



**2020-2024**

# **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy**



**2020-2024**

**COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

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**Michiana Area Council of Governments**  
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South Bend, IN 46601



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DAMORE AMPHITHEATER





**Chapter 1**  
**Introduction**

## 1



## Our Region

The Michiana Area Council of Governments (MACOG) is a council of governments that serves as a regional forum to our local governments to study and resolve interlocal issues on transportation, environment, and development. We serve our local governments to achieve our collective vision to advance the region's economic vitality, quality of life, create diverse and resilient hometowns, and explore ways to attract and retain talented individuals and organizations.

As a council of governments, we provide technical planning services to local governments in our four-county planning region of Elkhart, Kosciusko, Marshall, and St. Joseph Counties. Together, these counties have a population of nearly 600,000 people. Our region is located in northern Indiana and is fortunate to be within 200 miles of major Midwestern cities and amenities in Indianapolis, Chicago, Detroit, and Columbus. We have access to many quality of life amenities such as Lake Michigan beaches, year-round trails, a burgeoning culinary scene, major

and minor league professional sports teams, theaters, zoos, and shopping. Additional amenities include the cultural arts, festivals, and sporting events from our local communities and higher education institutions.

## As an Economic Development District

To better serve our local governments, MACOG holds many federal and state designations that enable us to act as a liaison and a conduit for our communities to access the many federal and state funding opportunities.

One of the designations MACOG holds is an Economic Development District (EDD), administered by the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA).

As an EDD, our communities are eligible to receive EDA funds to improve our public infrastructure systems and construct projects that build strong and resilient hometowns.



## Partnerships

Each of our four counties has local economic development organizations (LEDOs) that focus on economic development initiatives such as business retention, expansion, and recruitment. These LEDOs include the Economic Development Corporation of Elkhart County, Kosciusko Economic Development Corporation, Marshall County Economic Development Corporation, and the South Bend Regional Chamber.

In 2011, the LEDOs saw a need to better market our region and established the South Bend-Elkhart Regional Partnership. The Regional Partnership has been an integral economic development entity in our region. They focus on a systemic approach to advance the region's economy and unify our regional communities to achieve our collective vision.

As an EDD, we bring together these key private and public sector stakeholders to create a coordinated effort to advance the region's economy to be diverse, innovative, and resilient. One of the

ways we accomplish this is by holding regional economic development summits. Attendees have the opportunity to network and share best practices. Being an EDD has served as a foundation for regional collaboration that has built lasting partnerships with our federal, state, and local organizations, and instilled cooperative regional planning.

## Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is to be a roadmap to guide the region's economic development initiatives over five years. The CEDS guides us in prioritizing a regional list of projects and ensuring they align with the CEDS goals and EDA's investment priorities. The CEDS also enables MACOG to retain its EDD designation.

The CEDS allows us to examine our economic conditions, identify opportunities and areas that need improving, create a "plan of action," and establish a framework to measure our progress.



## Background

Our current 2015-2019 CEDS was built from a collaborative planning process with the Regional Partnership, LEDOs, and the Regional Development Authority (RDA) that began in 2014. During that same time, the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC) announced the Regional Cities Initiative that challenged applicants to establish transformative economic development projects to create competitive and resilient communities. The processes for both products were similar in that rather than duplicating our efforts, the CEDS served as the foundation for the development of our Regional Cities Plan.

Upon being designated as one of the three recipients for the IEDC's \$42 million for Regional Cities, the Regional Partnership was tasked with administering the grant to begin implementing the projects. Many of the Regional Cities and CEDS projects either have been implemented or had groundbreaking ceremonies.

Following these planning efforts, in 2016, community leaders indicated the sustainability of our region needs to go

beyond Regional Cities and focus on quality of place initiatives. Therefore, the RDA and the Regional Partnership facilitated the creation of the Regional Economic Development Strategy Plan (REDS).

This plan will guide a long-term systemic approach to advance our region's economy and increase our per capita income by 2025.

This will be accomplished through five strategic pillars: **workforce development, recruiting and retaining talent, diversify our industries and attract higher pay jobs, increase entrepreneurship, and promote diversity and inclusion to create opportunities for minority populations.**





## CEDS Planning Process

MACOG kicked off the process in 2019 to update our CEDS to reflect our economic conditions and priorities through the next five years (2020-2024). A strategy committee was first organized to guide and oversee the development of the CEDS. The strategy committee consisted of LEDOs, local government officials, economic specialists, and the Regional Partnership.

MACOG held monthly committee meetings that first refined our vision and goals, and analyzed our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT). This analysis is summarized in Chapter 3. The strategy committee next reviewed and refined the objectives as related to our regional goals. This was accomplished through a series of exercises where the committee identified future priorities, what is currently working as well as the areas that need to change. Our goals include being a world-class leader in higher education and community partnerships, access and connectivity, and high-performing communities. More details on the goals and objectives are provided in Chapter 4.

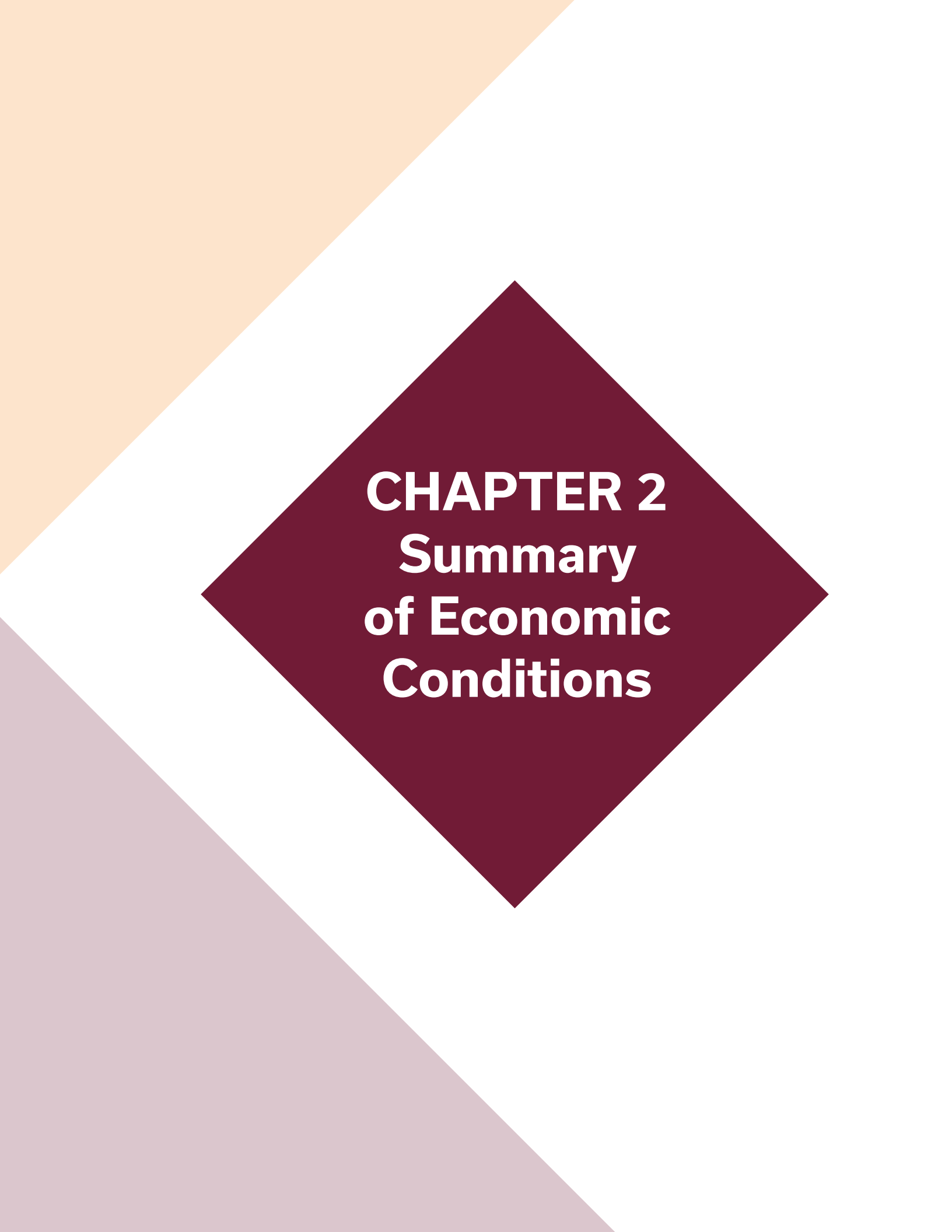
Public participation was incorporated from the process that took place in the development of the Regional Partnership’s

REDS. This included conducting stakeholder interviews and meetings with key community leaders, local government officials, public and private institutions, and economic development specialists.

Additional engagement was conducted at the Region’s Industry Growth subcommittee meetings to solicit input on priority projects.

Through December, MACOG held a 30-day public comment period. The public had the opportunity to speak with the Strategy Committee during this time to share their thoughts on the draft CEDS. During the public comment period, MACOG held a public open house on December 12, 2019, which seven individuals attended. We received several comments from attendees to know more about water quality initiatives to support water recreation opportunities, the value of remediating brownfields to encourage redevelopment versus building new structures on greenfield sites, workforce development and education, and trail connections to destination areas. See Appendix A of the list of public comments.





**CHAPTER 2**  
**Summary**  
**of Economic**  
**Conditions**





## 2



## Economic Overview

The 2015-2019 CEDS and Regional Cities Initiative noted the stagnant population growth in Indiana. Though the state has a positive growth rate, the population has been growing from births in the state rather than migration from other states or nations. To achieve the economic development vision, regions must attract talent from outside Indiana.

The MACOG region has also been struggling to attract and retain talent. Much of the population growth is from a birth rate higher than the death rate. Since 2016, international migration has been positive in each county; however, our region's domestic migration continues to be negative. Still, when counting all the components factoring into the change in the population, the region is growing.

According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, the Elkhart-Goshen Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) had higher employment growth in 2017 (6 percent) than the South Bend-Mishawaka MSA (0.4 percent). The total Gross Domestic Product has now topped the pre-recession (2007) level.

