

Northeast Indiana  
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy  
2020-2024



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## **Preliminary Information**

### **Background and Purpose**

The 2020 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is an update to the 2015 report and enables Region 3-A Regional Planning Commission (Commission) to continue as a designated Economic Development District (EDD) by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) of the U.S. Department of Commerce. This CEDS was prepared according to the guidelines of 13 CFR Chapter III, Part 303, Section 303.7. The CEDS helps to ensure the communities within the region remain eligible for funding through the EDA.

The EDA of the U.S. Department of Commerce invests in public works, economic adjustment assistance, technical assistance, and short-term planning. EDA investment priorities enhance regional competitiveness and support long-term diversification and development of the regional economy. Eligible EDA applicants are states; city and local governments; Indiana Tribes; colleges and universities; nonprofit organizations; and economic development districts. The purpose of the CEDS is to bring together the public and private sectors to create an economic roadmap to diversity and strengthen the regional economy and to qualify the region for additional EDA assistance.

This comprehensive economic development strategy was developed by the Region III-A Regional Planning Commission with assistance from the Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council and with the guidance, feedback, and support of the Regional CEDS Committee. The Strategy and monitoring is possible with a recurring federal grant from the Economic Development Administration that is administered by Region III-A Development and Regional Planning Commission.

This strategy was developed in 2020, approved by the Region III-A Board of Directors in April 2020, and submitted to the Economic Development Administration for approval on April 17, 2020. Per regulation, this strategy will be updated every five years by Region III-A Development and Regional Planning Commission and the Regional CEDS Committee. During the life of the Strategy, the Commission and Committee will periodically review the Strategy to assess progress and outcomes.

## CEDS Committee

The CEDS Committee was developed with the goal of having all 10 counties represented, and to have a diverse mix of both the public and private sectors represented. Efforts were also made to include individuals from higher education, public utilities, and economic development professionals.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Representing</b>	<b>Type</b>
Colton Bickel	Adams County EDC	Adams County	Private
Dan Rickord	Mayor, City of Decatur	Adams County	Public
Elissa McGauley	Allen County Department of Planning Services	Allen County	Public
Ken Fries	Allen County Council	Allen County	Public
Anton King	DeKalb County EDC	DeKalb County	Private
Don Grogg	DeKalb County Commissioners	DeKalb County	Public
Mark Wickersham	Huntington County United EDC	Huntington County	Private
Tom Wall	Huntington County Commissioners	Huntington County	Public
Bill Bradley	LaGrange County EDC	LaGrange County	Private
Dennis Kratz	LaGrange County Commissioners	LaGrange County	Public
Paul Shepherd	Avilla Town Council	Noble County	Public
Isaac Lee	Steuben County EDC	Steuben County	Private
Lynne Liechty	Steuben County Commissioners	Steuben County	Public
Keith Gillenwater	Grow Wabash County	Wabash County	Private
Brian Haupert	Wabash County Commissioners	Wabash County	Public
Chad Kline	Wells County EDC	Wells County	Private
Todd Mahnensmith	Wells County Council	Wells County	Public
Jon Myers	Whitley County EDC	Whitley County	Private
Ryan Daniel	Mayor, City of Columbia City	Whitley County	Public
Paul Spoelhof	City of Fort Wayne Community Development Director	Allen County	Public
Ellen Cutter	Greater Fort Wayne	Allen County	Private

Rachel Blackman	Purdue Community Research Institute	Regional	Higher Education
Ryan Twiss	Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership	Regional	Private
Justin Brugger	Fort Wayne City Utilities	Allen County	Public
Whitney Bandemer	Trine University	Regional	Higher Education
Pone Vongphachanh	Upstate Alliance of Realtors	Regional	Private
Gene Donaghy	Regional Development Authority	Regional	Public
Bill Konyha	Regional Chamber of Northeast Indiana	Regional	Private
Linda Walczak	Northeast Director, Indiana Economic Development Corporation	Regional	Private
Edmond O'Neal	President, Work One	Regional	Private
Todd Johnson	Deputy District Director, INDOT	Regional	Public
Andrea Kern	Northeast Liason, Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs	Regional	Public
John Stafford		Chairman	Private
Michael Moellering	Burt, Blee, Dixon, Sutton, & Bloom	Legal Counsel	Private

## Summary Background – Regional Profile

### Population

The region’s counties—Adams, Allen, DeKalb, Huntington, LaGrange, Noble, Steuben, Wabash, Wells, and Whitley—have a current total population of 705,461 people, according to 2018 U.S. Census Data. In terms of population, Allen County is the largest county in the region with a population of 375,351, or 53%. This is due to the largest city in the region, Fort Wayne, being located in Allen County. Fort Wayne’s population reached 267,633 in 2018, which is approximately 71% of Allen County’s population and 38% of the population in the region. Allen County is followed in population size by Noble, DeKalb, LaGrange, Huntington, Adams, Steuben, Whitley, Wabash and Wells County in descending order. The Indiana Business Research Center (IBRC) at the Indiana University School of Business conducted population projections for the State of Indiana. Their estimates show the population of the region growing to 749,031 by the year 2040. This is an increase of 43,570 people, or 6%, compared to 2018. The population for the region is expected to increase by 2040, but the data for each county shows a range of expected outcomes. There are six counties that are expected to see an increase in population. The six counties are Adams, Allen, DeKalb, LaGrange, Noble, and Whitley. The largest increase will be in Allen County with a 10% increase. The remaining five counties – Huntington, Steuben, Wabash, and Wells – are all expected to see a decrease in population. The largest anticipated decrease will be in Wabash County with a 12% decrease in population.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2018, Indiana Business Research Center – Indiana University Kelly School of Business 2018

