greater Fort Wayne, Inc., Executive Committee
- Office Expansions and Relocations
- Small Businesses
- Southeast Fort Wayne Community Members
- Superintendents
- Talent Attraction
- Tourism



## APPENDIX C. BEST PRACTICES



Anticipating a potential shortfall of STEM talent in the coming years, San Diego Regional EDC launched Just Say No To Winter in 2019. The talent attraction campaign focused on attracting tech-savvy, midlevel Millennial workers from Boston, New York, and Chicago. The campaign is an outgrowth of the region's larger talent attraction and retention program, San Diego: Life. Changing.

The campaign ran digital ads on social media networks and also included offline, printed banner ads on subways. It built on the region's brand of year-round perfect weather by juxtaposing San Diego's sunny winter skies with Chicago's, New York's, and Boston's harsh winter climates.

Find out more at <https://sandiegolifechanging.org/just-say-no-to-winter>.



In 2013, while the Houston area was experiencing an oil boom, it was simultaneously experiencing a talent bust. Employers from the energy sector had trouble filling middle-skills jobs. Companies were forced to hire inexperienced workers and provide costly training, only to have the newly trained employees be lured away by competitors offering higher wages.

In response to requests from the private sector for a talent initiative, the Greater Houston Partnership (GHP) created UpSkill Houston in 2014. JPMorgan Chase (JPMC) cochaired the working group and, toward the end of the project, JPMC helped focus the project on developing middle skills. GHP's Regional Workforce Development Task Force, which was cochaired by industry executives, led the process of starting an industry-led initiative. UpSkill Houston is supported through a mix of funding from industry, philanthropy, and the public sector.

Find out more at <https://upskillhouston.org>.





Like many cities across the nation, Tulsa has been fighting for talent from a shrinking pool of candidates. Recognizing the need to edge out the competition, the George Kaiser Family Foundation (GKFF) and the city knew they needed something big to generate publicity. Together, they devised Tulsa Remote, a comprehensive remote worker attraction program offering a \$10,000 stipend, guaranteed space in Tulsa's top coworking office, discounted downtown apartment rentals, and community-building events and programming to eligible applicants. Initial qualifications were simple and only required participants to move to Tulsa within six months, be 18 years or older, be eligible to work in the US, and have full-time remote employment outside of Oklahoma. GKFF funds the initiative and is the charitable organization of Tulsa oil and banking billionaire George Kaiser.

Initial program interest and success surpassed all expectations. Applications poured in from all 50 states and more than 200 countries. Tulsa Remote decided to close enrollment after less than 10 weeks and 10,000 applications. Originally created to accommodate 20 to 25 remote workers, the program expanded to assist almost 90 people by midsummer 2019. The initial cash amount offered to individuals was \$10,000 but GKFF added a \$1,000 housing stipend after it became clear that Tulsa Remote could no longer provide furnished apartments for the first three months of participants' stays in Tulsa due to the unexpected popularity of the program. What distinguishes Tulsa Remote from similar initiatives is the thought given to creating a built-in community for new Tulsans. Most programs of this kind have only offered cash incentives to lure remote workers.

Find out more at <https://tulsaremote.com>.



With a population of nearly 146,000 and a regional workforce of 395,000 in a 45-mile radius, Savannah is the county seat of Chatham County on the Atlantic coast in Georgia. Savannah has more art galleries per capita than New York City and is home to the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD), Georgia Southern University, Savannah State University, and Savannah Technical College. In total, 65,000 students live in the Savannah area, 7,000 of whom are majoring in technical fields. Wanting to capitalize on Savannah's creative assets, the Savannah Economic Development Authority (SEDA) partnered with the city and Chatham County in 1997 to establish The Creative Coast (TCC), a nonprofit coworking space and entrepreneurial community focused on cultivating the creative and innovation-based economy.

In 2019, TCC, in tandem with South Carolina's Center for Innovation, received a \$300,000 US Economic Development Administration (EDA) federal grant (with local matching) to fund and grow technology-driven startups in the region. Other efforts to grow the innovation ecosystem include the newly created Savannah Logistics Corridor, which matches the creative and innovation industry with logistics and shipping through education, incubation, and incentives. Additionally, SCAD also plays an integral part in Savannah's creative industry not only through its myriad festivals and shows, but also most notably through SCADpro, the college's research and innovation studio devoted to solving creative and business challenges for Fortune 500 clients.