## Key Economic Indicators

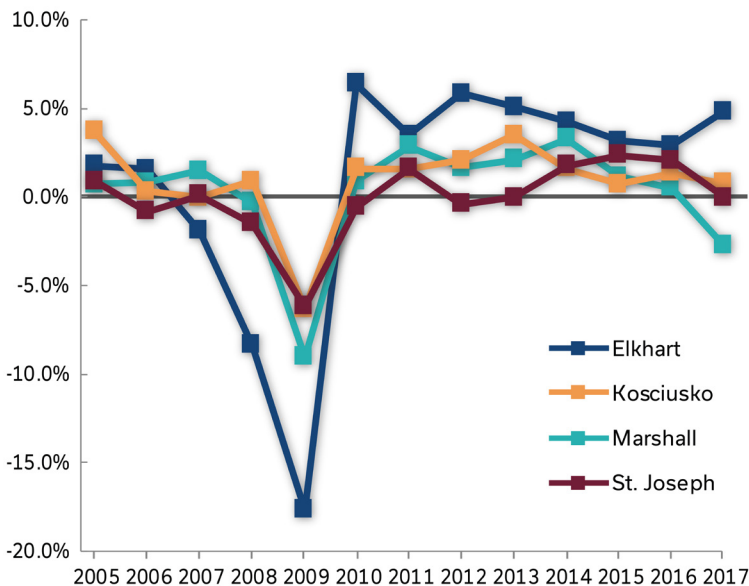
### Gross Domestic Product

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) represents the total value of the goods and services produced in the United States. The Census MSA geographic boundary has been the common measure of GDP. In the MACOG region, there are two Metropolitan areas: South Bend-Mishawaka, IN-MI MSA and Elkhart-Goshen, IN MSA. Between 2016 and 2017, the real GDP rose 4.2 percent in the Elkhart-Goshen MSA, while the real GDP in the South Bend-Mishawaka MSA dropped 0.5 percent. The Elkhart-Goshen MSA has consistently been growing (nearly five times) faster than the South Bend-Mishawaka MSA, with a 2017 growth rate of 11.6 compared to 2.1 for the South Bend-Mishawaka MSA.

### Retail Sales

Retail sales in the MACOG region increased by nine percent in 2017. The total retail sales increased in Elkhart (10.4 percent), Marshall (9 percent), and St. Joseph (7 percent) Counties but decreased in Kosciusko County (1.6 percent).

**Figure 2-1: Annual Employment Change**



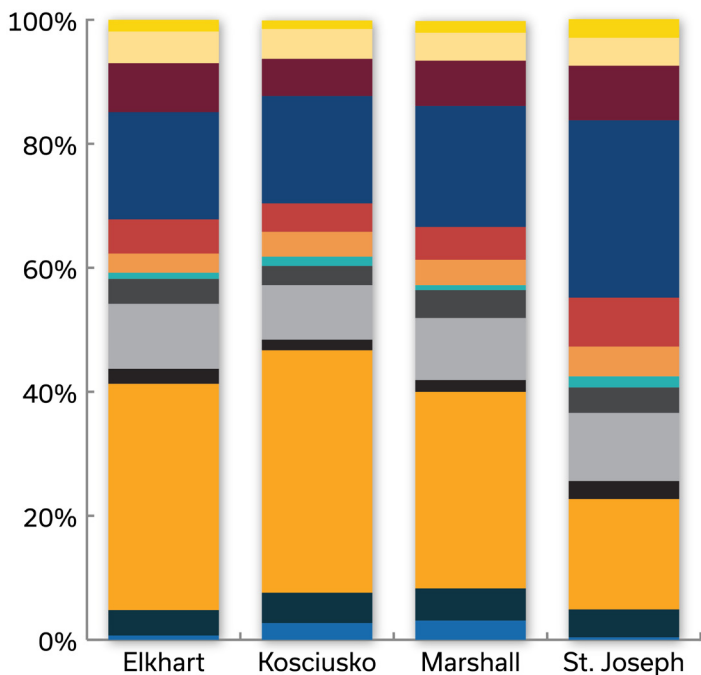
Source: STATSIndiana, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW)

**Employment**

Elkhart County continues to lead the other three counties in the MACOG region in employment, with a five percent growth in 2017 (Figure 2-1).

Nearly 20 percent of Indiana residents are employed in the manufacturing industry. In the MACOG region, all counties, except St. Joseph County, manufacturing is the leading employed industry; Elkhart County (36.5 percent), Kosciusko County (39 percent), and Marshall County (32 percent). Manufacturing is a considerable industry in St. Joseph County, though, with 18 percent employed. See Figure 2-2 for employment by industries in the MACOG region. The most employed industry in St. Joseph County is in educational services, health care, and social assistance, with 29 percent. This is higher than the state (23 percent) and the nation (23 percent).

**Figure 2-2: Employment by Industry**



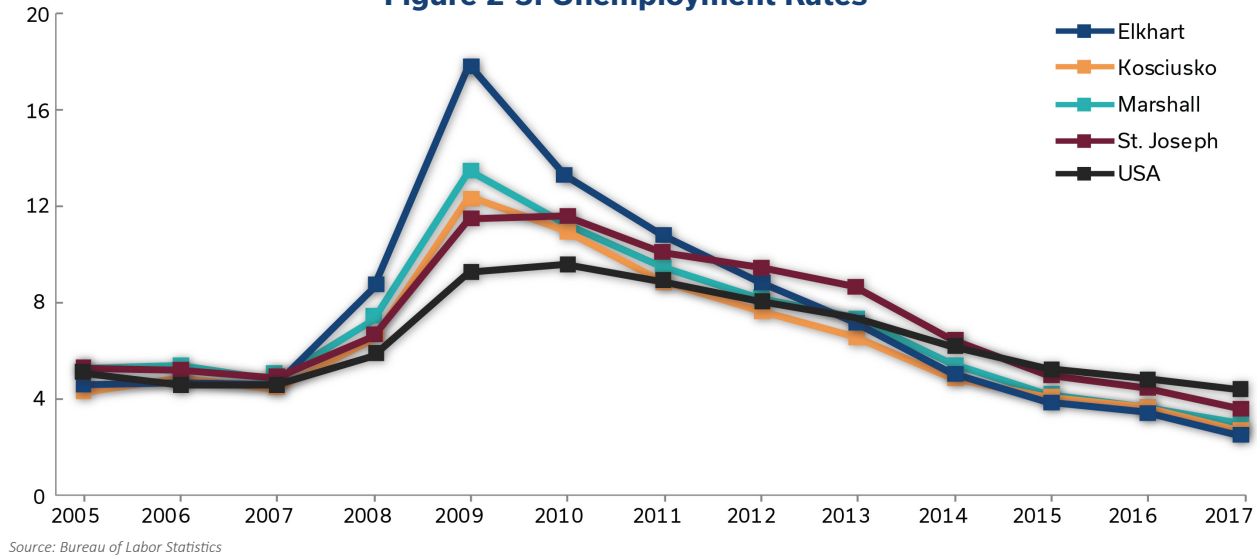
**LEGEND**

- Public administration
- Other services, except public administration
- Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services
- Educational services, and health care and social assistance
- Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services
- Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing
- Information
- Wholesale trade
- Transportation and warehousing, and utilities
- Manufacturing
- Retail trade
- Construction
- Agriculture, forestry, fishing & hunting, & mining

Source: 2017 ACS 5-Year Estimate



**Figure 2-3: Unemployment Rates**



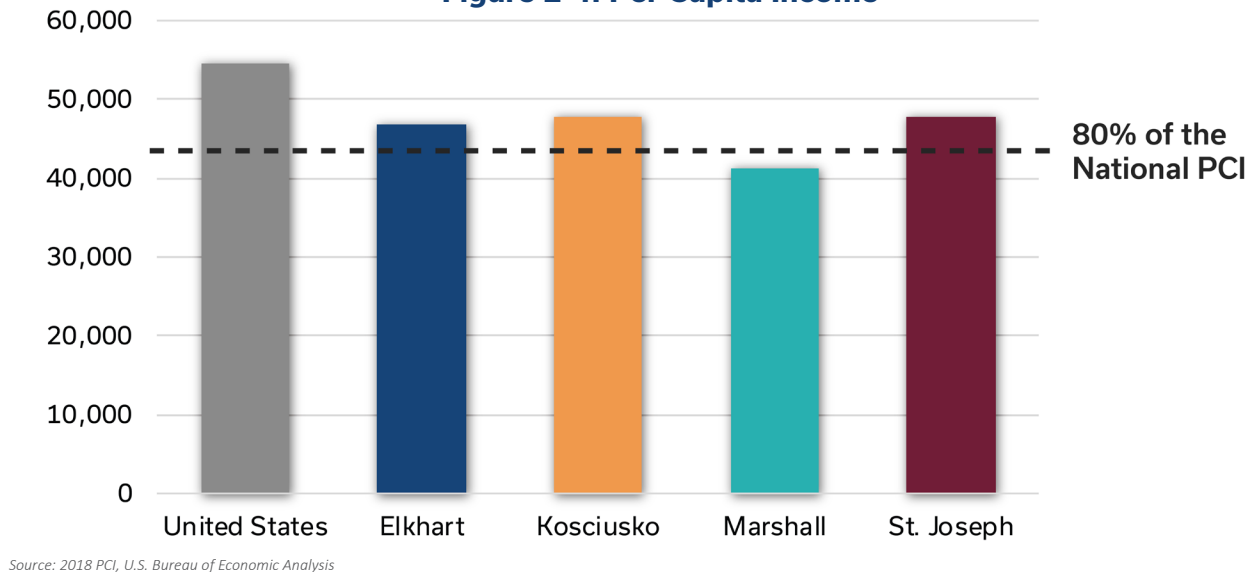
**Distress**

The EDA requires an EDD to meet one of three distress criteria to be an eligible recipient for the partnership planning grant. One criterion is an unemployment rate that is one percent greater than the national average unemployment rate for the most recent 24-month period. Another criterion is a per capita income below 80 percent of the national average. The third criterion is a special need determined by the EDA.

The unemployment rates in the region have improved to be lower than the 4.4 national unemployment rate in 2017. The 2017 unemployment rates for Elkhart County was 2.5, Kosciusko County was 2.7, Marshall County was 3.0, and St. Joseph County was 3.6, see **Figure 2-3**.

According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, the 2018 average per capita income for the region is 80 percent of the national average; however, Marshall County falls below the national average with 76 percent, see **Figure 2-4**.

**Figure 2-4: Per Capita Income**





## Socioeconomic Profile

### Population Density

Indiana’s population is estimated to be 6,666,818, ranked the 17th largest state in the US, based on the 2017 population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau Population Estimates Program.

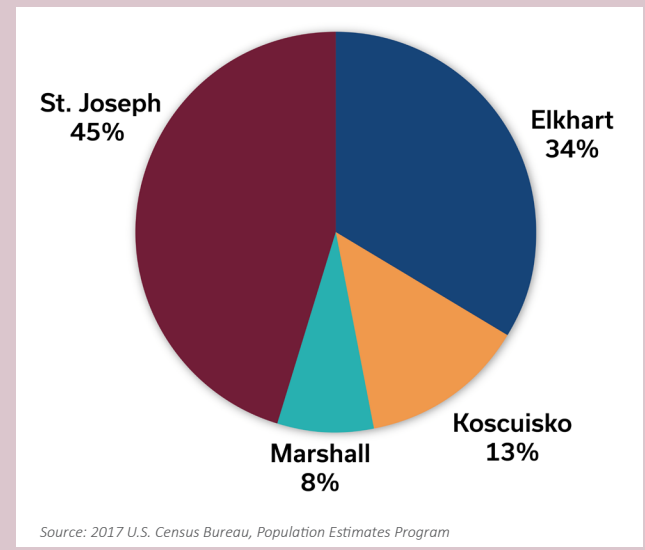
The combined population in the MACOG region is 601,170. See **Figure 2-5** for the regional population distribution. The region is projected to grow to almost 650,000 people in 2050, nearly 8 percent more than the current population (**Figure 2-6**).