County	Population – 2018	Population – 2040	Population Change	Percent Change
Adams	35,636	37,344	1,708	4.6%
Allen	375,351	419,283	43,932	10.5%
DeKalb	43,226	43,689	463	1.1%
Huntington	36,240	33,921	-2,319	-6.8%
LaGrange	39,330	43,321	3,991	9.2%
Noble	47,532	48,662	1,130	2.3%
Steuben	34,586	32,565	-2,021	-6.2%
Wabash	31,280	27,837	-3,443	-12.4%
Wells	28,206	27,482	-724	-2.6%
Whitley	34,074	34,927	853	2.4%
<b>Region</b>	<b>705,461</b>	<b>749,031</b>	<b>43,570</b>	<b>6.2%</b>

## Population – Age

As a region we are in line with the rest of the state on the age of our population. The individual county data does provide areas of concern for three of our counties. The percentage of the population that is over the age of 65 is 16.0% nationally, and 15.8% within Indiana. The three counties that have a significantly higher percentage of residents over the age of 65 are Wabash County at 20.9%, Steuben County at 20.2% and Wells County at 18.3%. These three counties are all projected to see their population decrease by 2040. An aging population such as this will need a service provision aimed toward this demographic. Also, efforts will be needed to attract and retain younger working people.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2018

County	0-4 Years Old	5-17	18-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Percent 65+
Adams	3,327	7,827	3,009	7,965	7,984	5,524	15.5%
Allen	26,135	70,272	33,762	98,416	92,048	54,718	14.6%
DeKalb	2,803	7,658	3,593	10,606	11,547	7,019	16.2%
Huntington	2,066	5,746	3,540	8,627	10,031	6,230	17.2%
LaGrange	3,504	9,275	3,605	8,986	8,597	5,363	13.6%
Noble	3,069	8,535	4,091	11,478	12,734	7,625	16.0%
Steuben	1,976	5,143	3,509	7,149	9,825	6,983	20.2%
Wabash	1,661	4,851	3,147	6,739	8,356	6,526	20.9%
Wells	1,839	5,143	2,144	6,450	7,466	5,164	18.3%
Whitley	2,074	5,825	2,546	8,068	9,437	6,124	18.0%
<b>Region</b>	<b>48,454</b>	<b>130,275</b>	<b>62,946</b>	<b>174,484</b>	<b>178,026</b>	<b>111,276</b>	<b>15.8%</b>
Indiana	418,544	1,149,586	655,977	1,699,640	1,713,110	1,055,021	15.8%
Nation	19,810,275	53,589,067	30,456,902	30,456,902	83,904,335	52,413,193	16.0%

## Education

Educational attainment is essential to the regional economy and the workforce. Data for the region was reviewed as it relates to the number of people over the age of 25 and the level of education obtained. The data shows that the region is ahead of the state in both high school graduates and associates degrees. Regionally, 38.6% of residents over the age of 25 have a high school diploma as their highest level of education attainment. The entire state has 33.5% of residents with this level of attainment. The data also indicates that 9.9% of residents have an Associate’s degree compared to 8.7% of all Indiana residents. The region is behind the state when it comes to Bachelor’s degrees and graduate degrees. The percentage of residents with a Bachelor’s degree is 12.2% compared to 16.5% for all of Indiana. Graduate degrees or more have been obtained by 6.1% of residents compared to 9.4% of all Indiana residents. The data for LaGrange County shows that 27.8% of residents in the County have less than a 9<sup>th</sup> grade education. All other counties have less than 10% of their residents with this classification. The reason for this in LaGrange County is their significant Amish population. Their custom is to finish with formal education at the 8<sup>th</sup> grade level. Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2018 and American Community Survey, 5-year estimates 2014-2018

County	Less than 9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Grades 9-12, No Diploma	High School Graduate	Some College, No Degree	Associate’s Degree	Bachelor’s Degree	Graduate Degree or more
Adams	8.9%	7.0%	39.7%	19.3%	9.7%	10.6%	4.7%
Allen	4.2%	6.6%	28.7%	21.9%	10.5%	18.4%	9.7%
DeKalb	2.1%	7.6%	41.8%	20.6%	10.1%	12.1%	5.6%
Huntington	2.6%	6.5%	42.0%	20.2%	9.8%	12.3%	6.6%
LaGrange	27.8%	8.4%	32.4%	15.2%	5.8%	7.8%	2.6%
Noble	7.1%	8.7%	40.7%	19.4%	9.8%	10.1%	4.1%
Steuben	3.1%	6.7%	38.3%	21.4%	9.8%	13.2%	7.4%
Wabash	3.1%	8.6%	42.5%	18.7%	8.7%	10.6%	7.8%
Wells	2.2%	6.7%	40.0%	20.2%	12.8%	12.4%	5.7%
Whitley	1.7%	5.6%	39.7%	20.5%	14.0%	14.0%	6.9%
<b>Region</b>	<b>6.3%</b>	<b>7.2%</b>	<b>38.6%</b>	<b>19.7%</b>	<b>9.9%</b>	<b>12.2%</b>	<b>6.1%</b>
Indiana	3.7%	7.7%	33.5%	20.4%	8.7%	16.5%	9.4%

## Housing

The region has high rates of home ownership in compared to the state and nation. Regionally, housing units that are owner-occupied is 68.3%. The state has 61.3% and nation has 56.1% of households that are owner-occupied. Based on the high rates of owner-occupied households the number of renter-occupied households is lower than the state and national figures. There are 20.5% of households in the region that are renter-occupied compared to 27.6% for Indiana and 31.7% for the nation. There is one characteristic in the region’s housing stock that skews the data and that is lake homes. Lake homes are typically second homes that are used primarily on the weekends during the summer months. Lake homes are located primarily in three counties. The data shows that homes used for seasonal or recreational use account for 22.6% of the housing in Steuben County, 12.6% in LaGrange County, and 5.2% in Noble County. Lake homes do factor into the calculation for vacant homes. Because of this the region has a vacancy rate of 11.2%. However, when you take lake homes out of the equation the region has a 7.1% vacancy rate.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2018 and American Community Survey, 5-year estimates 2014-2018