The Green Bay Packers football team is the only community-owned franchise in any of the four major sports leagues in the US. To sustain the community that has given life to the team, the Packers invested back into it through the creation of the Titledown District. The district plays a pivotal role in the region, attracting additional investments and urban amenities to become a top destination for talent. Going beyond retention to ensure the viability of the region, the Packers partnered with Microsoft and launched TitledownTech with the goal of job creation and outside talent attraction. Comprised of three parts (Innovation Lab, Venture Studio, and Venture Fund), TitledownTech focuses on five verticals and prioritizes digital ventures created in or relocated to Northeast Wisconsin. The organization is housed in a 45,000-square-foot space that hosts commercial businesses on the first floor. The second floor is the hub for TitledownTech offices. With a unique, \$25 million fund to attract outside talent, TitledownTech is the bedrock of long-term financial sustainability and competitiveness in the region. Already able to boast about private sector investment and enhanced research and innovation, the cross-sector partnership is transforming Green Bay.

Find out more at <https://www.titledowntech.com>.



In 2015, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) consolidated three federal climate data centers to create the National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) in Asheville (aptly nicknamed Climate City). The following year, The Collider opened, adjacent to NCEI headquarters. Located in downtown Asheville, The Collider fosters the growth of climate data technology firms and startups, while attracting and retaining the skilled workforce needed to support them. Occupying 6,000 square feet within the Callen Center, The Collider offers unique access to NCEI data and scientists and also facilitates coworking opportunities. The offices have high-speed broadband access and videoconferencing capabilities, host networking events and other relevant programming, and provide certification opportunities for climate data professionals and others looking to help their organizations plan for climate change. Expanding on its unique position, The Collider held its first cross-industry conference with luminaries Katharine Wilkinson and Bill Nye in 2019. The conference included a hackathon, a business conference within the larger expo, and many talks open to the public. In September 2019, a one-day training on US Climate Resilience Toolkit was held for professionals.

The Collider aligns public, private, nonprofit, and academic initiatives related to climate science innovation both locally and nationally. It ensures long-term competitiveness of the region through private sector job creation and investment and cross-sector collaborations. Because climate change affects everyone, The Collider has the potential to become a global resource for climate change management and business.

Find out more at <https://thecollider.org>.





The Water Council was created after the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) conducted an industry cluster analysis, which identified the depth and potential growth of the water technology cluster. The initiative was driven by the private sector, higher education, and two nonprofits—the Greater Milwaukee Committee and the Spirit of Milwaukee. Through research, loaned executives, and extensive collaboration, the Water Council was formed as a nonprofit in 2009. It is focused on five outcomes: increasing research in water technology, commercializing water technology research, promoting water entrepreneurship, increasing access to capital, and developing a skilled workforce.

In 2009, the Water Council was inducted into the UN Global Compact Cities Programme, an initiative to help city leaders find solutions to urban issues within local capacity, and has been headquartered within the 100,000- square-foot Global Water Center (GWC) since its doors opened in July 2013. The GWC and the School of Freshwater Sciences (housed at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee) serve as two anchors in the Water Technology District, an area just south of downtown Milwaukee that has become the epicenter for the region's water cluster, thanks to more than \$220 million of new public and private investments from 2010 to 2014.

Find out more at <https://thewatercouncil.com>.



Building on the region's long agricultural heritage, the KC Animal Health Corridor is an initiative housed within the Kansas City Area Development Council (KCADC) with the goal of promoting the Greater Kansas City region as the premier location, nationally and globally, for companies in the animal health industry. KC Animal Health Corridor has successfully brought together all of the region's major animal health stakeholders. It functions as the industry's unified marketing and advocacy organization, focusing on increasing national awareness of the region's animal science assets and opportunities. Further, the initiative seeks to improve communication and increase collaborative opportunities by connecting the region's animal science stakeholders. The organization also leverages the opportunities created by the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF), the Department of Homeland Security's research facility, and develops strategies to attract and retain a relevant and skilled workforce. More than 300 animal health companies reside in the corridor, comprising the largest concentration in the world. Together, they represent 56 percent of total worldwide animal health, diagnostics, and pet food sales. Most recently, in 2019, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced Kansas City as the location for its two new major offices, bringing 568 employees to the area from Washington, DC.