### Race & Ethnicity

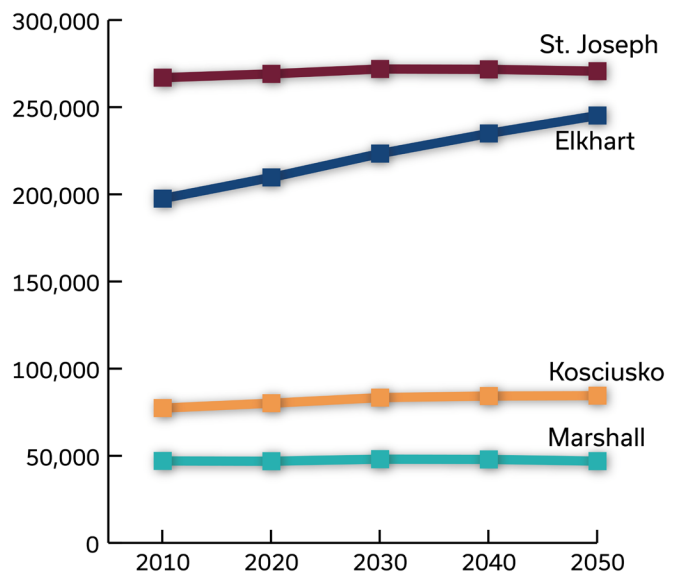
Indiana’s population is expected to become more racially and ethnically diverse over the next 20 years. According to the State’s Demographer, the fastest-growing group will be those identifying as two or more races. It is anticipated this group will increase 135 percent by 2030. In Elkhart County, the multiracial population is expected to grow by 95 percent to 10,676 people by 2040. St. Joseph County’s multiracial population is expected to grow by 99 percent to 16,452 people. In Marshall and Kosciusko Counties, the population with two or more races will still be under 2,000, so there are no projections for those counties.

Asian and black/African American racial groups are also expected to grow significantly in the state, with moderate growth in this region. The Hispanic population is expected to double in the state. Currently, over 6 percent of Indiana residents identify as Hispanic. In Elkhart County, the Hispanic population is projected to grow by 127 percent. In Kosciusko, Marshall, and St. Joseph Counties, the population is estimated to grow 60 percent, 79 percent, and 44 percent respectively.

**Figure 2-5: Regional Population Distribution**

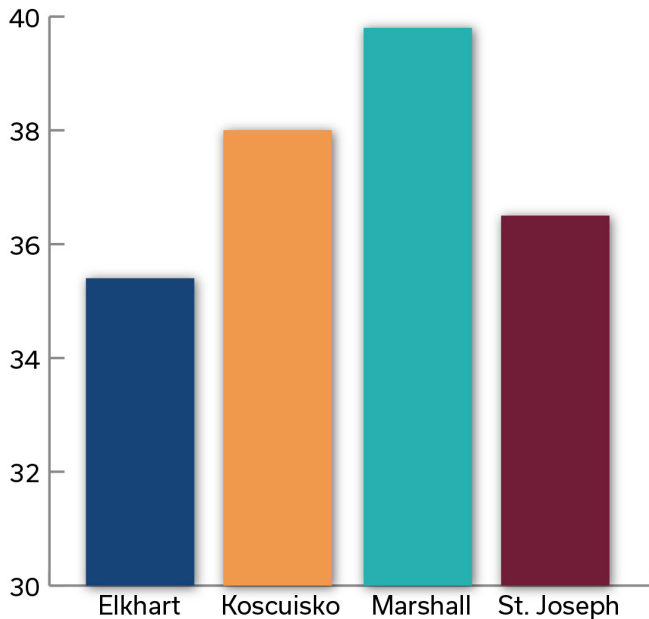


**Figure 2-6: Regional Population Projections**





**Figure 2-7: Median Age**



Source: 2017 ACS 5-Year Estimate

Spanish is the main non-English language spoken in the region, with the area having a higher percentage of Spanish-speakers, at 8 percent, as compared to 5 percent of Indiana’s population. Of the population that speaks Spanish, fewer than half speak English less than very well.

**Median Age**

The median age is increasing in the state and the MACOG region. Marshall and Kosciusko Counties have median ages older than Indiana’s 37.5 years, and Elkhart

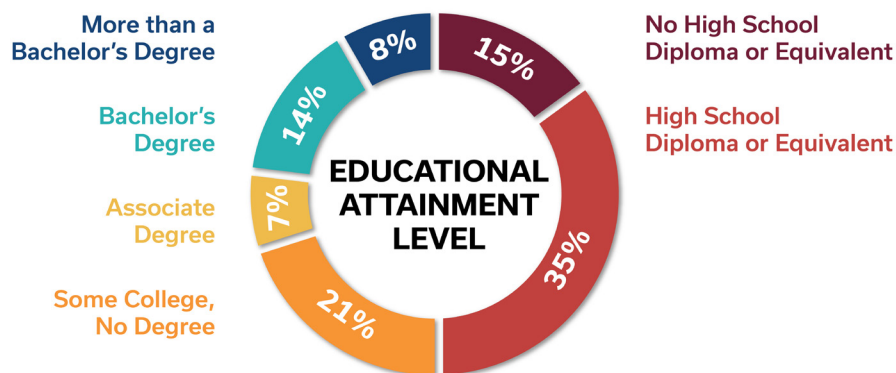
and St. Joseph Counties have younger median ages (**Figure 2-7**). A higher median age reflects the aging population and workforce, which is changing the demand for particular housing and daily service needs. The percentage of each county’s population over age 65 has increased since 2010. Like the state, each county has experienced growth of approximately one percent in seven years. Marshall County has the greatest amount over 65, at 16.5 percent of the population.

**Educational Attainment**

The educational attainment in the MACOG region remains lower than the state with 31 percent receiving a post-secondary degree. The state’s average post-secondary attainment is 39 percent. The educational attainment with the highest percentage in the state and each county is a high school graduate or equivalent. The population across the MACOG region reflects an approximate 80/20 percent split between those with a high school degree and a bachelor’s degree or higher, respectively. See **Figure 2-8** for the breakdown of the Educational Attainment in the MACOG region in 2017.

The change in education for the 18 to 24-year-old population since 2010 tells a different story. The highest educational attainment in Kosciusko County and

**Figure 2-8: Regional Educational Attainment Level**



Source: 2017 ACS 5-Year Estimate

St. Joseph County is Some College or Associate's Degree. In Elkhart County and Marshall County, it is predominately those with a High School Graduation.

Since 2010, the percentage of people attending college and earning associate's degrees or higher has been increasing in Indiana. That is reflected in the changes in Marshall and Kosciusko Counties. In Elkhart County, the percentage earning Bachelor's Degrees or Higher has declined while those with Some College or Associate's Degrees are growing. In St. Joseph County, the percentage with Some College or Associate's Degree has decreased while those with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher are increasing. The industries in the region need a labor force of varying skills and training. Many require higher education skills while some have programs that begin training in high school.

An increasingly diverse population and workforce are strengths for the region. Americans are starting to prefer living in racially, politically, and economically diverse communities and workplaces with more diversity are shown to be more innovative and adaptable.

### **Housing**

The jobs to household ratio gauge the distribution of employment opportunities and workforce (those actively employed) population across a geographic area. A ratio between 1.0 and 1.5 indicates a community has approximately an equal balance of jobs and housing. A ratio of less than 1.0 indicates a community has more housing than jobs, whereas, a ratio greater than 1.5 indicates a community has more jobs than housing.

The jobs to household ratio in 2017 in the MACOG region is 1.42, increasing from 1.2

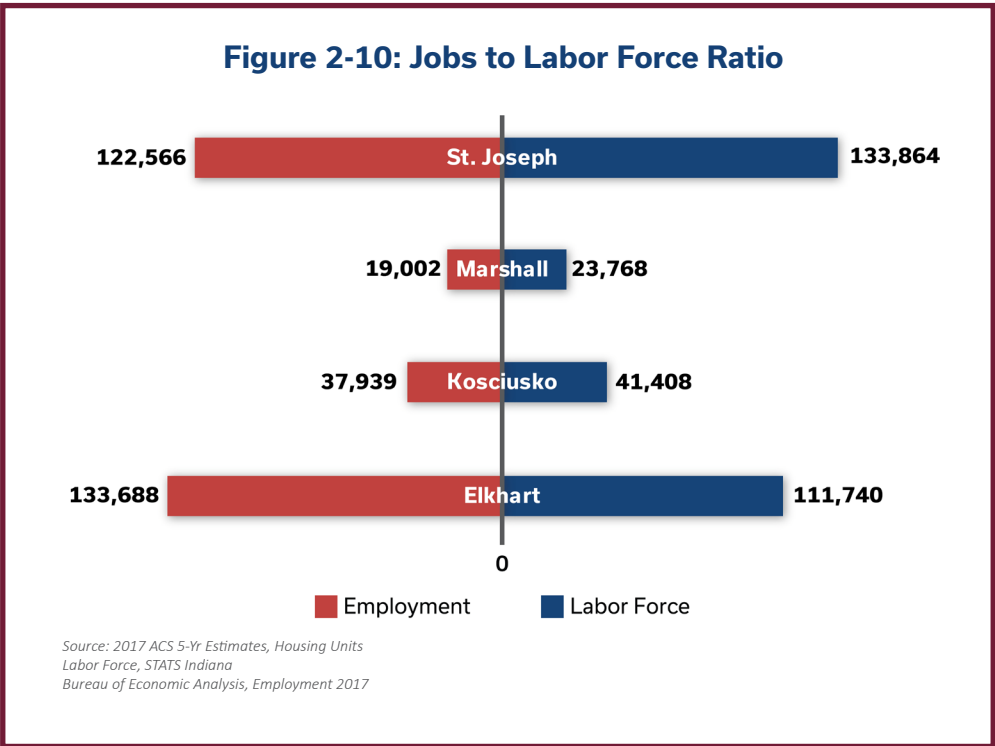
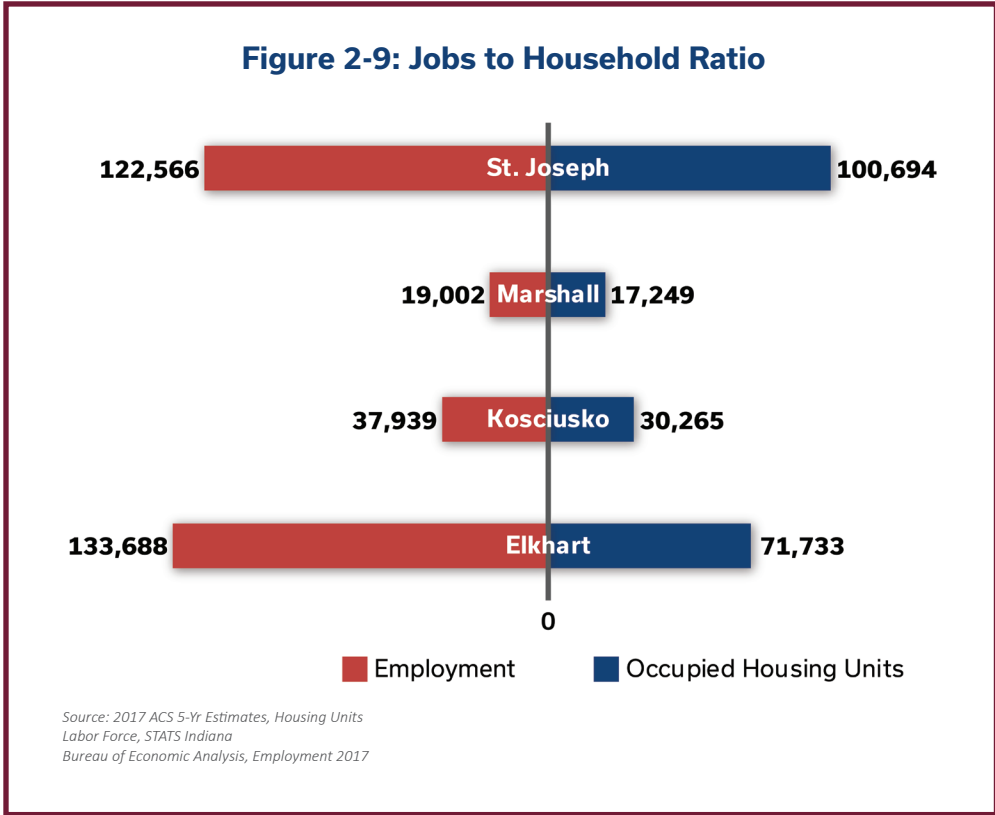
in 2010. Elkhart County has the highest ratio, at 1.86, indicating it has more jobs than housing. Kosciusko, Marshall, and St. Joseph Counties average around a balanced ratio of jobs to housing with 1.25, 1.10, and 1.22 respectively. **Figure 2-9** displays the balance between jobs and households.