County	Owner-Occupied	Renter-Occupied	Vacant	Seasonal or Recreational Use
Adams	72.8%	21.5%	5.7%	0.7%
Allen	62.4%	29.0%	8.6%	0.4%
DeKalb	71.8%	21.9%	6.3%	0.3%
Huntington	69.9%	22.2%	7.9%	0.3%
LaGrange	68.0%	14.2%	17.7%	12.6%
Noble	67.2%	21.2%	11.6%	5.2%
Steuben	55.1%	16.0%	28.8%	22.6%
Wabash	66.4%	24.3%	9.3%	1.5%
Wells	73.0%	18.8%	8.2%	0.3%
Whitley	76.8%	15.6%	7.7%	2.8%
<b>Region</b>	<b>68.3%</b>	<b>20.5%</b>	<b>11.2%</b>	<b>4.7%</b>
Indiana	61.3%	27.6%	11.0%	1.6%
Nation	56.1%	31.7%	12.2%	4.0%

## Income

Per capita income lags behind both the state and nation. As a whole per capita income for the region is 90.8% of the state, and 78.6% of the nation. There will need to be a focus on implementing strategies that will lead to per capita income increasing across the region. The number of households in poverty across the region is lower than the percentages for the state and nation. Allen County is the most populous county in the region, and has a sizable urban core with the City of Fort Wayne. Allen County has the highest per capita income in the region, but also has the highest percentage of households in poverty. The percentage of households in poverty in Allen County is higher than both the state and nation percentages.

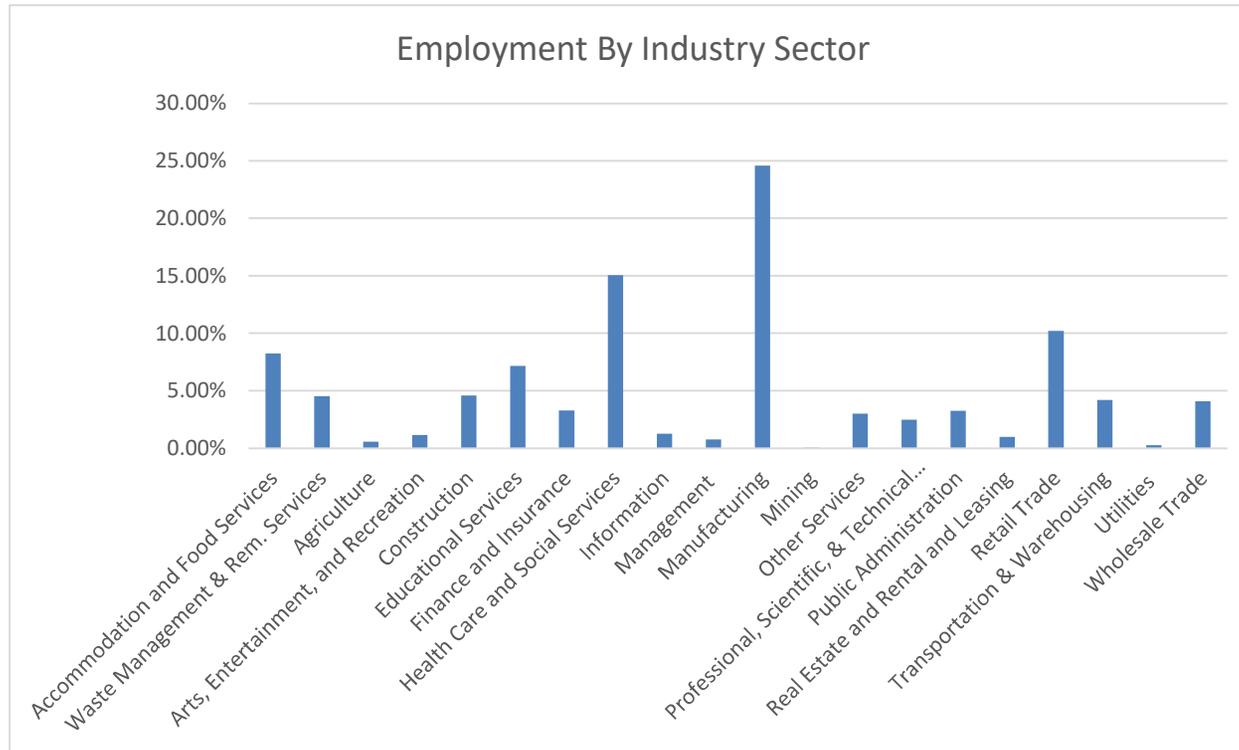
Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis 2018 and U.S. Census Bureau 2018

County	Per Capita Income	Percent of Indiana	Percent of Nation	Households in Poverty
Adams	\$39,167	83.1%	71.9%	11.6%
Allen	\$46,288	98.2%	85.0%	13.5%
DeKalb	\$44,069	93.5%	80.9%	10.1%
Huntington	\$42,292	89.7%	77.7%	10.1%
LaGrange	\$42,146	89.4%	77.4%	7.8%
Noble	\$39,798	84.4%	73.1%	9.1%
Steuben	\$43,231	91.7%	79.4%	11.0%
Wabash	\$43,820	92.9%	80.5%	12.4%
Wells	\$42,730	90.6%	78.5%	8.5%
Whitley	\$44,528	94.4%	81.8%	7.1%
<b>Region</b>	<b>\$42,806</b>	<b>90.8%</b>	<b>78.6%</b>	<b>10.1%</b>
Indiana	\$47,149		86.6%	13.0%
Nation	\$54,445			13.1%

## Employment

Employment across all industries within the region indicates that the largest employing industry is manufacturing which accounts for nearly 25% of all employment. The employment concentration in this sector, combined with a strong current economy, has contributed to high levels of employment across the region. Regional stakeholders have emphasized the need to align workforce training with current regional job opportunities, particularly in the manufacturing sectors that are struggling to attract a younger workforce. The next highest sectors with the highest levels of employment are Health Care and Social Services, Retail Trade, and Accommodation and Food services.