Find out more at <https://kcanimalhealth.thinkkc.com>.



AllianceTexas is a 27,000-acre, master-planned industrial, mixed-use, and residential development in Fort Worth (and partially in surrounding suburban communities). AllianceTexas was developed by Hillwood, one of the largest real estate development firms in the US (founded by Ross Perot Jr.), starting in 1990. The AllianceTexas development includes a unique set of air and ground logistics assets, including an intermodal hub and Alliance Airport. In 2019, Hillwood announced the creation of the AllianceTexas Mobility Innovation Zone (MIZ), which will serve as a testbed for future transportation technologies and platforms. The new center of innovation will provide unmatched infrastructure and scale for corporations, entrepreneurs, and other innovators to develop, test, scale, and commercialize advanced mobility technology and business models. In late 2020, TuSimple, a self-driving truck company developing technologies to allow driving from depot-to-depot without human intervention, announced plans to build a hub for its autonomous trucks in the MIZ. Bell Helicopter, BNSF Railway, UPS, and Deloitte are also among the companies working in the MIZ.



The former 6.1-acre Entergy power plant, maintenance yard, and office site on the other side of the interstate highway from downtown Baton Rouge sat vacant on Government Street for many years. In 2013, Entergy Gulf States Louisiana donated the long-abandoned property to Build Baton Rouge (then known as the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority). After analyzing the site and surrounding neighborhood in collaboration with urban planning and design firms, the redevelopment authority launched a development offering process to pursue public/private redevelopment options. The flexible offering, conducted as a Request for Expression of Interest (RFEI) in 2016 collaboration with Fregonese Associates—an urban planning firm based in Portland, Oregon—included key contents and selection criteria that gauged demand and tested ideas from local and national developers for potential redevelopment options of the site. After negotiating a successful offering with a consortium, construction began in 2018 on the Electric Depot entertainment district with a 33,000-square-foot entertainment venue inside the 100-year-old building with a large gathering area, bars/restaurants, and retail space. The site also includes new construction for urban residential units and an outdoor green space for live entertainment, a beer garden, and games, including a giant-size Jenga game.





Like most major cities in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s, Oklahoma City (OKC) experienced stagnation and urban decay. Previously a center for oil production, stockyards, and an intersecting major highway system, OKC suffered the effects of suburbanization and national recessions. In 1991, OKC lost to Indianapolis in a bid to move a United Airlines maintenance facility from San Francisco to the Midwest. When the mayor, then Ron Norick, asked why they selected Indianapolis over OKC, United explained that, despite OKC's superior incentives, United employees did not want to live there. Spurned, Norick created the Metropolitan Area Projects Plan (MAPS) to stimulate economic development and improve the quality of life for OKC residents. Two overarching goals of the initiative were to encourage city residents to invest in their city through a limited term, one-cent sales tax that allowed projects to be completed debt-free while also ensuring MAPS programs were managed by dedicated city staff, separate from changing city leadership and elected officials.

The original MAPS initiative proved successful and three more iterations were approved by voters: MAPS for Kids, MAPS 3, and, in 2019, MAPS 4. Initial projects focused on downtown revitalization efforts, elevating OKC's national reputation, and bringing new cultural and convention facilities. Building on this momentum, the city passed MAPS for Kids to improve the public school system through capital projects. MAPS 3 focused on improving the city's quality of life, most notably through the "core-to-shore" project, which relocated a 1-mile stretch of I-40 and replaced it with a landscaped boulevard entrance to the city that connected the center to the shore of the Oklahoma River. MAPS 4 will fund 16 projects, including improving downtown connectivity, funding the Innovation District, and more. More than 70 percent of MAPS 4 funding is allocated to

neighborhood and human needs while the remainder will go to improving quality of life and career initiatives.