The average household size in the MACOG region is 2.64. The average family size is over 3.1. Examining the jobs to labor force ratio, this ratio for the MACOG region is 1.01. A ratio of just over one job per household may not be enough for the labor force. The jobs-to-labor force ratio is 1.0 for the region. Only Elkhart County has a ratio of over 1.0 with 1.2, whereas the other counties are below 1.0. Although, the ratios are low in Kosciusko, Marshall, and St. Joseph Counties there are jobs in those counties for most of their labor forces. **Figure 2-10** displays the balance between jobs and the labor force.

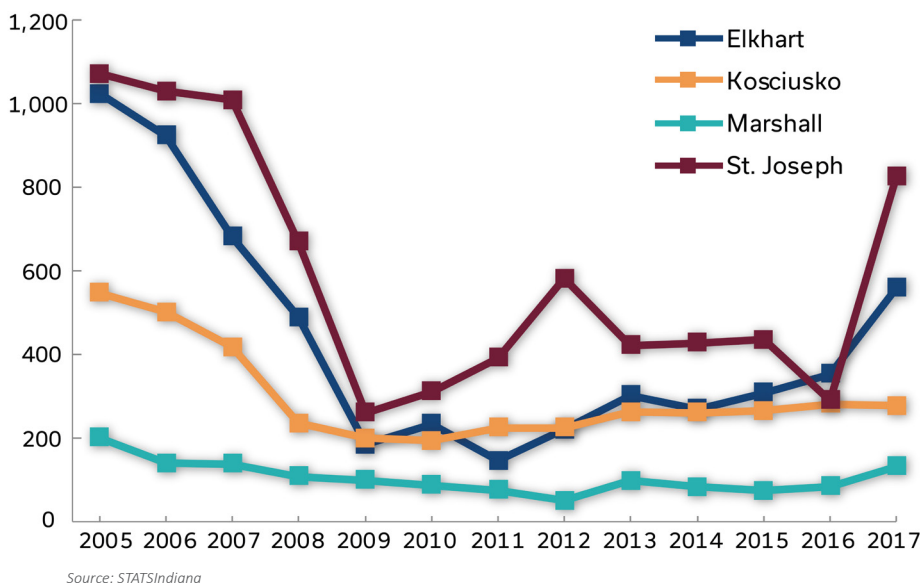
In each county of the MACOG region, approximately an average of 16 percent of workers commute from counties outside the MACOG region: 21 percent in Elkhart County, 14 percent in Kosciusko County, 16 percent in Marshall County, and 13 percent in St. Joseph County.

The population is mobile and does not always seek to live and work in the same community. Lower ratios in counties are understandable because of commuting out of the county. Balanced jobs to household ratio should be a goal in any region along with offering desirable workforce employment, education, and amenities, as these are qualities families and individuals, seek when deciding to locate in a particular place.





**Figure 2-11: Residential Building Permits**



**Building Permits**

In 2017, nearly 1,800 residential building permits were filed in the MACOG region (Figure 2-11). Of the 1,795 permits, 43 percent were for buildings with five or more family units. Almost all of the other permits were for single-family detached residences. Over the past three years, the number of permits has been consistently increasing, with 2017 recorded as the highest activity since the economic recession in the late 2000s.

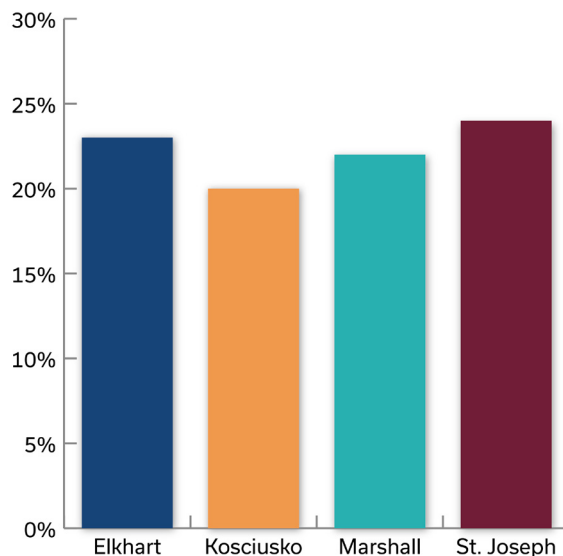
pay more than 30 percent of their incomes on housing with 24 percent. Elkhart County had the second-highest with 23 percent. Kosciusko County had the least with 20 percent.

**Housing Affordability**

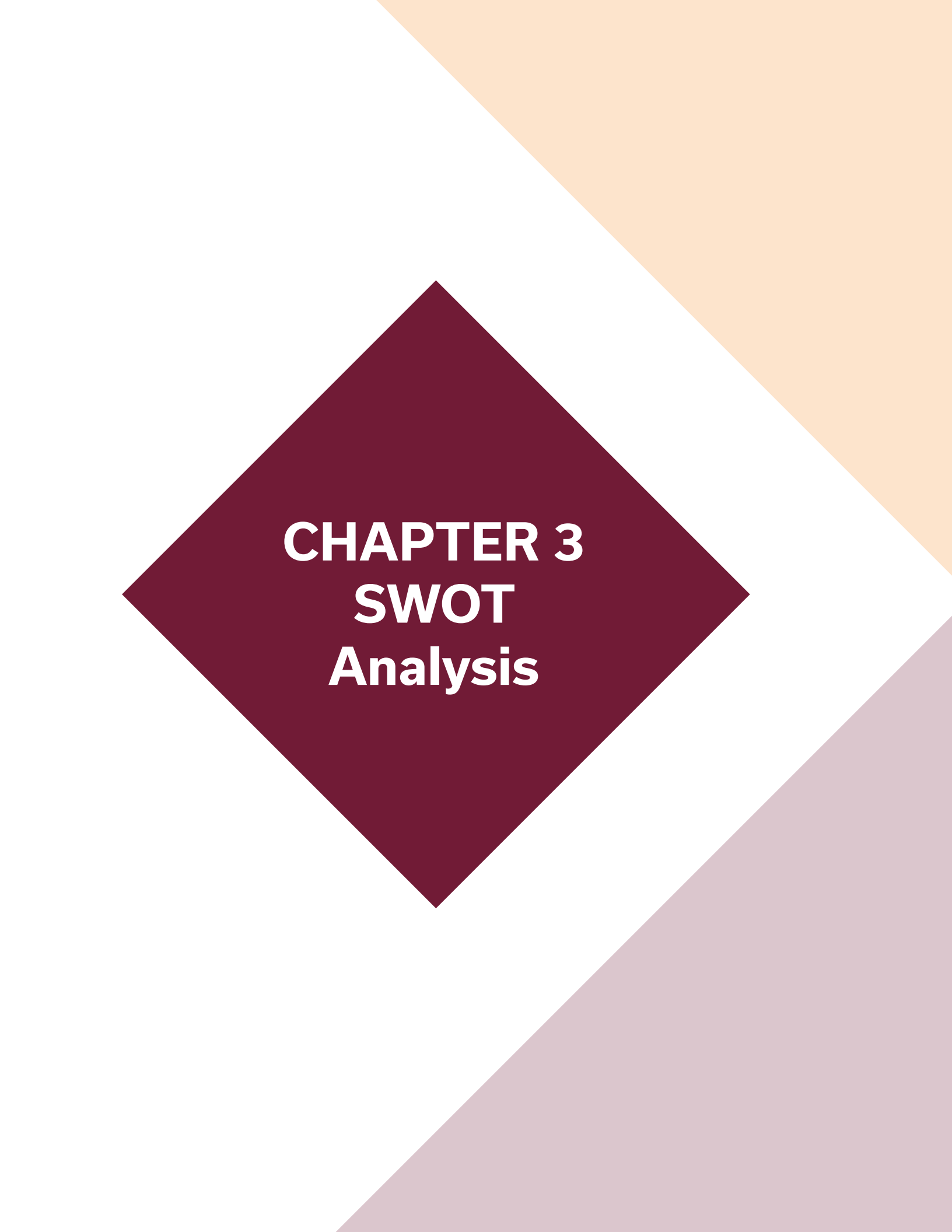
To determine housing affordability in the MACOG region, we need to consider the percentage breakdown of the household income. If housing costs exceed 30 percent of a family’s or individual’s income, households are considered cost-burdened.

Approximately 23 percent of all households in the MACOG region are considered cost-burdened. Figure 2-12 displays the breakdown of the housing cost-burden in the MACOG region. St. Joseph County had the highest amount of the population who

**Figure 2-12: Housing Affordability**



Source: 2013 - 2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates



**CHAPTER 3**  
**SWOT**  
**Analysis**



## 3

The unique qualities from communities in the MACOG region provide assets as well as challenges. This chapter summarizes the economic challenges our region is facing as well as areas of opportunities we can capitalize on. A SWOT analysis evaluates the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the area. Strengths and weaknesses are specific to the evaluated place, while opportunities and threats can be external influences. The analysis looks into the current conditions, qualitative and quantitative, that begin to show the region's character.

## Strengths

Our region is centrally located in the Great Lakes megaregion, expanding our quality of life by being within hours to major metropolitan areas such as Indianapolis, Chicago, Detroit, and Columbus. We have access to many quality of life amenities such as Lake Michigan beaches, attractive state parks, year-round use of trails, high-end restaurants, major and minor league professional sporting events, theaters, and shopping.

