CITY OF LINCOLN
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
June 10, 2026

AS A COURTESY, PLEASE TURN OFF ALL CELL PHONES & ELECTRONIC DEVICES DURING THE MEETING

BOARD / COMMISSION / COMMITTEE

9:00 AM

Whitney Eklund, Mayor Pro Tem
John Reedy, Councilmember

Sean Scully, City Manager
Erin Frye, Economic Development & Communications Specialist
Daniella Stepek, Economic Development Specialist

Melanie Borchardt, Member
Andrea Faria, Member
Joann Hilton, Member
Faraz Mahmood, Vice Chairperson
Jason Price, Member
David Riccitiello, Chairperson

CITY HALL
First Floor Community Meeting Room
600 Sixth Street
Lincoln, CA 95648

or attend via
ZOOM
register by using this link:
https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_soOckqMMR4ah16Jesqf_Cg
or participate by calling US: +1 (669) 900-6833
use ID# 884 8306 6022 and use *9 to raise your hand to speak

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. ROLL CALL

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

4. CITIZENS ADDRESSING THE COMMITTEE (Within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Board / Commission / Committee)

5. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

5.A Approval of Meeting Minutes, March 11, 2026. (Blair Hutchison)

5.B Approval of Meeting Minutes, May 13, 2026. (Blair Hutchison)

6. STAFF UPDATES

6.A Award Announcements. (Daniella Stepek)

6.B ICSC Monterey Recap. (Faraz Mahmood/Daniella Stepek)

6.C Sales Tax Measure Update. (Sean Scully)

7. NEW AND CONTINUING BUSINESS

7.A Final Economic Development Action Plan Discussion. (Erin Frye and Daniella Stepek)

COMMITTEE INITIATED BUSINESS

8. NEXT REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING - July 8, 2026 at 9:00am

9. ADJOURNMENT

NOTE: *Materials related to an item on this Agenda submitted to the Council/Redevelopment Successor Agency after distribution of the agenda packet are available for public inspection in the City Clerk's office at 600 Sixth Street, Lincoln, CA during normal business hours. Such documents are also available on the City of Lincoln's website at https://www.lincolnca.gov/ subject to staff's availability to post the documents before the meeting.*

In compliance with the American with Disabilities Act, the City will provide special assistance for disabled members of the public. The meeting room is wheelchair accessible and disabled parking is available. If you have a disability and need a disability-related modification or accommodation to participate in the meeting, please contact the City Clerk's Office at (916) 434-2490. As a courtesy, please make every effort to inform the Clerk of your needs at least 24 hours prior to the meeting so the City may make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting.

Pursuant to applicable laws and regulations, including without limitation, California Government Code Section 65009 and/or California Public Resources Code Section 21177, if you wish to challenge in court any of the above decisions (including any action regarding planning, zoning and/or environmental decisions), you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised at the public hearing(s) described in this notice/agenda, or in written correspondence delivered to the City at, or prior to, the public hearing.

Levine Act Provisions -- The Levine Act requires a party (or the party's agent(s)) to a proceeding before the City of Lincoln that involves any action or consideration to their contract, license, permit, or other entitlement for use, to disclose any campaign contribution made to City elected or appointed officer totaling more than $500 within the 12 months before the City decision. This includes contributions to Councilmembers, Planning Commissioners and members of other City boards and commissions.

STAFF REPORT

Item Number 5.A

SUBJECT:	Approval of Meeting Minutes, March 11, 2026. (Blair Hutchison)
SUBMITTED BY:	City Clerk
DEPARTMENT:	City Clerk's Office
DATE:	June 10, 2026

ATTACHMENTS:
EDC MEETING MINUTES - 3.11.2026.docx

MINUTES
CITY OF LINCOLN
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
March 11, 2026

The meeting was conducted in person at City Hall, 600 6th Street, Lincoln, CA, and virtually on Zoom.

1. **CALL TO ORDER by Chairperson David Riccitiello at 9:10 a.m.**

2. **ROLL CALL:** Committee members present:

Andrea Faria
Faraz Mahmood, Vice Chairperson
David Riccitiello, Chairperson

Members absent: Melanie Borchardt
Joann Hilton
Jason Price

Staff and Council Liaisons Present: Whitney Eklund, Mayor Pro Tem
John Reedy, Councilmember
Sean Sully, City Manager
Nita Wracker, Assistant City Manager
Erin Frye, Economic Dev. Specialist
Daniella Stepek, Economic Dev. Spec.
Kristi McKenney, Deputy City Attorney

Member Melanie Borchardt arrived at 9:19 a.m.

3. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE –** led by Faraz Mahmood

4. **CITIZENS ADDRESSING THE COMMITTEE (Within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Board / Commission / Committee)**

None.

5. **APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES**

5.A Meeting minutes of January 14, 2026.

Chairperson Riccitiello called for a motion of approval for the item. Member Faria motioned to approve, motion was seconded by Member Borchardt. Motion passed unanimously by the following voice vote:

AYES: Borchardt, Faria, Mahmood, Riccitiello

ABSENT: Hilton, Price

5.B Meeting minutes of February 11, 2026.

DRAFT

Chairperson Riccitiello called for a motion of approval for the item. Member Faria motioned to approve, motion was seconded by Member Borchardt. Motion passed unanimously by the following voice vote:

AYES: Borchardt, Faria, Mahmood, Riccitiello

ABSENT: Hilton, Price

6. STAFF UPDATES

6.A Permit Assistance Program Workshops Update.

Economic Development Specialist Daniella Stepek provided the update to the committee, with a brief discussion to follow.

6.B Strategic Plan Progress Update.

Economic Development & Communication Specialist Erin Frye provided an update to the committee.

7. NEW AND CONTINUING BUSINESS

7.A Business Retention and Expansion Initiatives.

Economic Development Specialist Daniella Stepek made the presentation to the committee.

7.B California Cultural Districts.

Chairperson Riccitiello gave the presentation to the committee.

8. NEXT REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING – March 11, 2026, at 9:00 a.m.

11. ADJOURNMENT

Chairperson Riccitiello adjourned the meeting at 10:00 a.m.

Submitted by Blair Hutchison, Deputy City Clerk

_____
Blair Hutchison, Deputy City Clerk

STAFF REPORT

Item Number 5.B

SUBJECT:	Approval of Meeting Minutes, May 13, 2026. (Blair Hutchison)
SUBMITTED BY:	City Clerk
DEPARTMENT:	City Clerk's Office
DATE:	June 10, 2026

ATTACHMENTS:
EDC MEETING MINUTES - 5.13.2026.docx

MINUTES
CITY OF LINCOLN
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
May 13, 2026

The meeting was conducted in person at City Hall, 600 6th Street, Lincoln, CA, and virtually on Zoom.

1. **CALL TO ORDER by Chairperson David Riccitiello at 9:04 a.m.**

2. **ROLL CALL:** Committee members present:

Joann Hilton
Faraz Mahmood, Vice Chairperson
David Riccitiello, Chairperson

Members absent: Melanie Borchardt
Andrea Faria
Jason Price

Staff and Council Liaisons Present: Whitney Eklund, Mayor Pro Tem
John Reedy, Councilmember
Sean Sully, City Manager
Nita Wracker, Assistant City Manager
Erin Frye, Economic Dev. Specialist
Daniella Stepek, Economic Dev. Spec.

3. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE –** led by Joann Hilton

4. **CITIZENS ADDRESSING THE COMMITTEE (Within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Board / Commission / Committee)**

None.

5. **APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES**

5.A Meeting minutes of March 11, 2026.

Moved to next regular scheduled meeting due to lack of quorum.

6. **STAFF UPDATES**

6.A Award Announcements

Economic Development Specialist Daniella Stepek provided the update to the committee, with a brief discussion to follow.

6.B Business Walk Recap

DRAFT

Economic Development Specialist Daniella Stepek provided an update to the committee, including a summary of feedback received from local business owners. Committee members who assisted in the business walk also shared their observations and feedback during the discussion.

7. NEW AND CONTINUING BUSINESS

7.A Economic Development Strategic Plan Discussion

Consultant, Chabin Concepts made the presentation to the committee with a long discussion to follow.

8. NEXT REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING – June 10, 2026, at 9:00 a.m.

11. ADJOURNMENT

Chairperson Riccitiello adjourned the meeting at 11:01 a.m.

Submitted by Blair Hutchison, Deputy City Clerk

_____
Blair Hutchison, Deputy City Clerk

STAFF REPORT

Item Number 6.A

SUBJECT: Award Announcements. (Daniella Stepek)

SUBMITTED BY: City Clerk

DEPARTMENT: City Clerk's Office

DATE: June 10, 2026

ATTACHMENTS:
Business Facilities Magazine May-June 2026.pdf

Business Facilities
The Source For Site Selectors
MAY / JUNE 2026
BUSINESSFACILITIES.COM



THE AI WORKFORCE

From Ambition To Activation

Page 10

PLUS:

Site Identification 30 Ports & FTZs 50 Texas Governor's Report 78


INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
IEDC 2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE
New Orleans
OCTOBER 25 – 28 | HYATT REGENCY
Built for this Moment: Learning from Legacy, Leading with Impact
REGISTER TODAY:
NEWORLEANS.IEDCONLINE.ORG

A GROUNDBREAKING ADVANTAGE

Louisiana Is Building the Foundation for What's Next



- **FastSites**–Louisiana's $150M investment in site development.
- Delivering development-ready sites that meet the speed and scale of business.
- Reducing risk, lowering costs, accelerating timelines.

FASTSITES PREPARES LOUISIANA'S SITES TODAY TO SECURE TOMORROW'S INVESTMENT

LOUISIANA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

For more info, visit **BusinessFacilities.com/location-info**

OPPORTUNITYLOUISIANA.COM/FAS

CONTENTS

VOLUME 59 ◆ NUMBER 3

ON THE COVER

10 THE AI SKILLS SHIFT

From boardroom to shop floor, navigating workforce evolution in the artificial intelligence landscape calls for a holistic view.

FEATURES

14 *BUSINESS FACILITIES* 2026 EDO AWARDS

This annual recognition highlights innovation and a range of initiatives making an impact on economic development and community growth.

26 THE ROLE OF INNOVATION HUBS

From emerging tech corridors to established centers, here's a look at some of the regions building innovative ecosystems to help business scale and compete.

30 THE ART OF SITE IDENTIFICATION

Defining an ideal footprint for a new facility brings site searches to the ground level.

78 TEXAS GOVERNOR'S REPORT

Governor Greg Abbott provides a look into the strategy diversifying the already strong business climate in the Lone Star State.





SPECIAL REPORTS

32 CUSTOM TALENT, COMPETITIVE EDGE

Workforce training comes in many forms, and companies can access the specific skills they need today and in the future.



40 DRIVING THE MESSAGE HOME

Automakers and suppliers are finding their ideal locations as communities rev up their assets to meet the industry's needs.



COVER DESIGN: MEGAN KNIGHT, GROUP C CREATIVE/PRODUCTION MANAGER

COVER IMAGE: Adobestock/ IM Imagery

Business Facilities May/June 2026 Volume 59, Number 3, USPS 875-100 (ISSN 0746 0023) is published bi-monthly by Group C Media, Inc., 2 Bridge Avenue, Suite 231, Red Bank, NJ 07701. Phone 732-842-7433. Fax 732-758-6634. Periodicals Postage Paid at Eatontown, NJ, and additional mailing offices. Paid subscription rate $52.00 per year. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Group C Media, PO Box 237, Lincolnshire IL 60069.



Arizona is a global hub for emerging technologies and high-tech advancements that are shaping the future. Top companies from aerospace and defense, semiconductors, battery, electric and automated vehicles, AI, medical devices and more are making significant investments throughout the state. With vibrant culture, a business-friendly environment and 300+ days of sunshine every year, it's easy to see why Arizona is a great place to innovate and scale.

ARIZONA
COMMERCE AUTHORITY

Learn more at azcommerce.com













SPECIAL REPORTS (CONT.)

50 FROM PORT TO PROFIT
Ports and foreign-trade zones support today's import and export activity, amidst economic and political uncertainty.

64 ALABAMA PROFILE
Broad industrial reach and diversification into high-tech sectors characterize the current business climate.

68 DELAWARE PROFILE
The First State offers a low cost of doing business and powerful legal, governing, and corporate tax regulations.

70 MASSACHUSETTS PROFILE
From life sciences to AI, the Bay State fosters innovation-led investment, research commercialization, and high-value talent.

72 NEVADA PROFILE
The Silver State has a mining legacy, while providing a promising location for tech, manufacturing, and professional services.

74 WISCONSIN PROFILE
In the Badger State, companies across legacy and emerging industries find robust research assets, coordinated capital, and a collaborative ecosystem.

76 VIRGINIA PROFILE
A strong talent pipeline and infrastructure assets are key to the Commonwealth's surging growth in innovative industries.

BUSINESS REPORTS

81 TEXAS: EXPANDING HORIZONS
The Lone Star State continues to attract a broad range of investment that includes next-generation industries.

84 ARKANSAS: THE NATURAL STATE SURGE
Investments in technology, aviation, and manufacturing are fueling expansion across The Natural State.

86 FLORIDA: DIVERSIFIED GROWTH
The Sunshine State is gaining new industries, while supporting legacy sectors with a solid business climate.

88 NORTH CAROLINA: BUILDING BOLDLY
With a long-term strategy for industrial growth, the Tar Heel State continues to attract and retain emerging and traditional sectors.

90 MEXICO: TOWARD THE NEXT ERA
Focused on long-term economic growth, Plan México is central to the nation's business attraction strategy.

DEPARTMENTS

6 FIRST WORD
8 NEW & NOTEWORTHY
62 Q&A: GREATER ROCHESTER, NY
91 WHY? UTAH
94 THE LAST WORD: CRITICAL MINERALS
95 ADVERTISER INDEX

Online @ BusinessFacilities.com



Business Facilities Ranks Wake County as a top place for business.

Others agree.

CNBC

#1 State for Business ('25, '23, '22)
#2 State for Business (2024)
North Carolina

MILKEN INSTITUTE

#1 Best Perfoming Large City
Raleigh, North Carolina

FT FINANCIAL TIMES

#3 City for International Business
Raleigh, North Carolina

Business Facilities
The Source For Site Selectors

#1 Best Business Climate (Large)
Raleigh/Cary, North Carolina

See for yourself.

raleigh-wake.org

For more info, visit **BusinessFacilities.com/location-info**

WAKE COUNTY
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

FIRST WORD

Reaching For The Future



Technology impacts virtually every aspect of modern life. From the smartphone we check early in the day to the highly advanced manufacturing processes utilized by companies around the world, the tech evolution continues and seems to be gaining speed. New data centers, AI workplace tools, and robotics in the workplace present opportunities and challenges.

In this issue, "The AI Skills Shift" story on page 10 takes a look at how artificial intelligence is beginning to fit into workers' job descriptions, and how companies might provide a framework for employee development in this sphere. Meanwhile, innovation hubs are not limited to a focus on tech any longer; companies looking for a location with a growing or established ecosystem that supports their industry can consider sector-specific hubs that are cropping up or solidifying a foundation. Turn to page 26 to read more about "The Role Of Innovation Hubs".

Still, at the root of site selection is finding the right parcel of land or existing facility for a company's new or expanding operation. The article on page 30 looks at "The Art Of Site Identification" at the ground level. Supporting many site selection teams during a search is the economic development organization (EDO)—providing location tours, identifying potential incentives, and directing to workforce training opportunities. The *Business Facilities* 2026 EDO Awards in this issue (page 14) recognize innovative and effective initiatives from economic development teams. These awards are a showcase from entries received earlier this year and represent a slice of the work that EDOs do every day to support the growth of businesses in their communities.

Anne Cosgrove
acosgrove@groupc.com

VOLUME 59 ◆ NUMBER 3

Business Facilities
The Source For Site Selectors

2 Bridge Avenue, Suite 231 • Red Bank, NJ 07701
(732) 842-7433 (800) 524-0337

Published by Group C Media, Inc.

BusinessFacilities.com

PRESIDENT TED COENE
tcoene@groupc.com

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR ANNE COSGROVE
acosgrove@groupc.com - (732) 559-1250

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT CAROLYN COENE
carolyn@groupc.com

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
NORA CALEY DEVIN HILLSDON-SMITH BEIA SPILLER

CREATIVE/PRODUCTION MANAGER MEGAN KNIGHT
mknight@groupc.com - (732) 559-1274

SENIOR GRAPHIC DESIGNER LINDA KOCUR

NATIONAL SALES MANAGER BRIAN SACK
brian@groupc.com - (732) 629-1949

SENIOR ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES
BILL DEY bdey@groupc.com - (732) 559-1257
JIM SEMPLE jsemple@groupc.com - (732) 559-1251

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD
John Boyd, Jr., Principal, The Boyd Company, Inc.
Linda Burns, Incentives Practice Leader, WDG Consulting, LLC
David Gaines, Managing Director, Goldstone Consulting Group
Jason Hickey, President, Hickey & Associates
Allea Newbold, Principal, Ryan, LLC
Bob Westover, SVP, Economic Incentives Practice Leader, Colliers

GROUP C MEDIA

CO-OWNER & PRESIDENT
SUSAN L. COENE

CO-OWNER & PRESIDENT
TED COENE

CONTROLLER DANIELLE DEPASQUALE
ddepasquale@groupc.com - (732) 559-1271

VICE PRESIDENT, MARKETING NEIL EISENBERG
neil@groupc.com - (732) 559-1254

SENIOR CREATIVE STRATEGIST MATTHEW SHAM
msham@groupc.com - (732) 559-1256

DIRECTOR OF DIGITAL CONTENT MARY ELLEN MCCANDLESS
maryellen@groupc.com - (732) 559-1272

WEB PRODUCER / DIGITAL AD OPS LEAD JASON BERARDI
jberardi@groupc.com - (732) 559-1279

SUBSCRIPTIONS - (732) 842-7433

EDGAR T. COENE
Founder and Chairman — 1968-2013

Business Facilities is a publication of Group C Media, Inc.© 2026 by Group C Media; all rights reserved.

PROUD MEMBER OF:
INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
SEDC Southern Economic Development Council
SIIA AM&P NETWORK

RALEIGH
NORTH CAROLINA

IT'S A SMART MOVE.

The #1 Best Performing Large City* is a place where you can find relief from crowded roads and strained infrastructure. With a strong local economy, Greater Raleigh is a pro-business community in the heart of North Carolina's Research Triangle region.



Within 30 minutes, you have three R1 universities, companies spanning nearly every industry, a Top Five Large Airport in the U.S.* connecting you to the world, endless talent ready to work, and numerous smaller communities to welcome you home.

In the business — of growing business.

www.raleighecondev.org

Scan to see new and expanding companies in Raleigh.

RALEIGH
Economic Development

*Ranked the Best Performing Large City, Milken Institute, 2025
*Top Five Large Airport, J.D. Power 2025

NEW & NOTEWORTHY

STARBUCKS CHOOSES NASHVILLE FOR SOUTHEAST OFFICE

Starbucks plans to invest $100 million to expand its North American presence by locating a southeast corporate office in Nashville, Tennessee. At this location, the global coffee company expects to employ up to 2,000 people over the next several years to serve in a variety of corporate-related operations.

The Nashville office will support continued coffeehouse expansion and rising customer demand, particularly in the southeastern U.S., while working with the company's global headquarters in Seattle.

Brian Niccol, Starbucks Chairman and CEO, said, "As Starbucks continues to expand across North America, Nashville gives us an opportunity to support that growth with great talent and proximity to our growing number of coffeehouses and suppliers across the southeast. This city offers a deep, diverse talent pool and a strong sense of community, making Nashville another ideal place to invest for the long term."



From its new corporate office in Tennessee, Starbucks supports coffeehouse expansion.

Said Deputy Governor and Tennessee Department of Economic & Community Development Commissioner Stuart C. McWhorter, "This $100 million investment and the creation of up to 2,000 new jobs underscore Tennessee's strength as a destination for high-quality corporate growth and reflect the meaningful, well-paying opportunities that will soon be available to our talented workforce." ◆

DEFENSE FIRM TEXTRON SYSTEMS EXPANDS IN LOUISIANA

Textron Systems Corporation is expanding its manufacturing and engineering operations of advanced military vehicles and naval systems with a multi-site investment across southeast Louisiana. The projects span three existing facilities in St. Tammany and Orleans parishes. The company is expected to create 133 direct new jobs while retaining 761 current positions.



Textron Systems' Advanced Reconnaissance Vehicle (ARV)

Textron Systems is a defense contractor specializing in advanced military systems, marine craft, and aerospace technologies, supporting critical U.S. defense programs. Textron Systems has maintained a presence in southeast Louisiana since 1980, with operations in St. Tammany and Orleans parishes.

In St. Tammany Parish, Textron Systems is investing $5.8 million across two sites in Slidell. The projects include workforce growth and facility improvements, as well as to advance engineering and development work for next-gen armored vehicle programs, including the ARV and XM30.

In Orleans Parish, the company will expand employment at its shipyard facility in New Orleans, where it designs and manufactures the Ship-to-Shore Connector for the U.S. Navy.

"Textron Systems is proud of our decades-long history of economic development and employment in the St. Tammany and Orleans parishes," Textron Systems Senior Vice President Marine Systems Ryan Schaffernocker said. "Thanks to our partnership with the state of Louisiana, these capital investments and retention and hiring initiatives will enable us to support further growth in the community while enhancing our offerings to our U.S. military and international customers." ◆

BURLINGTON STORES BREAKS GROUND IN BUCKEYE, ARIZONA

Burlington Stores recently broke ground on a 2 million-square-foot distribution center in Buckeye, Arizona, planned to open in 2028. The company expects to employ more than 1,000 people at the facility.

"We are really excited to break ground on this innovative distribution center optimized for off-price retail," said Greg Shultz, Executive Vice President & Chief Supply Chain Officer at Burlington. "This new distribution center is designed with advanced systems and improved processes to drive increased speed, flexibility and efficiency."

The retailer will open 110 net new stores nationwide by the end of 2026. ◆



Burlington Stores operates more than 1,000 retail locations across 46 states.

PHOTOS: (TOP) STARBUCKS; (CENTER) BURLINGTON STORES; (BOTTOM) TEXTRON SYSTEMS

IDEALWORKS CHOOSES SOUTH CAROLINA FOR U.S. HEADQUARTERS LOCATION

Germany-based Idealworks has established its U.S. headquarters in Greenville County, South Carolina. Founded in 2020, the industrial automation company has roots in robotics development dating back to 2015. The move accelerates Idealworks' existing US business and establishes a permanent local presence.

Idealworks was attracted to the region due to Greenville County's longstanding manufacturing industry, particularly the established automotive cluster with existing customers such as BMW Manufacturing. The company also supports customers across manufacturing and logistics industries, where coordinated robotic fleets are critical to operational efficiency.

"We selected Greenville County and the City of Greenville for our new U.S. headquarters primarily because they sit in the heart of the southeast's manufacturing corridor, providing us proximity to existing customers and leading automotive OEMs, tier-one suppliers, and industrial operators," said Michael Schneider, CEO, Idealworks. "The existing international community, business infrastructure and support, and quality of life also solidified our decision to establish our presence here."

Idealworks is part of the Munich-based Agile Robots Group, a global leader in physical AI, providing access to an established network of engineering expertise and service infrastructure across the United States. Locations are in Palo Alto, California, and Auburn Hills, Michigan; the latter was added with the acquisition of Krause Automation. ◆



Idealworks customers in the U.S. include Toyota North America and BMW Manufacturing Co.

PHOTO: IDEALWORKS



For more info, visit **BusinessFacilities.com/location-info**

The AI Skills Shift



BY ANNE COSGROVE

FROM BOARDROOM TO SHOP FLOOR, NAVIGATING THE AI WORKFORCE EVOLUTION CALLS FOR A HOLISTIC VIEW.

Artificial intelligence is no longer confined to software developers and Silicon Valley startups. Manufacturers are using AI to predict maintenance needs and optimize production lines. Hospitals are leveraging it to improve diagnostics and patient scheduling. Logistics firms are deploying AI-driven route optimization, while banks, retailers, construction companies, and professional service firms are rapidly integrating AI into everyday operations.

For employers, the challenge is no longer whether AI will reshape work. The more pressing question is how organizations can find, develop, and retain talent capable of operating in an AI-centric business environment.

Companies do not necessarily need to replace their workforce with a department of data scientists. In many cases, an effective strategy involves identifying adaptable employees, partnering with education and workforce organizations, and building practical AI fluency across the organization.

AI TALENT IS BROADER THAN TECH TALENT

While demand for machine learning engineers and AI architects remains high, many organizations are finding equal value in workers who can effectively apply AI tools within existing roles. Increasingly, employers are seeking what workforce experts call "AI-enabled workers"—those who understand how to use AI to improve productivity, automate repetitive tasks, analyze information, or support decision-making.

PHOTO: CHATGPT GENERATED

For example, a logistics coordinator who can use AI-powered forecasting software may add value to their role in the organization. A marketing professional who understands generative AI tools can often produce campaigns faster and at lower cost. In manufacturing, technicians who can interpret AI-driven predictive maintenance systems are increasingly in demand.

Employers that broaden their definition of AI talent often gain a larger and more sustainable recruiting pipeline.

BOARDROOM VIEWPOINT

Earlier this year, The Conference Board shared that it had found that from 2023 to 2025, the share of S&P 500 companies disclosing AI as a risk soared from 12% to 83%. Yet the surge in AI risks has exposed a gap in corporate board preparedness. While many boards have strengthened their broader technology oversight, AI expertise remains scarce:

According to the survey, from 2021 to 2025 disclosure of technology expertise among S&P 500 directors rose from 20% to 51%, while cybersecurity expertise increased from 15% to 27%. By contrast, AI expertise slightly ticked up, from 1.5% to 2.7%.

"AI is now firmly on the board agenda, but governance maturity is still catching up. Many companies have moved quickly to recognize AI as a material risk, but they are still working through who owns oversight, how issues are escalated, and what level of board fluency is needed as AI becomes more embedded across the business," said Andrew Jones, author of the report and Principal Researcher at The Conference Board.

These findings come from The Conference Board report are based on S&P 500 disclosure data, as of December 2025, and a survey of 130 executives, largely from US public companies.

Just under a quarter (23%) of surveyed executives consider their board highly fluent in AI—51% say their board has moderate fluency, and 25% say their board has low or no fluency.

In the survey, 26% of executives say their company will focus on strengthening AI board education or AI upskilling. About 2% plan to add new directors with dedicated AI or technology expertise. Less than 10% of executives say their companies are fully prepared to comply with AI regulations.

"Companies are no longer treating AI governance as a niche or future issue. But most are still in the process of turning broad principles into durable governance practice. The challenge now is to build clearer accountability, stronger controls, and oversight models that can adapt as AI use deepens and regulatory scrutiny grows," said Brian Campbell, Leader of The Conference Board Governance & Sustainability Center.

75% of those surveyed say AI will disrupt employment and workforce structures on a large scale in the next three years. And, 41% say AI will exacerbate inequality between and within countries. Most also see AI as a long-term driver of productivity and efficiency, with 80% saying AI will generate sustained productivity and efficiency gains across the economy in the next three years.

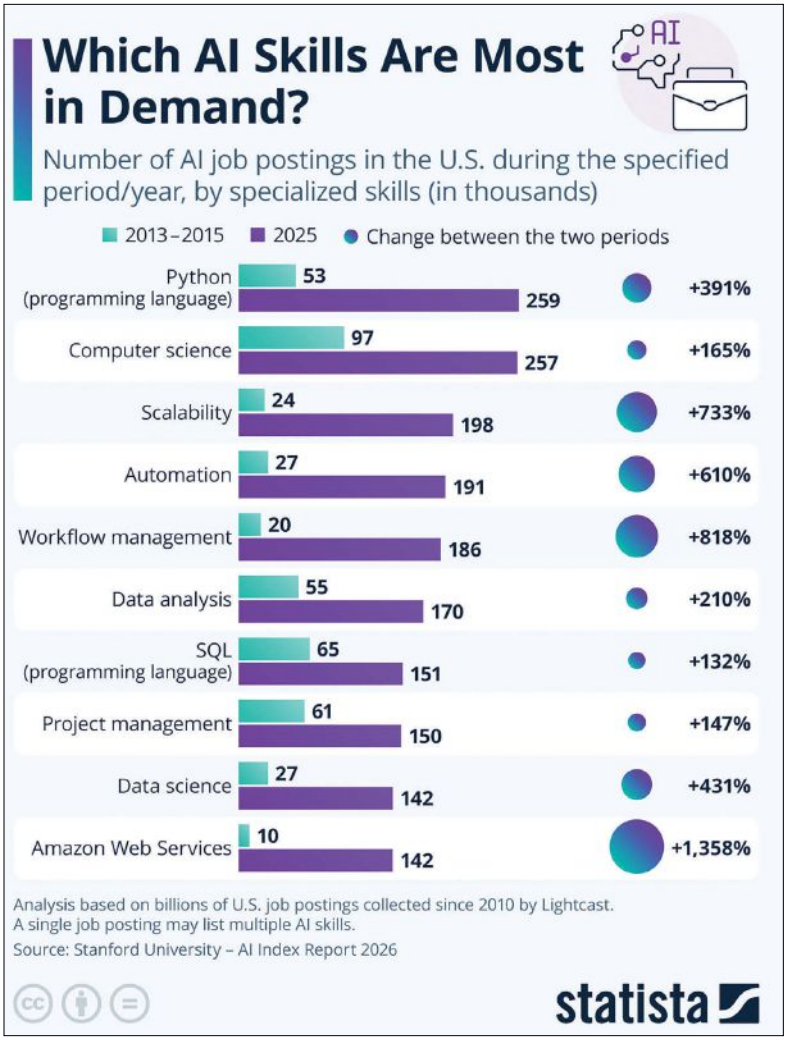


IMAGE: STATISTA

COMMUNITY COLLEGES, WORKFORCE PARTNERSHIPS AS KEY TALENT SOURCES

Many employers are finding that traditional four-year degree pathways are not for meeting AI workforce needs. In this scenario, another dimension of relevance has taken root in community colleges, technical schools, workforce boards, and apprenticeship programs.