Nearly \$5 billion in economic impact can be attributed solely to the original MAPS program, which is almost a 10-fold return on the city's original investment. Success of MAPS is due in part to ensuring projects are completed regardless of changing leadership (i.e., project-led vs. leadership-led). Not only does the community play an active role in OKC's development through financial investment with the sales tax, but it also oversees the program with a volunteer citizens advisory committee. Another success factor of each MAPS cycle is the bundling of projects to achieve a common goal. Strategically, beginning with less-expensive, more accessible projects, citizens see action from their investments, which in turn creates confidence in the system and their choices.

Find out more at <https://www.okc.gov/government/maps-3/maps-history>

## APPENDIX D. SWOT ANALYSIS

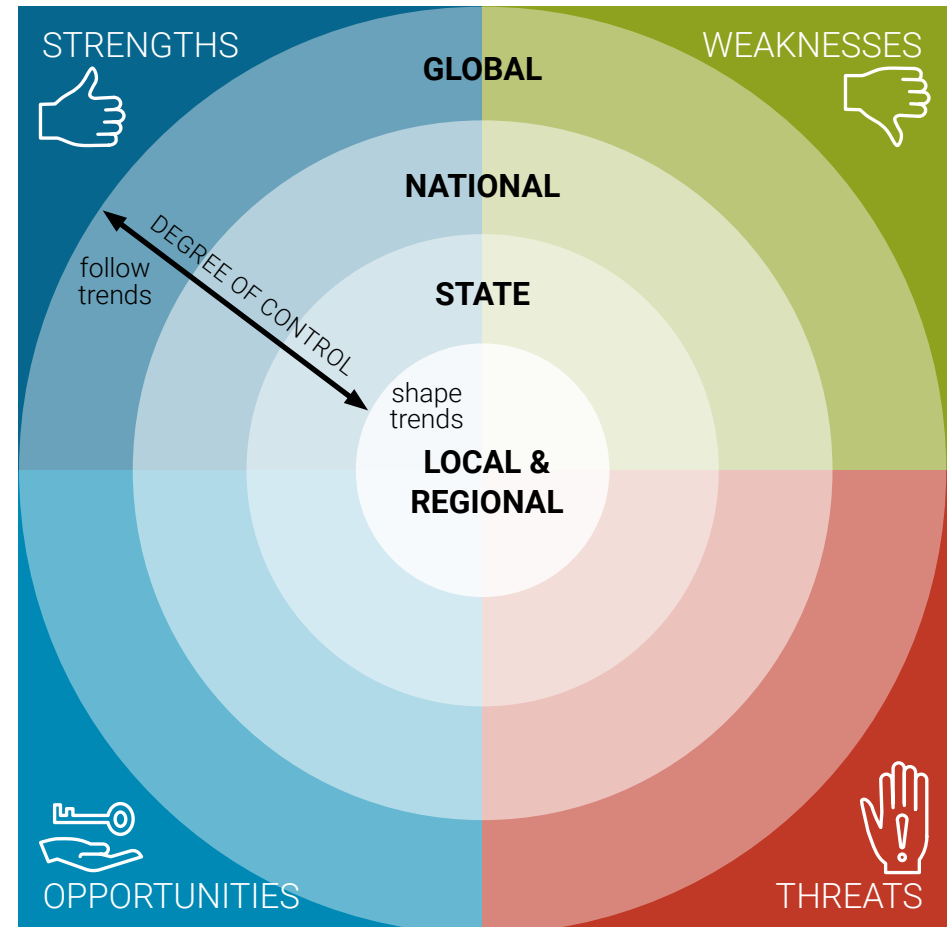
In addition to the data analysis, TIP conducted a more extensive analysis of Fort Wayne-Allen County's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This SWOT analysis relied heavily on qualitative input gathered during the stakeholder roundtables and one-on-one interviews. The analysis also incorporates findings from the quantitative data analysis and the consulting team's knowledge of national and global trends affecting economic development.

The SWOT analysis can be defined as follows.

- **STRENGTHS:** Advantages that can be built on to grow and strengthen the local economy.
- **WEAKNESSES:** Liabilities and obstacles to economic development that limit Fort Wayne-Allen County's growth potential.
- **OPPORTUNITIES:** Assets and positive trends that hold significant potential for increased prosperity and the attraction of new businesses, investments, and people.
- **THREATS:** Unfavorable factors and trends that could negatively affect the local economy.