Communities in our region are increasingly supporting the development of biking and walking trails. Not just our cities but towns too are making financial commitments to ensure their community features a trail network. The provision of trails has proven to be a catalyst for economic development.

The return on investment supersedes the cost to develop these systems. Our region features highly-sought-after trail systems that attract users from all over the midwest. Not only can our residents enjoy using the trails during the spring, summer, and fall months, but we can take advantage of the winter conditions to enjoy cross-country skiing and trekking through the woods at many of our state and local parks.

We are fortunate to be home to many higher education institutions that add to our quality of life. In particular, the University of Notre Dame (ND). Over the years, ND has invested millions of dollars to transform the urbanized area of South Bend. Improving our transportation corridors and gateways, community





development activities with the Eddy Street Commons, and investments in renewable energy technologies. In addition to ND, we are home to Indiana University-South Bend, Ivy Tech Community College, Bethel University, Goshen College, Grace College, St. Mary's College, and Ancilla College. All of these institutions play a vital role in developing our workforce and providing the necessary training and education to build skill sets in diverse industry sectors.

Our region's employment conditions continue to outshine the state. Since 2010, employment has steadily increased with Elkhart County seeing a five percent growth in employment. Manufacturing remains the industry leader in three of the four counties (Elkhart, Kosciusko, and Marshall) in the MACOG region and leads the way in the nation for the RV and orthopedic industries. Educational services, health care, and social assistance

industries in St. Joseph County surpasses the state (23 percent) and the nation (23 percent) with 29 percent. Additionally, our unemployment rates in 2018 remained lower than the national average (3.9 percent). The unemployment rate for Elkhart County was 2.6, Kosciusko County was 2.6, Marshall County was 3.2, and St. Joseph County was 3.6.

Within our region, we have skilled economic development specialists to aid in attracting businesses and acquiring grant opportunities from our federal and state partners. We continue to reap the benefits from receiving \$42 million for the Regional Cities Initiative from the Indiana Economic Development Corporation. In April 2019, we received a \$42 million grant from the Lilly Endowment Inc. to support the Labs for Industry Futures and Transformation (LIFT) Network. This will aid our region to be more productive and resilient, and attract talent in the digital economy.





## Weaknesses

Above all of the common weaknesses our communities share, the weakness that holds us back the most from growing and being an attractive place to live and work is we collectively fail to effectively market our assets and dispel the negative perceptions.

While economically we may do all that is right to diversify our industry sectors and build walkable mixed-use developments, geographically our region does not share the same natural scenic landscapes and favorable weather conditions offered in the western and southern states of the U.S. While we may not have access to the mountains or the ocean, we do have a lot to offer in terms of quality places, but fail to effectively market our region to appear just as favorable as places in the western and southern states of the U.S.

We need to re-tailor our message from being known as the “RV and Orthopedic Capitals in the nation” to highlight how “open we are to do business and support entrepreneurs,” how “our communities have high-quality infrastructure systems,” and advertise our regional trail systems.

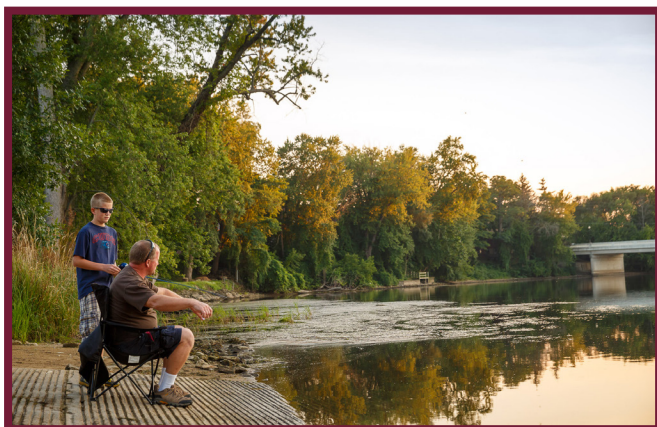
We could do better in marketing our quality public and private school systems. Contrary to the negative perception by “non-locals,” our region has many quality public and private schools available for families to

choose from. Additionally, the state of Indiana offers families the ability to send their children to a school of their choice.

Another negative perception our region receives is safety perception. Communities in our region are perceived as not safe due to reports of crime and drug abuse. While this is a valid perception, the reality is these activities occur at a micro-level in specific areas of our region. The majority of these incidences were caused by visiting individuals or non-locals.

Other weaknesses include the need to upgrade our broadband infrastructure to attract businesses and professionals. While there is an extensive fiber network available in St. Joseph County and a smaller-scale network in Marshall and Elkhart Counties, many of the rural areas do not have access to the same level of broadband service.

Lastly, affordable housing is another area of weakness as housing costs are rising faster than wage growth. The neighborhoods in which affordable housing is available is a turnoff for prospective families and individuals as some of these homes are located in disinvested older neighborhoods that were once built around thriving economic centers. Reinvestment in these neighborhoods is needed to preserve the character and bring new life by making them a more inviting place to want to live in.







## Opportunities

The MACOG region does have a strong base of existing economic activity and momentum from the many regional planning efforts that have occurred and are in progress. The most recent plans include the Innovate Indiana Regional Cities Plan and the Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS). Currently, the City of Elkhart is conducting its 2040 plan that seeks to diversify its industry sectors, build a strong workforce, provide quality infrastructure systems, and address neighborhood and quality of life issues.

Regional economic leaders are exploring opportunities to utilize their innovation assets including Notre Dame focusing on being known as a top-tier research university and advancing its local region. The region also has other higher educational institutions with graduates possessing high-skilled talent. This is an opportunity

for our region to link the region's industrial base and its research assets, which will improve the innovation ecosystem-workforce and talent, diverse industry growth, and a place for entrepreneurs and new businesses to thrive.

Although the workforce is aging and communities in the MACOG region are challenged to train students and newer members of the workforce in major industries such as manufacturing, our LEDOs, private entities, and school systems continue to instill programs at an early age to introduce students to industries to build skill sets and reduce the time to earn a degree. Efforts to develop the local workforce will aid attracting workers from outside the region.

Investment is being made in our counties to upgrade the broadband infrastructure to dark fiber and expand the fiber network into under-served areas to generate



economic development. Recently, ChoiceLight and St. Joseph County received an EDA grant to expand its fiber-optic network to the western portion of the county. Elkhart County is exploring the opportunities to install dark fiber lines and expand the service to its cities and towns.

Communities in the MACOG region have seen the benefits of and gravitated towards developing placemaking projects that focus on creating walkable and bikeable communities to attract and retain talented professionals. An incredible amount of new mixed-use developments and apartments have been under construction in the past

year, particularly in downtown South Bend, Mishawaka, and Plymouth. The City of Elkhart will also be seeing new housing and commercial developments in their downtown River District in the coming year(s). Many of the communities in the MACOG region are updating their park master plans to explore ways to improve their park systems and provide the park amenities residents desire. Additionally, trail development remains a top priority for our communities identified from their comprehensive plans. An opportunity also exists to better promote our cities riverfronts and increase access to the waterways and recreational use as







blueways; a canoe and kayak water trail.

Through 2017 and 2018, MACOG partnered with the Purdue University Center for Regional Development (PCRD) to finalize a study that examined the region’s defense industry clusters and how to best leverage these assets. The study shows the region has a tremendous opportunity to capitalize in this market as over \$83 million is leaking from our region. MACOG will explore opportunities to work with the RDA, the South Bend-Elkhart Regional Partnership, Chambers of Commerce, and industry business leaders to create strategies and an action plan.

There has been an increasing demand to identify and remediate brownfields to economically viable uses. In July 2018, MACOG facilitated the development of a brownfields working group and regional Coalition. In 2019, the Coalition received an EPA brownfields grant to fund and provide technical expertise to complete site-specific reuse plans.

The Regional Cities grant continues to aid in the transformation of our communities

to attract and retain talented professionals. The RDA narrowed the original 46 Regional Cities projects down to 26 priority investments. In 2018, progress was made in funding commitments and all 26 Regional Cities projects were approved by the Indiana Economic Development Corporation.

Lastly, in April 2019, the University of Notre Dame and the Regional Partnership announced a \$42.4 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. to form the Labs for Industry Futures and Transformation (LIFT) Network. The LIFT Network will accelerate the region’s vision from the CEDS and the REDS and builds upon the momentum from the Regional Cities Initiative. The LIFT Network will enhance and link cutting-edge expertise, technologies, workforce development programs, and innovation-based facilities throughout the region. The LIFT Network will be a vital component to help diversify our regional economies to be more resilient.





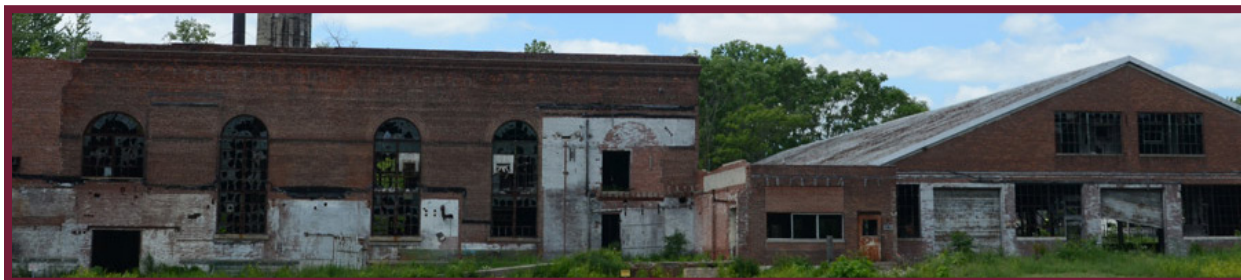
## Threats

Although our region has many assets that make it an attractive place to live and work, when compared to similar economic regions in the nation, our region lags in five key areas. These areas are educational attainment to enter higher-skilled jobs, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) occupations, patent awards, venture capital and federal commercialization, and employment in high-growth start-ups and “young” firms. Additionally, there is a need for mentors to guide entrepreneurs and hubs for these individuals to come together and share ideas.

Our rate of population growth continues to be behind the state (1.3 percent) and the nation (2.4 percent). The region has difficulty reducing the out-migration trend, particularly retaining talented professionals. The educational attainment remains lower than the state and nation, which limits the ability of existing industries to expand into emerging employment areas. A high percentage of the workforce is at or approaching the retirement age. Much of the workforce in this demographic is employed in skilled-trade jobs and manufacturing jobs but community leaders fear these skill sets will be lost because of the younger workforce not pursuing a career in these trades to replace the retiring workforce. While our region has plenty of jobs available much of the population entering the workforce is pursuing careers in professional technology jobs.

Our region is challenged by heavily relying on the strong manufacturing sector while not having diverse industry clusters. This raises concerns amongst professionals that the region may not withstand another economic downturn. Although the MACOG region has a thriving advanced manufacturing sector, regional firms are continuously under competitive pressures with similar-sized communities in the United States who have the quality of life amenities and their more sought after geographic locations of the west coast and southern states. These firms are challenged to rapidly stay innovative and introduce new processes and products into the market. Our education systems have outdated facilities and need to upgrade their technology to support workforce training for automation, robotics, and health.