Many community colleges are launching AI-related certificate programs focused on practical applications rather than simply theoretical instruction. These programs often emphasize data literacy, automation tools, cybersecurity, robotics integration, and generative AI platforms used in business settings.

For employers, partnerships with these institutions can provide several advantages, including faster workforce development timelines, customized curriculum aligned to company needs, and access to incumbent worker training,

Some employers are also collaborating directly with local workforce development agencies to identify displaced workers or transitioning professionals who can be retrained into AI-supported roles. Manufacturing companies, in particular, are beginning to integrate AI training into broader Industry 4.0 workforce initiatives that combine automation, robotics, advanced analytics, and smart manufacturing systems.

Another emerging trend is the development of employer-led advisory councils that help shape curriculum around real operational needs. Manufacturers, logistics companies, healthcare systems, and technology firms are providing direct input on the software platforms, automation systems, and data competencies most relevant in today's workplace. This collaborative approach helps ensure training programs remain aligned with rapidly evolving technologies while creating clearer talent pipelines into high-demand positions. For employers facing persistent labor shortages, these partnerships are becoming an increasingly strategic component of long-term workforce planning.

UPSKILLING FOR AI WITH CURRENT EMPLOYEES

As competition for experienced AI professionals intensifies, a company may conclude that upskilling current employees is both more practical and more cost-effective than relying on outside recruitment.

Existing employees already understand company processes, culture, customers, and operations. Teaching them how to incorporate AI tools into their work can often produce faster returns than hiring entirely new teams.

Employers beginning an AI upskilling strategy often focus on three levels of capability:

Foundational AI Literacy. These programs are increasingly becoming enterprise-wide initiatives rather than technical training reserved for IT departments.

Functional AI Skills. At this stage, employees learn how AI applies specifically to their roles. Training tied directly to day-to-day workflows often produces the highest adoption rates.

Advanced Technical Skills. Some organizations will still require specialized experts in areas such as machine learning, data engineering, AI infrastructure, model governance, cybersecurity; and automation integration.

MANUFACTURING & AI SKILLS: A MATCH FOR THE FUTURE

Manufacturers have spent decades investing in automation, robotics, and digital systems to improve efficiency and competitiveness. Now, companies that build AI fluency across their workforce will be better positioned to improve productivity, strengthen decision-making, and adapt to rapidly changing market conditions. For employers, the challenge is not simply adopting AI technologies. It is building organizational readiness.

In a manufacturing environment, this means developing a workforce that understands how AI tools can support operations, maintenance, logistics, quality control, engineering, and workforce planning. It also means helping employees become comfortable working alongside intelligent systems, interpreting AI-generated insights, and identifying opportunities where automation and analytics can solve real operational challenges.

Manufacturers are increasingly deploying AI-powered systems for predictive maintenance, machine vision inspection, inventory forecasting, production scheduling, and energy management. These tools can identify patterns that humans may miss, reduce downtime, improve throughput, and help companies make faster decisions using real-time operational data. The success of these investments depends heavily on whether employees understand how to use the tools effectively and trust the outputs being generated.

One emerging trend is the movement away from isolated "innovation teams" toward broader workforce integration. Instead of limiting AI knowledge to IT departments or data specialists, manufacturers are beginning to introduce AI awareness across production, maintenance, supply chain, and supervisory roles. Frontline employees often have the strongest understanding of operational bottlenecks and process inefficiencies, making them valuable contributors to AI implementation efforts.

Training strategies are also evolving. Many manufacturers are incorporating AI concepts into existing workforce development and upskilling programs rather than creating entirely separate initiatives. Community colleges, technical schools, apprenticeship programs, and

industry associations are increasingly offering coursework focused on industrial AI, automation analytics, robotics integration, and digital manufacturing systems. Employers that align with these education partners can create stronger talent pipelines while helping current workers adapt to changing technologies.

Another trend is the growing emphasis on "human-centered AI." Manufacturing leaders are recognizing that workforce adoption improves when AI is positioned as a tool that enhances employee performance rather than replaces workers. In practice, this often means deploying systems that reduce repetitive administrative tasks, improve safety monitoring, support troubleshooting, or provide operators with better production insights. Transparency and communication are becoming critical parts of successful AI integration strategies.

For companies looking to begin developing an AI-fluent workforce, the process often starts with assessment and education rather than large-scale technology investments.

Next, employers can focus on foundational AI literacy. Supervisors, plant managers, engineers, and frontline workers should understand basic concepts such as machine learning, predictive analytics, data interpretation, and automation workflows. Training does not need to be highly technical initially. The goal is building familiarity, reducing uncertainty, and helping employees understand practical applications within their specific roles.

Pilot projects can also serve as effective learning tools. Leadership alignment is equally important. Employers that successfully build AI fluency typically establish clear workforce strategies tied to operational goals, workforce development, and long-term competitiveness. Executives, plant leadership, human resources teams, and operations managers all play a role in shaping how AI adoption is communicated and implemented.

The manufacturers that gain the greatest advantage from AI may not necessarily be those with the most advanced technologies. Increasingly, the differentiator will be workforce adaptability. Companies that invest early in AI fluency, digital skills, and continuous learning are likely to build stronger operational resilience and position themselves more competitively in the evolving industrial economy.

A PowerFL Place for Business.

Energy costs shouldn't be a barrier for your business. Florida Power & Light Company, the nation's largest electric utility, delivers reliable power to more than 12 million Floridians.

The PoweringFlorida team supports companies with site selection, workforce data, energy incentives and more.

2026 Top Utility EDO

#1 America's Top Economy

+10,000,000 Workforce

Top State for Talent Attraction

#1 For Higher Education

Best Tax Climate in the Southeast

#2 State for Business

PoweringFlorida.com

FPL PoweringFlorida™

OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

BUSINESS FACILITIES 2026 EDO Awards

For more info, visit **BusinessFacilities.com/location-info**

Presenting The 2026 Economic Development Awards

BY BF EDITORS

BUSINESS FACILITIES' ANNUAL AWARD RECOGNIZES PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES MAKING AN IMPACT ON ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY GROWTH.

Business Facilities 2026 Economic Development Organization (EDO) Awards recognize economic developers' efforts toward growing their communities. Record-breaking projects and creating new pockets of economic growth are the goals that communities are aiming to secure. These 2026 EDO Awards winners characterize tenacity from the grassroots level to securing multimillion-dollar projects. ***Business Facilities*** editors evaluated the entries submitted through an online portal and selected more than 20 winners in categories by Statewide, Utility, Large, Mid-Sized, and Small EDO.

Statewide EDO Awards

Arizona Commerce Authority
Where Global Business Thrives
www.AZCommerce.com

Arizona has emerged as a global hub for high-tech innovation, attracting record foreign direct investment and a thriving international presence. This is the result of a multi-year, proactive strategy to expand global partnerships. Key to Arizona's global outreach strategy is the state's seven International Trade and Investment Offices, located in Mexico, Canada, Europe, Israel, Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan. These offices serve as platforms to increase economic collaboration and enhance the market reach of Arizona companies. In 2025, exports by Arizona companies surged from $32.4 to $44.4 billion—a 37% increase and the second fastest growth in the nation. As of March 1, 2026, the ACA supported more than 500 active projects in its pipeline. International projects account for nearly one-third of the pipeline, representing more than 46,000 projected new jobs and over $121 billion in capital investment - demonstrating even more promises ahead.

BusinessPA, part of Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development
PA SITES
PAGetsItDone.com

In 2024, the Pennsylvania budget set out $500 million for site development, including $400 million for the new PA SITES program. PA SITES includes two components that support the development of competitive sites within the Commonwealth: planning grants and construction grants/loans. The planning grants provide for conducting a plan or feasibility study for a site to achieve best use. The construction grants and loans serve as gap financing for sites that need financial assistance to reduce development risk. The first awards for the program were announced in multiple tranches in 2025, and by the end of 2025, the state awarded more than $113 million. PA SITES has been game-changing for attracting investment. Support for Eli Lilly's historic $3.5 billion pharmaceutical manufacturing project in the Lehigh Valley included a $25 million PA SITES package. And Johnson & Johnson's $1 billion investment in cell therapy manufacturing also included a $15 million PA SITES package.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PA

Opportunity is already here.



Big companies.
Small businesses.
Future-ready workforce.

Walkable downtowns.
Rural spaces.
Urban access.

Everything you need to grow your business and live well.

See what's possible today.

MONTGOMERYCOUNTYPA.GOV/COMMERCE
commerce@montgomerycountypa.gov
610-278-5950

MONTGOMERY COUNTY
PENNSYLVANIA

For more info, visit **BusinessFacilities.com/location-info**

Louisiana Economic Development
Louisiana Storyteller Initiative
www.OpportunityLouisiana.gov

The Louisiana Storyteller Initiative is a grassroots marketing campaign designed to reshape outdated perceptions about Louisiana. LED recognized perception gaps were influencing business recruitment, workforce attraction, and investor confidence. It built a proactive strategy to mobilize credible third-party voices to tell the state's story. Unveiled in January 2026, the Initiative identifies and equips key stakeholders as "Storytellers." These ambassadors help to amplify accurate, consistent narratives about Louisiana's business climate. Central to the effort is the Storyteller Hub, a curated digital platform that serves as a resource for investment announcements, performance metrics, awards, and links to state resources. More than 800 leaders enrolled at launch, with over 900 Storytellers joining within the first three weeks. Initial outreach generated 12 earned media placements, reaching a potential audience of 3.37 million.

Kansas Department of Commerce
Data Center Tax Exemption & Grid Security
www.KansasCommerce.gov

Enacted in 2025, SB 98, the bipartisan Kansas Data Center Sales Tax Exemption Program, established a 20-year state and local sales tax exemption designed to attract large-scale, permanent data center developments. The law offers guidance on acceptable uses for natural resources and critical infrastructure. A distinctive aspect of the program outlines a collaboration between the state's Department of Commerce and its Intelligence Fusion Center, housed in the Office of the Attorney General. The goal of the program is to verify that a data center's control systems, operational management, ownership influence, load planning, and connection contribute to a more stable and secure energy grid. SB 98 also establishes an expectation for water conservation practices and encourages adoption of emerging cooling technologies suitable for each local condition.

Virginia Economic Development Partnership
InternshipsVA
www.VEDP.org/InternshipsVA

InternshipsVA was launched in February 2026 to address the challenge of talent retention. While Virginia's public institutions, private universities, and community colleges produce highly educated graduates, nearly half leave the Commonwealth after graduation. InternshipsVA's goal is to ensure students gain meaningful, paid work experience with Virginia employers, strengthening early career connections and increasing long-term retention. InternshipsVA offers a suite of employer-focused resources, including a 50% wage match for eligible internships, regional internship managers, and training and toolkits for employers. Through a one-of-a-kind partnership with Handshake, the largest employer recruitment platform for Gen Z, InternshipsVA provides free recruitment access for organizations, connecting students directly with Virginia employers. These resources make it easier for employers, particularly small and mid-sized businesses, to compete for talent, reduce recruitment costs, and build long-term workforce capacity.

Wisconsin Economic Development Corp.
Thrive Rural Wisconsin
WEDC.org

Thrive Rural is a statewide capacity-building initiative led by the Office of Rural Prosperity at the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC). The program was designed to address limited local capacity to plan, fund, and implement complex development initiatives in rural communities. Many rural communities and Tribal nations have strong ideas for growth but lack staffing, technical expertise, or resources needed. Thrive Rural provides technical assistance, project management support, and capacity-building grants. Launched as a two-year pilot, the program supported 10 rural and Tribal communities. The program has helped advance projects related to housing, downtown redevelopment, entrepreneurship support, placemaking, clean energy initiatives, and organizational strengthening. A defining feature of Thrive Rural is its customized, phased approach to capacity building. The program also leverages a public-private partnership with national nonprofit Resource Rural.

www.BusinessFacilities.com

The Online Source For Corporate Site Selectors



NEWS: Breaking Relocation/Expansion Projects

RESEARCH: Reliable reports from industry experts

WATCH AND LISTEN: Location Videos, Podcasts, Webinars

FIND: Site Seekers' Guide location information for US, Canada and Caribbean

READ: *Business Facilities* Magazine digital edition

Business Facilities
The Source For Site Selectors

24/7 NEWS AND INFORMATION

www.BusinessFacilities.com

CLECO Power (Louisiana)
AI Advantage Platform
ClecoDev.com

The Cleco First: The AI Advantage initiative is an AI-driven economic development platform designed to transform engagement with site selectors, consultants, and companies evaluating new locations. Built around a custom Large Language Model (LLM), the program enables real-time access to economic development information. The platform integrates Cleco's data—including infrastructure capacity, utility rates, workforce metrics, available sites, and incentive programs—into a single intelligent system. By drawing from Cleco's fact books, project data, and integrated partner resources, the platform can generate precise insights about costs, infrastructure readiness, and workforce availability. Through integrated data connections with Cleco's website, partner organizations, and site selection tools such as ZoomProspector, the AI serves as a shared knowledge hub that ensures unified project information and access to regional assets.

Dominion Energy
LinkedIn Showcase Page
www.DominionEnergy.com/economic-development

Dominion Energy launched its Economic Development LinkedIn Showcase Page to support economic development outcomes across Virginia, South Carolina, and North Carolina through engagement with site selectors, corporate location decision-makers, economic development organizations, and regional partners. While Dominion Energy holds a significant role in supporting major projects, infrastructure readiness, and workforce growth, there has been no dedicated "always on" channel showcasing this role. The content pillars of the page include: economic development project announcements; infrastructure/power reliability insights; workforce readiness and regional competitiveness; executive perspectives on long-term energy planning; and partnership storytelling. Within its first year, the LinkedIn Showcase Page demonstrated traction with a targeted professional audience, attracting 600+ organic followers. A total of 76 posts generated 950+ engagements.

SITE SELECTION DEMANDS CERTAINTY

Shiawassee Economic Development Partnership delivers it — backed by credentials that prove it:



- *Business Facilities* Outstanding Small EDO Award Winner.
- IEDC Accredited Economic Development Organization.
- MI Sites Certified & VIP by DRP Enrolled.

Our team is nationally recognized.
Our sites are pre-qualified, pre-studied, and ready.
Your decision just got easier.

SEDP Shiawassee Economic Development Partnership
www.sedpweb.org
(989) 725-9241

For more info, visit **BusinessFacilities.com/location-info**

Florida Power & Light
Florida First Sites
www.PoweringFlorida.com

FPL PoweringFlorida expanded its FloridaFirstSites.com program in 2025, growing the website to include 50 vetted industrial sites across the state. Each site undergoes a rigorous evaluation process that includes assessing utilities infrastructure, transportation access, workforce availability, and proximity to ports. The program provides a depth of information: each site listing includes detailed data and a video virtual tour. PoweringFlorida also expanded its WonderFL talent attraction campaign in 2025 through a collegiate outreach initiative. Designed to strengthen Florida's workforce pipeline, the program engages universities and colleges across the state and nation to promote career opportunities aligned with targeted industries. The initiative connects students and recent graduates with information on high-demand sectors, regional employers, and quality of life advantages.

Commerce Lexington (KY)
Digital Awareness & Education Campaign
LocateInLexington.com

In March 2025, Commerce Lexington launched its first-ever fully digital economic development awareness and education campaign. It was built to address outdated perceptions of Kentucky and elevate the Lexington region's standing. This initiative was created to reach C-suite executives and site selectors in targeted NAICS sectors through a mix of digital channels. Core tactics included NAICS-based digital advertising, event specific geotargeting, LinkedIn campaigns, industry-focused video, and impression based ads. The campaign's approach was intentionally simple, testimonial driven, and high impact. Key dates throughout 2025 were structured around quarterly reporting cycles to allow for optimization and presentation of cumulative results. Results to date reflect strong engagement across all digital channels, effective penetration within C-suite and site selection audiences and measurable improvements in visibility.

Detroit Regional Partnership (MI)
Verified Industrial Properties (VIP) Program
VerifiedIndustrialProperties.com/

The Verified Industrial Properties (VIP) program administered by the Detroit Regional Regional Partnership (DRP) was introduced to advance site readiness across the Detroit region. VIP by DRP provides qualified site owners and brokers with fully subsidized site assessments and studies, evaluating key areas like nearby infrastructure, easements, zoning, and environmental conditions. These properties are listed on the VIP program online portal, alongside information including workforce data and drone footage. To date, VIP by DRP has invested more than $5 million to support site owners and brokers and hosts 91 verified sites on its portal. In 2025, the program invested $2.5 million into more than 40 sites. VIP reached a key milestone last year, by assisting in the rezoning of an agricultural site for industrial development.

CLECO
Energizing Your Tomorrow

AI-Powered
Utility Partner

A new economic development AI chatbot helping
our region move faster and compete smarter.

TedAi

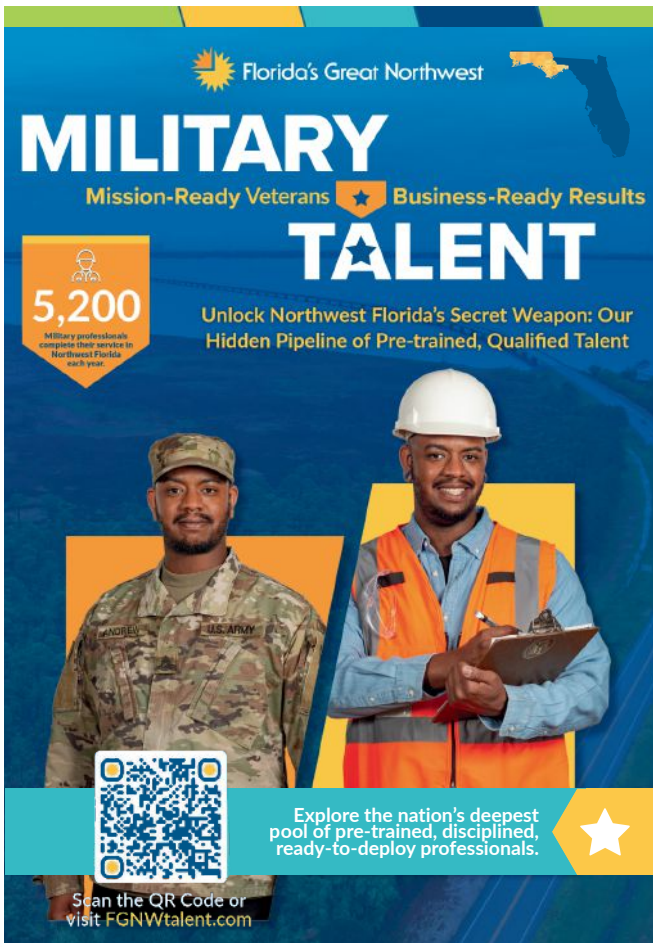
ClecoDev.com

Large EDO Award (500k or more pop.)

Florida's Great Northwest

Florida's Great Northwest
Mapping Military Talent
www.FloridasGreatNorthwest.com

Northwest Florida boasts a strategic concentration of military assets with an estimated 3,000 annual retirees from six military bases. With the aim of providing empirical evidence to replace anecdotal evidence, Florida's Great Northwest (FGNW) launched an initiative to transform military presence into a validated economic engine. Securing the FloridaCommerce Defense Reinvestment Grant, FGNW began by partnering with the University of West Florida Haas Center for a deep-dive into military transition data. Next, the Haas Center integrated qualitative insights from CareerSource Okaloosa Walton, scaling a localized snapshot into a regional workforce profile. The quantitative and qualitative results from the study surpassed initial estimates and provided a new baseline for the region. The final product was the campaign: Florida's Great Northwest Military Talent: Mission-Ready Veterans, Business-Ready Results.



For more info, visit **BusinessFacilities.com/location-info**

Greater Phoenix Economic Council

Greater Phoenix Economic Council (AZ)
Economic Monitor Online Tool
www.GPEC.org

The Economic Monitor from the Greater Phoenix Economic Council is an AI-powered intelligence platform that aims to distill and deliver economic data. The tool addresses that key economic indicators are published continuously by government agencies, but fragmented across sources. To build the tool, GPEC's team surveyed existing alternatives and focused on these considered essential: expertly curated data; interface intuitive for a general audience, yet rigorous for technical users; and free and publicly available. GPEC launched Version 1.0 in 2023 and a redesigned Version 2.0 in October 2025. The platform unites 36 public data series spanning 22 key indicators across Greater Phoenix, Arizona, and the U.S. Since launching Version 2.0, the platform has directly served 779 users generating 1,015 views.

GREATER RICHMOND PARTNERSHIP

Greater Richmond Partnership (VA)
AI-Powered Business Attraction Pipeline
www.GRPVA.com

The Greater Richmond Partnership (GRP) launched its AI-Powered Business Attraction Pipeline in January 2025 to integrate artificial intelligence across marketing, research, and business development. With this initiative, GRP aims to identify high-growth companies earlier, target site selectors more effectively, and ensure the region's competitive advantages remain visible in today's digital and AI-driven site selection environment. GRP continues to expand AI applications across market intelligence, prospect research, and digital marketing, including optimizing website content for AI-assisted search environments used by site selectors. GRP designed the initiative around three goals: identify high-growth companies and expansion signals earlier; strengthen targeted outreach to corporate decision-makers; and ensure Greater Richmond remains visible within emerging AI-driven research environments. Site selectors and corporate executives increasingly rely on AI during early-stage location decisions, and this program responds to shifts in how companies evaluate locations.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PA
COMMERCE DEPARTMENT

Montgomery County Economic Development (PA)
Careers of Tomorrow® Initiative
https://www.MontgomeryCountyPA.gov/Commerce

The Careers of Tomorrow® initiative, supported through Montgomery County's Commerce budget, is a county-wide effort to align workforce development. The initiative was created in 2019 to address an urgent need to strengthen the future talent pipeline across the county and southeast Pennsylvania. Among the primary goals: increase awareness of in-demand careers and career pathways across priority industries; connect employers with students, educators, and community partners; and provide labor market information through a biennial publication focusing on 25 in-demand career paths. Key milestones include the launch of the biennial publication and establishment of the annual Careers of Tomorrow® Career Expo beginning in 2022. The Expo has grown to engage more than 60 employers and over 1,000 students each year.

A E D P
Alexandria Economic Development Partnership

Alexandria Economic Development Partnership (VA)
Connecting Tech Talent
AlexandriaEcon.org/

Alexandria Economic Development Partnership partnered with Virginia Tech's new Alexandria campus in 2025 to launch Connecting Tech Talent. Held annually in March, this event is designed to bridge the gap between employers and graduate-level technology talent. The event features parallel workshops: graduate students prepare for interviewing and networking while business owners explore how to engage Virginia Tech talent. At the inaugural event, attendees represented a cross-section, from consulting firms and biotech to boutique retail and wellness studios. One of the immediate outcomes was AEDP forming a partnership with Virginia Tech's Master of Engineering (MEng) program, placing student teams with four Alexandria small businesses for a summer semester.



For more info, visit **BusinessFacilities.com/location-info**

Mid-Sized EDO Award
(100k to 500k pop.)

Development Corp. of Abilene (TX)
NextU Program
DevelopAbilene.com

To continue developing a reliable talent pipeline, the Development Corporation of Abilene (DCOA) funds the NextU Program. Developed in partnership with Abilene Independent School District, Wylie Independent School District, and the Big Country Society for Human Resource Management, NextU prepares students with industry-recognized certifications and real-world experience. NextU bridges the gap between classroom instruction and career opportunity through collaboration of educators, employers, and economic developers. NextU content is aligned with the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). In 2025, NextU celebrated the largest graduating class in its history, with 53 seniors completing industry-aligned programs. The program also provides DCOA-funded scholarships.

Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation - Coyote Business Park (OR)
Revenue Diversification
CTUIR.org

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) aimed to diversify its revenue sources. In 2025, this goal was furthered when Cairnspring Mills, an artisan flour mill, chose to locate on the reservation. This is the first public-private development in CTUIR's Coyote Business Park. The mill has specifications wheat farmers must meet to produce the artisan flour. This has sparked interest in regenerative agriculture by local farmers who will be paid a premium, and may keep more revenue local. In addition, this partnership led to a first opportunity for tribes across the nation to make a financial investment into a business that supports food sovereignty.

City of Murrieta (CA)
Murrieta Innovation Center
www.MurrietaCA.gov

The City of Murrieta, California launched the Murrieta Innovation Center (MIC), established to bridge the gap between emerging medical technology companies and established healthcare providers, while creating a local ecosystem. The City brokered relationships between MIC startups and major healthcare partners, including Loma Linda University Health, Kaiser Permanente, Rady Children's Hospital, Rancho Springs Hospital, and the Riverside County Medical Association. As a result, Murrieta now hosts four major hospital systems and an expanding healthcare footprint. The MIC's success has attracted outside investment, including a $3 million U.S. Department of Commerce grant to build wet and dry labs and creative office space, as well as $2.5 million from Riverside County for services and programming.

Sarnia-Lambton Economic Partnership (ON)
Newcomer Hub
www.SarniaLambton.on.ca

The Sarnia-Lambton Newcomer Hub, funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and launched by Sarnia-Lambton Economic Partnership (SLEP) in April 2025, strengthens the regional talent pipeline. Serving one of Canada's largest petrochemical, energy, and advanced manufacturing clusters, the 3-year initiative helps employers access skilled immigrant talent. The Sarnia-Lambton Newcomer Hub provides programming to strengthen employment readiness, professional networks, and workplace confidence, enabling newcomers to connect with local employers. In its first year, the Hub delivered 12 events and served 190 participants, exceeding the annual target of 170, with many returning for multiple sessions.

Harrisonburg Economic Development (VA)
Entrepreneur Development Initiative
HarrisonburgDevelopment.com

The Harrisonburg Entrepreneurship Development Initiative (HEDI) provides targeted assistance for early-stage businesses—defined as generating between $5,000 and $200,000 in annual revenue. HEDI supports business owners through technical assistance paired with a performance-based mini-grant. Participants receive one-on-one training from a subject matter expert to build core business capacity and long-term sustainability. Harrisonburg partnered with eqALL to provide business training services. Upon achieving mutually identified goals, participants are eligible for a one-time grant of $2,500. HEDI launched in February 2025 with a cohort of 29 businesses, followed by a second round in December. To date, HEDI is retaining 49 businesses and 108 full- and part-time jobs. Additionally, the program set an inclusion goal of at least 20% of participating businesses being Latino-owned; the second round, 40% are Latino-owned.

Shiawassee Economic Development Partnership (MI)
Housing Initiatives
SEDPweb.org

Since early 2025, Shiawassee Economic Development Partnership (SEDP) in Michigan has taken a partnership-driven approach to move housing concepts to actionable projects. A central focus is close collaboration with the Shiawassee County Land Bank to identify high-potential properties within the bank portfolio for housing. Working alongside Land Bank leadership and local stakeholders, SEDP has helped elevate redevelopment-ready sites toward development opportunities. Meanwhile, SEDP has led education efforts with local government officials to expand understanding and appropriate use of tax increment financing (TIF) as a housing-enabling tool. As a result, several housing developments have been announced across numerous governmental jurisdictions. One of these success stories—Washington Park—will introduce 16 new affordable townhomes, directly responding to the limited housing inventory in Owosso.

City of Lincoln, California
Small Business Support Initiatives
www.LincolnCA.gov

The City of Lincoln, California launched two complementary initiatives to support small businesses—the Permit Assistance Program and the Business Spotlight Campaign. The Permit Assistance Program began in December 2025 with monthly in-person booth events staffed by the city's economic development team. The program educates prospective and current business owners on licensing, zoning, compliance requirements. Entrepreneurs receive guidance before signing leases or purchasing property. Hybrid workshops are offered in-person and virtually. In 2026, the Business Spotlight Campaign began featuring one licensed Lincoln business monthly across the city's digital platforms. The program also engages high school students who produce the promotional videos, providing experience in media production and marketing. Together, these initiatives help to remove barriers to entry, encourage equity, and market local businesses.



For more info, visit BusinessFacilities.com/location-info



Scientist safely manage samples in a state-of-the-art laboratory

Wisconsin Is Strengthening Its Position In Biohealth Manufacturing

Wisconsin is emerging as one of the country's most competitive destinations for biohealth and biopharmaceutical manufacturing, fueled by a combination of research excellence, advanced manufacturing expertise, and long-term workforce investment.

The state's biohealth industry now contributes nearly $38 billion annually to Wisconsin's economy and supports more than 58,000 jobs. While Wisconsin has long been recognized for its manufacturing legacy, it is increasingly gaining national attention for leadership in diagnostics, medical technology, precision medicine, and biopharma innovation.

That momentum received a major boost in 2023 when Wisconsin earned designation as a federally designated and funded tech hub. The recognition highlighted the state's growing strength in biotechnology and biohealth, as well as its ability to connect research institutions, manufacturers, and industry partners into a collaborative innovation ecosystem.

At the center of that growth is the state's highly integrated approach to research and commercialization. Universities, private companies, economic development organizations, and government leaders are working together to accelerate the development and production of next-generation healthcare technologies.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison continues to play a significant role in advancing bioscience and precision medicine research. Initiatives including the Wisconsin Health Data Hub and the Wisconsin Biohealth Tech Hub are helping companies bring new therapies, diagnostics, and healthcare technologies to market more efficiently.

Wisconsin's manufacturing capabilities provide another key advantage. Wisconsin suppliers provide products worth $7.8 billion to the state's biohealth industry annually—an indicator of the broad and deep supply chain that exists for biohealth companies in Wisconsin. The state's deep expertise in advanced manufacturing allows biohealth companies to scale production while maintaining quality and operational efficiency.