The following section summarizes key assets/opportunities and challenges/threats. The graphics on the subsequent pages summarize the results of the analysis. Items closer to the center of the graph are more local in nature. Those at the outer corners are influenced by state, national, or global trends, placing them largely outside local leadership's control. While it is important to be aware of national and global trends (many of which have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic), the focus should be on maximizing Fort Wayne-Allen County strengths and opportunities.

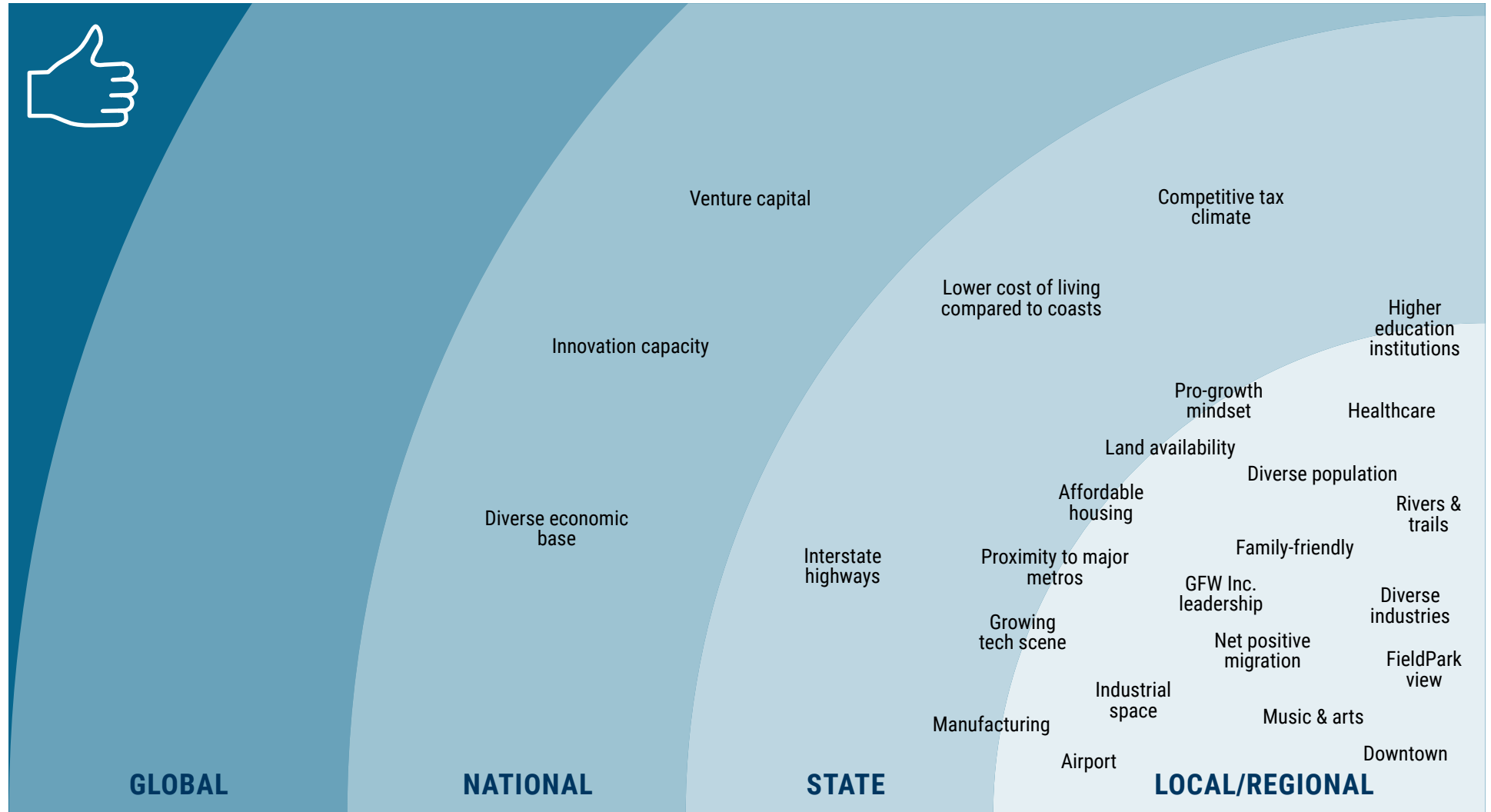
FIGURE 10. SWOT FRAMEWORK





## STRENGTHS

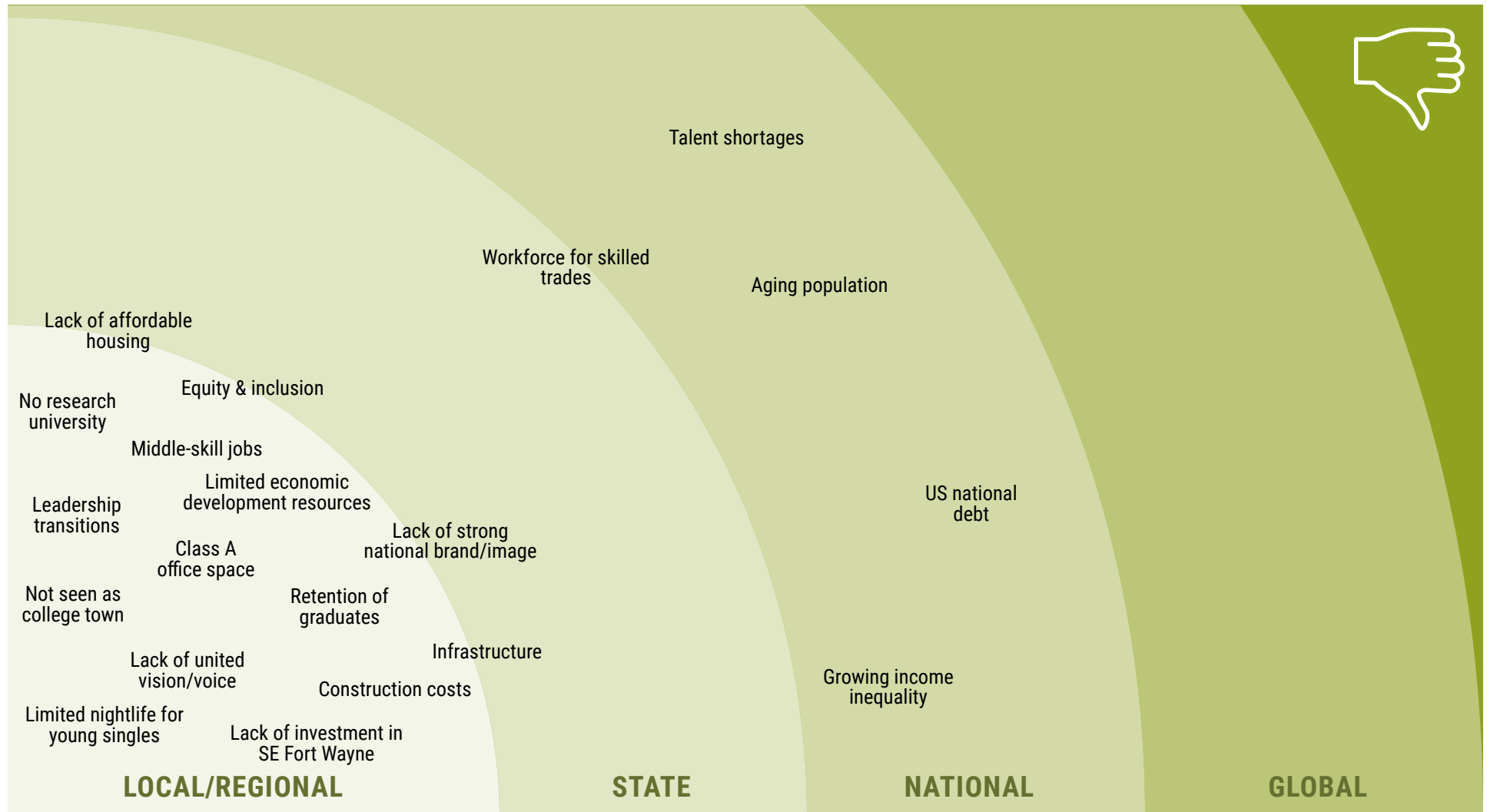
Advantages that can be built on to grow and strengthen the local economy.