Lastly, the cost and complexity of remediating potentially contaminated properties such as brownfields and EPA Superfund sites continues to be a threat to the region. Several sites in the region are suspected to have or are known to pose health risks, such as groundwater contamination that may threaten drinking water. Potentially contaminated sites require more complex transactions and increased risk for private developers and also hinder redevelopment on adjacent properties. Blighted properties not only pose health and environmental risks but their presence in the area negatively impacts the home values and is a drawback to attract new families, individuals, and businesses.





**CHAPTER 4**  
**Plan of Action**

## 4

**Our Vision**

**“Northern Indiana is a knowledge-driven, highly connected region that serves and provides access to a global innovation economy. We will be recognized for our world-class higher education and community partnerships, access and connectivity, and high-performing communities.”**



The region will achieve the vision through diversifying its industry sectors and adopting innovation-based economic development strategies where interconnected areas of focus lead to the strength of an ecosystem that provides a **world-class higher education system** to train our workforce, **community partnerships** to leverage resources and communicate best practices, **access, and connectivity** to quality services, infrastructure systems, and amenities in **high performing communities** throughout the region. These are the values we stand behind.

By leveraging the success of the region’s recent quality of place-Regional Cities Initiative, over \$400 million in investment has positively impacted communities

throughout the region. Building on this momentum, the region is forging ahead with “Ensuring Prosperity” (the Regional Economic Development Strategy) by addressing five strategic pillars in **Industry, Entrepreneurship, Workforce, Talent, and Inclusion**, with the overarching goal of matching the national per capita income by 2025.

The region continues to leverage its historical assets. A region with a rich history of innovation, a place that has always made things that people rely on every day, a manufacturing region. Where 35 percent of jobs in our region fall in this sector. Jobs in these industries have shaped the region’s economic history for many generations. However, to remain competitive and resilient, the region is



committed to diversify its industry sectors and ensure innovation-led strategies are at the forefront and include regional projects that positively impact that advance our region's economy.

Cohesive collaboration around health, growth, and sustainability are key themes as the region positions itself to best mobilize regional innovation leading to more productive, resilient, and talent-driven communities. Investment in building a network to enhance and link the cutting-edge expertise, technologies, workforce development programs, innovation-based facilities, and industry will have a significant impact in the region. Increasing productivity and growing industry through technological advancement, new product lines, and

access to broader markets will enhance and support the region's specialized industries. Catalyzing growth in emerging high-growth industry sectors will impact the region's economic resilience, grow jobs, and diversify the region's industrial mix. Advancing skills and deepening the region's talent base with leading-edge knowledge and training to meet industry demands and talent attraction initiatives will generate opportunities leading to the growth of the local economy.





## Goal 1: World-Class Higher Education and Community Partnerships

The region will focus on increasing the availability of work-ready talent for all key industry sectors by raising post-secondary education attainment levels. The strength of the region's educational institutions and how engagement is happening between them, employers, and agencies in each county bodes well for the region. People working at solutions from different perspectives have already begun sharing best practices and building efficiencies. Exploration of how to frame educational efforts around career pathways is underway and already developing a Center for Work-Based Learning where a learn-work ecosystem will exist to match students with training and resources and employers based on industry demands.

The region will increase social capital to improve academic and life success for

individuals across the region. Initiatives include: identifying gaps and developing stronger networks to enhance out-of-school learning opportunities; establishing a culture of mentoring across the region for students and adults; educating parents and the broader community on what future careers look like and the pathways to them; and connecting adult learners and employers with resources to encourage advanced education and training.

The region has initiatives underway to further assist students in overcoming financial barriers to post-secondary success; maximizing the utilization of Indiana's 21st Century Scholars program from enrollment to college completion, increasing FAFSA completion rates, and building dual-credit capacity in high schools.

The region has succeeded in attracting some of the best and brightest to the region as college students. More than 40,000 students are enrolled in higher education in the region. The region retains only a small percentage of these well-educated people once they graduate or obtain advanced degrees. Regional initiatives include: enhancing desirability of the region through increased community spaces; diverse housing choices; and connectivity among communities to attract and retain talent at all levels with the outcome of positive in-migration by 2025.

### Objectives:

- Establish effective human capital and facilities to provide optimal education opportunities
- Provide access to educational opportunities for all residents of the region
- Create an environment in the region for life-long learning and education
- Provide affordable access to educational opportunities and jobs that require higher levels of education
- Encourage an atmosphere for entrepreneurship opportunities and activities



## GOAL 2

### Goal 2: Access and Connectivity

The region is uniquely positioned in Northcentral Indiana with robust infrastructure and opportunities to grow and expand on key regional assets. The region is a mere 90 miles from Chicago, the nation's third-largest economy, and near other economic centers such as Indianapolis, Chicago, Detroit, and Columbus. The region has opportunities to better connect to other markets.

The region will leverage current assets while looking to enhance and expand opportunities throughout each community. Initiatives include: expanding the capabilities of the region's fiber network and our railways for both cargo and passenger travel; parks and trails enhancement projects; expanding our airport to add more airlines, daily flights, and non-stop destinations; increasing the amount of direct investment for coordinated transportation and road improvements throughout the region; and supporting business expansions and relocations through the discovery of available properties and sites.

Communities are continuing to explore ways to improve residents' access to employment opportunities. Not having access to a vehicle prevents some residents from having a higher-paying job. Local leaders are evaluating opportunities to improve public transit, enhance transportation services, and find new partnerships to provide convenient transportation throughout the region. Advances in technology can help bring employers closer to employees through ridesharing platforms or more efficient dispatching programs. Cities are promoting using smarter technology to find innovative solutions to current and future needs.

#### **Objectives:**

- Provide regionally coordinated and connected public transit systems readily available for those most in need
- Create affordable and safe sustainable communities for families/people to live
- Promote alternative forms of transportation to help improve regional air quality and health benefits
- Promote sustainable cities through the use of technology and smart infrastructure
- Actively develop local and regional abilities to grow technology for government and business



### GOAL 3

## Goal 3: High-Performing Communities

The region is committed to attracting and growing new economy companies to complement our remarkably strong manufacturing industries, by growing jobs in higher pay traded industries by 20 percent by 2025. The region has a higher concentration of manufacturing jobs than almost anywhere in the United States. We need to keep those jobs and have the opportunity to build on what's already here.

The region's efforts to become a high-performing community will include several initiatives focused on expanding business connections and relationships to access low-cost and convenient supply chain options. Additionally, our region will adopt new technologies and help businesses with technical support to increase productivity and revenue in a more digital economy, as well as connecting them more strongly to higher education institutions.

This will create a workforce of the future and position us to develop advanced manufacturing innovation facilities to attract high-potential economic sectors in areas such as IT/data analytics, health tech, aerospace, defense and more. It will also accelerate the expansion of employment

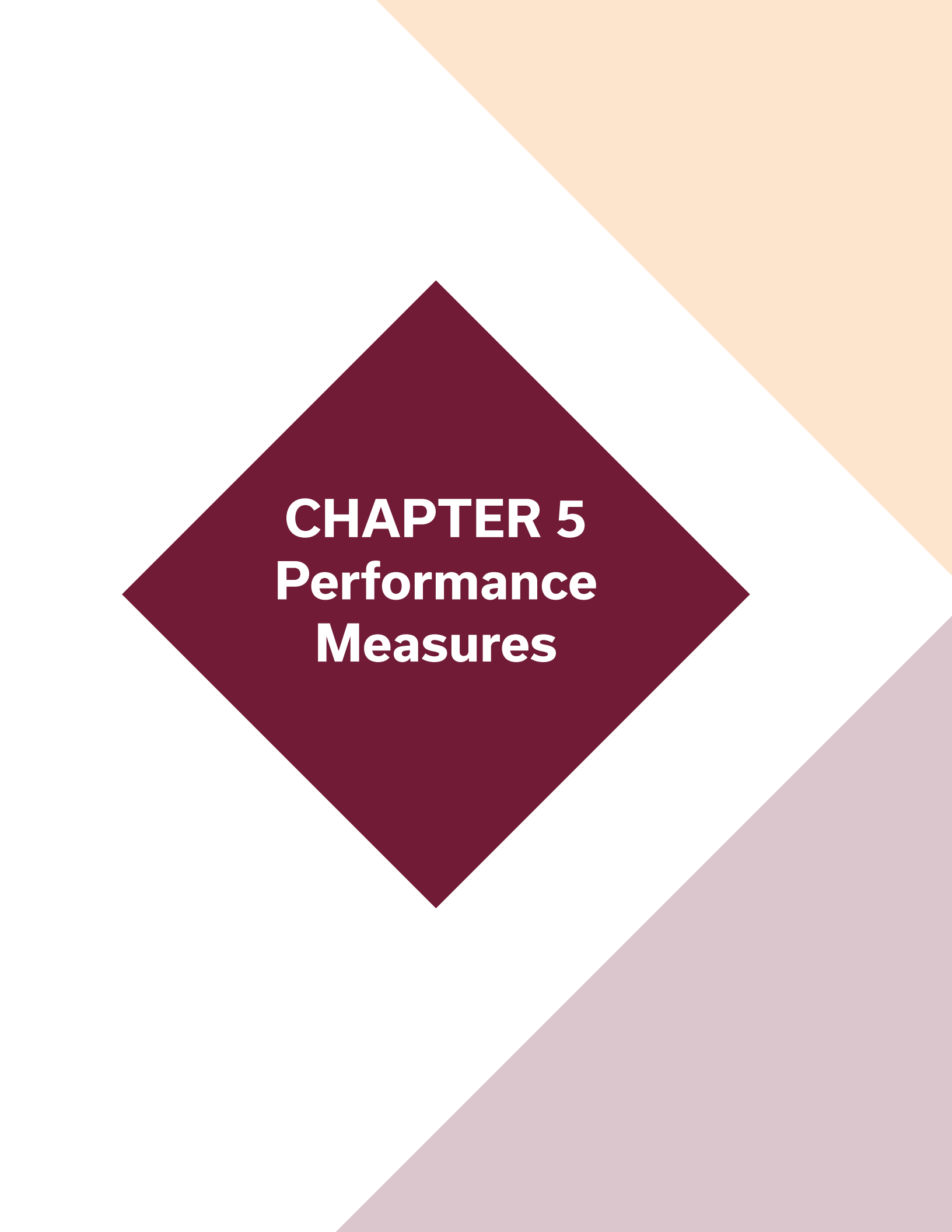
in high-pay trade industry sectors through business attraction efforts, and increase inclusive access to opportunities through the encouragement of community collaboration, diversification, mentorship, and entrepreneurship.

Beyond job attraction, the region is committed to improving the quality of life for residents through creating vibrant downtowns, outdoor recreation opportunities, quality entertainment, and centers of art and culture. The communities will take advantage of natural amenities by focusing development along the water with parks, trails, and residential units. These high-quality amenities attract business-owners, entrepreneurs, and high-skilled professionals to choose to make this region their home.