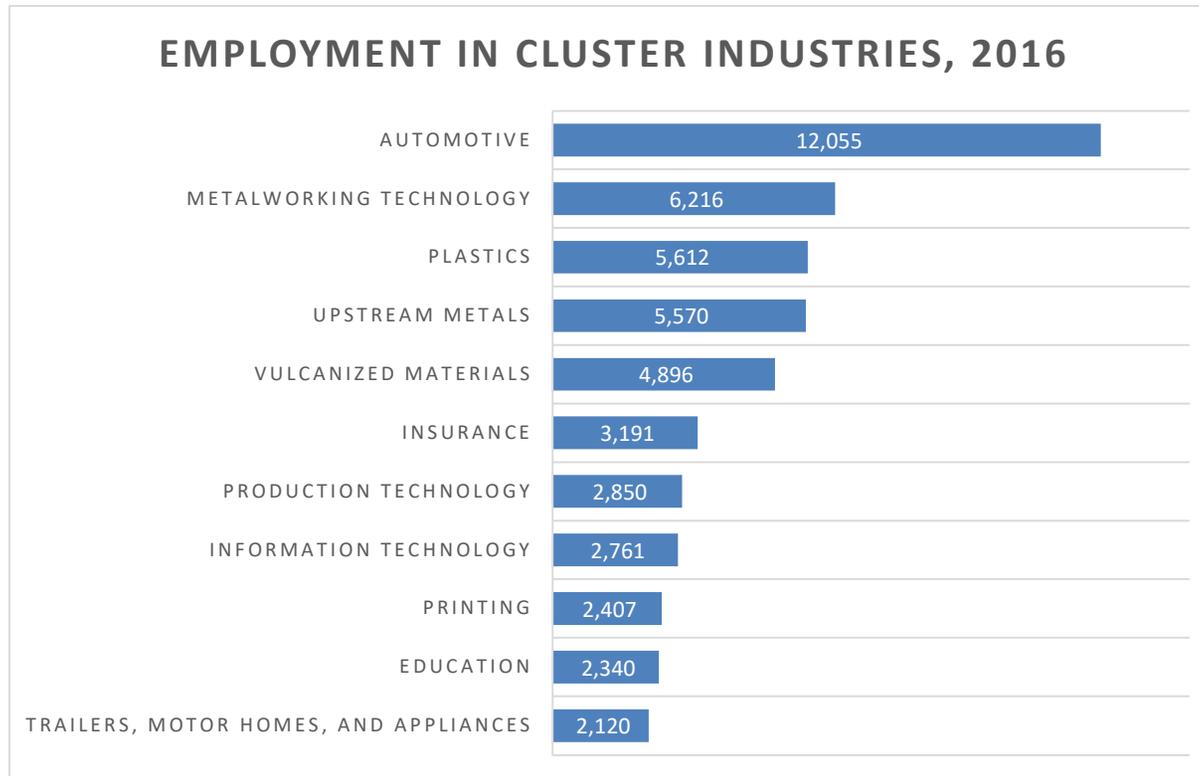
Source: Indiana Department of Workforce Development 2019



## Industry Clusters

Industry clusters are defined as concentrations of companies and industries that are interconnected by markets, suppliers, and trade in a geographic area. The region has several well-established industry clusters that are linked via employment, location, business expertise and other marketplace factors. The largest cluster in the region is automotive. It has roughly double the number of jobs of the second highest cluster of metalworking technology. The automotive cluster has been good for the economy of the region, but this cluster is highly sensitive to economic downturns. The manufacturing sector is represented with second through fifth largest clusters. Those are metalworking technology, plastics, upstream metals, and vulcanized materials. The region also has a large insurance cluster. The information technology cluster is the eighth largest cluster in the region and is quickly growing. It is anticipated that this cluster will be higher up on the list when the next CEDS update is completed.

Source: Institute for Strategy and Competitiveness, Harvard Business School 2016



## Employment – Unemployment

Unemployment across the region remains at historic lows at the end of 2019. All 10 counties have an unemployment rate below 3%. The strength of the economy has contributed to the low unemployment rate. The region does have concentrations in manufacturing. That industry is very sensitive to downturns in the economy. When the next economic downturn takes place, it is expected that unemployment across the region will rise. This shows the importance of focusing on resilience when developing an economic development strategy.

Source: Indiana Department of Workforce Development 2019

County	Unemployment %
Adams	2.4%
Allen	2.9%
DeKalb	2.5%
Huntington	2.9%
LaGrange	2.2%
Noble	2.9%
Steuben	2.3%
Wabash	2.7%
Wells	2.5%
Whitley	2.5%
<b>Region</b>	<b>2.6%</b>

### Top 10 Employers in the Region

1. Parkview Hospital Randallia
2. Parkview Health
3. Parkview Regional Medical Ctr
4. GM Fort Wayne Assembly Plant
5. Lutheran Hospital
6. Uniroyal-Goodrich Tire Manufacturing
7. Harris Corporation
8. Lincoln Financial Advisors
9. Purdue University Fort Wayne
10. BF Goodrich Tire Manufacturing

## Transportation

Transportation planning in the ten-county region is done by Region III-A and the Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council (NIRCC). Region III-A works in Huntington, LaGrange, Noble, Steuben, Wabash, and Whitley counties. NIRCC works in Adams, Allen, DeKalb, and Wells counties. Indiana has 14 interstate highways pass through it, two of these intersect in the region. Additionally, the region has seven U.S. highways, and 20 state roads. Fort Wayne is a regional freight hub with access to several large Midwestern cities. This includes semi-truck and railroad traffic. The region is home to an intermodal facility and also has ready port access. The region is home to the Fort Wayne International Airport, which provides both passenger and freight services. The region is also home to six general aviation airports, which are primarily used by private pilots. The region has one municipal transportation system serving the urbanized area within Allen County and eight rural public transportation systems. There has been continued emphasis on the development, connectivity, and completion of trails and pedestrian facilities throughout the region. All counties have trails open, as well as trails under development or planned.