Source: TIP Strategies Research.

## WEAKNESSES

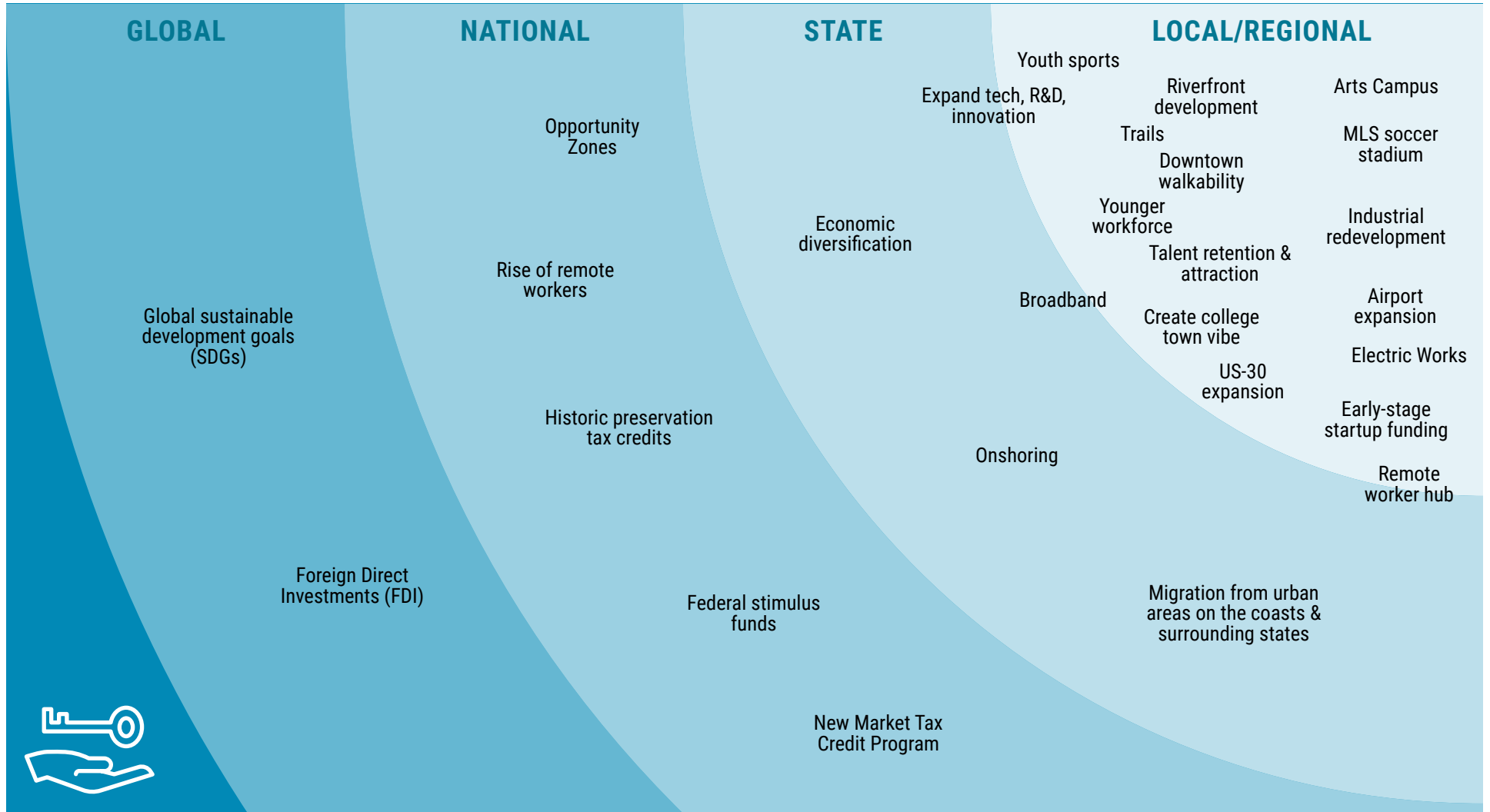
Liabilities and obstacles to economic development that limit Fort Wayne-Allen County's growth potential.



Source: TIP Strategies Research.