### **Objectives:**

- Encourage the attraction of new business while still continuing to grow and retain existing businesses
- Attract high-quality/high-paying jobs in industries anticipating growth regionally and globally, especially technology
- Promote alternate energy and green-based industries as integral sectors of the regional economy
- Promote the region to non-residents focusing on the quality of life and economic opportunities
- Develop and support local leadership from businesses and neighborhoods





**CHAPTER 5**  
**Performance**  
**Measures**

5

Performance measures allow for benchmarking of progress towards the vision and goals of the CEDS. MACOG will continue to monitor progress on each of the goals and the plan of action through annual reporting and other tools. The performance measures demonstrate some of the data collected to support the goals. Some of the data is collected in collaboration with the South Bend - Elkhart Regional Partnership, who assist the local economic development organizations with various local and regional economic efforts.

The following data points will serve as the baseline to measure the performance of the CEDs through 2024. Over the next year, MACOG will work with our local governments and economic development organizations to monitor the progress of the goals. Additionally, other data sources may be incorporated to accurately reflect our region’s performance and economic trends as we annually reevaluate our priorities and needs.

**Goal 1: World-Class Higher Education and Community Partnerships**

As a region, we are committed to attracting talent by raising the post-secondary education attainment levels. The educational attainment rate can indicate the types of workforce programs and trainings that are needed to properly attract and retain jobs in the desired industries.

**Post-Secondary Education**

Measuring the attainment of post-secondary education will help us evaluate the access to educational opportunities that our residents need to access the high paying jobs they want.

**Post-Secondary Baseline Attainment**



Source: U.S. Census, 2017 ACS 5-Year Estimate

**Innovation Index**

The Innovation Index is calculated from five major categories that can help regional leaders understand the economic opportunities for businesses and higher education institutions. The Index gives us the ability to compare our region to others across the country.

**Innovation Baseline Indexes**



Source: 2016 Innovation 2.0, StatsAmerica

**Affordable Education**

Improving access to financial resources will help individuals reach their full potential academically and within the workforce. By tracking FASFA completion rates, this allows us to understand students’ access to potential financial resources.



**Baseline FAFSA  
Completed Apps  
2018/2019 Cycle**

**94%**

Source: 2018/2019 Cycle, Federal Student Aid

## Goal 2: Access and Connectivity

Ensuring our businesses and residents have the appropriate access and connectivity to competitive markets, high quality infrastructure systems and technology, and employment are key indicators in attracting and retaining businesses and talented professionals. Our region's quality of life is also impacted by the reliability and efficiency of the transportation network, the accessibility of places, and how people travel to meet their daily needs.

### Broadband

As we pursue diversifying our industries to attract technological jobs, our region must stay ahead of the curve. That means constructing broadband infrastructure in our urban and rural environments to advance economic development and to attract and retain talent.

**Baseline Percent of  
the Population w/Fixed  
25 Mbps/3 Mbps**

**87%**

Source: 2018 Broadband Deployment Report, FCC

### Navigation by all Modes of Transportation

Within a 200 mile radius, our businesses and residents can access regional cities in Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Ohio and we are committed to reduce the commute times to these markets. However, a greater need is to improve the access and connectivity to jobs and core services within our region. One of the ways we can attract and retain talent is building an environment that is conducive to commute by transit, biking, and walking.

**Baseline Commute to  
Work by Carpool, Transit,  
Walking, or Biking**

**15%**

Source: U.S. Census, 2017 ACS 5-Year Estimate

### Accessibility Index

In 2019, MACOG began the process to develop an Equitable Mobility Action Plan (EMAP) to address our region's mobility needs and enhance the quality of life. This plan will set regional benchmarks to measure the accessibility of the transportation network and reduce the barriers and gaps to places of employment, healthcare, and other core services our residents daily depend on. In 2020, MACOG will use a new tool to measure the ease of travel to jobs and core services by all modes of transportation.

### Trail Usage

In 2019, MACOG procured several bicycle and pedestrian counters to measure the usage of our communities' trail systems. Measuring the trail usage will analytically evaluate the investment, and the quality of life impact trails have on our communities. MACOG will begin deploying these counters on regional trail systems in 2020.

### Freight Movement

Beginning in 2020, MACOG will be conducting a freight mobility study to better understand the types of freight and the amount of goods that move through our region. This study will help our region improve freight services. This study will also establish a baseline to monitor the progress of this initiative in 2021.

## Goal 3: High-Performing Communities

Our economic development professionals and industry leaders understand to withstand another economic recession



we need to diversify our industries and improve our communities' quality of life. The region is committed to attract and grow new higher pay trade companies to complement our leading manufacturing industries. We will continue to create vibrant downtowns, instill development principles that encourage biking and walking, expand our recreational amenities, and capitalize on our natural assets.

### Per Capita Income

Per capita income serves as a key measurement of the stability and wealth within a region. It evaluates the standard of living and quality of life of the region. It matters because a rise or decline in per capita income indicates the region's level of prosperity.

**Regional Baseline  
Per Capita Personal  
Income**

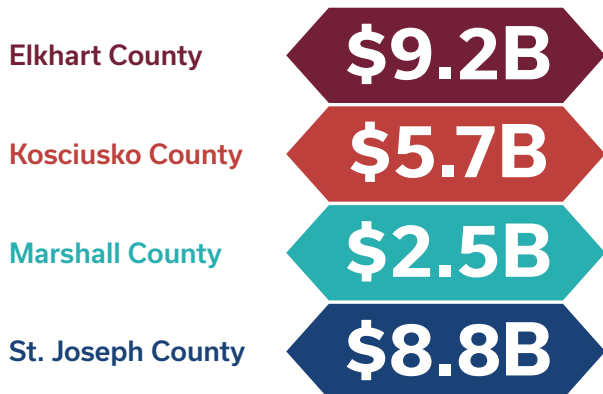


Source: 2018 PCI by County, National Comparison, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

### Net Assessed Value

Construction activity, quality of life projects, and overall economic progress can impact the value of property in a community. By tracking the net assessed value in each community in the region, we can evaluate the progress communities are making to improve the value of their downtowns, commercial centers, and neighborhoods.

#### Regional Baseline NAVs



Source: 2019 IN Gateway Dashboard

### Net Migration

Measuring the net migration will support our region's efforts in recruiting and retaining talented individuals. This measure compares the number of people choosing to move into or out of the region. Through creating high performing communities, more people will choose to move into and stay longer in the region.

**Baseline  
Net Migration**



Source: 2017 Components of Population Change, Stats Indiana

### High Paying Industry Clusters

Although our region excels in manufacturing than almost anywhere in the U.S., we need to diversify our industry clusters for the sustainability of our local economies. Local Economic Development Organizations are focused on attracting and growing higher pay industry clusters in the region.

**Baseline  
Employment in  
High-Pay Traded  
Industry Clusters**



Source: 2018 Annual Report, South Bend-Elkhart Regional Partnership

### Startup Companies

The region has a history of innovation and successful companies built from the entrepreneurial spirit. As a region, we want to be known as an "entrepreneurial hub." We are committed to increase new business ventures, accelerate startup companies, and establish an entrepreneurial ecosystem.

**Baseline  
High Potential  
Startups Launched**



Source: 2018 Annual Report, South Bend-Elkhart Regional Partnership



**APPENDIX A**  
**Public Comment**

A



## Community Engagement

The CEDS will serve as a roadmap to guide our local municipalities, local economic development organizations, and the Regional Partnership to continue to build partnerships and make strategic investments to position the region for success for decades to come. The CEDS will guide us in prioritizing a regional project list and ensure they align with the CEDS' goals, EDA's investment priorities, and the interests of the residents living in the region. The CEDS was developed by the input of the Strategy Committee, residents, and key stakeholders.

Through December, MACOG held a 30-day public comment period. The public had the opportunity to speak with the Strategy Committee during this time to share their thoughts on the draft CEDS. During the public comment period, MACOG held a public open house on December 12, 2019, which seven individuals attended. We received several comments from attendees to know more about water quality initiatives to support water recreation opportunities, the value of remediating

brownfields to encourage redevelopment versus building new structures on greenfield sites, workforce development and education, and trail connections to destination areas. The following pages provide a list of the public comments and MACOG's response.

Additional engagement was done from the process that took place in the development of the South Bend-Elkhart Regional Partnership's Regional Economic Development Strategy. Community engagement methods were conducting stakeholder interviews and focus group meetings with key community leaders, local government officials, public and private institutions, and economic development specialists.





Date Submitted	Submitted By	Public Comment	MACOG's Response
December 12, 2019	Ryan Fellows, St. Joseph County Area Plan, in person	"In my former job with the Southwest Michigan Plan Commission, I was responsible for developing the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and one of the things that I had done was an implementation matrix. I made sure I tied a person or organization to be responsible to implement the strategies. I see the list of goals and objectives but there is no mention of how the objectives will be implemented. How are these objectives going to be implemented?"	MACOG staff mentioned that we included representation of local economic development organizations and the South Bend-Elkhart Regional Partnership and several of these objectives reflect their current work and will be the responsible entities for implementation. Additionally, in previous CEDS, we included a project list and will be doing a call for projects in the coming months that will also indicate the responsible entity for implementation.
December 12, 2019	Matt Maday, American Structure Point, in person	Matt wanted to know more about the process we used to develop the CEDS and asked to take a draft copy to review and provide comments. No comments were submitted by Matt.	MACOG staff provided an overview of the planning process and how we engaged the Strategy Committee.
December 12, 2019	Alison Mynsberge, email  (Alison submitted several comments by email and are separated by topics to efficiently respond to her comments.)	"Has the economic development strategy been coordinated with the regional transportation strategy?"	MACOG replied to Alison by stating we are the Metropolitan Planning Organization responsible for creating the Regional Transportation Plan. Planned infrastructure projects in the Regional Transportation Plan, where appropriate, will be included in the CEDS project list.