Global life sciences companies are continuing to invest in Wisconsin as a result. In Madison, Catalent announced a $45 million expansion to strengthen biologics manufacturing capabilities. In southeastern Wisconsin, Eli Lilly and Co. is investing $4 billion into a major expansion in Kenosha County focused on injectable drug manufacturing capacity. Meanwhile, Abbott further reinforced Wisconsin's prominence in diagnostics through its acquisition of Exact Sciences.

Beyond large corporate investments, Wisconsin has built an environment where startups and midsize companies can grow alongside established industry leaders. Today, more than 2,200 biohealth companies operate across the state, supported by organizations such as BioForward Wisconsin, which helps connect researchers, businesses and policymakers throughout the industry.

"Wisconsin is uniquely positioned to lead the future of biohealth innovation because of the strong partnerships between our research institutions, manufacturers, and workforce development organizations," said John W. Miller, CEO of the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation. "Companies here have access to world-class talent, cutting-edge research, and the infrastructure needed to grow and compete globally."

Workforce development remains a central component of Wisconsin's strategy. The state's technical college system, the first established in the nation, now serves nearly 275,000 students across 16 colleges and more than 50 campuses. These institutions provide industry-aligned, hands-on training designed to meet the evolving needs of advanced manufacturing and life sciences employers.

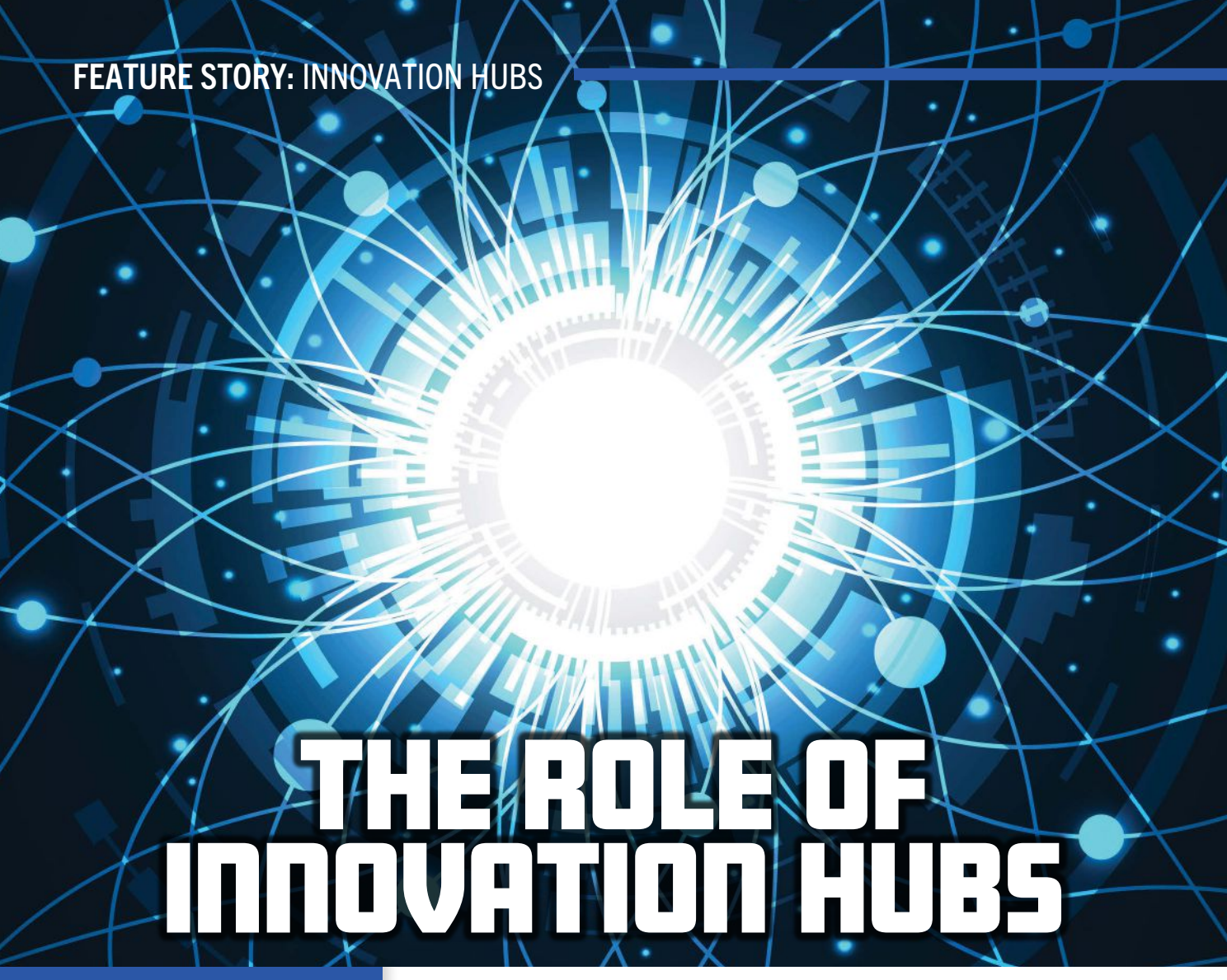
Wisconsin is also investing in future talent pipelines through K-12 STEM education initiatives, including more than $5.5 million committed to fabrication laboratories that introduce students to engineering and advanced manufacturing concepts early.

As the life sciences industry continues to evolve, Wisconsin is positioning itself as a destination where companies can innovate, scale manufacturing operations, and access the skilled workforce necessary for long-term growth.

Photo Courtesy of BioForward and Eurofins

ADVERTISEMENT


WE
BUILD
GLOBAL CONNECTIONS LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS COMPETITIVE EDGES
STABLE ENVIRONMENTS QUALITY AND CAPACITY MOMENTUM
FOUNDATIONS FOR SUCCESS SYNERGISTIC PARTNERSHIPS
Tap into Wisconsin's manufacturing heritage and modern capability. Our reputation for quality and unrivaled combination of skilled talent, smart automation, and financial and climate stability lowers risk and sets your company up for long-term success.
Let's look forward together.
WISCONSIN
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
wedc.org



THE ROLE OF INNOVATION HUBS

BY BF EDITORS

HOW LEADING REGIONS ARE TRANSFORMING TALENT AND IDEAS INTO SCALABLE, INNOVATIVE ECOSYSTEMS THAT SUPPORT BUSINESS.

An innovation hub, when referring to a city, region, or other geographic area, is widely understood as a concentrated ecosystem where people, institutions, and resources intersect to generate and accelerate new ideas, technologies, and enterprises. Unlike a single building or campus, a geographic innovation hub encompasses an entire environment—physical, cultural, and economic—that supports the continuous exchange of knowledge and the rapid translation of concepts into market-ready solutions.

These hubs typically bring together a diverse mix of stakeholders, including established companies, startups, research institutions, universities, investors, and public agencies. Their proximity and interconnectedness enable frequent collaboration, formal and informal networking, and the sharing of both tangible and intangible resources. This network effect fosters creativity, encourages risk-taking, and supports the scaling of innovations across industries.

Geographic innovation hubs thrive on talent. These locations attract and retain skilled professionals by offering career opportunities alongside a quality of life that supports creativity and professional growth. Education and training programs are often closely aligned with industry needs, ensuring a steady pipeline of specialized expertise. Infrastructure—both physical, such as transportation and broadband connectivity, and institutional, such as business support services—reinforces the hub's capacity to support innovators.

As innovation hubs mature, they often become self-reinforcing economic engines capable of reshaping entire regional economies. What begins as a cluster of universities,

PHOTO: ADOBESTOCK/ PHAGRAPHIC

research facilities, or entrepreneurial startups can evolve into a globally recognized center for specialized expertise and commercialization. Over time, successful hubs develop layers of interconnected support systems that strengthen competitiveness, attract investment, and create a cycle of sustained innovation.

EVOLUTION OF THE INNOVATION HUB

The evolution of an innovation hub is rarely accidental. In many cases, it begins with a foundational asset such as a major research university, a concentration of technical talent, a legacy industry, or a strategic geographic advantage. Public and private investment then accelerates momentum through infrastructure improvements, workforce development initiatives, incubators, accelerators, and venture capital activity. As companies and institutions collaborate, knowledge transfer becomes more fluid, enabling ideas to move more quickly from laboratories and classrooms into production environments and commercial markets.

In the United States, many innovation hubs emerged from historically dominant industries. Regions once defined by manufacturing, defense, automotive production, or energy development have increasingly diversified into advanced technology sectors. Pittsburgh, for example, transformed portions of its industrial economy into a center for robotics, artificial intelligence, and autonomous systems through the combined influence of universities, startup ecosystems, and technology investment. Similarly, Detroit has leveraged its automotive expertise to expand into mobility technology, electric vehicles, battery research, and connected transportation systems. In these and similar regions, legacy industries provided not only technical expertise but also engineering talent, supply chain infrastructure, and a culture of industrial problem-solving that could adapt to emerging technologies.

Universities frequently serve as anchor institutions within innovation ecosystems. Research universities generate intellectual property, attract federal and private research funding, and produce graduates with specialized expertise. More importantly, they often create pathways for commercialization through technology transfer offices, startup incubators, and industry partnerships. Institutions such as Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Stanford University, and Carnegie Mellon University have become synonymous with innovation because they maintain deep relationships with both startups and established corporations. Faculty research can evolve into venture-backed companies, while students gain opportunities to work directly with industry partners on applied projects and emerging technologies.

Corporate involvement is another defining characteristic of successful innovation hubs. Large companies increasingly establish research centers, incubator partnerships, and venture initiatives within these ecosystems to gain access to talent, emerging technologies, and entrepreneurial networks. Rather than relying solely on internal research and development, corporations are increasingly embedding themselves within collaborative innovation environments where ideas can be tested and scaled more rapidly.

Technology companies have been particularly active in this strategy. Google has invested heavily in regional innovation ecosystems through office campuses, startup support initiatives, and university partnerships in locations ranging from Silicon Valley to Austin and New York. Microsoft similarly collaborates with universities, workforce training organizations, and startup accelerators to support cloud computing, cybersecurity, and artificial intelligence initiatives. These relationships allow large firms to remain connected to entrepreneurial experimentation while also helping smaller companies access mentorship, funding opportunities, and market visibility.

ECOSYSTEMS FOR SECTOR-SPECIFIC INNOVATIONS

Innovation hubs are also increasingly sector-specific. While some regions support broad-based technology ecosystems, others develop deep specialization around particular industries. The Research Triangle region of North Carolina has become known for biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, and life sciences due to the combined influence of research universities, healthcare institutions, and pharmaceutical manufacturers. Austin has cultivated a strong presence in semiconductors, software development, and advanced electronics. Houston has expanded beyond traditional energy leadership into energy transition technologies, carbon capture research, and industrial decarbonization initiatives. These focused ecosystems allow companies to benefit from concentrated expertise, specialized suppliers, and highly targeted workforce pipelines.

Life sciences hubs provide particularly strong examples of collaborative innovation ecosystems. In the Boston-Cambridge area, hospitals, universities, biotech startups, pharmaceutical firms, and investors operate in close proximity, creating an environment where research and commercialization occur at accelerated speeds. Companies working in biotechnology often collaborate with universities for clinical research, partner with hospitals for testing and validation, and rely on nearby venture capital firms for financing. This dense concentration of expertise and resources enables rapid iteration and commercialization that would be more difficult in isolated environments.

Advanced manufacturing has also become a growing component of innovation hub development. Modern manufacturing innovation centers increasingly combine automation, robotics, additive manufacturing, data analytics, and artificial intelligence into integrated production ecosystems. Public-private partnerships frequently support these efforts through specialized research institutes and workforce initiatives. Manufacturers

benefit from access to shared testing facilities, technical expertise, and collaborative research networks that reduce development costs and accelerate implementation timelines.

For example, manufacturers working with the Manufacturing USA network gain access to collaborative research institutes focused on technologies such as advanced composites, photonics, additive manufacturing, and smart manufacturing systems. These institutes bring together companies, universities, government agencies, and workforce organizations to solve technical challenges while supporting commercialization and workforce readiness. Small and midsize manufacturers often benefit alongside larger corporations because shared research environments reduce barriers to accessing advanced technologies.

Automotive innovation provides another illustration of hub evolution. As the industry shifts toward electrification, connected vehicles, and autonomous systems, companies are increasingly clustering near battery research centers, semiconductor expertise, and software engineering talent. Automakers and suppliers are partnering with universities and technology firms to develop next-generation mobility systems. Regions capable of combining engineering expertise, advanced manufacturing infrastructure, and clean energy initiatives are emerging as leaders in the transition.

As hubs mature, they also become more intentional about supporting entrepreneurship at multiple stages. Early-stage incubators help founders refine concepts and business models. Accelerators provide mentorship and market access for scaling companies. Later-stage support may include specialized laboratory facilities, manufacturing space, export assistance, or access to institutional investors. This layered structure allows companies to remain within the region as they grow.

Workforce development plays a central role in maintaining innovation ecosystems over time. Successful hubs recognize that talent pipelines must evolve alongside industry demands. Community colleges, technical schools, apprenticeship programs, and university partnerships increasingly align curriculum with emerging technologies and employer needs. Programs focused on semiconductor manufacturing, robotics maintenance, data analytics, cybersecurity, and clean energy systems are helping regions prepare workers for evolving industries while also attracting employers seeking specialized labor pools.

Digital infrastructure has become another defining requirement for modern innovation hubs. Broadband connectivity, cloud computing access, cybersecurity resources, and data infrastructure now support nearly every industry sector. Regions investing in digital capacity position themselves to compete more effectively for technology-driven industries and remote collaboration opportunities. In many cases, smart city initiatives and digital modernization efforts become part of broader economic development strategies aimed at supporting innovation ecosystems.

Sustainability and clean technology are increasingly shaping the next generation of innovation hubs as well. Regions focused on renewable energy, battery production, hydrogen technologies, carbon management, and circular manufacturing systems are attracting substantial public and private investment. Federal incentives, corporate sustainability goals, and evolving supply chain requirements are accelerating growth in these sectors. Innovation hubs focused on climate technology often combine research institutions, industrial expertise, infrastructure investment, and workforce programs to support commercialization at scale.

Collaboration across sectors remains one of the most important

CANADA'S INNOVATION HUBS: A PROVINCE & TERRITORY GUIDE

Leading Innovation Hubs & Primary Strengths Across Canada

PROVINCE / TERRITORY	INNOVATION HUB(S)	PRIMARY STRENGTHS
ALBERTA	Calgary; Edmonton	Clean energy tech, AI, agritech, hydrogen
BRITISH COLUMBIA	Vancouver; Victoria	Clean tech, digital media, life sciences, AI
MANITOBA	Winnipeg	Aerospace, agtech, food processing innovation
NEW BRUNSWICK	Fredericton; Moncton	Cybersecurity, digital services, smart grid
NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR	St. John's	Ocean tech, offshore energy, marine research
NOVA SCOTIA	Halifax	Ocean technology, defense, AI, digital health
ONTARIO	Toronto; Waterloo	AI, fintech, quantum, software, advanced manufacturing
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND	Charlottetown	Biosciences, agriculture innovation, food tech
QUEBEC	Montréal; Québec City	AI, aerospace, gaming, life sciences
SASKATCHEWAN	Saskatoon; Regina	Protein industries, agtech, mining technology
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES	Yellowknife	Mining innovation, Arctic logistics, clean energy
NUNAVUT	Iqaluit	Arctic research, climate science, remote infrastructure
YUKON	Whitehorse	Clean energy, mining tech, Arctic innovation

Innovation drives Canada's future. These hubs represent leadership in research, technology, entrepreneurship, and industry collaboration across all provinces and territories.

Sources: Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED); Global Innovation Clusters; Provincial Economic Development Organizations; Canada's Tech Networks

IMAGE: GRAPHIC DESIGN GENERATED BY CHATGPT

characteristics distinguishing successful innovation hubs from isolated business clusters. Effective ecosystems create environments where startups can engage with large corporations, researchers can work alongside manufacturers, and public agencies can coordinate with investors and workforce organizations. These relationships create resilience because innovation does not depend on a single company or industry.

Increasingly, secondary and emerging markets are developing innovation strategies tailored to regional strengths rather than attempting to replicate Silicon Valley. Mid-sized cities and regional economies are identifying niche opportunities connected to existing industries, university assets, or geographic advantages. Some focus on agricultural technology, logistics automation, aerospace systems, energy innovation, or defense technology. Others leverage specialized manufacturing expertise or supply chain positioning to support emerging industries. This regional specialization allows communities to compete more effectively while building on authentic economic foundations.

Public policy influences innovation hub growth through infrastructure funding, research grants, tax incentives, and economic development initiatives. Federal and state programs supporting semiconductor manufacturing, clean energy development, broadband expansion, and advanced manufacturing are helping regions strengthen innovation capacity. Local governments are also investing in innovation districts, mixed-use redevelopment projects, and entrepreneurship support initiatives designed to attract companies and talent.

Ultimately, innovation hubs succeed because these create environments where collaboration, experimentation, and commercialization can occur more rapidly than in isolated settings. Their strength lies not only in technology or infrastructure but in the networks of relationships. As industries continue to evolve and technologies advance, innovation hubs are likely to remain central to regional competitiveness, workforce development, and long-term economic growth.

AMERICA'S INNOVATION HUBS: A 50-STATE GUIDE

Leading Innovation Hubs & Primary Strengths Across the United States

STATE	INNOVATION HUB(S)	PRIMARY STRENGTHS
Alabama	Huntsville; Birmingham	Aerospace, defense, biotech
Alaska	Anchorage; Fairbanks	Arctic tech, energy, logistics
Arizona	Phoenix; Tucson	Semiconductors, optics, aerospace
Arkansas	Bentonville; Little Rock	Supply chain tech, retail innovation
California	Silicon Valley; San Diego	AI, software, biotech
Colorado	Denver; Boulder	Aerospace, climate tech, quantum
Connecticut	New Haven; Hartford	Bioscience, insurtech, advanced manufacturing
Delaware	Wilmington; Newark	Fintech, chemicals, materials science
Florida	Miami; Orlando	Fintech, simulation tech, aerospace
Georgia	Atlanta; Savannah	Fintech, logistics, EVs
Hawaii	Honolulu; Hilo	Ocean science, renewable energy
Idaho	Boise; Idaho Falls	Semiconductors, nuclear research
Illinois	Chicago; Champaign	Quantum, AI, agtech
Indiana	Indianapolis; West Lafayette	Life sciences, advanced manufacturing
Iowa	Des Moines; Ames	Insurtech, agtech, biosciences
Kansas	Wichita; Kansas City	Aviation, animal health
Kentucky	Louisville; Lexington	Logistics, ag-bioscience
Louisiana	Baton Rouge; New Orleans	Energy transition, water tech
Maine	Portland; Orono	Forest products innovation, marine science
Maryland	Baltimore; Rockville	Cybersecurity, biotech
Massachusetts	Boston; Cambridge	Biotech, robotics, AI
Michigan	Detroit; Ann Arbor	Mobility tech, autonomous systems
Minnesota	Minneapolis; Rochester	Medtech, health innovation
Mississippi	Jackson; Starkville	Aerospace, agtech
Missouri	St. Louis; Kansas City	Geospatial tech, agtech
Montana	Bozeman; Missoula	Photonics, autonomous systems
Nebraska	Omaha; Lincoln	Agtech, logistics
Nevada	Reno; Las Vegas	Lithium, battery tech
New Hampshire	Manchester; Portsmouth	Advanced manufacturing, defense tech
New Jersey	Princeton; New Brunswick	Pharma, biotech, telecom
New Mexico	Albuquerque; Los Alamos	National labs, quantum, energy
New York	New York City; Albany	Fintech, semiconductors, AI
North Carolina	Research Triangle; Charlotte	Biotech, fintech
North Dakota	Fargo; Grand Forks	UAS/drone systems, agtech
Ohio	Columbus; Cleveland	Smart mobility, biotech
Oklahoma	Oklahoma City; Tulsa	Aerospace, energy tech
Oregon	Portland; Corvallis	Semiconductors, clean tech
Pennsylvania	Pittsburgh; Philadelphia	Robotics, life sciences
Rhode Island	Providence; Newport	Ocean tech, defense innovation
South Carolina	Greenville; Charleston	Advanced manufacturing, aerospace
South Dakota	Sioux Falls; Rapid City	Fintech, defense tech
Tennessee	Nashville; Knoxville	Healthtech, nuclear innovation
Texas	Austin; Houston	AI, semiconductors, space tech
Utah	Silicon Slopes; Salt Lake City	SaaS, fintech
Vermont	Burlington; Montpelier	Clean tech, food systems
Virginia	Northern Virginia; Richmond	Data centers, cybersecurity
Washington	Seattle; Spokane	Cloud computing, aerospace
West Virginia	Morgantown; Charleston	Energy tech, biomaterials
Wisconsin	Madison; Milwaukee	Biohealth, water technology
Wyoming	Cheyenne; Laramie	Energy innovation, carbon tech

U.S. TERRITORIES & ASSOCIATED ISLANDS

PUERTO RICO
San Juan; Mayagüez
Life sciences, medical devices, biopharma manufacturing, tech services, fintech

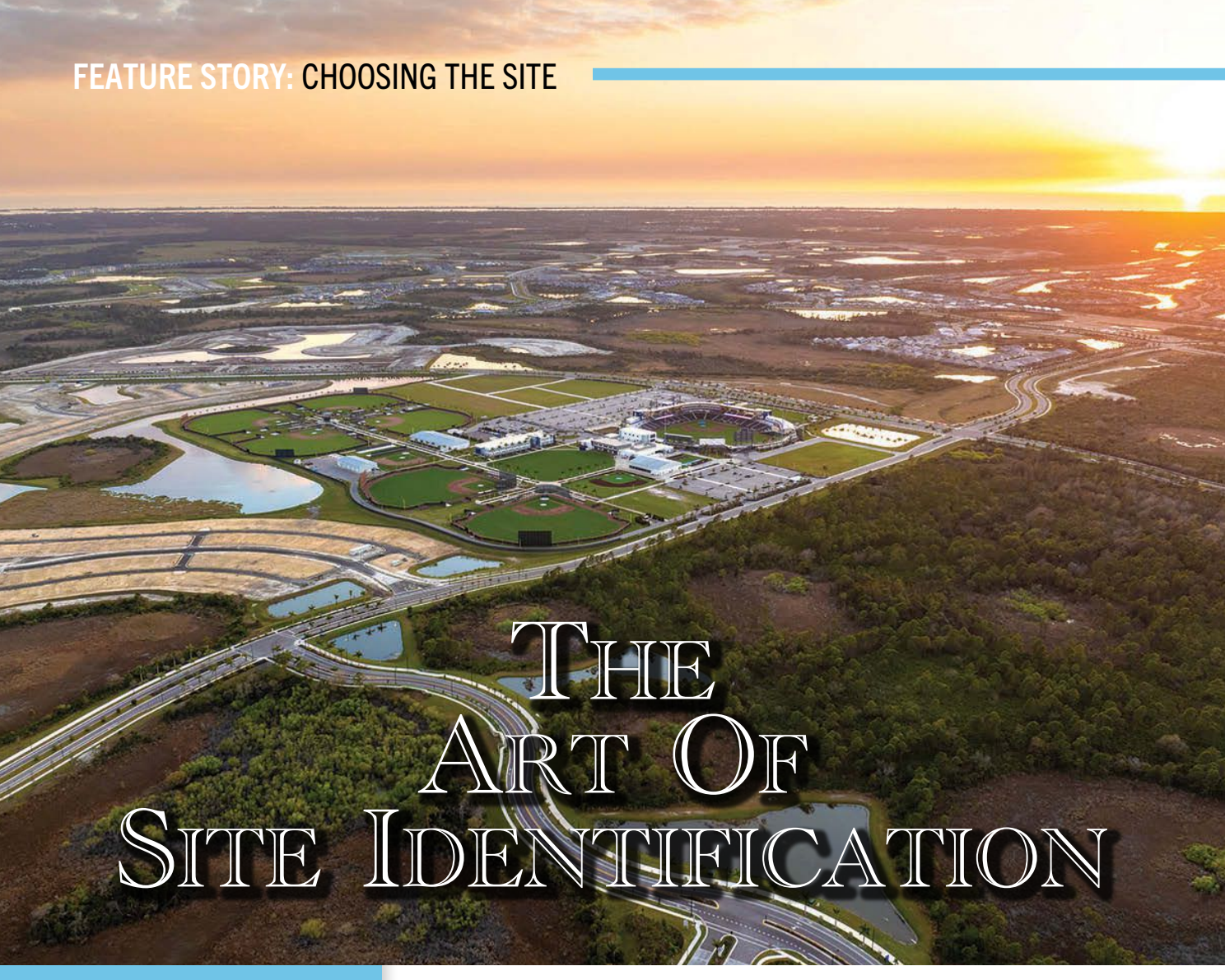
U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS
St. Thomas; St. Croix
Marine science, renewable energy, tourism tech, fintech, small business innovation

GUAM
Hagåtña
Defense technology, cybersecurity, maritime innovation, logistics, remote operations

Innovation is shaping America's future. These hubs represent leadership in research, technology, entrepreneurship, and industry collaboration across all 50 states, U.S. territories, and associated islands.

Sources: EDA Tech Hubs, Technical.ly Ecosystems, State Economic Development Organizations, CBRE Research

IMAGE: GRAPHIC DESIGN GENERATED BY CHATGPT



The Art Of Site Identification

BY DEVIN HILLSDON-SMITH

BEYOND THE MAP, DEFINING THE IDEAL FOOTPRINT FOR A NEW FACILITY BRINGS THE SEARCH TO THE GROUND LEVEL.

For the modern site selector, land is not just a line item on a balance sheet; it is the first and most critical gate in a project's lifecycle. In an era defined by fractured supply chains and aggressive decarbonization goals, the mandate from the board is rarely "find us a nice spot." It is "find us a location where we can break ground in six months without hitting a million-dollar surprise."

Site identification is the process of narrowing the "Funnel of Certainty." It is the transition from a broad regional interest—driven by macroeconomics—to a specific, viable tax parcel. For site selectors and facility managers, this phase is where the most expensive mistakes are either made or avoided.

DEFINING THE SEARCH CRITERIA: THE NON-NEGOTIABLES

One of the greatest threats to a successful site selection project is scope creep. Before a single map is opened, decision-makers must establish a rigid set of technical non-negotiables. For heavy industrial users, these criteria often center on the physical footprint and utility intensity:

Acreage and Buildability: It is not enough to find 100 acres; one must find 100 contiguous, flat acres. In land development, topography is destiny. Significant grade changes can add millions in "cut and fill" costs and months to the earthmoving schedule.

Infrastructure Thresholds: We are seeing a massive shift toward "Power First" selection. For data centers or advanced manufacturing, a site without access to 100+ MVA

PHOTO: ADOBESTOCK/BLUNOL

of power—or a clear, two-year path to a substation—is effectively a decorative field. Similarly, for chemical or food processing, the capacity for high-volume wastewater discharge is a non-negotiable that GIS data may gloss over.

Specialized Access: If your business model relies on Class I Rail or specific heavy-haul trucking routes, your map of the United States shrinks. Identifying these constraints early prevents the "sunk cost" of investigating attractive land that can never serve the operation.

THE RISE OF THE CERTIFIED SITE

In 2026, the traditional model of buying raw land and hoping for the best is increasingly seen as an unacceptable corporate risk. This has led to the rise of certified site programs—focused on delivering site readiness, often managed by state economic development organizations (EDOs) or major utility providers. These programs are found under varying terminology (e.g., shovel-ready, ready sites).

What is "Readiness"? A Certified Site is a parcel that has been "de-risked" before it ever hits the market. To earn this designation, a site undergoes a battery of third-party technical audits, including:

- **Phase I Environmental Site Assessments (ESA):** Ensuring no historical contamination exists.
- **Geotechnical Boring:** Confirming the soil can support heavy foundations.
- **Wetland & Endangered Species Delineations:** Proving the buildable area is actually buildable.
- **Archaeological Surveys:** Ensuring construction won't be halted by historical finds.

A primary driver for seeking a certified cite is speed to market. In a typical "raw land" scenario, the due diligence listed above can take six to 12 months. In a certified site scenario, that work is already complete. For a company racing to beat a competitor to a new market, that six-month head start is often worth more than the land itself.

Certification effectively shifts the "unknown" from the corporate balance sheet to the seller or the state. When a site is certified, the cost of discovery is already paid. If a site is found to have unstable topography or protected wetlands during the certification process, the managing organization bears the burden of remediating or re-pricing the site before a corporate buyer even looks at it.

THE DESKTOP REVIEW: FILTERING AT SCALE

Once the criteria are set, the Long List is generated through a high-tech Desktop Review. We no longer rely on local anecdotes; we rely on Geographic Information Systems (GIS).

Modern site selection uses "layered" GIS data to overlay power lines, fiber optic trunks, floodplains, and parcel boundaries. This allows selectors to scan entire states in seconds. Satellite imagery provides a current view of "encroachment"—the risk of residential neighborhoods moving too close to an industrial zone, which often leads to future noise complaints and restrictive operating hours.

GREENFIELD VS. BROWNFIELD: A STRATEGIC TRADE-OFF

A recurring debate for decision-makers is whether to pursue a greenfield (raw land) or brownfield (previously developed) site.

Greenfield: Offers a "blank slate." A prime advantage is the project team can optimize the facility layout for maximum operational efficiency without working around old foundations or existing footprints. However, the cost of bringing utilities to the property line can be staggering.

Brownfield: The primary draw here is existing infrastructure. These sites often have massive power, water, and sewer "bones" already in place. With the rise of ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) mandates, redeveloping a brownfield can also offer significant PR and tax incentive advantages. The trade-off? The "Ghost of Industry Past"—the lingering risk of sub-surface contamination that can lead to long-term liability.