One area of emphasis from regional stakeholders is Highway U.S. 30. This highway runs east and west across the entire state from the border with Ohio and the border with Illinois. It includes two of the counties in the region, Allen and Whitley. Discussions with regional stakeholders shows that U.S. 30 is not realizing it's full potential when it comes to economic development, and that there are safety concerns that need to be addressed. Due to number of stoplights and local roads with access to the highway, combined with a mix of truck traffic and passenger traffic, the accident rate is deemed too high. The number of stoplights and local roads with access also increase commute times for workers and slow down the delivery of freight. U.S 30 is the main thoroughfare in Whitley County. Due to the attributes of U.S. 30 it contributes significantly to Whitley County having the longest average commute time in the region at nearly 25 minutes.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates 2014-2018



## Travel

The region is still very dependent on passenger traffic for residents to get to and from work. As a region over 90% of residents drive to and from work. Public transportation is utilized very little across the region. This is true even in Fort Wayne, the largest city in the region which has bus service. There is a small percentage of residents that ride a motorcycle, ride a bike, or walk to work. LaGrange County has the highest percentage in this category. This is due to their sizable Amish population that either walks or rides a bike to work. Driving is not an option for them due to their customs, so they utilize other means. The work at home category shows a low percentage currently, but due to technology advances combined with changing workplace environments, it is expected that this category will grow rapidly.

Source: U.S Census Bureau 2018

Travel to Work 2018 (Percentages)

County	Drive to Work	Public Transportation	Motorcycle, Bike, Walk	Work at Home
Adams	91.1	0.0	4.4	4.6
Allen	92.9	0.7	2.2	4.2
DeKalb	95.7	0.0	2.1	2.2
Huntington	92.8	0.2	3.5	3.5
LaGrange	81.2	0.2	13.6	5.0
Noble	93.9	0.1	3.3	2.7
Steuben	91.9	0.3	4.2	3.6
Wabash	91.7	0.7	5.3	2.3
Wells	93.7	0.4	2.5	3.4
Whitley	94.9	0.0	1.9	3.1
<b>Region</b>	<b>92.0</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>3.5</b>

## Broadband

Internet speeds across the region vary greatly between urban and rural areas. A commonly accepted broadband speed that is deemed adequate for everyday use is a download speed of 25 megabytes per second (Mbps) and an upload speed of 3 Mbps. Our region has these speeds almost universally in urban areas. However, these speeds are not obtainable for many residents in rural areas. Additional efforts are needed to close this gap, and ensure rural residents and businesses have the internet speeds they need.

The State of Indiana announced a grant program in 2019 called Next Level Broadband. This program allowed internet service providers to apply for funding that would allow them to expand service in their area. Within the region LigTel Communications applied for and received funding under this grant program. Their project expanded internet access along the U.S. 6 corridor in rural Noble county to an area east of the City of Ligonier. This project provided access to 83 unserved households and 12 unserved businesses. The requested grant amount was almost \$442,000 with a local match of more than \$117,000 for a total project cost of nearly \$559,000.

Source: FCC 2019 Broadband Deployment Report

Percentages of the population with broadband speeds of 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload

County	Urban	Rural
Adams	99.9	87.8
Allen	99.3	71.7
DeKalb	97.5	58.0
Huntington	100.0	57.1
LaGrange	93.1	44.9
Noble	99.5	58.5
Steuben	97.5	63.0
Wabash	100.0	42.6
Wells	97.9	46.2
Whitley	97.9	59.9
<b>Region</b>	<b>98.3</b>	<b>59.0</b>

## SWOT Analysis

### Strengths

- Access to natural resources, such as lakes, rivers, reservoirs, parks, nature preserves, energy sources, etc.
- Access to an array of post-secondary institutions for education.
- Regional economic development collaboration between the Regional Partnership of Northeast Indiana and its Regional Opportunity Council, Regional Chamber, Workforce Development, NE Regional Office of the IEDC, Region III-A, and NIRCC.
- Availability of transportation infrastructure, including two interstates, many US highways and state roadways, east/west railways, and airports.
- Quality of life, specifically the availability of arts, entertainment, bike trails, etc -- examples of this includes the Pulse Opera House in Warren, the Honeywell Center in Wabash, the Embassy Theatre in Fort Wayne, and the Sculpture Walk in Decatur.
- Industrial development, such as the creation of new industrial parks.
- The Innovation Center and the associated business incubator.
- Strong industrial base with a particular strength in the manufacturing sector.
- Strong core workforce talent for manufacturers.
- Amish trades orientation benefit to employers.
- Availability of two state parks and the hunting/sportsman opportunities available on state-owned properties.
- City of Fort Wayne's Legacy Fund, which is designed to provide transformational investment and leverage additional resources, projects, programs or policies that will have positive, long-term community impacts and serve as catalysts for other positive and desired change.
- Strong schools, kindergarten thru grade 12, including 6 regional New Tech High Schools.
- Turnstone, which provides a full range of rehabilitative, educational, wellness, athletic and recreational programs and facilities to persons with physical disabilities and their families.
- Sports facilities, including Parkview Field and the Allen County War Memorial Coliseum.
- 9 jurisdictional permitting agencies working together to streamline the permitting processes.
- Location within 3-4 hour drive of multiple urban areas such as Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Columbus, Toledo, Cincinnati, Dayton, Indianapolis and Louisville.
- Low cost of doing business.
- A recent interest in shell buildings.