Date Submitted	Submitted By	Public Comment	MACOG's Response
December 12, 2019	Alison Mynsberge, email	<p>"The development of solid trail networks, as mentioned in the document, is a great opportunity to improve the community's physical health and economic well-being simultaneously."</p> <p>"Make sure recreational trails easily connect to restaurants for economic growth and the growth of the community's social fabric. Link recreational trails to dog parks, family destinations, and dog/kid-friendly restaurants &amp; shopping areas where parents can relax or shop while kids and/or dogs play within easy view."</p>	<p>MACOG replied that we routinely work with our municipalities and engineers to plan and encourage the best trail alignment, where feasible, that connects to destination areas. MACOG sent Alison a link for more information on regional trail planning at <a href="http://www.macog.com/activetransportation/">http://www.macog.com/activetransportation/</a>.</p>
December 12, 2019	Alison Mynsberge, email	<p>Talented workers are busy workers. We work at least full time. We need social support networks, which include good public school systems, quality care for family members (including children, elderly parents, and/or disabled family members), and functional transportation networks. We also want to be able to visit our friends who still live in the beautiful parts of the country that were mentioned in the CEDS (such as Colorado or California).</p> <p>"Childcare (and affordable wrap-around care) is a problem."</p>	<p>MACOG thanked Allison for her comment.</p>



Date Submitted	Submitted By	Public Comment	MACOG's Response
December 12, 2019	Alison Mynsberge, email	"The loss of the South Bend – Chicago Airports bus route is problematic. If only the South Shore train went to the airports!"	<p>MACOG replied by forwarding a link to a news article reported by WNDU. The article states that at least one company, Royal Excursion has announced their plans to take over this service to continue the bus shuttle service between South Bend and Chicago.</p> <p><a href="https://www.wndu.com/content/news/South-Bend-wont-lose-Chicago-airport-shuttle-bus-service-for-long--566184761.html">https://www.wndu.com/content/news/South-Bend-wont-lose-Chicago-airport-shuttle-bus-service-for-long--566184761.html</a></p>
December 12, 2019	Alison Mynsberge, email	"How many of the area's educated youth are leaving for the West/South vs simply Bloomington & Indy (where they attend public university or find their first job out of college?) Notre Dame's status as a private university has some serious drawbacks for town-grown relations. Examining where the region's high school grads (vs. college students) are going is important for developing a retention strategy."	MACOG thanked Alison for her comment and forwarded the comment to the University of Notre Dame.
December 12, 2019	Alison Mynsberge, email	"Of course, Elkhart's rate of job growth/improvement in unemployment was better than the rest of the region. Starting from the bottom leaves plenty of room for growth. What are the underemployment rates for the region?"	MACOG replied to Alison by referring her to page 9 of the CEDS that provides the region's unemployment rates for Elkhart, Kosciusko, Marshall, and St. Joseph Counties.



Date Submitted	Submitted By	Public Comment	MACOG's Response
December 12, 2019	Alison Mynsberge, email	<p>"How can the region's development strategy focus on workforce development, retaining talent, promoting diversity and inclusion, and being recognized for world-class education when it fails to advocate for its public schools? (see page 18, which is a nice way of saying that the negative perception of schools in the area is due to underperforming public schools, and page 24, which ignores K-12 and focuses only on higher ed)"</p>	<p>MACOG responded to Alison and replied, in regards to page 18 of the CEDS, MACOG and regional community leader's support to have quality schools of choice for families to decide between public or private school systems. Having quality school systems only enhances the region's quality of life for current and future families.</p> <p>In regards to page 24 of the CEDS, while goal 1 focuses on higher education, our regional economic development organizations and local school districts seek and collaborate to offer workforce development programs that educate and train students in K-12 schools for career preparedness.</p>

December 12, 2019	Alison Mynsberge, email	<p>"You can't promote diversity &amp; inclusion or retain talent when the region's message includes that "you don't have to send your kids to public schools" - because that easily becomes a message of economic and/or de facto racial segregation."</p> <p>"There are many well-educated graduates of South Bend's public schools. The attitude that Indiana's public schools – and South Bend's, in particular – are "bad" certainly doesn't welcome its well-educated public school graduates back to the community."</p>	MACOG thanked Allison for her comment.
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Date Submitted	Submitted By	Public Comment	MACOG's Response
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"Realistically, inner-city schools are higher-cost schools.

- Aging, inefficient school buildings
  - High cost to make energy-efficient and up to code given today's needs for power, internet access, accessibility, and safety.
- Higher-needs student body
  - IEPs are generally not supported at private schools.
  - Private schools can kick these kids out & send them back to the public schools.
  - Access to medical care tends to be easier (closer to medical centers/specialty doctors) in urban areas, so higher-needs students may be over-represented in urban school districts.
- Inner-city schools are underfunded relative to their student population.
  - TIFs and other tax abatement strategies often add to the population of students without also adding to the taxable base for the school district.

Date Submitted	Submitted By	Public Comment	MACOG's Response
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ In South Bend, I would guess that very little of the new construction going on downtown will correlate to additional revenues for the school district in the next 5 years, and that the "full value" of the construction currently underway won't be seen in the tax base for SBCSC's funding purposes for 20 years.</li> <li>◦ I suspect these tax abatement strategies are less detrimental to suburban districts with high-cost housing and faster growth of the student population, but may similarly impact poor, rural school districts."</li> </ul>	
<p>December 12, 2019</p>	<p>Alison Mynsberge, email</p>	<p>"It is not possible to improve recreation opportunities in this region without working on water quality."</p> <p>"Our rivers, lakes, ponds, and beautiful Sycamore, Sweet Gum, Oak, and other trees are some of our best natural assets. As beautiful as the West is, it lacks water and has horrible air quality during fire season. The South is humid. As someone who lived out West, I prefer to breathe in the summer and I appreciate not worrying about major wildfires threatening my home, health, and recreational activities. If north-central Indiana cleans up its water resources, it'll be in very good shape for those of us who like 4 seasons."</p>	<p>MACOG replied to Alison by stating we recognize that water quality is critical to many aspects of creating and/or improving recreational opportunities in our region. MACOG provides the St. Joseph River Basin Commission as a staffing solution and is working with the Commission to create incentives for transportation and recreational infrastructure projects that provide water quality benefits in the St. Joseph River Basin.</p>





Date Submitted	Submitted By	Public Comment	MACOG's Response
December 12, 2019	Alison Mynsberge, email	<p>"Until we fix our wastewater issues and restore wetlands to reduce devastating flooding, we will continue to have problems with E. coli and toxic algae that prevent recreational activities most of the time. In the current state, the rivers and lakes are simply not safe to swim in due to cyanobacteria."</p>	<p>MACOG replied by stating wastewater and stormwater infrastructure systems that prevents pollution in our waterways is an important part of creating high performing communities. Fortunately, the presence of cyanobacteria is still uncommon in our region. Wetland restoration is an important part of preventing flooding and pollution that is supported by the local Soil and Water Conservation Districts through USDA programs that pay restoration costs.</p>
December 12, 2019	Alison Mynsberge, email	<p>"Please stop funding kayak and canoe water trails until there's a regional water quality management strategy."</p>	<p>MACOG replied by thanking Alison for her comment and mentioned we understand your concern. Providing access and information as part of water trail development can raise awareness and build support from adjacent property owners to do their part by minimizing negative impacts to the waterways.</p>
December 12, 2019	Alison Mynsberge, email	<p>"Every new commercial construction project is a potential brownfield (privatized profits but public costs of remediation). Let's not mistakenly advocate for the equivalent of the Harvard, IL, Motorola plant (<a href="https://www.nwherald.com/2017/03/22/timeline-of-motorola-campus-in-harvard/a701fm3/">https://www.nwherald.com/2017/03/22/timeline-of-motorola-campus-in-harvard/a701fm3/</a>) – note that in 2017, the new owner was asking for huge tax incentives again."</p>	<p>MACOG replied by thanking Alison for her comments about brownfields. MACOG is currently working to promote the redevelopment of brownfields across the region. In 2019, MACOG applied for and received a grant from the US Environmental Protection Agency to perform environmental assessments on brownfields to move sites towards redevelopment. You can read more about MACOG's work on brownfields here: <a href="http://www.macog.com/brownfields.html">http://www.macog.com/brownfields.html</a>.</p>

Date Submitted	Submitted By	Public Comment	MACOG's Response
		<p>“Until all of the existing built-up areas are in use, we shouldn't be turning any other farmland or natural areas over to impervious surfaces of any type. There are several good reasons for this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most abandoned businesses and industrial sites have existing transportation networks and neighboring housing. Recreating that infrastructure around a greenfield is a huge public cost that is rarely considered in cost-benefit analyses. Part of this cost could be calculated by examining TIFF funds (redirected tax money) used to extend sewer systems, roads, and other infrastructure – along with the expenditures that support the deteriorating infrastructure that was built to abandoned business and industrial sites.</li> <li>• This area has excellent farmland. Farmland can be built up into business and residential areas, but it's awfully difficult to bring it back from that state to farm it again - it's also difficult to return a parking lot to a high-quality wetland.</li> <li>• As a fiscally conservative tax payer, I'd rather not pay to close off infrastructure to a Big Box Store that was abandoned at site A while providing TIFF incentives to build new infrastructure to the Big Box Store's new building at site B, particularly if site B was a wetland which will no longer provide flood protection for residences in the region due to increased runoff during high-rain events.”</li> </ul>	



Date Submitted	Submitted By	Public Comment	MACOG's Response
December 12, 2019	Alison Mynsberge, email	"I am suspect of the LIFT Network's payoff based on the small portion with which I'm familiar. My understanding is that much of the funds for City of South Bend's portion of the Tech Resource Center at Catalyst 2 in Innovation Park came from city funds rather than grant money, and I believe there's been a huge focus on innovation when local businesses & government agencies haven't even figured out how to implement best practices."	MACOG forwarded Alison's comment on the LIFT Network to the University of Notre Dame's Economic Development Department and the South Bend-Elkhart Regional Partnership. See responses below.

### LIFT Network Comment

Comment was forwarded to the University of Notre Dame's Economic Development Department and the South Bend-Elkhart Regional Partnership.

Notre Dame oversees the development of the LIFT Network and responded by stating, "Labs for Industry Futures and Transformation (LIFT) Network, is a collaborative platform that provides cutting-edge expertise, technologies, workforce development programs, and innovation-based facilities for collaboration across higher education, community and industry partners in support of in support of a more prosperous, resilient, and skilled region.

A central aim of the LIFT Grant funded activities is to infuse digital capabilities, through intentional platform, into our region's industry - from advanced IT and data analytics to technologies in additive manufacturing and robotics and beyond. In addition to providing resources to support the adoption and development of best in class technologies and business practices, LIFT provides support for workforce skills and educational training programs in those fields that are critical to advance the digital capabilities of regional businesses.

The Tech Resource Center is one of the early pilots in this initiative and its support through LIFT is focused upon the applied analytics apprenticeship program that will provide a unique resource to upskill the adult/incumbent workforce through project-based learning in collaboration with locally based IT Analytics businesses. The Tech Resource Center is central to the community's ongoing efforts to attract philanthropic support for civic innovation activities, and currently houses the



Bloomberg Innovation team. Additional grant applications are underway to expand the services at the TRC.”

The Regional Partnership’s response states, “Innovation has been a core part of the make-up of the region for generations and as we build on the historical fabric of our community, innovation led initiatives continue to gain momentum. As technology and access to it becomes increasingly important, creating creative assets like the SB Tech Resource Center, allows for a collaborative place for residents in the community to learn, solve problems and connect. The recent announcement of the launch of the LIFT Network is just one platform that has supported projects like the SB Tech Resource Center and we expect to hear more about other assets in the region that will benefit and expand with the support of such an initiative. Labs for Industry Futures and Transformation (LIFT) Network and the associated iNDustry Labs is a collaborative platform that will support industry advancement by providing cutting-edge expertise, technologies, workforce development programs, and innovation-based facilities for collaboration across higher education, community and industry partners. Collectively these efforts will support the South Bend - Elkhart Region through the transformation to an increasingly digital and automated future, enhancing the current manufacturing base with new business models, technologies and tailored workforce training programs while accelerating new high-tech sector growth in the region.”





Stokkeby Falls

MARATHON





**2020-2024**

**Comprehensive  
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