LOGISTICS & CONNECTIVITY: PROXIMITY TO THE CORE

Finally, a site is only as valuable as its connection to the world. We evaluate this through Proximity to Core.

The Labor Shed: A site's "reach" is measured in drive-times, not miles. If your facility requires 500 workers, can you draw them from a 45-minute radius without competing against three other mega-employers for the same talent pool?

The Logistical Spine: Proximity to Interstate interchanges and "last mile" connectivity is paramount. For global firms, the proximity to air cargo hubs or deepwater ports determines the total landed cost of their product.

Redundancy: Decision-makers are increasingly looking for "dual-service" sites—those served by two different power substations or two different rail carriers—to ensure that a single point of failure doesn't shut down the entire supply chain.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE BUSINESS CASE

The site identification phase is where the vision for a new facility meets the reality of the earth. By considering certified sites, strictly defining non-negotiables, and leveraging GIS data, site selection teams can move from a "Long List" of possibilities to a "Short List" of certainties.

In the next installment of this series, we will move beyond the map and into the trenches, exploring the Technical Due Diligence required to ensure that your chosen site doesn't hold any expensive secrets beneath the surface.

Part 2: The Deep Dive: Uncovering What Lies Beneath—From Geotechnical Boring to Entitlement Hazard, will be published on BusinessFacilities.com.



Hillsdon-Smith is the Founder and Principal Consultant at Hyphen Strategies, LLC (www.hyphenstrategiesllc.com). With 15+ years of experience, he advises on corporate site searches, utility and infrastructure readiness, certified sites programs, strategic planning, and incentive and capital stack strategy. He is a licensed attorney and real estate broker, and he is active in industry leadership, including service on the board of the Indiana Economic Development Association and on the board of directors for a U.S. technology park.



Custom Talent, Competitive Edge

BY BF EDITORS

EXPANDED WORKFORCE TRAINING OPTIONS PROVIDE COMPANIES ACCESS TO EMPLOYEE SKILLS FOR TODAY AND THE FUTURE.

Companies in nearly every industry face a combination of labor shortages, accelerating technological change, and widening skills gaps. In response, workforce development strategies such as custom training programs, apprenticeships, and skilled trades education are gaining renewed importance as businesses seek practical solutions to build sustainable talent pipelines.

Custom training initiatives are designed specifically around employer requirements. This type of approach allows businesses to collaborate directly with educational institutions and workforce partners to create programs focused on the skills needed within their facilities or industries. These range from short-term certification courses to highly specialized technical instruction for advanced equipment, robotics, software systems, and emerging manufacturing technologies.

Custom training offers both flexibility and speed in responding to rapidly changing market conditions. As automation, artificial intelligence, and digital systems become more integrated into daily operations, companies often require workers to learn new competencies faster than traditional degree programs can provide. Custom training helps bridge that gap by delivering targeted instruction that can quickly prepare new hires or upskill existing employees.

Custom training can also be a retention strategy. Workers who receive company-sponsored education and career advancement opportunities are often more likely

PHOTO: ADOBE STOCK/PARRADEE



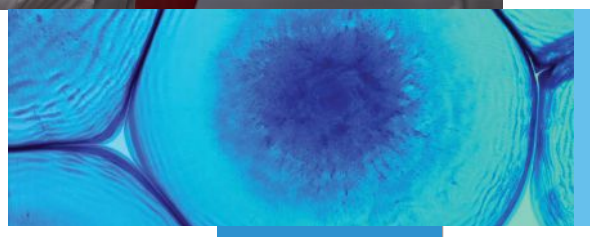
Medicines for All Institute, Virginia Commonwealth University



BIO-CAT, Inc., Fluvanna County



University of Virginia School of Medicine



Accelerating life sciences *from discovery to delivery*

Virginia is where life sciences and biopharma succeed. A collaborative ecosystem, skilled workforce, and business-ready environment help companies move faster – from discovery to manufacturing to global scale.

VIRGINIA

Learn more about Virginia's biopharma hub

For more info, visit **BusinessFacilities.com/location-info**

to remain with an organization long term. Additionally, custom training programs help employers adapt to regional economic priorities and industry-specific demands. States and local communities frequently support these efforts through workforce grants, training incentives, and partnerships with public institutions, helping companies reduce onboarding costs while creating stronger regional talent ecosystems. As industries continue modernizing and competition for skilled labor intensifies, custom training is becoming an essential component of workforce strategy for businesses seeking long-term operational resilience and growth.



Custom workforce training programs are increasingly valuable for companies seeking employees with specific or in-demand skills

PHOTO: ADOBE STOCK/BILLION PHOTOS

APPRENTICESHIPS ON THE RISE

Across the United States, companies are turning to apprenticeship programs as a solution to workforce shortages, rising training costs, and the demand for skilled employees. Once associated mainly with construction and manufacturing trades, apprenticeships have expanded into industries such as information technology, healthcare, cybersecurity, finance, and advanced manufacturing.

Increasingly, apprenticeship programs may combine paid on-the-job training with classroom instruction. This "earn-and-learn" model benefits both workers and employers.

Large corporations and industry leaders have expanded apprenticeship initiatives in recent years. Companies in advanced manufacturing and technology sectors are partnering with community colleges, workforce agencies, and the U.S. Department of Labor to create registered apprenticeship programs that address skills gaps. For example, semiconductor companies and manufacturing firms have introduced programs to train technicians needed for domestic production facilities. Technology companies are also investing in apprenticeships to prepare workers for software development, cybersecurity, and data-related careers, especially as demand for digital skills grows.

The U.S. Department of Labor recently awarded grants to expand registered apprenticeships across all states and territories, helping employers develop new training pathways and increase access to skilled careers.

As technology, automation, and artificial intelligence continue reshaping the workplace, apprenticeship programs are becoming an essential part of workforce development in the United States. By investing in structured, hands-on learning opportunities, companies are not only filling immediate labor needs but also building a more adaptable and sustainable workforce for the future.

SKILLED TRADES REMAIN A STRONGHOLD

Recent research from JLL on new skilled trades talent reveals that by 2030, an estimated 2.1 million skilled trades positions for electricians, HVAC technicians, plumbers, pipefitters, construction equipment operators, and general maintenance workers could go unfilled. The U.S. Department of Education reports potential economic losses could reach $1 trillion annually, meaning this shortfall of skilled trades workers poses substantial risks to business continuity and economic resilience.

"Tradespeople are the custodians of the physical infrastructure upon which every organization depends," said Dr. Paul Morgan, Global COO, Real Estate Management Services at JLL. "We're at a critical inflection point where demand for skilled trades is accelerating while the available workforce continues to shrink. This systemic crisis threatens how we power our data centers, cool our laboratories, secure our manufacturing facilities and maintain the spaces where millions of Americans work every day. We risk operational disruptions that will ripple through the entire economy, affecting everything from construction timelines to energy costs to building safety. The window to act is now, before the gap becomes insurmountable."

JLL is identifying trends to work toward addressing the talent shortage. College tuition costs, $1.8 trillion in student loan debt and growing AI disruption of white-collar professions are reshaping career decisions. JLL's research found that community col-



AMARILLO
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In the heart of the Texas Panhandle lies **Amarillo, Texas**, often referred to as "The Middle of Everywhere." ™ More than a strategic location, Amarillo offers businesses a workforce ecosystem where education, industry, and economic development are fully aligned.

Through partnerships with employers, academic institutions, and workforce organizations, Amarillo continues expanding local training programs, connecting businesses with emerging talent, and supporting workforce development that delivers results. In Amarillo, companies don't have to wait for talent to catch up; they can grow with a workforce pipeline built to support long-term success.

To learn more about workforce development and business opportunities in Amarillo, visit **amarilloedc.com** or **scan the code.**

Amarillo College

AmTech CAREER ACADEMY

Texas Tech University School of Veterinary Medicine

Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center School of Pharmacy

West Texas A&M University

lege enrollment has risen 12% over the past five years, with trades-related majors among the fastest-growing. Construction trades, engineering technologies and mechanical and repair technologies all significantly outgrew nearly all other majors from 2024 to 2025.

"We're seeing a meaningful generational shift as young Americans recognize the multiple pathways to fulfilling careers with family-sustaining wages," said Michael Thompson, Americas Workplace Management Lead, Real Estate Management Services, JLL. "Skilled trades offer the resilience of hands-on expertise that AI is positioned to augment but not replicate for any foreseeable horizon."

The research emphasizes that addressing the shortage requires more than filling positions; it demands elevating the profession itself.

For instance, skilled trades in the buildings and facilities environment increasingly demand specialized expertise. In data centers, electricians deploy high-capacity electrical generation and distribution with redundantly powered backup systems, while HVAC technicians maintain automated systems.

Life sciences facilities require refrigeration specialists to understand EPA mandates for low-GWP refrigerants and pipefitters to install clean agent fire suppression and high-purity water systems critical to pharmaceutical-grade standards. Advanced manufacturing environments need building automation specialists to maintain facility management systems monitoring real-time conditions and pipefitters to service ultra-pure water systems.

"From data centers demanding immense power density and thermal management precision to life sciences facilities operating under stringent regulatory requirements, today's skilled trades professionals navigate complexity that combines traditional craft with cutting-edge technology," said Wei Xie, Global Head of Research, Workplace Management, JLL. "This creates a defining opportunity for the industry to rebrand skilled trades for the next generation."

For commercial real estate operators and contractors, the research recommends a holistic Build-Grow-Retain approach: build talent pipelines through strategic educational partnerships, grow capabilities with continuous upskilling on emerging building systems and retain top performers through structured career pathways and high-performance workplace cultures.

For its part JLL launched a pilot program for a skilled trades internship program within its Industrials division. Partnering with trade schools across multiple U.S. markets, the 26-week program balances classroom learning with practical on-the-job applications. Ninety percent of eligible graduates received a full-time job offer from JLL, and the program establishes a scalable model for talent development that JLL can expand across other industries and sectors.

AMARILLO, TEXAS: HOW AMTECH STRENGTHENS THE WORKFORCE PIPELINE

In the heart of the Texas Panhandle lies Amarillo, Texas, identified as "The Middle of Everywhere"™. Thanks to its central location and certified sites, Amarillo continues to grow as a place where businesses can expand with confidence. But beyond strategic location advantages, Amarillo also has a powerful competitive edge—a strong workforce development strategy through its partnership with a career and technical education leader: AmTech Career Academy.

AmTech Career Academy was created by Amarillo Independent School District (AISD) in 2018 and officially opened in 2021 to be the premier career and technical education program in the nation. AISD invested $46.2 million to purchase and remodel a 231,000-square-foot building into a state-of-the-art facility offering 28 career pathways for high school students. Each year, thousands of students access AmTech Career Academy for vocational training, with more than 4,500 students attending its 2026 career fair alone.

Today, AmTech Career Academy gives students access to cutting-edge tools, equipment, and hands-on learning environments that reflect real industry settings. The campus features a 3,500-square-foot robot and drone coliseum, an advanced mechatronics Smart Factory, a complete audio and visual production studio, and an Anato-



AmTech Career Academy was created by the Amarillo Independent School District (AISD) in 2018.

PHOTO: AMARILLO EDC



SINCE 1987

MISSOURI
ONE START

START STRONG
STAY STRONG

INCENTIVES FOR
RECRUITMENT | TRAINING | UPSKILLING

RANKED #5 IN THE U.S.

FOR CUSTOMIZED WORKFORCE TRAINING
- Business Facilities magazine

A Division of the Missouri Department of Economic Development

For more info, visit **BusinessFacilities.com/location-info**

mage Theater with advanced anatomy visualization technology typically seen in higher education.

Through career pathways in fields such as cybersecurity, drone technology, robotics, agricultural technology, manufacturing technology, welding, veterinary technology, pharmacy technology, and more, students are able to explore future educational and career opportunities while still in high school. By introducing students to high-demand technical fields early, AmTech helps build real experience, confidence, and practical skills before students enter the workforce.

That early workforce development is further strengthened through alignment with the Amarillo Economic Development Corporation (AEDC). As AEDC works with existing and prospective businesses to identify workforce needs, those insights help inform the types of skills and training that are most valuable in the region.

The result is a more connected workforce pipeline, one where education and industry are aligned and working toward the same goal.

For businesses, this means access to a steady flow of talent that is already familiar with industry tools, expectations, and environments. Students who work through AmTech programs are better prepared to step into entry-level roles, apprenticeships, or continued technical education.

For students, the impact is just as meaningful. AmTech provides a direct connection between education and career opportunities, helping students explore different industries, develop specialized skills, and make informed decisions about their future.

This approach strengthens Amarillo's overall workforce by creating a pipeline that is proactive, practical, and aligned with real industry demand.

In Amarillo, workforce development does not start after graduation. It starts early, with programs like AmTech that give students a head start and gives businesses confidence in the talent available in the region.

Visit amarilloedc.com to learn more about workforce development in Amarillo.



Brightpoint Community College in Chesterfield County, Virginia is one of the educational partners providing customized training for nonprofit drug manufacturer Civica Rx's Petersburg facility.

VIRGINIA: LIFE SCIENCES SUCCESSES VALIDATE TALENT DEVELOPMENT MODEL

Virginia has surprised many industry observers by emerging as a significant biopharma manufacturing hub. Multi-billion-dollar investments from Eli Lilly and Company and AstraZeneca, along with Merck's expansion at its Elkton facility, underscore growing confidence in Virginia's talent base and workforce and development infrastructure and speak to a growing consensus that the Commonwealth can deliver what companies need—quickly.

"In biopharma, speed to market depends heavily on speed to talent," said Sneha Atwal, Vice President of Manufacturing for Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP). "In Virginia, our advantage lies not only in having an abundance of talent, but how quickly we can develop, deploy, and scale that talent. We remain focused on collaboration and coordination to build one of the most responsive, industry-aligned talent pipelines in the country. It's a manufacturing-grade workplace ecosystem."

In partnership with the Virginia Community College System, the VEDP's Virginia Talent Accelerator Program connects employers with training resources that speed and simplify startups and expansions while continuing to provide dividends down the road. Launched in 2019, the Talent Accelerator has been named the country's top customized workforce training program by ***Business Facilities*** every year since 2023 (and by *Area Development* in 2025) for providing resources that support recruitment, training, and more. Lilly, AstraZeneca, and Merck are all using Talent Accelerator services—provided at no cost to qualified new and expanding companies as an incentive for job creation—to staff their new facilities.

PHOTO: GEOFF JOHNSON, THE DOWNTOWN CREATIVE

"Part of the vision for the Talent Accelerator is that, while VEDP is with an organization for a certain period of time, ultimately that company will be embedded in the community and looking for community resources. So VEDP, very wisely I think, envisioned that community colleges should be there from the beginning," said Elizabeth Creamer, Vice President of Workforce Development and Credential Attainment at the Community College Workforce Alliance (CCWA). CCWA is the workforce development division of Richmond-area community colleges Brightpoint and J. Sargeant Reynolds.

The CCWA partnered with VEDP to deliver customized training to Utah-based pharmaceutical manufacturer Civica Rx. In 2023, the company opened a 140,000-square-foot sterile injectable manufacturing facility in Petersburg to produce insulin in vials, prefilled syringes, and generic injectable drugs for hospitals. The plant created approximately 190 jobs—and a need for highly specialized training.

Preparing candidates to work in pharmaceuticals required specialized training that wasn't yet available in Virginia, so VEDP set out to help CCWA build a customized program. VEDP connected CCWA with a national subject matter expert who helped identify the faculty and equipment the schools would need to support on-site training.

Brightpoint Community College now offers a two-semester career studies certificate that prepares students to either go into a company as a technician or pursue further education in pharmaceutical manufacturing. This work also led to a partnership with the Virginia Manufacturers Association, Civica, and pharmaceutical chemical manufacturer AMPAC Fine Chemicals that resulted in a fast-track, noncredit pharmaceutical manufacturing technician (PharmaMT) credential. Less than two years passed between launching the program and enrolling the first students.

As Civica Director of Business Excellence Angel Colucci said, "It's really great, as a startup, to have a partner who's coming to the table asking, 'Have you considered this? How do I help here?'"

For more information about VEDP programs, visit www.vedp.org.



PHOTO: ADOBE STOCK/SPYRAKOT



DRIVING THE MESSAGE HOME

BY NORA CALEY

THE AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY GRAVITATES TOWARD REGIONS WITH WORKFORCE, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND SUPPLY CHAIN ADVANTAGES.

Despite economic uncertainty, the automotive industry continues to roll along. In an environment of rising fuel prices, high interest rates, and low consumer confidence, auto sales remain resilient. Manufacturers are increasing efficiencies, speeding innovation, and communicating the latest gadgetry and style options.

According to the National Automotive Dealers Association (NADA), the sales for new light-vehicle totaled 16.2 million units in 2025, an increase of 2.4% compared to 2024. Economic headwinds might have encouraged some of those sales. NADA reported that tariff announcements induced some consumers to buy a vehicle before the those took effect.

A similar phenomenon happened with the September 30, 2025 expiration of federal electric vehicle tax credits. Buying activity increased in third quarter, leading to a record-high monthly market share for battery electric vehicles (BEV) of 11.8%. For all of 2025, NADA reported, sales of EVs totaled 1.26 million units, an increase of 1.2% compared to 2024.

Even without the federal tax credit, shoppers are interested in EVs. According to the Alliance for Automotive Innovation, in fourth quarter 2025, EVs represented 9.6% of new light-duty vehicle sales. While that was down from 10.2% in 2024, there are still 164 models of electric car, utility vehicle, pickup truck and vans now available for sale in the U.S. (For another perspective on EV sales during 2025, see the sidebar on page 48.)

Whether they are building EVs or gasoline-powered vehicles, automotive businesses employed 952,800 workers in March 2026, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. While that was down from 975.3 in March 2025, the industry remains a robust employer.

Companies continue to look for sites to build state-of-the-art facilities, and locations are heralding their advantages. Following are some locations that are attracting the interest of automotive manufacturers and suppliers.

PHOTO: ADOBE STOCK/CANDY1812



MICHIGAN

PURE OPPORTUNITY®

Welcome to the land of limitless opportunity. Where breathtaking natural beauty stretches as far as the eye can see, and high-tech industries power fresh ideas and pristine possibilities. Ready to seize your opportunity?

Visit **MICHIGANBUSINESS.ORG** and discover why Michigan is the ideal state to live, work and prosper.

MICHIGAN ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

For more info, visit **BusinessFacilities.com/location-info**



Automotive manufacturer Minth Group Limited will convert a former steelmaking site to a facility that will produce high-quality plastic and aluminum components for automakers' U.S. plants.

GADSDEN, ALABAMA: DYNAMIC AUTOMOTIVE MANUFACTURING

Nestled in the foothills of Northeast Alabama, Etowah County has quietly become one of the most dynamic automotive manufacturing communities in the American South. Home to multiple Tier 1 and Tier 2 automotive suppliers, including the Narmco Group, Inteva Products, and Fehrer Automotive, the county has built a supply chain ecosystem that serves some of the world's largest automakers.

Geography has played a decisive role in shaping this ecosystem. Gadsden, the county seat, sits within a two-hour drive of six major OEMs: Honda, Mercedes, Volkswagen, Toyota, Hyundai, and Mazda-Toyota, placing local suppliers squarely at the center of the Southeast's automotive corridor. The county is further connected by Interstate 59, Norfolk Southern rail to the Port of Mobile, and the Northeast Alabama Regional Airport, with Birmingham-Shuttlesworth International Airport 60 minutes away, Huntsville International Airport 90 minutes away, and Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport within two hours. Being in the center of these logistical hubs, Etowah County is equally effective for domestic distribution and global supply chain connectivity.

In early 2026, that connectivity drew one of the region's most significant investments in a generation. Global automotive supplier Minth Group Limited announced plans to invest $430 million and create more than 1,300 jobs at the former Gulf States Steel site in Gadsden, a 400-acre brownfield that had long symbolized the region's industrial past. The facility will encompass nearly one million square feet of manufacturing space and produce high-quality plastic and aluminum components for automakers' North American plants. The Taiwan-based company, which operates 78 plants globally, selected Gadsden as its flagship U.S. campus, citing the region's workforce, infrastructure, and proximity to major OEMs.

Gadsden State Community College has opened an Advanced Manufacturing Center to expand the region's talent pipeline.

The appeal of Etowah County to automotive manufacturers is no accident. "People here know how to work," said David Hooks, Executive Director of the Gadsden-Etowah Industrial Development Authority. "They appreciate the opportunity to work. They expect to be paid for it, but they don't mind working."

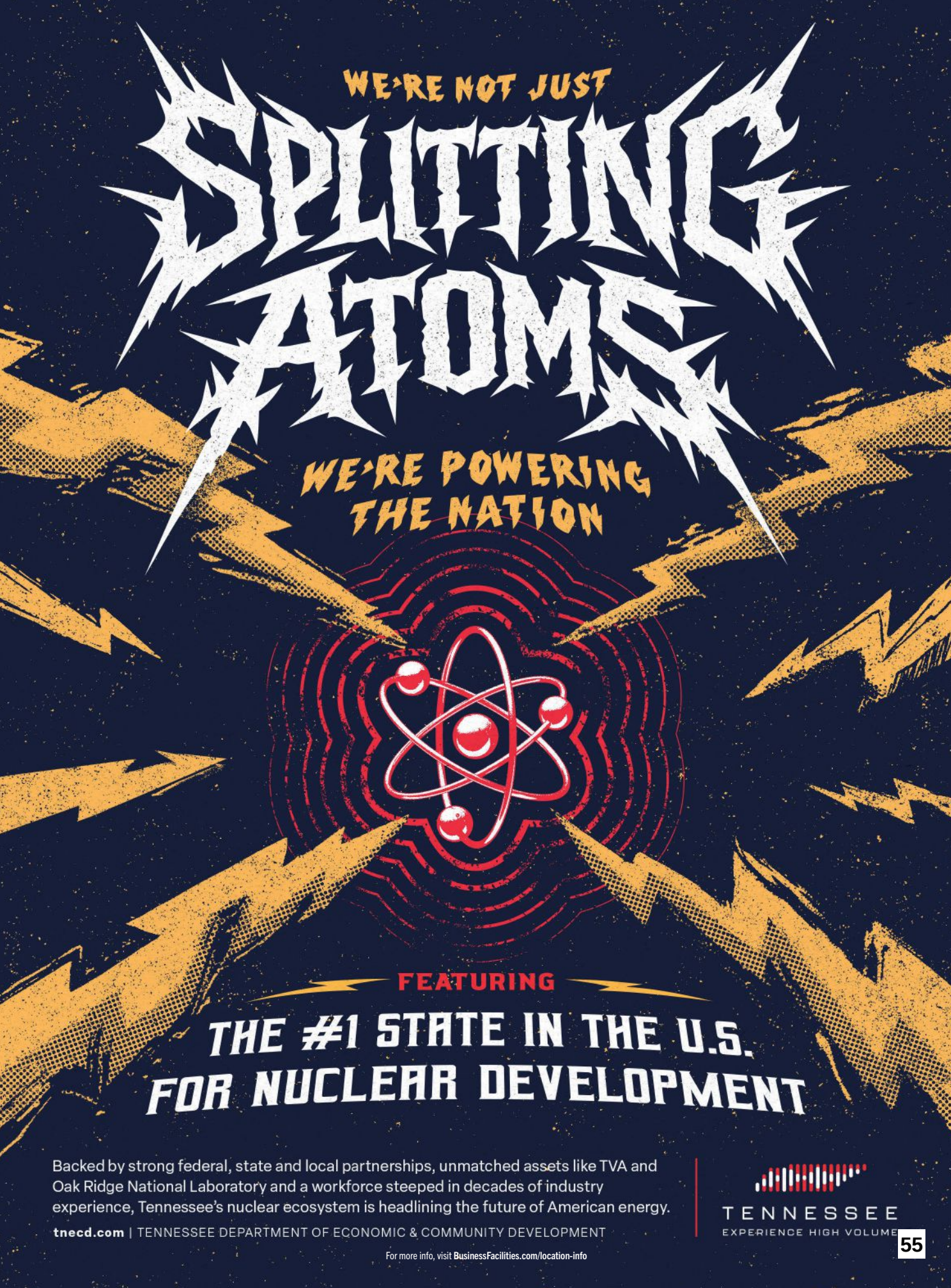
That culture of craftsmanship and reliability is supported by more than 500,000 residents within a 60-mile radius of Gadsden, providing a deep, experienced labor pool. Gadsden State Community College's newly opened 50,000-square-foot Advanced Manufacturing Center reinforces that pipeline, offering immersive training in mechatronics, precision machining, and additive manufacturing; skills that translate directly to the automotive industry.

For companies evaluating expansion, the county offers industrial sites at every scale. The 1,250-acre Northeast Alabama Regional (NEAR) Megasite, featuring a 100-acre shovel-ready pad, an on-site power substation, a 500,000-gallon water tank, and direct rail access, is designed to help large-scale manufacturers begin production quickly. The 25-acre Airport Industrial Park, an Alabama Advantage-Site, offers suppliers and logistics operations a streamlined, smaller footprint. All sites carry the infrastructure readiness and certified status that global site selectors demand.

What Minth Group recognized, and what Etowah County's growing roster of automotive suppliers already knows, is that the community offers a place where infrastructure, workforce, and regional collaboration are priorities.

Visit https://gadsdenida.org/ for more information.

PHOTO: CITY OF GADSDEN


WE'RE NOT JUST
SPLITTING ATOMS
WE'RE POWERING THE NATION
FEATURING
THE #1 STATE IN THE U.S. FOR NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENT
Backed by strong federal, state and local partnerships, unmatched assets like TVA and Oak Ridge National Laboratory and a workforce steeped in decades of industry experience, Tennessee's nuclear ecosystem is headlining the future of American energy.
tnecd.com | TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
TENNESSEE
EXPERIENCE HIGH VOLUME

MICHIGAN: DRIVING THE FUTURE, STAYING ATOP THE AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Since the popularization of the assembly line, Michigan has been at the heart of the American automotive industry. Kick-started by a historic approach to manufacturing, the state's automotive industry has sustained its leadership through an unmatched combination of infrastructure, talent, and innovation that continues to this day.

Michigan's dominance in the automotive industry began by pushing the envelope. It continues today for the same reason, with over 55% of total U.S. automotive R&D spending taking place in Michigan. This commitment to finding the most efficient and effective ways to move has been marked by recent investments in new technologies, from electric vehicles (EVs) to advanced aerial mobility (AAM).

As EVs grow in popularity around the world, producing batteries efficiently without relying on international-sourced manufacturing has been one of the biggest challenges for automotive companies. Opening this year, Ford Motor Company's groundbreaking BlueOval Battery Park aims to address that as the first United States factory owned by an automaker to produce lithium-iron phosphate (LFP) batteries. This is significant, as LFP batteries are cheaper to produce and do not require cobalt or nickel.

Michigan's capacity to push the automotive industry forward with new technology is due in large part to the state's strong talent base.

Creating a tighter EV supply chain also requires semiconductors, an integral component of EVs. In recent years, Michigan has made significant strides in drawing semiconductor manufacturers to the Great Lakes State, like SK Siltron CSS. The Korean manufacturer first opened operations in Michigan in 2022 with a $300 million manufacturing facility and is now expanding operations with a $544 million investment from the Department of Energy. Michigan is also home to Hemlock Semiconductor, the largest producer of hyper-pure polysilicon, an integral semiconductor material.

Michigan's capacity to push the American automotive and mobility industry forward with new technology is due in large part to the state's strong talent base. Michigan boasts the highest concentration of mechanical and industrial engineers in the nation, is a top 10 state for STEM degree completions, and is investing heavily in up-and-coming workforce



Michigan's capacity to push the American automotive and mobility industry forward with new technology is due in large part to the state's strong talent base.

PHOTO: DREW MASON

to maintain its large talent pool. Last year, Ford and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) unveiled plans for $1.54 million in Ford Future Builders Labs, which will help K-12 students across Michigan gain hands-on knowledge of the trades, advanced manufacturing, and the auto industry.

Michigan's engineering and manufacturing ability isn't confined to the paved road, either. Last year, Governor Gretchen Whitmer and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) launched the Michigan Advanced Air Mobility Initiative to position the state as a national leader in next-generation aviation technology. The initiative helped steer over $42 million in combined public and private investment toward Michigan's growing AAM sector.

As the No. 1 region for vehicle production and the No. 1 state for automotive investments, it's clear Michigan continues to drive the future of the automotive industry, but that doesn't mean the Great Lakes State is resting on its laurels. By focusing on innovative mobility opportunities, cultivating its dense talent base, and doubling down on its in-state manufacturing prowess, Michigan is paving the way for a brighter automotive future.

Visit www.michiganbusiness.org to learn more.

TENNESSEE: CRANKING UP THE VOLUME ON AUTOMOTIVE, FROM MANUFACTURING TO INNOVATION

More than four decades ago, Nissan made a decision that would reshape Tennessee's economic trajectory, establishing its North American operations in the state and laying the groundwork for what would become one of the Southeast's most significant automotive hubs. What began as a single investment has since evolved into a statewide ecosystem and one that now spans nearly every corner of Tennessee, touching tens of thousands of workers.

Today, that momentum can be seen across the state. More than 900 automotive companies operate in 88 of Tennessee's 95 counties, forming a network that stretches from specialized suppliers to major assembly plants. The state is No. 1 in the Southeast for employment in the auto sector, with more than 136,000 Tennesseans employed in the industry. This growth has continued in recent years, with more than 20,700 new job commitments and $18 billion in capital investment announced since 2019.

Global brands like Volkswagen, General Motors, and Ford have joined Nissan in choosing Tennessee, drawn in part by its central location. Nearly 70% of the U.S. population is within a day's drive, giving manufacturers efficient access to customers and suppliers alike. Still, the state's automotive story is not defined by assembly plants alone.