## OPPORTUNITIES

Assets and positive trends that hold significant potential for increased prosperity and the attraction of new businesses, investments, and people.

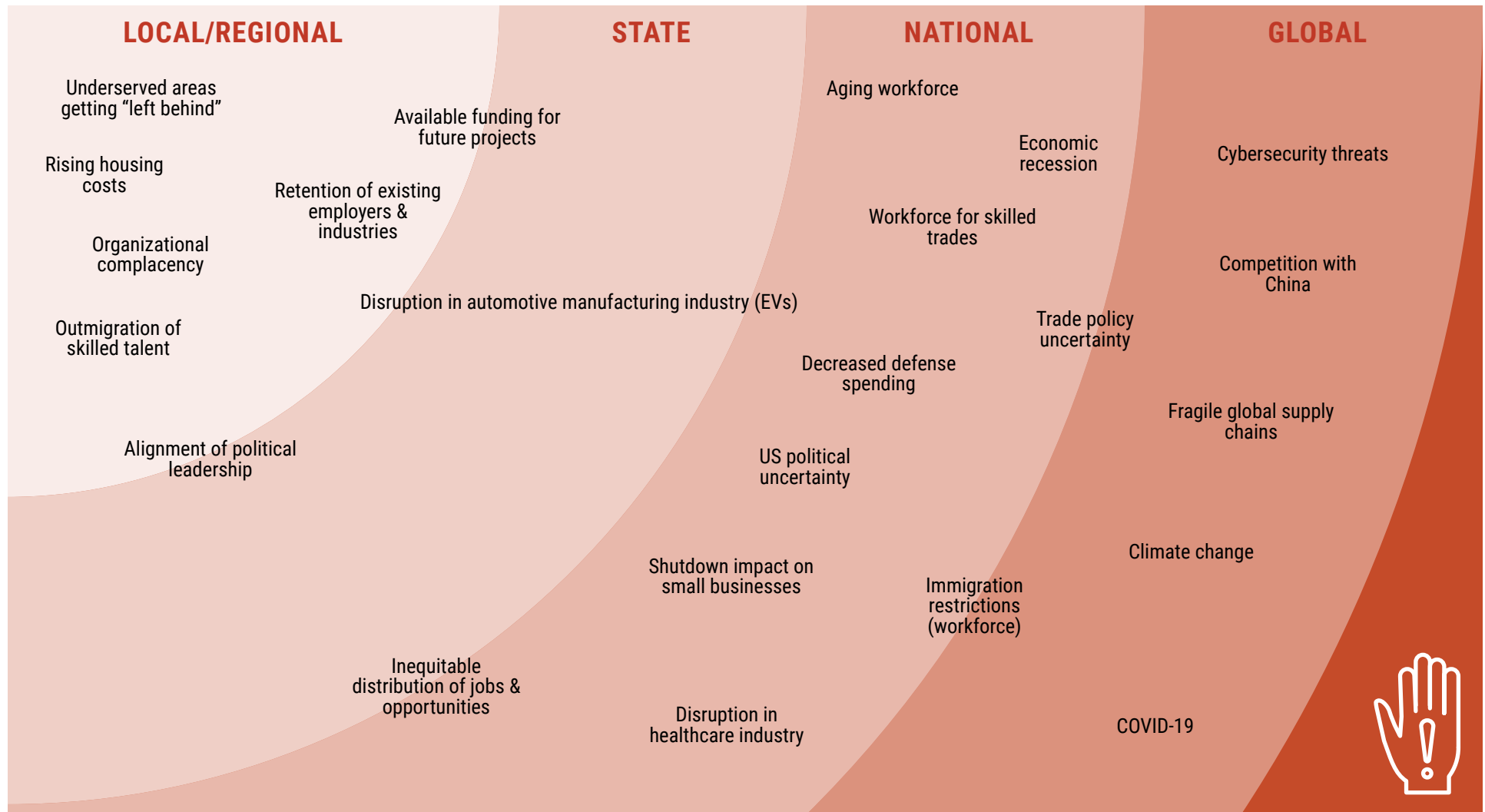


Source: TIP Strategies Research.



## THREATS

Unfavorable factors and trends that could negatively affect the local economy.



Source: TIP Strategies Research.



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