## Weaknesses

- The population is less educated than other areas.
- Problems with illegal drug use.
- Lack of passenger rail and public transit.
- Housing shortage across the region.
- Mismatch between jobs demanded and labor force.
- Relatively underdeveloped entrepreneur support system.
- High school diploma can be preferred to vocational training received from local vocational schools.
- Lack of new shell buildings – many buildings available are older and less desirable to companies.
- Lack of "white collar" jobs/not a good job mix.
- Minority business ownership is not strong compared to other Midwestern areas.
- Venture capital could be higher.
- Patents are not as strong as they used to be.
- Old housing stock.
- Lack of a comprehensive entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- INDOT reluctance to fast pace projects, too much bureaucracy and layers for projects to happen at the speed they could.
- Career counseling in schools doesn't steer students towards in-demand jobs and the educational path to get them.

## Opportunities

- Centrally located to other metropolitan areas and markets.
- Affordable housing in the region generally.
- Perception as family friendly.
- Expansion of trail system.
- Indiana location, including business and tax-friendly environment.
- Medical industry has invested heavily in the region.
- Low cost of living.
- Build research & development capacity through greater partnerships between industry and higher education.
- The major reservoirs, lakes and streams for fishing and hunting.
- Agricultural expertise.
- Foreign trade zone.
- Multi-company consortium training programs (multiple companies that need the same things would help drive demand and lower the cost).
- Access to vocational schools.
- Guidance/career counselors in educational settings.

## Threats

- Other cities have amenities that the region cannot offer, particularly to people who work electronically and can live anywhere they wish.
- Underfunded and deteriorating public utilities, particularly sewer districts.
- Lack of higher paying “white collar” jobs.
- Many companies in the region are not locally owned, so money is lost locally, and leads to companies less involved in local communities and programs.
- Brain drain - population of 19-25 continues to decrease.
- Region's educational attainment has not budged for a decade.
- Lack of skills and education necessary to remain globally competitive.
- Lack of consistent, reliable broadband access.
- Health of the population contributing to greater healthcare costs.

## **Action Plan**

### **Regional Goals, Objectives, and Performance Measures**

This section contains goals, strategies, and performance metrics for the 2020 CEDS update. The strategies associated with each goal are a result from the regional background information, the SWOT exercise, and the CEDS committee input and review. Performance metrics are also included to measure goals, strategies, and their implementation. Metrics are not necessarily attributed to one party. Activities associated with goals and strategies will occur on local and regional levels. Region 3-A will track measures, many of which are output metrics, to determine the progress of implementation.

### **Goal 1: Support and Address Regional Workforce Development and Attraction Issues**

#### **Strategies**

- Increase the number of adults with a degree or certification within four years of graduating high school.
- Improve the skill set of the workforce to attract top companies.
- Increase regional median income.
- Establish a collaborative facility/program among 3-5 local higher education institutions to provide health sciences training to meet industry demands regionally.
- Encourage the development of a variety of housing options to meet the need of the current and future labor force.

#### **Performance Measures**

- Have at least 65% of residents obtain a degree or certification within four years of graduating high school.
- Increase the number of students enrolled in cooperative programs between high schools and employers by 20% within five years.
- Increase attraction efforts of high-skill jobs such as advanced manufacturing and health services so that higher income opportunities exist for workers.
- Increase in housing units that meet the needs of the labor force across the region.

## **Goal 2: Maintain and Strengthen Infrastructure Across the Region**

### **Strategies**

- Obtain grant funding for utility infrastructure projects.
- Have broadband available to all residents and businesses across the region.
- Work with transportation programs to increase access and efficiency of roadways across the region.
- Identify sites for shell buildings or shovel-ready development.
- Region 3-A and NIRCC to provide technical assistance to communities seeking funding for infrastructure planning and facility projects.
- Study utilities across the region to ensure they are adequate to meet both current and future needs.

### **Performance Measures**

- 100% of residents and businesses have access to broadband with download speeds of 25 mbps, and upload speeds of 3 mbps within five years.
- Increase in the number of infrastructure projects funded by 20% over the next five years.
- Increase in the number of sites that have shell buildings or a shovel-ready designation.
- Support corridor planning along U.S. 30 that will lead to increased safety, decreased travel times, and increased economic development.
- Increase in investment across the region, public and private, in utilities so that overall capacity increases.

### **Goal 3: Support Business, Business Development, and Entrepreneurship**

#### **Strategies**

- Develop a diversified economy that expands beyond the traditional manufacturing base.
- Grow existing manufacturing base and attract new manufacturing and distribution companies to the region.
- Continue to have a business-friendly tax and regulatory climate. Streamline approvals for economic development projects.
- Develop a variety of support services to assist entrepreneurs, including business-related research, invention and innovation evaluation, product and service development, and marketing.
- Enhance access to venture capital – both debt and equity.
- LEDO's continue to administer business retention and expansion programs, visiting local employers, and providing technical assistance.
- Focus on public education to minimize a risk-adverse mindset.

#### **Performance Measures**

- Increase the number of jobs across the region to meet not only population growth, but also attraction efforts.
- Growth in the number of businesses outside of the manufacturing sector.
- Establish training opportunities for workforce development to match industry diversification needs.
- Increase in venture capital invested in the region.