Across Tennessee, a strong network of original equipment manufacturers has taken shape, reinforcing the industry's foundation. Companies like Denso, with multiple locations in East

MINTH GROUP ANNOUNCES $430 MILLION INVESTMENT IN GADSDEN, ALABAMA CREATING 1,300 JOBS



AND WE STILL HAVE AVAILABLE SPACE AND WORKFORCE FOR YOUR BUSINESS!

GADSDEN-ETOWAH INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

David Hooks
Executive Director
davidhooks@gadsdenida.org
256-543-9423

SCAN ME

For more info, visit BusinessFacilities.com/location-info



The Volkswagen assembly plant in Chattanooga, Tennesee opened in 2011.

Tennessee, Magna in Lawrenceburg, LG Chem in Clarksville and Toyota Motor Manufacturing in Jackson are part of a broader supply chain that supports production both within the state and across the region. Together, this interconnected system has made Tennessee a critical link in the national automotive landscape.

From design to advanced manufacturing, Tennessee supports the automotive ecosystem with talent, capital, and collaboration.

That foundation has made Tennessee a natural choice for continued investment. Since opening its assembly plant in Chattanooga in 2011, Volkswagen has grown its footprint to include research and development operations in Hamilton County. In April 2026, Nissan further expanded its presence by beginning production of the all-new 2027 Infiniti QX65 in Smyrna, marking a new chapter of luxury vehicle manufacturing for the company.

As technology continues to reshape the industry, Tennessee's role is expanding alongside it. Automakers and suppliers are navigating technological change, evolving supply chains and increasing global competition. In response, the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development (TNECD) is focused on maintaining stability and momentum. Through continued investment in workforce development, infrastructure and research and development assets, the state aims to remain a reliable, business-friendly partner for the industry.

The automotive sector in Tennessee looks much different today from how it did four decades ago. The state is not just building vehicles anymore. It's actively testing the new technology that will power the next generation of American-made cars. From design and engineering to advanced manufacturing and innovation, Tennessee now supports the entire automotive ecosystem with talent, capital, and collaboration.

Tennessee's automotive story isn't slowing down—it's accelerating into its next phase of innovation and growth.

Visit https://tnecd.com/ for more information.

RIO SOUTH TEXAS REGION: STRATEGIC LOCATION, COMPELLING VALUE PROPOSITION

The Rio South Texas Region has rapidly emerged as one of the most strategic locations in North America for automotive suppliers. Driven by its unique binational positioning, robust infrastructure, and growing industrial ecosystem, the region offers a compelling value proposition for

PHOTO: OFFICE OF GOVERNOR BILL LEE

Tier 1 and Tier 2 suppliers seeking efficiency, resilience, and long-term growth.

At the core of its appeal is geography. Located along the U.S.–Mexico border, Rio South Texas functions as a natural bridge between two of the world's most integrated automotive manufacturing bases. Suppliers operating in the region can seamlessly connect with production hubs in northern Mexico while maintaining direct access to U.S. markets. This dual-market proximity enables companies to optimize operations, reduce transit times, and meet increasingly strict requirements under the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA).

The Rio South Texas region provides an advanced, multimodal logistics network for the automotive industry.

Equally important is the region's advanced logistics network. With access to multiple international bridges, major highways, rail systems, seaports, and cargo airports, Rio South Texas supports highly efficient, multimodal transportation. Cities like Harlingen exemplify this advantage, offering connectivity via air, land, rail, and sea—an uncommon combination that strengthens supply chain reliability. These capabilities are critical for automotive suppliers that depend on just-in-time and just-in-sequence delivery models.



With binational positioning, robust infrastructure, and a growing industrial ecosystem, the Rio South Texas regions offers a compelling value proposition.

Another defining strength is the Rio South Texas Region Binational Autocluster, a collaborative initiative uniting



PHOTO: ISTEP

For more info, visit **BusinessFacilities.com/location-info**

Automotive Trade Association: EV Survey 2025

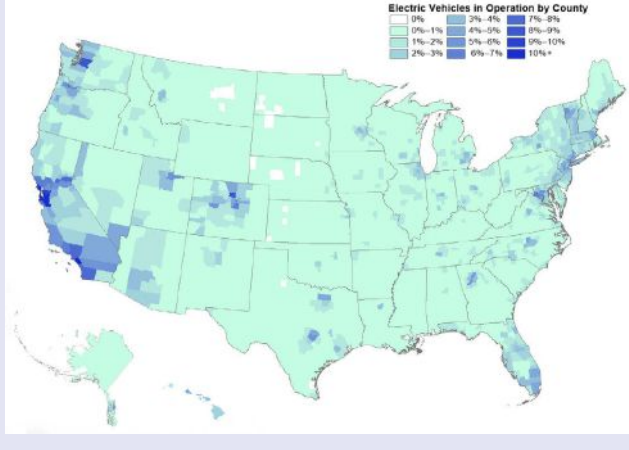
In March 2026, the Alliance for Automotive Innovation (AAI) released its state-by-state analysis of the U.S. electric vehicle market for Q4 and full-year 2025. The "Get Connected Electric Vehicle Report Q4 2025" from this automotive trade association summarizes EV sales and purchasing trends across the 50 states. The report features a breakdown of light-duty market share by powertrain (2016-2025) and a geographic distribution analysis of registered EVs and charging infrastructure. (The full report is available for download at the Alliance for Automotive Innovation website: www.autosinnovate.org)

One trend highlighted is that EV sales in Q4 were the lowest since first quarter of 2022; down year-over-year. A few key points:

- EVs represented 6.5% of new U.S. light-duty vehicle sales in Q4 2025, down from 12.6% in Q3 2025 and a decrease of about 257,000 units.
- EVs represented 9.6% of new light-duty vehicle sales in 2025, down from 10.2% in 2024.
- Light truck sales represented 82% of the EV market, down 3% points from Q3 2025.

When it comes to geographic trends, the AAI report found California (17%) led the country in EV registrations in Q4 2025, though down 14.6% points from the previous quarter. EV market share decreased in every state and Washington, D.C., from the third quarter to the fourth quarter of 2025.

- Four states and the District of Columbia had EV registrations above 10% in Q4 2025: District of Columbia (16.3%); Washington (14.8%); Nevada (12.3%) Oregon (11%); and Hawaii (10.1%).



Comparing Q4 2025 to Q4 2024, there were 187,000 fewer new EVs registered in the U.S.— a 43% volume decrease.

- Year-over-year, total light-duty vehicle sales (all powertrains) decreased 5% (about 198,000 fewer vehicles).
- EV market share decreased 4.4% points.
- Hybrid market share grew 3.5% points.
- Internal combustion engine vehicle market share increased by 0.9% points, reversing the trend of quarterly ICE contraction.

For full-year 2025, there were just over 1.5 million EVs registered in the U.S.–a 4% volume decrease compared to AAI's 2024 data.

- 2025 total light-duty vehicle sales (all powertrains) increased 2.2% (about 340,000 additional vehicles).
- EV market share decreased 0.6% points.
- Hybrid market share grew 3.7% points.
- Internal combustion engine vehicle market share decreased 3.1% points.

PUBLIC EV CHARGING

In Q4 2025, the number of publicly available EV chargers increased 22% from Q4 2024, while total EVs on the road increased 25%. Nationwide, there were 246,755 EVs registered in Q4 2025, and 8,537 public chargers added. The report states that 7.3 million EVs were on the road (2.5% of vehicles in operation) and a total of 236,945 publicly available charging outlets—a ratio of 31 EVs for every public port. AAI also reports that the composition of new public charging networks is shifting: Non-Tesla fast chargers outnumber new Tesla installations. Tesla dropped from 55% of all new fast charging installations in 2023 to 39% in 2025.

MAP SPOTLIGHT

The AAI report highlights an uneven geographic distribution of EVs and charging infrastructure across the U.S. The map shows the dark blue areas as having the highest density, decreasing to the white locations According to the report, among the 3,100 U.S. counties:

- 25 counties have no registered EVs.
- Half of all registered EVs arein 42 counties (1.4% of all counties).
- 646 counties (21%) have an EV in operation (E-VIO) rate greater than 1%.
- 274 counties (13%) have an E-VIO rate greater than 2%. ◆

more than 170 companies participating in the automotive sector, plus educational institutions, and economic development organizations. This ecosystem fosters innovation, workforce development, and supply chain integration across borders. Suppliers benefit from being part of a coordinated network that includes OEM-linked manufacturers producing components for major global brands.

Rio South Texas offers excellent value per operating cost for labor, land, and utilities, without sacrificing quality or productivity. Additionally, the companies that make up the binational autocluster are versatile, as most serve several industries beyond the automotive sector.

The region's shared border with Mexico allows companies to leverage cost-effective manufacturing while maintaining a U.S. footprint for final assembly, distribution, or compliance purposes. This hybrid model is increasingly valuable as companies pursue nearshoring strategies to mitigate global supply chain disruptions.

Workforce availability is another key advantage. The region boasts a young, growing population supported by technical schools, universities, and workforce training programs tailored to advanced manufacturing. Four-year and several two-year institutions help ensure a steady pipeline of skilled labor in engineering, automation, and precision manufacturing—critical areas for modern automotive production.

Finally, the region is positioning itself for the future of mobility. Significant investments—such as a $225 million automotive technology facility in McAllen—highlight its role in next-generation vehicle production, including software-defined and electric vehicles. This forward-looking focus ensures that suppliers locating in Rio South Texas are not just supporting today's supply chains but actively participating in tomorrow's innovations.

In summary, Rio South Texas offers automotive suppliers a rare combination of strategic location, integrated binational collaboration, cost efficiency, logistics strength, and future-ready industry development. As global manufacturers continue to rethink supply chains, the region stands out as an ideal platform for sustainable growth and competitive advantage.

To find out more information, visit www.costep.org.



For more info, visit **BusinessFacilities.com/location-info**



From Port To Profit

BY NORA CALEY

PORTS AND FOREIGN-TRADE ZONES SUPPORT IMPORT AND EXPORT ACTIVITY, AMIDST RISING COMMERCE AND SHIFTING SUPPLY CHAINS.

Goods are continuing to flow in and out of the United States, amidst the continued shifts in tariffs, geopolitical tension, and economic headwinds. Trade volumes remain high and regions are investing in their ports and foreign-trade zones, or FTZs.

According to the United States Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation (BTS) Statistics, "Port Performance Freight Statistics: 2026 Annual Report", in 2024, U.S. ports accounted for 41% of all U.S. imports and exports, totaling over $2.1 trillion. Exports accounted for 34% of this value, while imports accounted for 66%.

Also according to BTS, 72% of all tonnage was concentrated within the top 25 ports. Those 25 ports handled a total of 1.87 billion short tons of cargo in 2023, an increase of 1% from 2022.

FTZs are an important component of trade and the larger economy. FTZs are designated locations where merchandise is considered to be outside of U.S. customs territory, which enables businesses to reduce or eliminate duties on imports. The zones play an important role in encouraging international trade.

According to the 86th Annual Report of the Foreign-Trade Zones (FTZ) Board to the Congress of the United States, released in November 2025, there were 199 FTZs active during 2024, with a total of 381 active production operations. Nearly 543,000 people were employed within 1,300 active FTZ operations during the year. The value

PHOTO: ADOBE STOCK/FOTOMEK

TAKE THE LEAD WITH THE #2 RANKED FTZ

Stay Competitive with FTZ 122

Reduce, defer or eliminate duties while strengthening trade with Port of Corpus Christi Foreign-Trade Zone 122. With direct highway, rail and deepwater access only 150 miles from Mexico, our strategic Gulf Coast location and year-round operations offer the speed, scale and flexibility to keep your global and domestic trade moving.

FTZ Advantages:

- Direct access to rail (UP, BNSF, CPKC) and interstate highways
- Three dedicated rail-ship docks for efficient cargo transfer
- Channel deepened to 54 feet for larger vessels
- C-TPAT certified for enhanced security and customs benefits
- Bi-monthly meetings led by the Port of Corpus Christi and Customs to support FTZ operators



DISCOVER HOW
FTZ 122 can improve your bottom line.

» portofcc.com

PORT CORPUS CHRISTI®

For more info, visit BusinessFacilities.com/location-info

of shipments into zones totaled nearly $964 billion, compared with $949 billion the previous year.

As consumers continue to purchase and companies continue to move goods, locations are updating and expanding their ports and assisting companies to benefit from working with FTZs.

PORT OF LONG BEACH: THE PORT OF THE FUTURE

As the premier gateway for Trans-Pacific trade, the Port of Long Beach in California is a global leader in green port initiatives and top-notch customer service, moving cargo with reliability, speed and efficiency. The Port of Long Beach moves more than $300 billion in cargo annually and supports 2.7 million jobs across the United States, including 691,000 in southern California.

Thanks to the efforts of the ILWU workforce and terminal operators, the Port of Long Beach led the nation as the busiest container seaport through the first quarter of 2026, processing nearly 2.4 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs).

"The Port of Long Beach is exploring development of the world's first conventional zero-emissions container terminal."

Industry leaders named Long Beach "The Best West Coast Seaport in North America" in 2025 for the seventh consecutive year, thanks to its focus on increasing competitiveness and operational excellence. The year 2025 was the busiest on record for the Port of Long Beach, with nearly 9.9 million TEUs moved, making it part of the nation's busiest port complex.

The Port of Long Beach is focused on transforming into the Port of the Future, with a projected annual throughput of 20 million TEUs by 2050. To remain at the cutting edge, the Port is investing $3.3 billion in strategic projects over the next 10 years to build the Port of the Future by enhancing marine terminal productivity, delivering greater efficiency to its customers and improving the sustainability of its operations.

These modernization efforts include construction of a state-of-the-art rail hub that will speed the movement of cargo through the port complex and shift more cargo to rail, helping to alleviate traffic on local freeways.

Achieving environmental goals while maximizing operations remains a priority as the Port explores the proposed development of the first conventional, zero-emissions container terminal in the world. If approved, the facility would handle up to 1.8 million TEUs annually, utilizing human-operated cargo-handling equipment powered by renewable energy. By operating Foreign-Trade Zone 50, the Port of Long Beach helps mitigate the impacts of tariffs and increase cash flow by deferring import duties and eliminating duties on re-exports for qualifying businesses within Orange County and parts of San Bernardino and Los Angeles counties.

The Port of Long Beach offers a data solution known as CargoNav for the industry's free use, providing a flexible, safe source of data on cargo movement that registered users tap into for valuable visibility into cargo movement, allowing operations crews to better coordinate workforce and equipment deployments, giving operators the information they need, when they need it.

Soon, CargoNav will be equipped with a Universal Trucking Appointment System that will allow motor carriers to schedule the pickup and drop-off of containers at any of the Port's six marine terminals—and eventually the entire San Pedro Bay.

Customers choose the Port of Long



The Port of Long Beach moves more than $300 billion in cargo annually.

PHOTO: PORT OF LONG BEACH



OPPORTUNITY ACCELERATED

ANCHORED IN SERVICE. PROPELLED BY PEOPLE.

Discover why Port Freeport is the gateway of choice for major industries and brands. As Texas's shortest and deepest channel, Port Freeport is the most operationally efficient choice for businesses.

- 1-hour transit time, shortest deep-water channel transit on the Gulf Coast
- 51-foot operational depth with a maximum depth of 56-feet
- New rail infrastructure
- 350 acres of environmentally mitigated land ready for development
- Diverse cargo portfolio with Containers, RORO, Breakbulk and Project Cargo

---

Learn More about the Port Freeport Advantage

PortFreeport.com | 1.800.362.5743

PORT FREEPORT℠

Beach for the most dependable, cost-effective and fastest delivery of goods in the world, along with the strong relationships it maintains with industry, community, environmental advocates and partner agencies.

Visit www.polb.com for more information.

PORT OF CORPUS CHRISTI: HIGH-PERFORMANCE GULF GATEWAY FOR GLOBAL INDUSTRY

For companies evaluating U.S. locations, the Port of Corpus Christi offers a compelling combination of scale, efficiency, and multimodal connectivity. Located on the South Texas coast approximately 150 miles from the U.S.-Mexico border, the region provides a strategic platform for optimizing supply chains across North America and global markets.

The Port of Corpus Christi's competitive advantage begins with maritime performance. The 38-mile Corpus Christi Ship Channel—now deepened to 54 feet—is the deepest on the Gulf Coast. Its depth and western Gulf location enable faster transit to open water, reduced vessel congestion and quicker turnaround times. These efficiencies are especially valuable for energy, bulk, and breakbulk operations working on tight global schedules.

"Port of Corpus Christi is a participant in the C-TAPT program, providing enhanced security and efficient customs processes."

Inland connectivity further strengthens the Port of Corpus Christi's value. Direct access to Interstate 37 and Interstate 69, along with major freight corridors such as U.S. Highway 181 and the Joe Fulton International Trade Corridor, enables efficient trucking into key U.S. markets. Rail service from three Class I carriers—Union Pacific, BNSF and Canadian Pacific Kansas City—provides competitive routing flexibility, while an extensive pipeline network positions Corpus Christi as a premier hub for crude oil, refined products and petrochemicals.

A significant advantage for locating or expanding operations is the availability of development-ready land. Large tracts are available both on-port and throughout the region, capable of accommodating everything from heavy manufacturing and energy infrastructure to logistics campuses and advanced manufacturing facilities. This availability, combined with streamlined permitting pathways and proximity to core infrastructure, allows faster project timelines and long-term scalability that is increasingly difficult to find in more land-constrained markets.

Recent capital investment reinforces this capacity for growth. The completion of the Corpus Christi Ship Channel Improvement Project in 2025 widened the channel from 400 to 530 feet while deepening it from 47 to 54 feet, facilitating safer navigation and accommodating larger vessels. For site selectors, this delivers long-term throughput certainty and scalability.

The Port of Corpus Christi's trade environment is designed for seamless coordination. As a participant in the Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism (C-TPAT), Port of Corpus Christi users benefit from enhanced security and more efficient customs processes. The integration of Foreign-Trade Zone 122 further strengthens competitiveness by allowing companies to defer, reduce or eliminate duties while improving cash flow and inventory management. Active coordination among Port leadership, U.S. Customs and Border Protection and zone operators supports compliance and operational clarity.



Aframax tanker STI Alexis inbound at the Port of Corpus Christi to load crude at Buckeye Texas Hub in the Inner Harbor.

PHOTO: PORT OF CORPUS CHRISTI

Workforce availability complements the infrastructure. Partnerships with Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi, Del Mar College and the Craft Training Center of the Coastal Bend align training with industry needs in energy, logistics, manufacturing and skilled trades—reducing ramp-up time and supporting long-term productivity.

Finally, South Texas' warm, dry climate supports consistent year-round operations with minimal weather-related disruption.

For companies that are prioritizing speed to market, cost efficiency, and scalable growth, the Port of Corpus Christi delivers a uniquely integrated solution—where deepwater access, multimodal infrastructure, workforce readiness and trade-friendly programs converge to support global business success.

Visit https://portofcc.com/ for more information.



Port Freeport has more than $325 million in infrastructure projects underway to accommodate larger vessels, increase commerce, and generate a greater economic impact.

PORT FREEPORT, TEXAS: OPPORTUNITY ACCELERATED

Ranked the 13th largest port in the nation based on foreign waterborne tonnage and 4th in Texas by the same measure, Port Freeport is accelerating opportunity. The Port provides accessibility through road and railway and is the shortest—and soon to be deepest—channel on the Texas Coast, offering more than 350 acres of mitigated and shovel ready land.

Known for reliable and flexible customer service, Port Freeport has experienced exponential growth and is undertaking strategic initiatives to pro-



PHOTO: PORT FREEPORT

For more info, visit **BusinessFacilities.com/location-info**

"At Port Freeport, the Velasco Container Terminal received two new super post-Panamax gantry crates in 2025."

vide customers with competitive expansion options while creating jobs as a leading economic catalyst for the region and the state. One of these initiatives includes the Freeport Harbor Channel Improvement Project, comprised of four reaches, which will deepen and partially widen the channel from its current depth 46 feet to depths ranging from 51 to 56 feet MLLW. The project was substantially completed in Q1 2026.

Port Freeport serves its customers and stakeholders through state-of-the-art infrastructure including a deep-water container terminal, a rail-served multi modal terminal for finished vehicle processing, storage and distribution, quick and efficient connection to the state highway system, the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, a railroad served by Union Pacific and Foreign Trade Zone #149 making the Port a global gateway. The Velasco Container Terminal received two new super post-Panamax gantry cranes in September of 2025 to enhance and grow its container operation. As a part of the expansion, Gate 12 was opened adjacent to the refrigerated warehouse, Cross-Dock #1, to create a seamless connection to the terminal.

Moving into the next century with continued operational excellence, the Port will break ground on Cross-Dock #2 in second quarter of 2026. This 84,000-square-foot multi-temperature facility is a significant investment that will provide critical infrastructure for the region, with completion on track for 2027.

There are more than $325 million in infrastructure projects underway at Port Freeport that accommodate larger vessels, increase commerce, and generate a greater economic impact.

Visit www.portfreeport.com for more information.

PORT HOUSTON: WHY COMPANIES CHOOSE FTZ 84

Companies choosing where to locate or expand their operations are prioritizing cost efficiency, scalability, and long-term reliability, and that's where Houston comes in. As a low-cost, high-service, low-risk gateway, Port Houston provides the consistency and performance companies need to move goods efficiently and grow with confidence. A key driver of that advantage is access to Foreign-Trade Zone No. 84 (FTZ 84), which is administered by Port Houston.

FTZ 84 provides flexible solutions that help businesses reduce costs, streamline operations, and remain competitive in an evolving global marketplace. These benefits are especially valuable for industries with complex import-export operations, including energy, automotive, and advanced manufacturing.

In 2025, demand for FTZ services increased as more than 125 companies sought guidance on customs duties enhancing their supply chain strategy. Seven new FTZ sites were added during the year, expanding the zone's footprint across the Houston area. FTZ 84 activity is estimated to support between $25 billion and $50 billion in annual merchandise received and up to $5 billion in exports, while sustaining approximately 10,000 jobs across in the Houston region.

Port Houston is located along the Houston Ship Channel and serves as a critical gateway for commerce and a strategic hub for companies seeking access to international markets. The Houston Ship Channel spans 52 miles and supports more than 200 private



Port Houston, located along the Houston Ship Channel, serves as a critical gateway for commerce.

"Port Houston is positioned near highway and rail connections to provide connectivity across Texas and beyond."

facilities and Port Houston's eight public facilities. Together, these comprise one of the most important industrial and logistics corridors in the United States.

Port Houston's strategic location further strengthens the value of FTZ 84. Positioned near major highway and rail connections, including key corridors such as State Highway 225, State Highway 146, Interstate 10, U.S. Highway 290, and U.S. Highway 59/I-69, the Port provides seamless connectivity across Texas and throughout FTZ 84's broader service area, including Waller and Wharton counties. This integrated infrastructure allows companies to move goods efficiently between production sites, distribution centers, and global markets, reducing transit times and improving reliability.

Ongoing infrastructure investments continue to enhance the region's competitive position. Expansion of the Houston Ship Channel is underway, and widening of the Channel through the Galveston Bay Reach is complete, increasing navigational safety, enabling larger vessels and supporting long-term growth. In addition, over the next five years, Port Houston is planning $2.1 billion landside capital investments designed to enhance capacity, improve performance, and support continued growth.

With a strong foundation in infrastructure, connectivity, and trade expertise, Port Houston and FTZ 84 continue to provide companies with the resources needed to grow, adapt, and compete in a rapidly evolving global economy. Large exporters, manufacturers using imported parts, and retail importers with more than 100,000 square feet of import inventory can all benefit from an FTZ.

Visit www.porthouston.com/ftz84 to learn more.

PORT TAMPA BAY: A LEADING ECONOMIC ENGINE FOR FLORIDA

Port Tampa Bay is Florida's largest and most diversified seaport, serving as a vital gateway for global trade, logistics and travel. Located in Tampa, the port sits at the heart of the Tampa Bay/I-4 Corridor—one of the fastest-growing



FTZ 84
FOREIGN-TRADE ZONE | PORT HOUSTON

Port Houston manages FTZ 84, a leading zone delivering opportunities for foreign commerce to thrive and drive regional prosperity.

What Foreign Trade Zone 84 can do for you:

- Reduce or eliminate import tariffs for U.S. importers and exporters
- Reap the benefits of reduced inventory tax rates
- Not a site? Gain access to public warehousing for your cargo needs
- Uncover greater efficiencies and save money

www.porthouston.com/ftz84

For more info, visit **BusinessFacilities.com/location-info**

distribution hubs in the United States. With immediate access to Interstate 4, companies can reach key markets, including Orlando, and connect to the broader Southeast. Within a 90-minute drive lies a robust logistics network encompassing more than 550 million square feet of industrial and distribution space, enabling faster cargo movement and reduced transportation costs.

Spanning more than 5,000 acres of industrially zoned land with deepwater access, Port Tampa Bay is Florida's largest port by tonnage, acreage, and cargo throughput and a leading economic engine for the state, generating approximately $34 billion in annual economic impact and supporting more than 192,000 jobs.

The port handles a wide range of cargo, including containerized freight, breakbulk and project cargo, bulk commodities, energy products, and roll-on/roll-off shipments. It is also a top 10 U.S. cruise port, welcoming more than 1.6 million passengers annually, and a major hub for shipbuilding and repair.

Port Tampa Bay offers a compelling combination of flexibility, reliability and growth potential. Its uncongested operations, strong berth availability and efficient inland connectivity allow shippers to move cargo predictably and cost-effectively. As global supply chains adapt to congestion and rising costs, the port has emerged as a strategic alternative, with container volumes growing more than 300% since 2018.

Infrastructure investments are underway to support up to 1 million TEUs annually, including the recent arrival of two post-Panamax ship-to-shore cranes to accommodate larger vessel sizes and increase efficiency. These advancements are further supported by recent federal investments to enhance capacity and strengthen supply chain resilience.

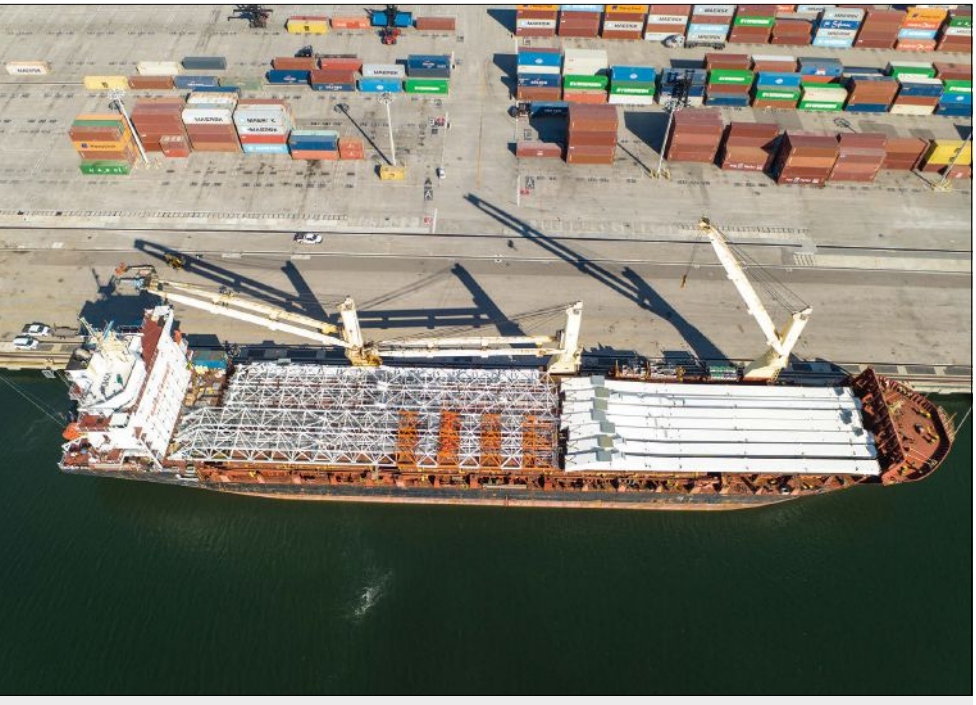
A key differentiator is Port Tampa Bay's foreign-trade zone (FTZ), which covers the entire port complex and provides significant logistical and financial advantages. With support from Port Tampa Bay, companies can store, assemble, test, or manufacture goods in the FTZ to optimize supply chain efficiency. The FTZ also supports import-for-export operations, making it well-suited for manufacturers, distributors, and global logistics providers. Expedited site activation further enables businesses to scale quickly.

"Port Tampa Bay spans more than 5,000 acres of industrially zoned land with deepwater access."

Beyond port infrastructure, the region benefits from the broader Tampa Bay/I-4 Corridor Foreign-Trade Zone Project (FTZ No. 79), which extends throughout West Central Florida. Through the FTZ, companies can streamline compliance, improve efficiency and expand their global reach. A skilled workforce, business-friendly environment, and continued population growth further strengthen the region's appeal.

Port Tampa Bay's strength lies in its diversification and forward-looking investment strategy. Through ongoing infrastructure enhancements and a commitment to customer-driven growth, the port continues to position itself as a reliable, flexible and scalable gateway. For companies looking to optimize supply chains, reduce costs and access one of the nation's most dynamic markets, Port Tampa Bay offers both the location and the resources to succeed.

Visit www.porttb.com to learn more.



Two new post-Panamax ship-to-shore (STS) gantry cranes have arrived at Port Tampa Bay, where installation will soon begin as part of the port's ongoing container terminal expansion.

PHOTO: PORT TAMPA BAY

ST. LUCIE COUNTY, FLORIDA: FTZ COVERS LAND AND SEA

Along Florida's southeast Atlantic Coast midway between Port Canaveral and PortMiami, the Port of Fort Pierce is a deepwater seaport accessible via the federally maintained Fort Pierce Inlet. The port is also located entirely

within Foreign-Trade Zone 218.

In its early years, the port was a hub for the international shipping of Florida citrus and produce. During World War II, it was converted to a U.S. Navy base before establishing itself as a shipping hub to the Bahamas.

In 2019, Derecktor Shipyards opened a full-service maintenance and repair operation designed for megayachts, adding the world's largest mobile boat hoist a year later. The hoist has a capacity of 1,500 tons, the near equivalent of eight 747 airplanes.

In 2023, Derecktor Fort Pierce LLC received FTZ 218's first subzone designation, offering substantial benefits to its maritime clients including duty exemption for imported parts and foreign-built yachts. In addition, major refit projects conducted within the FTZ benefit from deferred duties until completion. Upon finishing the project, vessels can leave the U.S. without the obligation to pay duties or taxes.



Fort Pierce, Florida in St. Lucie County

FTZ 218 encompasses all of St. Lucie County's 688 square miles. Fifteen miles inland, the Apollo Group, a cruise ship provisioner, also utilizes a subzone for its 246,000-square-foot warehouse and

The Port of Long Beach. Always open. Always moving.

Long Beach International Gateway Bridge is fully operational – always ready to serve **ALL** of the San Pedro Bay.

Port of LONG BEACH
THE PORT OF CHOICE

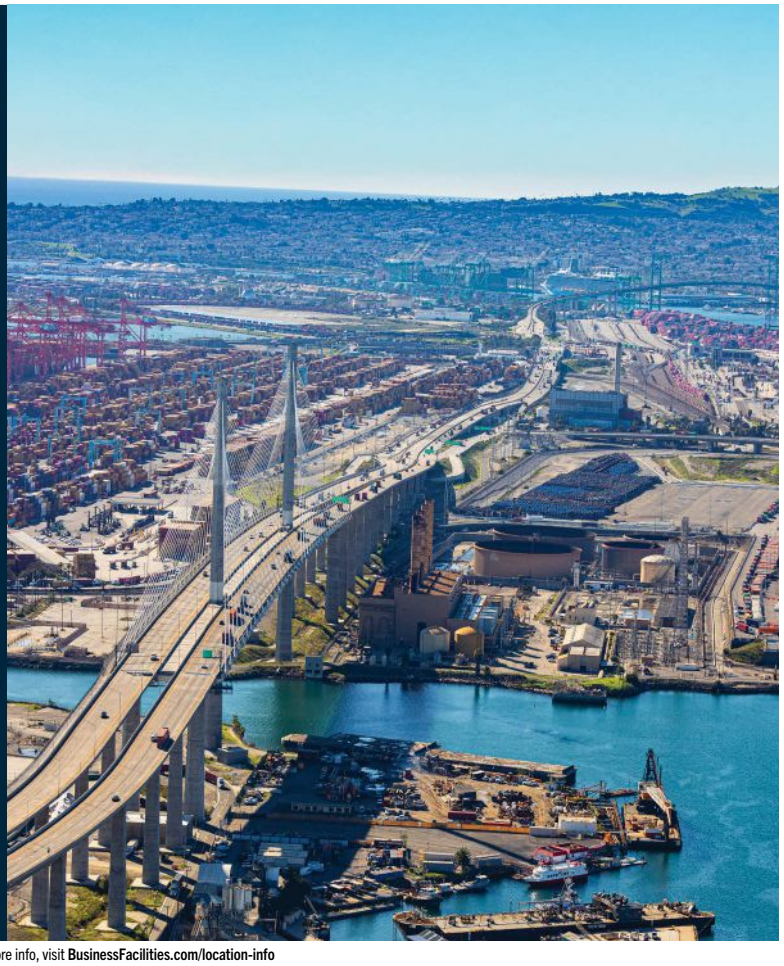


PHOTO: ADOBE STOCK/RESEARCHDIVA

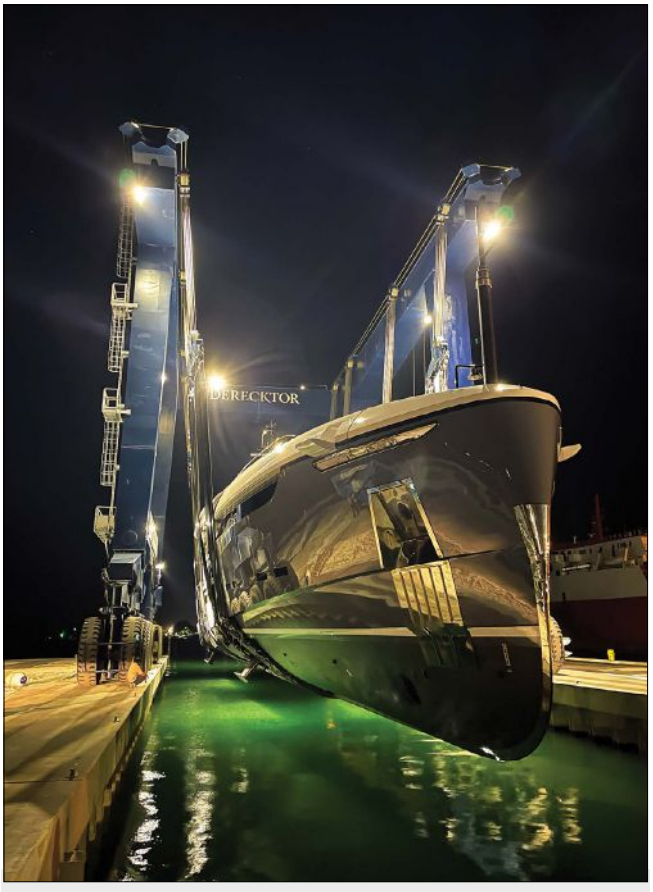
For more info, visit **BusinessFacilities.com/location-info**

"The Port of Fort Pierce in St. Lucie County is located entirely within Foreign-Trade Zone 218."

cold storage facility. Supplies sourced through a global network by the company can be efficiently delivered from the FTZ for the use of ocean-going ships in Florida's busy cruise ship ports located along Interstate 95 within a two-hour drive or less to the north and south.

Treasure Coast International Airport, King's Highway Industrial Park, St. Lucie West Commerce Park, and Crossroads Commerce Park are also approved FTZ 218 sites within St. Lucie County.

The county is developing 26 acres by the port to provide both recreational and marine commercial elements with a vision for the future development of large tracts of waterfront property. Facilities for small cruise ships, fast ferries, niche marine operations, Florida's space program, and yacht manufacturing are among future opportunities eyed for Florida's Port of Fort Pierce.



The Utopia on Derecktor Fort Pierce's 1500-ton capacity mobile boat hoist at the Port of Fort Pierce, within FTZ 218

In addition to logistics, distribution and the marine trades, advanced manufacturing and life science sectors are also experiencing rapid growth within the county. Top 15 in population growth, the county has a regional workforce of more than 387,000, an A-rated school district focused on career and technology education programs that graduates approximately 3,000 students a year with between 4,500 and 5,000 professional certifications, and business-friendly governments.

Visit www.youredc.com For more information about St. Lucie County, FTZ 218, and development at the Port of Fort Pierce.

PHOTO: DERECKTOR SHIPYARDS

PORT TAMPA BAY
EXPANDING CAPACITY FOR
FLORIDA'S
DISTRIBUTION
HUB

- Strategically located at the crossroad of the Tampa/Orlando I-4 Corridor and I-75; where there is over 550 million square feet of distribution center space
- The fastest growing region in the fastest growing state
- Expanded terminal capacity and plenty of room for growth
- E-commerce, consumer goods, perishables, and building materials
- Multiple round-trip truck deliveries per day from Port to distribution centers
- Weekly direct sailings from Mexico, Central America, South America, and Asia

REROUTE YOUR THINKING®
WWW.PORTTB.COM



For more info, visit **BusinessFacilities.com/location-info**

RENEW YOUR FREE SUBSCRIPTION



Continue receiving the strategies and insights you need to make the best possible location decisions.

Business Facilities
The Source For Site Selectors

Renew your FREE subscription today and keep up-to-date on:

- State Profiles
- Business Incentives
- Industry Reports
- Rankings, Awards and MORE!



Renew Today at BusinessFacilities.com/Subscribe



Innovation At All Levels

*with **Matt Hurlbutt**, President & CEO, Greater Rochester Enterprise*

FROM PRECISION OPTICS TO DAIRY PROCESSING, BUSINESSES ARE GROWING IN THE GREATER ROCHESTER, NY REGION.

Business Facilities: *In 2025, Greater Rochester Enterprise (GRE) worked to attract more than $200 million in capital investment and support more than 2,400 new and retained jobs to the region. What are a few highlights you'd share from last year? And how did 2025 business and retention results compare to previous years?*

Matt Hurlbutt: In 2025, GRE recorded 33 company project wins, resulting in $239 million in new capital investments. These investments led to the creation of 887 new jobs and the retention of 1,546 existing positions. GRE managed a robust portfolio of 281 business attraction and expansion projects, with 143 new projects initiated during the year. Key performance metrics such as new projects, project wins, and total projects under management each rose versus the prior year.

Several project wins expanded the region's capacity for new technology, critical materials, and essential goods. A couple of notable project wins include the expansion of EvolvOptic, a high-precision optics manufacturer; QED Technologies, a global provider of precision optics manufacturing and metrology solutions; and Toyota Material Handling North America, a leading provider of material handling solutions. Toyota and The Raymond Corporation opened an advanced energy storage solutions development, prototyping, and test center in Henrietta, NY. In addition, they invested in an R&D facility in Honeoye Falls, NY for the purpose of testing and validating fuel cell systems for their products. These next-gen energy applications for the lift truck industry are focused on increased productivity and efficiency and are designed to provide ecological and economic benefits.

Looking to 2026, the outlook remains positive. The year began with a major announcement from French textile-to-textile regeneration company Reju, which plans to invest $390 million in the City of Rochester. Reju will establish a textile regeneration hub at Eastman Business Park, its first North American location. The company selected Rochester due to its exceptional assets and the unique infrastructure at EBP, provided by Kodak and RED Rochester partners, which aligns with Reju's mission to recycle polyester and post-consumer waste into new textiles.



In Webster, New York, fairlife has opened a sprawling milk processing plant.

BF: *Greater Rochester is an established hub for companies involved in optics, photonics, imaging, and laser (OPIL) products and innovations. Would you provide a high-level view of this foundation? And, what are OPIL companies finding valuable in Greater Rochester in terms of resources on the horizon?*

Hurlbutt: The Greater Rochester, New York region is the world leader in optics, photonics, imaging, and laser technologies (OPIL), which is why it has so many outstanding Tier 1 and Tier 2 supply chain companies serving the semiconductor industry. You cannot make a chip in the United States without these indispensable Rochester-based companies. The region's expertise in photonics, laser technology, and materials science supports the next generation of not just chips but also packaging, the final step in semiconductor manufacturing.

OPIL sector growth in Rochester is impressive. With more than 150 OPIL companies employing approximately 20,000 residents, the industry has seen more than $1.1 billion in new capital investments and the creation of 4,300 new jobs since 2017.

Approximately 60% of all optics degrees in the U.S. are awarded by institutions in the Greater Rochester, NY region. The region is also the number one major metro for optics patents, driven by Rochester's patent activity in OLED, digital imaging, glass wafers for smartphones, advanced microscopy, and countless other innovations. These sector strengths reinforce why

PHOTO: GREATER ROCHESTER ENTERPRISE

the region is a finalist for a $160 million National Science Foundation (NSF) Engines Award focused on the Science, Technology, and Engineering of Lasers and Laser Applications Research (STELLAR). This award has the potential to grow a regional laser ecosystem that will benefit industries such as science, manufacturing, energy, biomedical, and national security applications, reinforcing Rochester's global leadership in optics and photonics, imaging, and lasers.

Recent expansions in this sector include QED Technologies, which is establishing a world-class fabrication and customer experience center. This expansion is designed to meet growing demand from the semiconductor, defense, and aerospace industries.

QED Technologies International President and Chief Executive Officer, Michael Mohammadi, said of the decision, "As a proud Rochester-based optics manufacturer, we are committed to advancing innovation and strengthening the global optics industry while driving growth that creates new jobs in our region." The company will invest $18 million and create more than 70 new engineering and scientific positions to accelerate R&D and boost production capacity.

In addition, EvolvOptic, a high-precision optics manufacturer, is expanding in Rochester and creating up to 40 new jobs.

EvolvOptic President, Ted Mooney, PhD. has said, "We are excited to be entering this new chapter of New York's leadership in optics technologies, as our targeted capability expansion will enable EvolvOptic to provide solutions for the growing, unmet needs of the optics industry, including the semiconductor industry, space- and ground-based imaging systems, directed energy, and high-energy laser research."

BF: *Let's talk about sites and site visits. What are selection teams looking at during the "on the ground" stage? Have you and your team seen a shift in questions being asked compared to in the past?*

Hurlbutt: The GRE team hosted more than 40 site visits during 2025, giving company leaders an opportunity to explore the Greater Rochester region and meet with key stakeholders. A few factors we're tracking are interest in buildings for sale, aggressive project timelines, and capital investments focused on automation. We've also found that companies are expanding existing facilities to keep pace with growth and market demands.

In addition to reviewing available sites and buildings that meet the project specifications, site selectors and company executives often want to tour universities and R&D labs and meet with workforce development partners and business leaders who are succeeding in the region. Greater Rochester, NY, is the right-sized city for easily connecting business leaders with the people and resources they need to solve problems or collaborate on innovations.

BF: *Food & Beverage is another significant industry for the region. What resources does Greater Rochester offer here, and can you hone in on the value of transportation infrastructure?*

Hurlbutt: With more than 250 food and beverage manufacturers and suppliers already calling the Greater Rochester, New York region home, the area has cemented itself as a premier hub for the industry. Global brands like Mott's, Constellation Brands, Barilla, HP Hood, and The Coca Cola Company's fairlife are thriving here.



EvolvOptic is expanding in Rochester, NY. Shown here is Dr. Ted Mooney, President of EvolvOptic (right) working with a colleague.

Advantages for the sector include:

- Agricultural Dominance: The region produces 29% of New York's agricultural sales. It is the leading milk-producing region in the state and home to the nation's third-highest apple-producing county.
- Abundant Resources: There is an unlimited supply of fresh water with no water rationing or rights issues
- Strategic Logistics: Situated near I-90, one-third of the U.S. and Canadian population is within 500 miles of Rochester, which offers major market access
- Innovation Pipeline: Fully integrated supply chains are supported by world-class R&D at Cornell University and RIT, driving advancements in packaging, food safety, and precision manufacturing.

With fertile land and a robust infrastructure, Greater Rochester, NY, offers a "farm-to-factory-to-fridge" solution that makes it the ideal place for food and beverage manufacturers. ◆

PHOTO: EVOLVOPTIC

ALABAMA PROFILE

Alabama's business climate entering 2026 continues to position the state as a desirable destination for advanced manufacturing, aerospace, automotive production, and industrial investment. A combination of competitive operating costs, a right-to-work environment, and strategic access to markets continues to attract both domestic and international companies. The state's economic development momentum remained strong through 2025, when Alabama secured a record $14.6 billion in new capital investment.

Manufacturing remains the foundation of Alabama's economy, particularly in automotive assembly, metals, chemicals, and industrial production, sectors that continue generating significant export activity and foreign direct investment. At the same time, the state is diversifying into higher-growth industries including aerospace and defense, biosciences, logistics, and technology-driven manufacturing. New investments tied to pharmaceuticals, electric vehicles, robotics, and digital infrastructure are helping broaden Alabama's industrial profile while reinforcing its established production strengths.

State-supported programs such as the Alabama Industrial Development Training program (AIDT), which provides customized workforce recruitment and training at no cost to qualifying employers, continue to support large-scale industrial projects and expansion activity statewide. Alabama has also expanded specialized training resources through facilities such as the Alabama Robotics Technology Park and regional workforce training centers focused on manufacturing, construction, maritime, and industrial technologies.

ALABAMA: A DYNAMIC, PRO-BUSINESS CLIMATE

A highly skilled workforce, strong pro-business climate, and steadfast community partnerships are just a few of the reasons the world's top companies have chosen to call Alabama home.

The state is an automotive powerhouse, turning out more than 1 million vehicles annually. Since Mercedes-Benz chose Alabama for its U.S. manufacturing plant more than 30 years ago, the industry has exploded, adding names like Honda, Hyundai, Toyota, and Mazda, along with hundreds of suppliers and support firms.

Aerospace has deep roots here, too, with Huntsville and the Saturn V rockets launching America's space age. Today, that ingenuity is seen in Alabama-built Airbus jets, Boeing rockets, Lockheed Martin missiles, and other cutting-edge products that fuel space exploration and protect U.S. interests around the globe.

Innovation thrives across the state, from the assembly lines to the research labs, where breakthrough developments are ushering in a new era of discovery.

Eli Lilly is the latest company to join the impressive roster of Alabama's bioscience



In December 2025, Eli Lilly and Company announced it will invest $6 billion in a new manufacturing facility in Huntsville, Alabama. At this next-generation synthetic medicine active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) facility, Lilly will produce small molecule synthetic and peptide medicines.

PHOTO: ELI LILLY AND COMPANY


Enter a state
of possibility.
If you're looking for a place to build, our sweet home is ready. Our state's supplier companies readily support the automotive supply chain, like Mercedes-Benz's state-of-the-art battery plant. And with plenty of greenfield sites and generations of experience under our belt, Alabama offers the reliability, speed and skilled labor to help you get off the ground confidently.
MadeinRuralAlabama.com
RURAL
MADE IN ALABAMA

firms. The pharmaceutical giant announced late last year it is spending $6 billion on a new advanced manufacturing operation to produce next-generation medicines.

"In Alabama, companies find a driven and dedicated workforce and unflinching support from top to bottom," said Ellen McNair, Secretary of the Alabama Department of Commerce. "Their success is our success, and we prove that each day with support and strategy to help accomplish their goals."

One of the key reasons for that success is a top-notch workforce training program individually designed to each company's needs. The state also welcomes industry with customized project agreements and incentives.

Prime locations and solid infrastructure are also part of the draw. And there's a renewed, statewide focus on ensuring that all communities, regardless of size, are preparing for a smooth entrance for new businesses.

The Site Evaluation and Economic Development Strategy program, known as SEEDS, aims to accelerate the development of new industrial sites. This matching grant program pairs state and local funds to prep dozens of parcels through land purchases, surveys, clearing, grading and other work. The Growing Alabama tax credits play a similar role, and communities across the state are taking advantage.

"Alabama has all the dynamic ingredients that forward-thinking companies want for new development," McNair said, "but none of that matters unless the state is ready for them. SEEDS and Growing Alabama have put our state in a prime position to offer the very best opportunities for industrial growth with the prepared sites and infrastructure."

"From a big city to a small town, we are confident that Alabama can deliver exactly what they need."

Visit www.madeinalabama.com for more information.

2026 "COOLEST THING" MADE IN ALABAMA

The Racing Honda Odyssey by Honda was named the 2026 "Coolest Thing Made in Alabama" in the annual Manufacturing Madness competition, held by Manufacture Alabama, a trade association. The winning product was revealed in April during an awards ceremony held at the Center for Commerce in Montgomery, where Ellen McNair, Secretary of the Alabama Department of Commerce, presented the award.

This year's competition saw more than 50,000 votes cast, with entries representing a range of industries, including aerospace, automotive, infrastructure and advanced manufacturing. The four finalists were AMERICAN Cast Iron Pipe Company, Austal USA, Honda and Blue Origin.

"This competition not only celebrates the innovative, world-class products made right here in Alabama, it is also a testament to the men and women behind the products and the companies that invest so much in their communities and create a lasting and positive economic impact on our state," said Jon Barganier, President and CEO of Manufacture Alabama. "Congratulations to all of this year's finalists and to our 2026 winner."

"Being named the 'Coolest Thing Made in Alabama' is an incredible honor for our team. This recognition reflects the passion and pride that go into every vehicle we build here in Alabama," said Lamar Whitaker, Plant Lead for Honda Alabama Auto Plant. "The Racing Honda Odyssey showcases the creativity and capability of our associates who push the boundaries of what's possible every day. As we approach 25 years of manufacturing in Alabama, we're proud to be part of such a robust community that rewards American-made excellence and ingenuity."

Manufacturing Madness is a bracket-style, public voting competition that highlights the role of manufacturing in Alabama's economy and raises awareness of the diverse, high-quality products made in communities across the state.



The Racing Honda Odyssey is manufactured in Lincoln, Alabama

PHOTO: MANUFACTURE ALABAMA

*HIRE SKILLS-FIRST. DON'T THROW AWAY TALENT.



Cindy, STAR

TEAR THE PAPER CEILING.ORG

STARs* SKILLED THROUGH ALTERNATIVE ROUTES.

ad COUNCIL

Opportunity @ Work.

DELAWARE PROFILE

Delaware's business climate in 2025 and into early 2026 continues to provide companies with a combination of corporate legal predictability, low operating costs, and East Coast market access. Often recognized as the nation's corporate capital, Delaware benefits from its well-established business laws and specialized Court of Chancery. Combined with the state's second-lowest business costs nationally and proximity to major northeast markets, Delaware remains competitive for headquarters, professional services, and innovation-driven operations.

Recent economic indicators point to continued stability and investment in long-term competitiveness. Delaware reported unemployment below the national average in 2025, while the state approved nearly $1 billion in FY2026 capital investments supporting infrastructure, workforce development, higher education, and economic development initiatives.

Key industries remain anchored by financial services, chemicals and advanced materials, life sciences, manufacturing, logistics, and food and agriculture. Financial and real estate-related industries continue to account for a substantial share of state GDP, while Delaware's expanding life sciences sector now supports more than 12,000 jobs across biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, and research.

Delaware offers a compelling value proposition centered on corporate certainty, strategic location advantages, and growing innovation sectors, particularly for firms seeking efficient access to Northeast markets.

SUSSEX COUNTY, DELAWARE: STRATEGIC HUB FOR FOOD PRODUCTION & PROCESSING

As the southernmost county in Delaware, located along the Mid-Atlantic coast, Sussex County offers direct access to major East Coast markets, a strong agricultural heritage, and a growing network of food production and processing assets. Within a four-hour drive of 25% of the U.S. population, Sussex County provides an ideal location for companies seeking efficiency in distribution, a growing workforce, and a business-friendly stronghold in the heart of the Mid-Atlantic region.

Sussex County is widely recognized as a leader in agricultural production, particularly in poultry, grains, and specialty crops. The region is the heart of the poultry industry in the U.S. and is supported by an integrated supply chain that includes growers, processors, transportation providers, and an experienced workforce.

Other industries considering Sussex County benefit from its strategic infrastructure. The region offers access to major highways, nearby ports, and multimodal logistics options that facilitate efficient movement of goods along the East Coast. Industrial sites and business parks, including shovel-ready properties,



In Sussex County, Delaware, food producers and agribusinesses continue to expand operations in response to strong demand and supply chain advantages.

PHOTO: PERDUE FOODS

provide room for expansion and scalability, supporting both small and large operations.

Recent investments and development trends underscore Sussex County's appeal. Food producers and agribusinesses continue to expand operations in response to strong demand and supply chain advantages.

The county's coordinated approach to economic development ensures that businesses receive support throughout the site selection and permitting process, helping projects move from concept to operation efficiently. The county also provides low-cost financing options to support the firms that choose to relocate to, or grow in, Sussex County.

The State of Delaware further enhances the competitive environment through a suite of incentives and programs tailored to manufacturers and processors. These include tax credits for job creation and capital investment, workforce training support, and site readiness initiatives.

Workforce availability and quality remain key advantages. Sussex County offers a labor force experienced in agriculture, food processing, and light manufacturing, supported by partnerships with local educational institutions and workforce development programs designed to meet industry needs.

The county is also one of the few that boasts a growing workforce, with a 29% increase in population over the past 10 years.

"Sussex County has built a reputation as a place where food companies can succeed at every stage—from sourcing and production to processing and distribution," said Andrew D. Harton, Director of Economic Development, Sussex County.

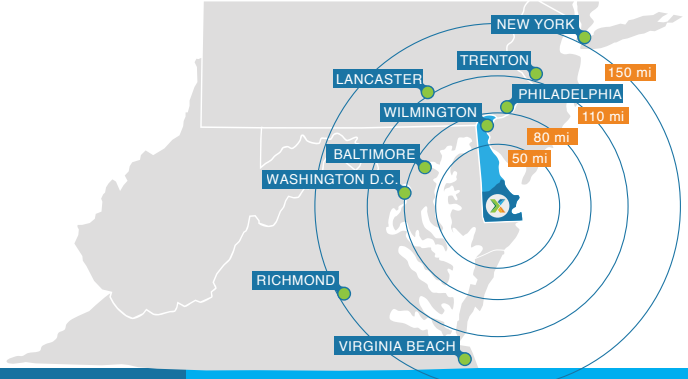
"With a strong agricultural foundation, strategic location, and business-friendly environment, the county continues to attract companies looking for long-term growth and operational efficiency," he continued.

As demand for reliable, domestic food production continues to grow, Sussex County, Delaware stands out as a location where resources, infrastructure, and industry expertise come together to support the future of food manufacturing.

Visit https://excitesussex.com/ for more information.

GROWING A LOT?

Marks the Spot



Sussex County, Delaware - By The Numbers

- Fastest growing Micropolitan Area in the U.S. 2023 – 24*
- 25% of the U.S. Population is within an 8-hour drive
- 29% Job Growth in the past 10 years
- 31% Population Growth in the past 10 years
- Shovel-Ready Industrial Parks

Ready to Grow? Need more info?

Contact **Andrew Harton**
Director of Economic Development
andrew.harton@sussexcountyde.gov
(302) 855-7748

* Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Vintage 2024 Population Estimates.

SUSSEX DELAWARE

For more info, visit **BusinessFacilities.com/location-info**

MASSACHUSETTS PROFILE

Massachusetts' business climate in 2025 and into 2026 continues to position the Commonwealth as one of the nation's premier hubs for innovation-led investment, research commercialization, and high-value talent. Companies here benefit from a significant concentration of universities, research institutions, venture capital, and highly educated labor, creating a strong ecosystem for technology-driven growth. State leaders have also intensified efforts to improve competitiveness through new economic development initiatives, streamlined regulations, and strategic capital investments aimed at lowering barriers to expansion.

Recent activity highlights continued public and private investment momentum. The state unveiled a $16.6 billion capital investment plan for FY2026-2030 focused on infrastructure, housing, innovation, and economic competitiveness, while additional business expansion programs launched in late 2025 are designed to leverage private-sector growth and job creation. In September 2025, Massachusetts approved projects expected to generate more than $300 million in private investment and over 1,300 new jobs through its Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP), which provides tax credits to companies for jobs created.

Key industries remain anchored by life sciences and biotechnology, financial services, higher education, advanced manufacturing, and technology, with especially strong momentum in artificial intelligence, climate tech, robotics, and clean energy innovation.

Massachusetts offers a compelling value proposition centered on innovation density, talent availability, and access to capital.

MARLBOROUGH: A HUB FOR GROWTH

Marlborough, Massachusetts, located in Massachusetts' 495/MetroWest corridor, has emerged as one of New England's premier destinations for business expansion, innovation, and long-term investment. Just 35 miles west of Boston with easy access to Interstate 495 and the Massachusetts Turnpike, the city offers companies strategic connectivity, modern infrastructure, and access to robust talent.

Marlborough continues to attract leading firms in life sciences and technology, thanks to its business-friendly environment and ability to support growth. Corporate investment in Marlborough reflects continued confidence in the market. Marlborough offers Tax Increment Financing to qualifying expansion projects, unlocking new investments and bringing jobs to the city. Companies including Sartorius, Moderna, and Cytiva partnered with the city and the Marlborough Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) on such incentives and have driven more than $375 million in private investment and created over 400 jobs in the city within the past three years. Most recently, the State of Massachusetts chose Marlborough from a competitive bid to build a state-of-the-art, 200,000 square foot crime lab, driving $200



From Tax Increment Financing agreements to small business grant opportunities, Marlborough, Massachusetts offers a robust suite of offerings for companies seeking a competitive advantage.