#### **Goal 4: Support Quality of Life, Community and Cultural Amenities as an Economic Development Tool**

##### **Strategies**

- Create vibrant downtowns in all of the region's cities and towns.
- Further develop the trail network across the region.
- Provide amenities that attract young professionals – housing, entertainment, the arts, and recreation.
- Promote and expand tourism opportunities to complement business sectors and enhance quality of life.
- Continue to promote the region as a family-friendly environment.
- Rehabilitation of historic districts.
- Promote early childhood learning and expand childcare options in all 10 counties.

##### **Performance Measures**

- Increase in the number of façade programs established or expanded.
- Increase in the number of downtown housing units.
- Increase in the number of trails across the region and link them to each other.
- Development of an arts campus within the region.
- Increase in economic impact of tourism dollars by 10% within five years.
- Establish at least one new childhood learning center or childcare option in each county within five years.

# Appendices

## **Appendix 1 – Resiliency**

The CEDS committee conducted a SWOT exercise which resulted in the communication of threats and vulnerabilities of the region. By engaging in this process, goals and strategies were developed to address resiliency to these vulnerabilities. The concerns and threats identified during the SWOT are below as they relate to the goals of the CEDS.

### **Goal 1: Support and Address Regional Workforce Development and Attraction Issues**

The region will need to supplement and maintain its workforce, particularly the 25-44 age group. If this doesn't happen there could be a contraction in businesses due to a shortage in either numbers or talent in the workforce. An additional threat and weakness related to the workforce is the lack of available housing choices. The future workforce will need a variety of available housing and affordable housing. Younger talent needs affordable homes or a choice of rental housing in the region.

### **Goal 2: Maintain and Strengthen Infrastructure Across the Region**

The biggest issue with infrastructure is funding. Resources exist to assist in funding for the expansion and maintenance of infrastructure. However, there isn't enough funding to meet all goals and objectives related to infrastructure. One big concern is the disparity in access to broadband between urban and rural areas within the region. To increase resiliency this disparity will have to be addressed, but available funding is again an issue.

### **Goal 3: Support Business, Business Development, and Entrepreneurship**

A concern is the lack of financial access for non-collateral rich startups. Stakeholders identified the need for access to capital that is not readily available. Entrepreneurship will diversify the economy, but a lack of funding and resources is a weakness currently in the region.

### **Goal 4: Support Quality of Life, Community and Cultural Amenities as an Economic Development Tool**

The region's quality of life and economic development are linked. A threat to growth and development is the lack of housing options. We will need more housing and a variety of housing to meet attraction efforts. While great strides have been made in the area of amenities, we are still fighting with several larger cities that are within a 250-mile radius of the region that can offer more. Efforts need to continue and be increased to ensure our downtowns are thriving and that we have the amenities that will attract young workers.

## **Pre-Disaster Preparation and Economic Resilience**

Hazard mitigation planning forms the foundation for a community's long-term strategy to reduce disaster losses and break the cycle of disaster damage, reconstruction, and repeated damage in the next disaster. State, county, and tribal governments are required to develop a hazard mitigation plan as a condition of receiving certain types of hazard mitigation disaster assistance, emergency and non-emergency.

**Hazard Mitigation planning** begins with organizing resources. A gathering of support and removing barriers to the planning process is needed. An effective planning process also requires aligning technical resources to establish a knowledge base for the plan.

Next, **identifying and assessing risk occurs**. The types of vulnerabilities are natural, man-made and technological. A plan will create a profile of the area, and in working with resources gaps and deficiencies will be identified and areas of vulnerabilities will be specified. A probability of risk occurrence will also be assessed for these areas.

**The mitigation plan includes strategies and priorities for response actions**. An assessment of the capabilities to execute these actions is completed. Additionally, a cost – benefit review of the proposed mitigation is done to support the priorities of responses in the event of a disaster.

### **Natural Disaster Resources**

Federal Emergency Management Agency

A Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) approved hazard mitigation plan is a condition for receiving certain types of non-emergency disaster assistance, including funding for mitigation projects. Specific information for additional resources for disasters is below.

### **Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program**

The Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant (PDM) program is a nationally competitive program that makes funding available to local, state, and Indian Tribal governments to implement hazard mitigation activities. Funding may be awarded for the development or update of an all hazards mitigation plan or for a hazard mitigation project. Local governments and Indian Tribal governments applying for PDM funds for local mitigation projects must have an approved local mitigation plan. Information about the PDM program is here: <https://www.fema.gov/pre-disaster-mitigation-grant-program>

### **Hazard Mitigation Grant Program**

The Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) provides funds to states, tribes, and local communities after a disaster declaration to protect public or private property through various mitigation measures. Hazard mitigation includes long-term efforts to reduce the impact of future events. Further information can be found at: <https://www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-grant-program>

## Appendix 2 – Economic Development Resources

### Economic Development Corporations

The region has economic development corporations that serve in a coordinating and service provision role within their geographic areas. These entities assist with business attraction and retention and other customized services based on local needs.

The region has the following corporations:

Adams County Economic Development Corporation  
313 West Jefferson Street  
Decatur, IN 46733  
[www.adamscountyedc.com](http://www.adamscountyedc.com)

DeKalb County Economic Development Partnership  
4483 County Road 19  
Auburn, IN 46706  
[www.dekalbedp.org](http://www.dekalbedp.org)

LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation  
304 N 00EW Suite 2  
LaGrange, IN 46761  
[www.lagrangecountyedc.com](http://www.lagrangecountyedc.com)

Steuben County Economic Development Corporation  
907 South Wayne Street, Suite 100  
Angola, IN 46703  
[www.steubenedc.com](http://www.steubenedc.com)

Wells County Economic Development Corporation  
211 West Water Street  
Bluffton, IN 46714  
[www.wellsedc.com](http://www.wellsedc.com)