PHOTO: MARLBOROUGH EDC

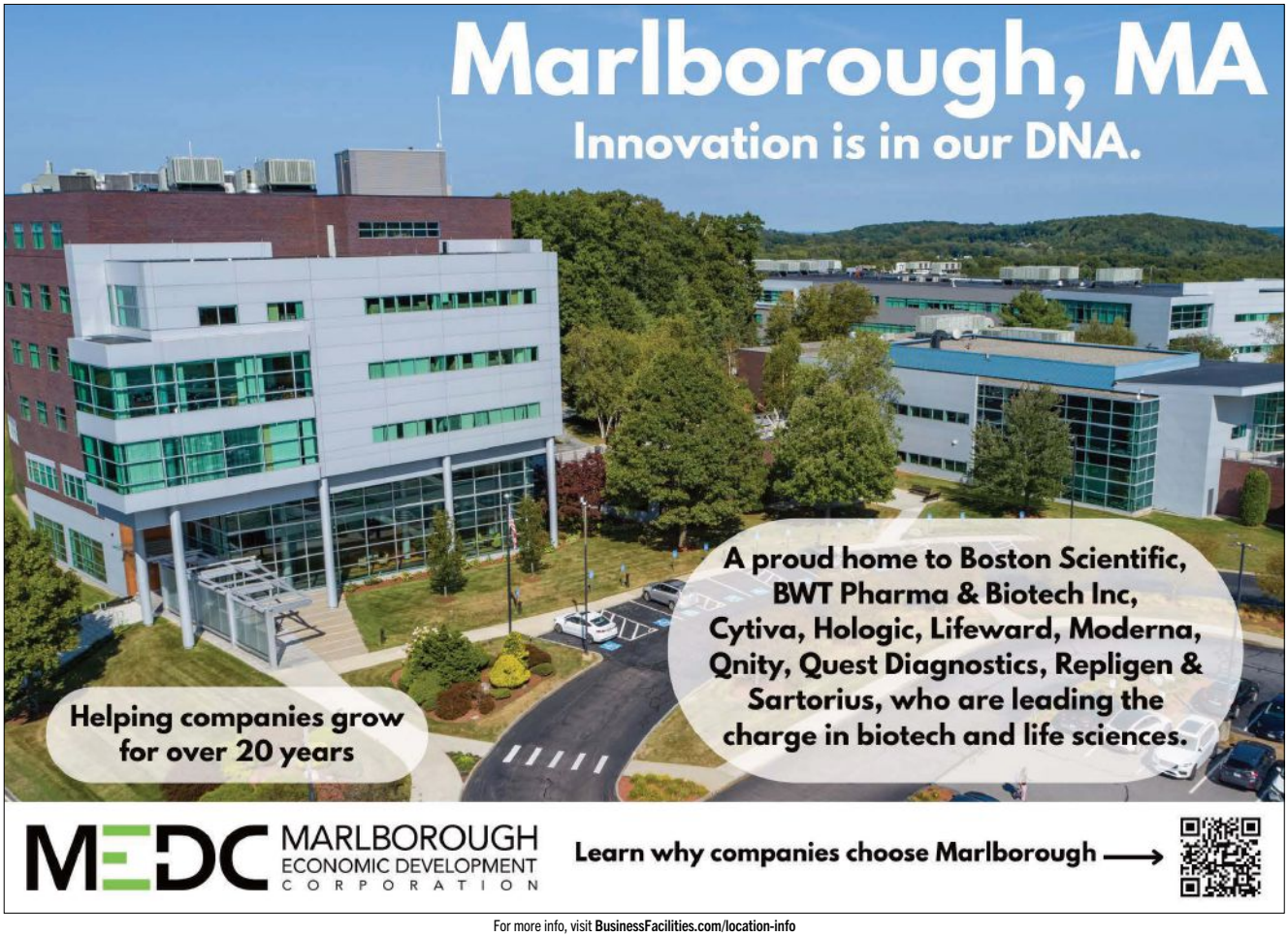
million in new investment and over 300 new jobs, reinforcing the city's role in the state economy.

That partnership approach is central to the MEDC mission. Marlborough takes business attraction and retention seriously, both globally and locally. MEDC works collaboratively with city departments to support businesses, developers, and commercial brokers with expediting permitting, connecting projects with local and state incentives, and helping them navigate expansion opportunities efficiently. From Tax Increment Financing agreements to small business grant opportunities, Marlborough offers a robust suite of offerings for companies seeking a competitive advantage and has helped 45 small businesses start or expand with approximately $800,000 in grant funding. The MEDC also runs a small business incubator program, directly feeding retail and restaurant users in the walkable, historic downtown district.

In addition to its economic fundamentals, Marlborough provides the quality-of-life amenities today's employers seek to attract and retain talent, including housing growth, hospitality options, dining, and recreation. The city has over 100 dining establishments ranging from fast casual to upscale options, as well as over 100 acres of passive and active recreation, including a new floating boardwalk open to the public. Since 2020, the city has approved more than 2,000 new, market rate housing options for the growing workforce and commercial interest. In addition, Marlborough is home to a community hospital that offers a variety of services, including a cancer center as well as a women's imaging center. In addition, the hospital system is currently investing $54 million in bringing proton beam therapy to the region.

As companies across the country evaluate where to invest next, Marlborough offers a compelling combination of location, talent, infrastructure, and execution. Close to 33,000 people choose to come to Marlborough every day to work in a city that offers a wide range of job opportunities, dining choices, recreation, shopping and entertainment options. For firms seeking a place where innovation can scale and investment is met with partnership, Marlborough stands out as one of the Northeast's most strategic business addresses.

Visit https://marlboroughedc.com/ for more information.



For more info, visit **BusinessFacilities.com/location-info**

NEVADA PROFILE

Nevada's business climate in mid-2026 continues to reinforce the state's position as one of the nation's fastest-growing economies. Companies here access a competitive tax structure that includes no corporate or personal income tax and a comparatively streamlined regulatory environment that has helped attract substantial new investment across multiple sectors.

Location remains a strategic advantage for Nevada business. Positioned within a day's drive of major western U.S. markets, the state affords efficient access to population centers, ports, and distribution corridors. This positioning continues to drive growth in logistics, e-commerce fulfillment, advanced manufacturing, and data center operations, particularly in the Reno-Sparks and Southern Nevada regions.

Advanced manufacturing, financial technology, clean energy, and digital infrastructure continue to expand ecosystems, while Nevada has emerged as a hub in the domestic lithium and battery supply chain ecosystem. Supported by lithium reserves, new mining investment, battery materials processing, and electric vehicle-related manufacturing, the state is poised to occupy an increasing role in U.S. energy security and advanced manufacturing strategy.

Growth in AI infrastructure and large-scale data center development is further strengthening Nevada's profile as a next-generation technology and industrial investment destination.

CITY OF HENDERSON: GROWING INDUSTRIES OF THE FUTURE

As the second-largest city in Nevada and one of the safest large cities in the U.S., the City of Henderson, Nevada has earned a reputation as a premier destination for business growth and investment. With a forward-thinking approach rooted in innovation, connectivity and community, Henderson delivers a high level of service and a commitment to excellence that distinguishes it as a top-tier location for companies looking to expand or relocate. From tailored site selection assistance to strategic workforce development partnerships, Henderson's focus on performance and continuous improvement was nationally recognized when the City received the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, the nation's highest presidential



The Debra March Center of Excellence in Henderson, Nevada is a workforce training facility that supports the region's advanced manufacturing talent pipeline. The City of Henderson and College of Southern Nevada launched the facility in 2023.

PHOTO: CITY OF HENDERSON

honor for organizational performance excellence.

Henderson's nationally recognized and accredited economic development team translates the City's strategic priority for economic vitality into real results through investments in workforce development, infrastructure and business partnerships. Working closely with K-12 education, higher education institutions and key industries, the City has built facilities and created training and career pathways designed to prepare workers for the jobs of the future. As Nevada's top city for residents with post-secondary education, Henderson remains an attractive destination for investment projects that generate high-skill, high-paying job opportunities.

In 2023, the City of Henderson and College of Southern Nevada opened the Debra March Center of Excellence—a workforce training facility supporting the region's growing advanced manufacturing pipeline. These investments, along with a partnership with Workforce Connections, the state's public workforce system to connect businesses with top-tier talent, position Henderson for growth across the City's five target industries:

- **Financial & Credit Services:** Anchored by firms such as Barclays and Paysign, this sector supports thousands of jobs with strong average wages and continues to expand as financial services become more technology-driven and specialized.
- **Back-Office Management & Support Services:** Companies like Amica Mutual Insurance benefit from scalable talent solutions and cross-industry capabilities in HR, accounting and operational support.
- **Media & Sports Production:** With a staggering 381% job growth over the past decade, Henderson is a rising hub for media and sports enterprises, supported by high-profile teams like the Las Vegas Aces and Raiders and the Henderson Silver Knights, Vegas Knight Hawks, and Las Vegas Desert Dogs.
- **Logistics Management:** Major employers such as Amazon, FedEx, and Levi's benefit from the City's ideal location near Southern California markets, including the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach.
  Interstate 11 also provides direct access, connecting Las Vegas to Phoenix, and eventually Canada to Mexico.
- **Electrical Equipment & Components Manufacturing:** Advanced manufacturers such as Lithion Battery, ANA Inc., Haas Automation, and Aristocrat Gaming benefit from a strong local concentration with significant opportunities to scale through national and global sales.

> *"Henderson, Nevada is a rising hub for media and sports enterprises, with 381% job growth in the sector over the past decade."*

Additionally, Henderson policies promote quality of life and pro-business environment. With 0% corporate or personal income tax, a highly educated workforce and access to nearly 25 million square feet of industrial space and counting, Henderson offers unmatched opportunities for companies to scale.

Whether relocating, expanding or launching, companies in Henderson benefit from a city committed to providing a gold level of service.

Visit HendersonNow.com for more information.



For more info, visit **BusinessFacilities.com/location-info**

WISCONSIN PROFILE

Wisconsin's business climate continues to position the state as a competitive location for companies seeking manufacturing strength, cost stability, and long-term operational reliability. Anchored by a deep industrial heritage and a highly productive workforce, Wisconsin offers businesses a favorable environment defined by competitive operating costs, strong infrastructure access, and close connections between industry, higher education, and technical training systems.

Recent economic indicators point to continued investment momentum. Wisconsin ranked among the nation's leaders in year-over-year personal income growth during 2025, reflecting sustained economic activity and workforce resilience. Capital investment announcements have remained active across advanced industries, strengthening Wisconsin's role in next-generation technology supply chains.

The state's economy remains driven by advanced manufacturing, machinery, food processing, and precision engineering, while its globally recognized agriculture and agribusiness sectors continue to provide stability and export strength. At the same time, Wisconsin is gaining traction in emerging industries such as biohealth, water technology, energy systems, and digital infrastructure, broadening its appeal to innovation-oriented companies and site selectors evaluating long-term growth opportunities.

WISCONSIN: WHERE INNOVATION MEETS INDUSTRY

Wisconsin has long been recognized as a manufacturing powerhouse, but today the state is also emerging as one of the nation's most dynamic centers for innovation. With strengths in advanced manufacturing, artificial intelligence, fusion, and life sciences, Wisconsin offers companies a rare combination of cutting-edge opportunity backed by a proven industrial foundation.

A defining advantage is Wisconsin's collaborative business environment. From global corporations to early-stage startups, companies benefit from an ecosystem where industry, higher education, investors, and public partners work together to accelerate growth. That spirit of partnership has helped position Wisconsin as a destination for businesses seeking both innovation and long-term stability.

"Wisconsin's success comes from pairing world-class innovation with practical execution," said John W. Miller, Secretary and CEO of the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC). "Companies can access talent, research, capital, and strategic support all in a state that understands how to turn ideas into products and products into growth."

Advanced manufacturing remains a cornerstone of that success. Wisconsin's deep expertise in precision production, automation, and supply chain operations continues to attract companies across sectors including biohealth, food production, and energy. Also, manufacturers in Wisconsin are evolving by integrating digital tools, robotics, and AI to stay globally competitive.

"Innovation drives everything we do at Yaskawa America Inc., and Wisconsin provides the environment and partnership to power it," said Mike Knapek, President & CEO. "Through our work with WEDC and state and local leaders, we're building a campus energized by advanced engineering, robotics assembly, and motion control manufacturing—high-skill, high-wage careers that fuel innovation and strengthen Wisconsin's leadership in advanced manufacturing."

Artificial intelligence is becoming another major growth driver. Through new statewide initiatives, Wisconsin companies are gaining access to tools and technical support that help them apply AI to real-world business challenges. The recently launched Microsoft AI



At the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Morgridge Hall is home to the College of Computing & Artificial Intelligence, launching July 1.

PHOTO: BRUCE DAMONTE



Located on the western shores of Lake Michigan, Milwaukee is the most populous city in Wisconsin followed by the capital city of Madison.

Co-Innovation Lab at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee is one example of that momentum, helping businesses collaborate with industry experts to develop and scale AI solutions. That momentum is accelerating with the University of Wisconsin-Madison's new College of Computing and Artificial Intelligence, backed by $100 million in philanthropic commitments to expand research, talent development, and industry collaboration.

Additionally, manufacturers are deploying AI across quality assurance, predictive maintenance, robotics integration, and supply chain optimization—improving uptime, throughput, and margins. By strengthening both the talent pipeline and applied research capacity, Wisconsin is positioning AI not just as a tool, but as a long-term competitive advantage for industry. Rather than treating AI as a future concept, Wisconsin is helping businesses implement it now.

The state is also building momentum in fusion energy, where public and private partners are investing in technologies that could reshape the future of clean power. Wisconsin-based Realta Fusion is among the companies leading that charge, developing compact magnetic mirror fusion technology with roots in research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Combined with the state's engineering talent and manufacturing capabilities, companies like Realta demonstrate why Wisconsin is well positioned to lead in next-generation energy solutions.

Wisconsin's innovation advantage is the result of a deliberate strategy that connects world-class research, emerging talent and growth capital. Through the federal State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI), the state has expanded access to early- and growth-stage funding, most notably through the $50 million Wisconsin Investment Fund, which is matched by private partners to help high-potential companies scale faster.

Complementing this approach, Ignite Wisconsin strengthens startup ecosystems statewide by aligning entrepreneurs, investors and support organizations to accelerate company formation and early growth. While SSBCI focuses on expanding access to capital, Ignite Wisconsin ensures companies are prepared to deploy that capital effectively, creating a coordinated pipeline from startup formation to scale. Together, these initiatives work in tandem to maximize impact, connecting funding with the networks and support systems companies need to grow.

WEDC plays a central role in advancing this momentum through targeted programs and capital deployment. Alongside the Wisconsin Investment Fund, Ignite Wisconsin provides grants ranging from $200,000 to $2 million to organizations that support startup growth.

For executives looking to lead in the industries of tomorrow, Wisconsin offers a place to operate, innovate and scale by combining robust research assets, coordinated capital and a collaborative ecosystem designed for long-term success.

PHOTO: WISCONSIN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

VIRGINIA PROFILE

Virginia continues to position itself as an appealing destination for business investment across technology, advanced manufacturing, life sciences, logistics, and professional services. The state comprises a competitive environment for business anchored by a skilled workforce, East Coast location, and diversified economy.

Virginia's workforce remains one of its defining advantages. Home to a highly-educated population, the state continues investing in workforce readiness through initiatives such as the Virginia Talent Accelerator Program and the Tech Talent Investment Program, helping employers access skilled labor across both established and emerging industries.

The Commonwealth's infrastructure network strengthens its value proposition. Close proximity to Washington, DC offers companies efficient access to domestic and global markets through an integrated system of highways, railroads, airports, and seaports.

Industry growth continues across a diverse economic base. Virginia remains the nation's largest data center market and a major hub for digital infrastructure, while also supporting significant activity in advanced manufacturing, life sciences, aerospace, clean energy, and professional services. Continued expansion in cloud computing and artificial intelligence capacity is driving additional investment, reinforcing Virginia's role in the future of the digital economy.

For companies evaluating expansion or relocation opportunities, Virginia offers a balanced business climate defined by talent, connectivity, and innovation.

HARRISONBURG, VA: WHERE BUSINESS THRIVES, AND THEIR PEOPLE DO TOO

A Place Businesses And People Love To Call Home. Choosing where to grow your business is one of the most important decisions you'll make—and Harrisonburg, Virginia offers a compelling case. With national recognition for affordability and livability, Harrisonburg combines smart economics with a high quality of life. *Forbes* ranked the city among the lowest-cost places to do business, while Reviews.org named Harrisonburg one of the top 10 destinations for millennials.

Located in the scenic Shenandoah Valley just two hours from Washington, DC, Harrisonburg offers the best of both worlds: the energy and amenities of a vibrant city paired with the accessibility and charm of a close-knit community. It's a place where businesses thrive and where employees love to live.

A Diverse Economy Built For Stability And Growth. Harrisonburg's economy is anchored by strong educational institutions, including James Madison University and Eastern Mennonite University, with Bridgewater College and Blue Ridge Community College nearby. Together, these create a steady pipeline of talent across industries.

But Harrisonburg is far more than a college town. It has deep roots in manufacturing, with companies like Tenneco



PHOTO: ENGINEERING SOLUTIONS, HARRISONBURG, VA

Founded in Harrisonburg, Virginia, Farmer Focus partners with independent family farmers to produce traceable, Certified Humane, and USDA Organic chicken. In 2022, the company opened its second facility in the city and employs more than 1,400 people.

operating alongside growing international firms such as SIBO USA and Lauf Cycles.

More recently, airplane engine repair company AeroNimble selected Harrisonburg for its operations. AeroNimble CHRO Eric Terry explained, "We chose Harrisonburg because it offered the right combination of partnership, infrastructure, and long-term opportunity. Logistically, being under two hours from Dulles Airport and directly along the I-81 corridor allows us to move engines and materials efficiently. That accessibility, combined with the strength of the local technical schools and community support, made Harrisonburg the clear choice for us."

The region was also recognized by Colliers, naming the Shenandoah Valley one of the top industrial markets to watch.

Agribusiness remains another major driver. Farmer Focus, a homegrown success, grew from startup to the city's largest private sector employer with 1,450 team members in only 12 years. As the company searched for a site for its second plant, leadership identified one deciding factor: partnerships. Harrisonburg and the Commonwealth of Virginia worked closely with businesses to support long-term growth, creating an environment where companies can scale with confidence.

A Tech Ecosystem Built For Talent. Harrisonburg is also emerging as a hub for technology and innovation. Companies benefit from access to more than 6,000 area college graduates each year, helping them recruit and retain talent in the Valley.

Massanutten Technical Center gives students hands-on experience in one of the nation's only high school-based Security Operations Centers. Blue Ridge Community College partners with industry leaders to train cybersecurity professionals, while James Madison University graduates hundreds of computer science students annually. Combined with eight additional colleges within an hour's drive, the region offers a deep and diverse talent pool.

Why Harrisonburg Works. With its blend of affordability, talent, industry diversity, and an area known internationally for natural beauty and outdoor recreation, Harrisonburg offers more than a place to do business, it offers a place to build a future. Whether launching, expanding, or relocating, you'll find a community ready to support your success.

Come join us! Find out more at www.harrisonburgdevelopment.com.



For more info, visit **BusinessFacilities.com/location-info**



Texas Accelerated

BY ANNE COSGROVE

INSIDE THE LONE STAR STATE'S STRATEGY FOR INNOVATION, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND LONG-TERM INVESTMENT



"A robust incentive program portfolio helps our communities compete for and win large job-creating projects."

— GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT

Texas offers a competitive business climate anchored by low taxes, a pro-business regulatory environment, and an evolving economy. Strategic access to domestic and global markets is enabled by extensive highway, rail, port, and air infrastructure. A diverse and expanding labor pool, bolstered by population growth and numerous universities, provides the largest workforce in the Lone Star State's history. A strong presence in manufacturing, technology, and logistics offer a landscape of opportunity to companies seeking scalability and long-term growth.

Business Facilities recently spoke with Governor Greg Abbott about the latest for business and residents in the Lone Star State. Building on the state's foundational elements supporting business growth, his administration is leading the continued evolution of its business climate.

Business Facilities: Tell us about the business climate in Texas. What is a significant shift occuring in recent years? And how is that impacting business?

Governor Greg Abbott: With an economy now valued at $2.9 trillion, opportunity is bigger and better in Texas. We have been named the Best State for Business for 22 years in a row, continuing an unprecedented winning streak. This is thanks to our world-renowned business climate and pro-growth policies, with no corporate or personal income tax, coupled with a robust infrastructure networks and logistical advantages.

Over the past several years we have made strategic investments in our business climate, and we continue to cut red tape to free businesses from over-regulation. In addition to creating the Texas Business Courts to adjudicate complex business cases, I have signed numerous bills into law that support small business and accelerate the process for starting and growing a business. This includes the creation of the Texas Regulatory Efficiency Office, which builds upon the progress of the Governor's Small Busi-

PHOTO: OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

ness Freedom Council that I formed to review government efficiency for Texas businesses. I also directed state agencies to provide recommendations to cut unnecessary government regulations that hamper small business formation, operation or growth.

Businesses recognize these efforts and are moving here to take advantage of our pro-business environment. In fact, since 2015 there have been nearly 330 corporate headquarter relocations to Texas. We are also increasingly seeing more companies choose to incorporate here. One noteworthy example is ExxonMobil. With longstanding roots in Spring, Texas, the company recently announced the decision to shift their legal domicile from New Jersey to Texas. This move reflects the strength of our state's predictable corporate laws and modern, business focused legal system.

BF: What are target industries in the state? Would you highlight a project or two that have chosen Texas for their business in the past 12 months, and what attracted those decision-makers?

Gov. Abbott: Our new "Bigger. Better. Texas." Statewide Economic Strategic Plan outlines 10 targeted industry sectors that we're focusing on for continued development. We believe that the following industries outlined in the strategic plan will best position Texas to leverage our competitive advantages and catalyze economic growth in the years ahead:

- Advanced Manufacturing (including Aerospace, Aviation & Defense; Automotive; Semiconductors; and Production Technology & Heavy Machinery)
- Energy Evolution
- Food & Livestock Products
- Hospitality, Tourism & Culture
- Information Technology & AI
- Life Sciences & Biotech
- Petroleum Refning & Chemicals
- Professional Services & Corporate Operations (including Financial Services and Headquarters)
- Rare Earth & Mineral Mining
- Transportation & Logistics

When looking at the multitude of business expansions and relocations announced across Texas in the past year, it's difficult to choose just one or two to highlight.

One of our largest job-creating announcements is Davie Defense's expansion of shipbuilding capacity in Galveston and Port Arthur to build Arctic icebreakers. The investment is expected to create more than 2,400 new jobs and more than $730 million in capital expenditure. With intentions to make Texas its hub for the revitalization of the American shipbuilding industry, Davie Defense cited Texas'



For more info, visit **BusinessFacilities.com/location-info**



Nasdaq Texas launched on March 5, 2026, marked by a ceremonial closing bell ringing at The Alamo in San Antonio, following SEC approval for the new Texas-based exchange. In March 2025, NYSE Texas launched as a fully electronic equities exchange based in Dallas. Part of the Intercontinental Exchange (ICE) group, it operates alongside the primary New York Stock Exchange.

world-class business environment and scale to support complex shipbuilding as reasons for their location decision.

To highlight investment in another critical and emerging industry, MP Materials announced in February the expansion of its presence in Texas with a rare earth magnet manufacturing campus in Northlake. The facility is expected to create more than $1.25 billion in capital investment and more than 1,500 new jobs. The company was awarded a Texas Semiconductor Innovation Fund (TSIF) grant for the manufacturing facility on the campus that will scale the company's capacity to produce neodymium-iron-boron (NdFeB) magnets, a critical component for semiconductor manufacturing. MP Materials cited the exceptional talent and infrastructure in North Texas that will underscore the success of the project.

BF: What incentives are being emphasized to support business attraction and retention? And, what did job creation look like in 2025, and now into 2026?

Gov. Abbott: While businesses come to Texas to take advantage of our competitive business advantages, a robust incentive program portfolio helps our communities compete for and win large job-creating projects. To highlight just a few of Texas' incentive programs:

The **Texas Jobs, Energy, Technology and Innovation (JETI) Act**, established during the 88th Legislative Session, has proven to be highly successful in attracting significant capital investment and high paying jobs by offering a value limitation on the school district property tax.

The **Texas Semiconductor Innovation Fund (TSIF)**, also established during the 88th Legislative Session through the Texas CHIPS Act, encourages continued growth in the semiconductor industry by providing grants and matching funds to eligible state entities, including institutions of higher education, and private business entities planning new or expanded semiconductor research, manufacturing and design projects.

The **Texas Enterprise Fund (TEF)** is a performance-based incentive which awards "deal-closing" grants to companies considering a new project for which one Texas site is competing with other out-of-state sites.

Our workforce has grown to more than 15.9 million as of January 2026. Statewide, more than four million Texans participate each year in workforce development programs. Additionally, the Texas Workforce Investment Council, Texas Workforce Commission and other local and regional workforce groups provide grants and other programs to support workforce development initiatives across the state.

BF: What else would you share about how your administration supports business? What is an area you are especially proud of, or are focused on during 2026?

Gov. Abbott: In 2026 and beyond, we are focused on moving at the speed of business and on upholding Texas' status as the best state for business in the nation. We are also focused on making continued investments in our grid and transportation infrastructure so we can continue to support the high level of economic expansion.

Texas produces more electricity than any other state and more than twice as much as the second-highest producing state. As Texas continues to experience unprecedented growth, we have increased dispatchable power capabilities and continue to make strategic investments in critical infrastructure.

The weatherization requirements for critical grid and natural gas infrastructure that I signed into law have proven effective as they help lessen the impact of natural disasters on the power grid, enhance reliability and resilience of the grid, bolster distribution infrastructure and support long-term expansion to keep pace with business growth.

This is in addition to a 10-year, $148 billion commitment to new transportation infrastructure projects. With more miles of public roadways, state highways, freight railways, airports and Foreign Trade Zones than any other state, it's clear that Texas is built for the needs of global businesses.

PHOTO: OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

BY ANNE COSGROVE

Expanding Horizons

ACROSS THE LONE STAR STATE, A RANGE OF OPPORTUNITY AWAITS INDUSTRIES CREATING THE FUTURE.

For Texas, a combination of scale, population growth, infrastructure, tax policies, and project recruitment continues to attract investment across manufacturing, semiconductors, energy, aerospace, data infrastructure, and corporate headquarters operations.

And Texas in 2026 is evolving beyond traditional oil-and-gas economics or low-tax branding. Over the past year, Governor Greg Abbott's administration has accelerated efforts to position Texas as a leader in semiconductors, artificial intelligence infrastructure, advanced manufacturing, and critical mineral supply chains.

That approach is producing measurable results. Texas led the nation in economic development activity in 2025, attracting approximately 1,400 projects tied to more than 42,000 jobs and $75 billion in capital investment. Houston, Dallas-Fort Worth, and Austin have been ranked among the top-performing metro regions for business recruitment and expansion activity.

One of the most significant developments has been the expansion of the Texas Semiconductor Innovation Fund (TSIF), a state initiative designed to support semiconductor manufacturing and related supply chains. Abbott has repeatedly framed semiconductor recruitment as both an economic and national security priority.

In April, Applied Optoelectronics Inc. (AOI), received a TSIF grant for a major expansion in Sugar Land, part of the Houston metro. Gov. Abbott announced that AOI would receive approximately $20.9 million in TSIF support to expand semiconductor and optical networking manufacturing capacity. The project represents more than $279 million in capital investment and is expected to create approximately 500 jobs. AOI's expansion includes a new 210,000-square-foot manufacturing facility adjacent to its headquarters, where the company plans to significantly increase production of AI-focused data center transceivers and optical networking technologies used in high-speed cloud and artificial intelligence infrastructure.

The state has also expanded semiconductor incentives tied to fabrication and materials manufacturing. Earlier this year, Coherent Corp. received a TSIF grant of approximately $14 million to accelerate semiconductor wafer production in Sherman, Texas, tied to a $154 million expansion project.

HOUSTON: ENERGY TRANSITION, INDUSTRIAL INNOVATION

The Houston region continues evolving from a traditional energy capital into a broader hub for industrial innovation and energy technology.



Applied Optoelecdtronics broke ground to expand in Sugar Land, Texas in April 2026.

PHOTO: APPLIED OPTOELECTRONICS

One of the most closely watched developments this year has been the growing momentum behind geothermal startup Fervo Energy, whose planned IPO could value the company near $7 billion. Industry observers increasingly view Fervo as symbolic of Houston's transition toward next-generation energy technologies built on the region's engineering and drilling expertise.

The Houston market also continues attracting investments tied to carbon management, hydrogen, petrochemicals, and industrial decarbonization. The city's long-established infrastructure and talent base remain major competitive advantages for companies operating in energy-intensive industries.

DALLAS-FORT WORTH: HEADQUARTERS GROWTH & SEMICONDUCTOR EXPANSION

The Dallas-Fort Worth region remains one of the nation's strongest corporate relocation and headquarters markets. Financial services, technology, logistics, and semiconductor manufacturing continue driving major investment activity throughout the

Metroplex. Wells Fargo's ongoing Las Colinas campus development, for example, represents a roughly $400 million office investment expected to support approximately 4,000 jobs. Incentives tied to the project include a $5 million Texas Enterprise Fund grant and approximately $31 million in local tax increment financing and related support from Irving.

The state's trajectory in 2025 and into 2026 reflects an economic development strategy to compete in industries shaping the next generation of growth.

Charles Schwab's Westlake campus expansion also continues reshaping the region's financial services footprint. The project includes approximately $100 million in investment and more than 1,200 jobs, supported by state and local incentives including a $6 million Texas Enterprise Fund grant and long-term property tax abatements.

Meanwhile, semiconductor manufacturing is becoming an increasingly important growth driver for North Texas. Texas Instruments' Sherman fabrication campus remains one of the largest semiconductor projects underway in the United States, representing approximately $30 billion in long-term investment and roughly 3,000 jobs. Local incentives include extensive property tax abatements and infrastructure support from city, county, and educational entities.

AUSTIN: BALANCING GROWTH WITH ACTIVE RECRUITMENT

Austin's economic development strategy is entering a new phase in 2026. After years of organic growth driven by technology migration and venture capital investment, city leaders are now moving toward a more proactive recruitment model amid slowing growth and increasing competition from other markets.

In May 2026, Austin officials advanced a new economic development framework aimed at actively recruiting large-scale projects and expanding the city's global investment profile. Government officials described the strategy as necessary to compete more intentionally for investment opportunities. The city is also reconsidering how it deploys corporate incentives. Officials estimate Austin's previous incentive agreements helped



Aerospace and communications company CesiumAstro will relocate its headquarters in the Austin, Texas region, in the city of Bee Cave.

PHOTO: CESIUMASTRO

generate approximately $5.1 billion in capital investment and nearly 9,000 jobs.

One notable 2026 announcement involved aerospace and communications company CesiumAstro, which has confirmed plans to relocate its headquarters to Bee Cave near Austin. The project represents approximately $500 million in investment and is expected to create around 500 jobs. Regional leaders described the project as evidence of Austin's continuing strength in aerospace, defense technology, and advanced engineering sectors.

The Austin Infrastructure Academy, a workforce development initiative to prepare residents for high-demand careers in construction, transportation, utilities, and skilled trades, will occupy a permanent space in a 560,000-square-foot facility purchased by Austin Community College District (ACCD). Created through a partnership among the City of Austin, Workforce Solutions Capital Area, and ACCD, the academy training programs focus on fields such as welding, HVAC, electrical work, heavy equipment operations, and construction management.