Greater Fort Wayne, Inc.  
200 East Main Street, Suite 800  
Fort Wayne, IN 46802  
[www.greaterfortwayneinc.com](http://www.greaterfortwayneinc.com)

Huntington County United Economic Development  
8 West Market Street  
Huntington, IN 46750  
[www.hcued.com](http://www.hcued.com)

Noble County Economic Development Corporation  
110 South Orange St  
Albion, IN 46701  
[www.noblecountyedc.com](http://www.noblecountyedc.com)

Grow Wabash County  
214 South Wabash Street  
Wabash, IN 46992  
[www.growwabashcounty.com](http://www.growwabashcounty.com)

Whitley County Economic Development Corporation  
220 West Van Buren Street, Suite 102  
Columbia City, IN 46725  
[www.whitleyedc.com](http://www.whitleyedc.com)

## Economic Development Resources

### Region:

#### Region 3-A

Formed as a regional unit of government, through Indiana Stature, Regional 3-A has been in existence since 1974, supporting the community and economic development needs of Huntington, LaGrange, Noble, Steuben, Wabash, and Whitley Counties. For additional information please go to [www.region3a.org](http://www.region3a.org)

#### Northeast Indiana Regional Coordinating Council

The Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council (NIRCC) is a voluntary organization of local governments that collaborate on regional issues including transportation, transit, community development, environment and other matters that impact the region. NIRCC operates in Adams, Allen, DeKalb, and Wells counties. [www.nircc.com](http://www.nircc.com)

#### Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership

The top priority for the Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership is increasing business investment. They support business, build the community, and market the region to the world. This is accomplished through collaboration which is the key in promoting a globally competitive economy in northeast Indiana. Their footprint is 11 counties. They cover the 10 counties covered by this CEDS, and Kosciusko County. [www.neindiana.com](http://www.neindiana.com)

### State:

#### Indiana Economic Development Corporation

The Indiana Economic Development Corporation is committed to attracting and supporting new business investment, creating new jobs for Hoosiers, and furthering Indiana's legacy as one of the top states in the nation for business. They numerous resources to assist in this effort. For more information on the resources available please go to [www.iedc.in.gov](http://www.iedc.in.gov)

#### Indiana Department of Transportation

INDOT is the state agency responsible for roadway construction and maintenance throughout the state of Indiana. There are programs available to municipalities that allow them to get grant funding within their jurisdictional boundaries. [www.in.gov/indot](http://www.in.gov/indot)

#### Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs

The Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs works with Indiana communities to build relevant and economically thriving places where people want to live, work, and grow. The Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs works with local, state, and national partners to provide resources and technical assistance to aid communities in shaping and achieving their vision for community and economic development. Grants are available for public facilities projects, utility projects, and broadband expansion amongst others. To learn more about their programs please go to [www.in.gov/ocra](http://www.in.gov/ocra)

### **Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority**

IHCDA believes that growing Indiana's economy starts at home. Everyone can agree that all Hoosiers should have the opportunity to live in safe, affordable, good-quality housing in economically stable communities. IHCDA's work is done in partnership with developers, lenders, investors, and nonprofit organizations that use their financing to serve low- and moderate-income Hoosiers. IHCDA leverages government and private funds to invest in financially sound, well-designed projects that will benefit communities for many years to come. [www.in.gov/ihcda](http://www.in.gov/ihcda)

### **Federal:**

#### **U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration**

The Economic Development Administration (EDA) provides financial assistance to help distressed communities overcome financial barriers that inhibit the growth of their local economies. EDA provides assistance for **public works projects**, planning, research and technical assistance, and education. Region 3-A Regional Planning Commission is a designated Economic Development District by the EDA and, as such, it is required to conduct economic development planning and project identification.

#### **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**

The Brownfields program provides funding for the **assessment and clean-up of brownfield sites**. The program leverages local funds and property owner involvement for the redevelopment process.

<https://www.epa.gov/brownfields>

#### **USDA**

The Rural Business Development Grant is a program for smaller communities to provide technical assistance, capital for a revolving loan fund, rural incubators, and other uses to foster emerging businesses in rural areas. <https://www.rd.usda.gov/files/fact-sheet/RD-FactSheet-RBS-RBDG.pdf>

The USDA also provides business and industry loan guarantees for business expansion, modernization, and other eligible activities for businesses located in communities less than 50,000 in size. <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-industry-loan-guarantees>

The USDA Water and Waste Disposal Program provides **funding for infrastructure in smaller communities**. This program provides loans and possible grants for drinking water systems. It also offers funding for sanitary sewage disposal, solid waste disposal, and storm water drainage to households and businesses. Eligible communities are those 10,000 in size or smaller.

### **Appendix 3 – CEDS DATA**

#### Creation and Adoption of this Plan

The 2020 CEDS update was developed with the use of a CEDS committee. This committee was comprised of stakeholders from across all 10 counties in the region. Stakeholders represented the public sector, the private sector, utilities, and higher education. Meetings were conducted with this group, and feedback was obtained regarding a strategy for our region. Members of the committee also completed surveys on key components that went into comprising this document.

Information used to create this document is available upon request to Region 3-A Regional Planning Commission. Requests for information related to this document may be made at 260-347-4714.

## Sources

This Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy uses demographic data obtained from a wide variety of sources, but primarily the US Census.

A substantial amount of data has been compiled and analyzed from various primary and secondary sources as part of this CEDS document:

- 2010, 2018 Census Data & American Community Survey 2014-2018\*
- United States Census Bureau 2018
- Indiana Department of Workforce Development 2019
- Institute for Strategy and Competitiveness, Harvard Business School 2016
- FCC 2019 Broadband Deployment Report
- Indiana Business Research Center – Indiana University Kelly School of Business 2018

\*Data from American Community Survey (ACS) is based on survey data and estimates and is less accurate than Decennial U.S. Census data.