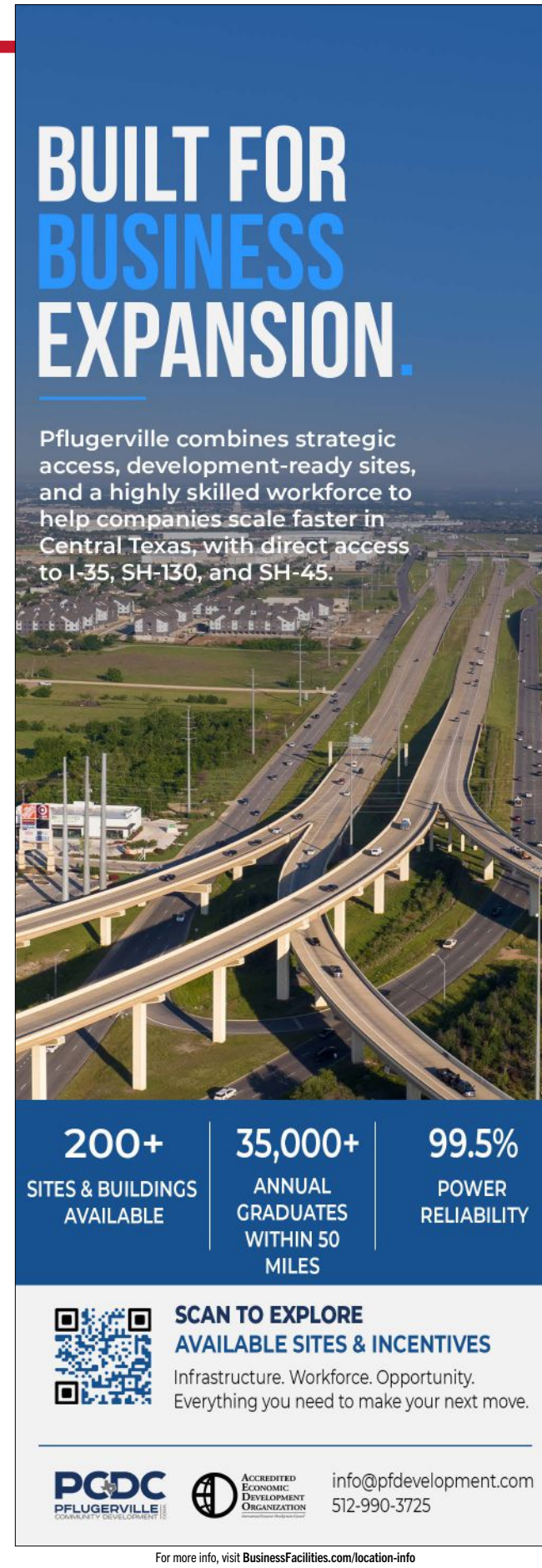
SAN ANTONIO: CYBERSECURITY, DEFENSE, AND ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

San Antonio continues emerging as one of Texas' most strategically important metros for defense technology, cybersecurity, aerospace, and advanced manufacturing investment. Long anchored by military installations and federal operations, the region is increasingly leveraging that foundation to attract private-sector growth in industries tied to national security, cloud computing, and advanced industrial production.

Advanced manufacturing activity is also accelerating across the region. Toyota Motor Manufacturing Texas continues expanding production at its South Side truck assembly plant, which supports thousands of direct jobs and a large supplier network throughout South Texas.

BUSINESS-FRIENDLY, STRATEGICALLY ESSENTIAL

The state's economic trajectory increasingly reflects a deliberate strategy to compete in industries shaping the next generation of global growth. Semiconductor fabrication, AI infrastructure, aerospace systems, cybersecurity, advanced manufacturing, and energy transition technologies are no longer emerging opportunities in Texas—they are becoming foundational pillars of the state's evolving economy. From Houston's industrial innovation ecosystem to Dallas-Fort Worth's headquarters and semiconductor momentum, from Austin's talent-development initiatives to San Antonio's defense and cybersecurity strengths, regional economies across Texas are contributing to a broader statewide transformation.



For more info, visit **BusinessFacilities.com/location-info**

BY CAROLYN COENE

The Natural State Surge

INVESTMENTS IN TECHNOLOGY, AVIATION, AND MANUFACTURING ARE FUELING EXPANSION ACROSS ARKANSAS.

Significant expansion in technology, aviation and manufacturing are reshaping Arkansas' economic landscape. These projects include significant capital investments and are expected to generate hundreds of permanent jobs, reflecting continued momentum in infrastructure-driven growth.

In January 2026, AVAIO Digital Partners announced a major new data center hub, AVAIO Digital Leo, aimed at accelerating the state's fast-growing tech sector. Located in Wrightsville, just south of Little Rock, the 760-acre campus will host the compute, networking, data storage technologies, and power infrastructure that underpin cloud computing and artificial intelligence applications.

The project is to be developed in several phases, starting with an initial $6 billion investment for infrastructure, power, and tenant deployments. Over the next five years, the campus is expected to bring more than 500 permanent operations jobs, along with construction jobs across the region.



In April, Governor Sanders (center) and the Arkansas Economic Development Commission awarded $25 million to more than 20 communities for industrial site development.

AVAIO is currently contracted with Entergy Arkansas for 150 MW of power, with the company anticipating power demand of up to 1 GW as the facility grows.

"AVAIO Digital's $6 billion data center hub represents the largest economic investment in Arkansas' history and sets the Natural State up to become a technology powerhouse that can compete with any state in the nation," said Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders. "Just last year, Arkansas led the way and passed legislation that reduced the regulatory timeline for new energy projects by more than half and offered new incentives to data center investments. This announcement confirms that cutting red tape and cultivating a pro-business, pro-growth environment is not only appealing to companies; it is what makes Arkansas one of the best states to live and work."

Construction of the project's first phase was expected to begin in the first quarter of 2026 and will be completed and energized in June 2027.

ENVOY EXPANSION BRINGS WAVE OF NEW AVIATION JOBS

Beyond technology and data infrastructure, Arkansas' aviation sector is also seeing major growth.

Envoy Air Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of American Airlines Group, will expand its aircraft maintenance facility at Clinton National Airport (LIT), while also launching a Center of Excellence on site. The company expects to add specialized aircraft maintenance positions as part of the expansion over the next two years. The expansion amounts to a capital investment exceeding $600,000.

PHOTO: ARKANSAS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

As part of the expansion, Little Rock will become Envoy's first Center of Excellence facility supporting the company's aircraft maintenance operations. A Center of Excellence allows the team to handle specialized aircraft maintenance tasks, such as advanced sheet metal and carbon composite repairs, and landing gear inspections.

"We're thrilled to announce this expansion of our Little Rock aircraft maintenance base, building on our presence at LIT that includes Maintenance, Customer Services, Stores, and more," said Jay Murray, Envoy Vice President, Maintenance. "This expansion is great for Envoy and the area, as it will create specialized jobs and economic growth the community."

"Arkansas' aviation industry is continuing to take off, and Envoy's investment is helping drive what comes next," said Gov. Sanders. "Envoy's Center of Excellence brings advanced maintenance, specialized training, and high-skill careers together under one roof—giving Arkansas a lasting edge and putting us at the forefront of where companies choose to grow. We're excited to see that future taking shape in our capital city."



Rendering of AVAIO Digital's campus under construction, located just outside Little Rock, AR

PHOTO: AVAIO DIGITAL

MAJOR EXPANSION AHEAD AS CONAGRA BRANDS INVESTS $220M

Along with aviation and tech developments, food production continues to drive significant investments across Arkansas.

In March, the Arkansas Economic Development Commission (AEDC) announced that Conagra Brands, Inc., a leading North American packaged food company, will expand its manufacturing facility through a multi-year investment of approximately $220 million. Over the next five years, the project is expected to generate more than 100 new jobs.

"Conagra has been a valued member of Arkansas' business community for years, and the company is doubling down on our state with an approximately $220 million expansion in Fayetteville," said Clint O'Neal, AEDC Executive Director. "We want companies like Conagra to succeed in Arkansas and are excited to see their growth in Fayetteville. Congratulations to Conagra and the City of Fayetteville on this expansion announcement that will have a significant impact on the Northwest Arkansas region."

Conagra plans to begin construction at its Fayetteville facility later this year to significantly raise chicken production capacity.

MISSISSIPPI COUNTY LANDS NEW MISA STEEL PROCESSING PLANT

Marubeni-Itochu Steel America Inc. (MISA), a global metals industry leader, plans to construct an advanced flat-rolled steel processing facility in Arkansas' Mississippi County. The more than $37 million investment is expected to generate 35 jobs.

The MISA processing plant will be located next to Big River Steel and is expected to significantly expand the region's capacity to produce steel for a variety of industries, including automotive, across the south central United States. The facility will be handled by MSP, a subsidiary of MISA, and will become part of the company's larger network of metal processing facilities across North America.

"MISA Specialty Processing (MSP) is thrilled to announce the opening of our newest coil processing facility in Mississippi County, Arkansas," said Chris VanDeventer, president of MSP. "This region has a rich legacy of supporting the steel industry, and its values are very much in line with those we hold at MSP. We truly appreciate the welcoming spirit of Mississippi County and are eager to become a lasting member of this vibrant community. We look forward to collaborating closely with local stakeholders and contributing to the continued growth and success of the area,"

"MISA's investment is an investment in building America," said Gov. Sanders. "Arkansas is at the center of the American steel boom, and this expansion continues to strengthen an industry that powers everything from our infrastructure to our economy. In Mississippi County, the top steel-producing county in America, that momentum is driven by a skilled workforce and a culture of hard work. We're proud to have MISA help lead what comes next right here in Arkansas."

Arkansas' growth continues across multiple sectors, each contributing to long-term job creation, innovation, and workforce development.

BUSINESS REPORT

Florida

BY ANNE COSGROVE

Diversified Growth

THE SUNSHINE STATE ATTRACTS AEROSPACE AND TECH SECTORS, WHILE SUPPORTING LEGACY SECTORS.

Recognized for its population growth, tourism industry, and favorable tax environment, the state of Florida has evolved into a more diversified economy—one increasingly attracting headquarters operations, financial services firms, aerospace investment, logistics facilities, and advanced technology companies.

Under Governor Ron DeSantis, Florida economic development policy in 2026 is emphasizing tax relief, infrastructure investment, workforce development, and business recruitment as central pillars of the state's strategy.

Gov. DeSantis' proposed 2026-2027 "Floridians First" budget highlights continued investments in workforce programs, infrastructure, and business competitiveness while pursuing additional tax relief measures. One of the administration's significant priorities has been eliminating or further reducing Florida's business rent tax. The state has already reduced the tax in recent years, and Gov. DeSantis has noted additional reductions as essential to maintaining Florida's competitive edge.

At the same time, Florida's leadership continues promoting the state as a destination for financial services, aerospace, technology, and headquarters operations. According to FloridaCommerce, the state worked with economic development partners in 2025 to secure 58 new economic development projects that generated more than $5.5 billion in capital investment and nearly 8,900 new jobs with average wages exceeding $100,000 annually.

Economic growth continues to benefit from strong population inflows and business migration trends. South Florida is seeing a continued influx of financial firms, investment groups, and technology companies relocating operations or establishing secondary headquarters in the region. Miami, West Palm Beach, and Tampa have emerged as increasingly important centers for finance, private equity, fintech, and corporate headquarters operations.

The state's lack of a personal income tax remains an advantage in executive recruitment and corporate relocation decisions. Florida also benefits from strong consumer growth, international connectivity, and expanding infrastructure investment across ports, airports, and logistics corridors.

EXPORTS & GLOBAL REACH

In April, FloridaCommerce and SelectFlorida shared that Florida businesses exported a total of $78.9 billion in 2025—increasing by $6.4 billion (8.9%) from 2024. Additionally, Florida's manufactured products accounted for 92% of all Florida-grown and Florida-made exports in 2025, with manufacturers exporting approximately $72.2 billion—increasing by $6.3 billion (9.5%) over 2024 and $19.5 billion (37%) since 2018.

"Florida continues to break economic records by providing Florida businesses with the resources they need to expand



Dassault Falcon Jet opened its new maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) facility at Melbourne Orlando International Airport, supporting the growth of the state's aerospace sector.

PHOTO: DASSAULT

their footprint, create jobs and support their local economies.," said Florida Secretary of Commerce J. Alex Kelly. "Florida has been ranked the #1 economy in the nation for three consecutive years with the fastest growing manufacturing sector in the country. This record-breaking performance is a direct result of our strategic investments into the talent development and critical infrastructure needed to set the foundation for businesses to expand beyond our state borders and onto the world stage."

"Through continued collaboration with Florida businesses, trade partners and logistics leaders, SelectFlorida is helping small and emerging business reach customers worldwide," said SelectFlorida President Matt Swanson.

Bilateral trade through Florida's seaports and airports in 2025 totaled $205 billion—increasing by $8.3 billion (4.2%) from 2024. The top export markets for Florida businesses included Brazil, Mexico, Canada, Germany and Colombia. The top categories of Florida-made exports are: civilian aircraft & parts; Telephones; pharmaceuticals, turbojets and gas turbines; and cars.

AEROSPACE & DEFENSE EXPANDS ITS FOUNDATION

Florida's aerospace sector continues a rapid expansion. In Cape Canaveral, SpaceX announced plans for approximately $1.8 billion in investment to expand Starship launch and processing capabilities at Kennedy Space Center and Cape Canaveral Space Force Station. The project is expected to create 600 full-time jobs by 2030 tied to launch operations, engineering, and manufacturing activities. The expansion includes additional launch infrastructure and processing facilities.

In late 2025, Dassault Falcon Jet, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Dassault Aviation, has opened its new maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) facility at Melbourne Orlando International Airport (KMLB) on Florida's east coast. This facility represents a significant expansion of Dassault's presence in the Americas, and it is one of the most recent additions to Dassault Aviation's global MRO network.



PHOTO: MIAMI WORLDCENTER

Miami Worldcenter is a 27-acre downtown district in Miami, Florida featuring residential, retail, hospitality, and public space. Opened in 2025, the district has achieved LEED for Neighborhood Development (LEED-ND) Silver Certification.

"Our state-of-the-art Melbourne MRO is the latest expansion of our worldwide network of more than 40 service locations. It adds significant capacity in the Americas and puts more service capability closer to our Falcon customers. Dassault already has a large footprint in the United States which includes 2,500 employees, aircraft completions and sales," said Eric Trappier, Chairman and CEO of Dassault Aviation.

Florida's Space Coast has benefited from a broader ecosystem that includes NASA operations, defense contractors, launch providers, satellite companies, and advanced manufacturing suppliers.

In the northwest section of the state, Accelint, a defense technology company, has established a new unmanned surface vessel (USV) integration facility in Bay County, positioning the area as a growing hub for maritime autonomy. The company specializes in building autonomous vessels equipped with advanced payloads for defense operations, including surveillance and security missions.

FINANCIAL SERVICES & AI: EMERGING GROWTH INDUSTRIES

Another significant development is the growth in financial services and artificial intelligence-related industries. Miami and West Palm Beach have attracted hedge funds, fintech companies, family offices, and technology startups at a pace that would have seemed unlikely a decade ago.

At the same time, Florida continues strengthening sectors such as cybersecurity, cloud computing, logistics, and defense technology.

One of the high-profile business moves in 2026 to date is Palantir Technologies' decision to relocate its corporate headquarters to Aventura in Miami-Dade County. The data analytics and artificial intelligence company joined a growing list of firms shifting executive operations to Florida amid broader migration trends affecting the finance and technology sectors.

As migration and capital flows continue reshaping the national economic landscape, Florida appears positioned to remain one of the country's most active and competitive environments for business expansion and relocation.

BUSINESS REPORT

North Carolina

BY ANNE COSGROVE

Building Boldly

FROM ITS URBAN TO RURAL COMMUNITIES, THE TAR HEEL STATE ATTRACTS LEGACY AND GROWING INDUSTRIES.

Building on years of strong project recruitment and workforce investment, North Carolina continues positioning itself as one of the nation's premier destinations for advanced manufacturing, aerospace, clean energy, life sciences, and digital infrastructure.

What distinguishes North Carolina in the site selection environment is not simply its low-cost business climate or favorable tax structure. Rather, it is the state's ability to combine workforce depth, infrastructure readiness, higher education assets, and long-term policy consistency into a scalable platform for industrial growth.

Governor Josh Stein has largely continued—and expanded—the advanced-industry recruitment strategy that helped define North Carolina's recent economic success. Taking office in January 2025, the governor has placed a stronger emphasis on ensuring that major economic development projects extend beyond the state's largest metropolitan areas into rural and mid-sized regions.

A significant theme emerging in 2026 has been the administration's focus on infrastructure readiness and site preparedness. Stein has emphasized the importance of expanding megasite capacity, workforce housing, transportation infrastructure, and energy availability to support long-term industrial recruitment.

Following another strong national business climate ranking for the state, Stein noted that North Carolina's economic growth strategy depends on "investing in people, infrastructure, and innovation so businesses can succeed in every part of the state." This broader regional approach is increasingly shaping project recruitment efforts across aerospace, manufacturing, and technology sectors.

For site selectors, the message from Raleigh is one of continuity and predictability. North Carolina's leadership continues prioritizing advanced industries while



At the 2026 SelectUSA Investment Summit, North Carolina Commerce Secretary Lee Lilley (left) accepted the 2025 State of the Year Award presented by Business Facilities magazine.

PHOTO: BUSINESS FACILITIES

maintaining a collaborative approach among state agencies, utilities, local governments, and educational institutions.



Operating in North Carolina for more than 50 years, Siemens Energy employs more than 3,000 at its Charlotte facility. The company also operates in Raleigh, Winston-Salem, and Lexington.

JETZERO'S AEROSPACE PROJECT RESHAPES PIEDMONT TRIAD

One of the most significant economic development projects announced in the United States recently remains JetZero's decision to establish a large aircraft manufacturing operation in Greensboro.

The California-based aviation company plans to invest approximately $4.7 billion over the next decade at Piedmont Triad International Airport, where it intends to manufacture its next-generation blended-wing Z4 aircraft. The project is expected to create more than 14,500 jobs, making it one of the largest job commitments in North Carolina history.

To secure the project, North Carolina approved a massive incentive package centered around a long-term Job Development Investment Grant (JDIG) agreement valued at more than $1.1 billion over nearly 40 years, contingent on hiring and investment benchmarks. Local governments and regional partners also committed substantial infrastructure improvements tied to roads, utilities, and airport expansion.

JetZero executives cited North Carolina's workforce pipeline and growing aerospace ecosystem as key reasons for selecting the Greensboro region. CEO Tom O'Leary said the state offered the "right combination of workforce capability, infrastructure, and long-term partnership" needed to scale next-generation aircraft production.

The investment reinforces the Piedmont Triad's emergence as a growing aerospace manufacturing hub alongside companies such as HondaJet and Boom Supersonic.

AMAZON WEB SERVICES EXPANDS AI, CLOUD INFRASTRUCTURE

North Carolina's digital economy also continued expanding in 2026, highlighted by Amazon Web Services' major investment in Richmond County.

AWS announced plans for approximately $10 billion in capital investment tied to cloud computing and artificial intelligence infrastructure. The project is expected to create at least 500 direct jobs, along with substantial construction activity and supplier-related employment.

The investment reflects a broader trend reshaping site selection nationwide: the rapid expansion of hyperscale data centers and AI computing infrastructure.

CLEAN ENERGY, ADVANCED MANUFACTURING EXPAND

One of the defining features of North Carolina's current business climate is the rapid expansion of clean energy and advanced manufacturing investment.

The state has assembled a strong ecosystem for electric vehicle batteries, semiconductors, and energy technologies. Toyota's multibillion-dollar battery manufacturing campus near Greensboro remains among the nation's most important EV supply chain investments, while semiconductor manufacturer Wolfspeed continues expanding its silicon carbide operations critical to EV and power applications.

Other companies in energy storage, grid technology, and advanced materials are also scaling operations across the state.

Gov. Stein's administration has continued supporting these industries through workforce development funding, infrastructure improvements, and incentives tied to advanced manufacturing recruitment.

For more than 50 years, Siemens Energy has maintained a major manufacturing and engineering presence in Charlotte. In recent years, Siemens Energy has announced multiple expansion projects in the region tied to transformer manufacturing and power-grid equipment production. In 2024, the company announced it will invest $150 million in a new large power transformer facility in Mecklenburg County, adding about 475 jobs. More recently, Siemens Energy included North Carolina in a $1 billion U.S. manufacturing expansion initiative expected to create more than 1,500 jobs nationally.

LIFE SCIENCES: FOUNDATIONAL INDUSTRY

While advanced manufacturing dominates many recent headlines, North Carolina's life sciences sector remains one of the state's most important long-term economic assets.

The Research Triangle continues ranking among the nation's premier biotechnology and pharmaceutical hubs, supported by research universities, contract manufacturing organizations, and global pharmaceutical companies.

Major investments announced in recent years by companies such as Eli Lilly, Novo Nordisk, and Fujifilm Diosynth continue ramping up in 2026, adding manufacturing capacity and high-skilled employment.

North Carolina's business climate in 2026 reflects a state moving from economic development success story to long-term industrial powerhouse. Under Gov. Stein, the state continues pursuing large-scale advanced manufacturing, aerospace, AI infrastructure, and life sciences investment while emphasizing regional growth and infrastructure readiness.

Projects such as JetZero and AWS illustrate North Carolina's growing ability to compete globally for transformational investments. Meanwhile, expanding ecosystems in clean energy, semiconductors, biotechnology, and aerospace provide additional depth and resiliency.

PHOTO: SIEMENS ENERGY

BY ANNE COSGROVE

Toward The Next Era

INTRODUCED IN 2025, "PLAN MÉXICO" AIMS TO EXPAND THE NATION'S DOMESTIC AND GLOBAL ECONOMIC REACH.

Mexico is aiming to position itself as a leading global destination for advanced manufacturing and nearshoring investment through Plan México, the economic strategy introduced by President Claudia Sheinbaum in January 2025. The initiative is designed to strengthen Mexico's role in North American supply chains, attract foreign direct investment, and modernize the country's industrial infrastructure as global companies continue to re-evaluate production networks.

For businesses across the U.S., Canada, and Europe, the plan represents Mexico's a clear signal that it intends to compete for new industrial projects tied to automotive manufacturing, semiconductors, aerospace, pharmaceuticals, electronics, logistics, and clean energy technologies. The strategy builds on the country's position under the USMCA trade agreement (due for renegotiation beginning in late May), including geographic proximity to the U.S. market, established manufacturing clusters, and competitive operating costs.

Plan México has set several long-term economic targets, including increasing investment to 28% of GDP by 2030, creating 1.5 million additional manufacturing jobs, and to position Mexico among the world's 10 largest economies. The government also aims to increase domestic content in strategic supply chains and expand industrial development beyond traditional northern border hubs.

A significant focus of the strategy is improving the business climate for investors. Mexican officials have pledged to streamline permitting, accelerate environmental and trade approvals, and reduce investment authorization timelines. In early May, the government unveiled reforms that would allow qualifying strategic investments to receive approvals in as little as 30 days, while most federal procedures would be capped at 90 days. The reforms also include a new single-window platform for foreign trade procedures and expanded coordination through a presidential investment office.

Infrastructure investment is another cornerstone of the plan. Mexico has outlined significant spending on highways, rail corridors, ports, airports, water systems, and energy infrastructure to support industrial growth. Officials have also emphasized expanding electricity generation and transmission capacity, particularly in regions experiencing rapid manufacturing growth.

The administration has continued to emphasize private-sector participation as essential to the strategy's success. Speaking after a March 5, 2026 meeting with a group of Mexican business leaders, President Sheinbaum said companies were "very optimistic" about Mexico's economic trajectory and announced that business groups had proposed nearly $100 billion in investments for the coming years. The remarks were made during a follow-up meeting on Plan México with members of the National Investment Council.

The Mexican government is also promoting fiscal incentives tied to nearshoring investment. Earlier phases of the plan included accelerated depreciation incentives for capital investment, as well as programs supporting workforce training and innovation. Officials have emphasized that the strategy is intended to strengthen regional supply chains across North America while reducing dependence on Asian imports in key sectors.

Against the backdrop of the upcoming review of the USMCA trade agreement, the Plan México initiative marks one of the country's most comprehensive industrial development efforts in decades, and underscores its evolving role in the global manufacturing landscape.

Top 10 Countries by Cumulative FDI Inflows to Mexico

(Jan. 2006–Sept. 2025, million USD)

Country of Origin	Total FDI
United States	$261,868
Spain	$60,848
Canada	$51,251
Japan	$37,105
Germany	$36,207
Belgium	$24,838
Netherlands	$19,414
United Kingdom	$15,773
Argentina	$13,102
France	$12,725

Source: Ministry of Economy. (2026, March 13). Foreign Direct Investment. Government of Mexico.

why?

UTAH



with ***JEFFERSON MOSS****, Executive Director*
Utah Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity

INVESTMENT IN THE TALENT PIPELINE, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND AN "ENERGY DECADE" BUILD AN ENDURING ECOSYSTEM IN THE BEEHIVE STATE.



Salt Lake City, Utah boasts a thriving tech sector, a highly educated workforce, and low operating costs.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF JAY DASH/UTAH OFFICE OF TOURISM

Business Facilities: *Tell us about the status of economic development in Utah.*

Jefferson Moss: The status of our economic development is strong and getting stronger. I believe that's because we have a simple, foundational philosophy in Utah: "Industry belongs here." Our balanced approach between short-term momentum and long-term infrastructure focus is building generational success. In fact, the data shows that Utah has been the best-performing economy in the country for the last 10 years, leading the nation with a 10-year GDP growth rate of 9.5%.

Our role at the Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity is to help businesses thrive by serving as a guide. Business leaders, founders, and site selectors we work with are dedicated to building success, and we're here to help them navigate challenges, realize their opportunities, and scale in ways that benefit Utahns and their bottom lines.

Recently, we guided significant capital investments across the state. In April, Creekstone Energy, LLC announced a $17 billion commitment to develop a data center in Millard County. Plus, Karman Space & Defense is working on a cutting-edge facility in West Valley. These projects highlight the significant growth we're seeing in the energy and aerospace sectors.

BF: *Why should companies consider Utah for its next relocation or expansion? What are targeted or growth industries in 2026, and beyond?*

Moss: Industry needs more than just a place. Industry needs a home, a collaborative place that embraces builders. If you're looking for a business-friendly environment that incentivizes growth using data-informed strategies, Utah is the place. We are consistently a top-three state for building billion-dollar companies, our tech sector is growing faster than any other state, and we're leading the way in next-generation energy and in our pipeline of talent and commercialized ideas coming out of our universities.

In targeted and growth industries, our key focus areas are aerospace and defense, fintech, life sciences and health care, and energy and minerals. These sectors align with the structural shifts that your readers are navigating.

As domestic manufacturing evolves and reshoring takes center stage, our years-long proactive approach in advanced manufacturing and aerospace and defense

in particular is paying off, as evidenced by some of our recent incentive recipients.

Additionally, amid rising global energy demand, we've outlined an aggressive plan for an "Energy Decade" as a key focus area within our state. This focus is doubly beneficial as it both helps us meet our immediate needs and positions us for future growth, making Utah a prime spot for energy and minerals.



Hikers enjoy the view near Sipapu Bridge in Utah's San Juan County.

BF: *Why is the Utah workforce ecosystem an asset to business?*

Moss: Site selection often hinges on having a strong talent pipeline. Here in Utah, we really see our workforce as a huge asset. Our young, healthy, and well-educated population is a key strategic advantage for us and the foundation of the home we offer to growing industries. We boast a nearly 70% labor participation rate from a workforce with a median age of 32. About 62% of Utahns hold a post-secondary degree, and about 76% of those graduates have high-yield degrees tied to high-demand occupations. In 2025, our employment growth rate doubled the national average. Last year alone, we saw more than 70,000 new graduates.

We're also perfectly positioned in today's globally interconnected economy. According to the most recent census, 130 languages are spoken in Utah, both at home and at universities.

Business Facilities has previously highlighted the effectiveness of partnerships between education and economic development, and we couldn't agree more. Through initiatives like the Nucleus Institute, we're actively supporting an innovation economy through education, physical spaces, and more.

Nucleus, as an example, brings together Utah's universities, industry leaders, entrepreneurs, and policymakers to transform big ideas into meaningful solutions and businesses. By investing in our people and aligning education with market needs, we're making it easier for companies that move to Utah to find the skilled professionals they need to grow and succeed, and for entrepreneurs to find access to community, resources, and capital.

BF: *Why are the state's location and infrastructure advantageous for business?*

Moss: We know that industry needs resources and help navigating them, and we have an extraordinary mix of both. We work to understand exactly what logistical, natural, and institutional resources businesses need.

This is why next-generation firms like Valar Atomics are looking around the country for places to build, and they're choosing Utah—out of 22 states, we were selected as the place for their groundbreaking small-form nuclear reactor testing and development. This effort is not limited to a single site; we're also developing the ability to manufacture nuclear power components and build a talent pool for it in-state. It's an ecosystem approach that has worked well for us historically.

We also offer massive logistical resources through some of our current projects of statewide significance, including the Utah Unland Port Authority, the Military Installation Development Authority, and The Point. These projects highlight some of our urban infrastructure that prioritize our targeted industries, but we're not limited to them.

We recognize the significant resources available outside the Wasatch Front in energy, minerals, and workforce. Just this month, we approved an incentive for the Creekstone Gigasite project in Millard County. This large-scale power and AI data center will generate and operate a remarkable 10 gigawatts of capacity, entirely behind the meter.

BF: *Why is the future bright for business in Utah? What is the current vision for the state's economic development path?*

Moss: Our vision is deliberate and ambitious. Here in Utah, we're aiming to be the nation's top-performing economy while enjoying a fantastic quality of life. We know that industry needs long-term success. We're not interested in short-term wins at all costs; our outlook is practical and focused on creating an unmatched environment for opportunity and livability.

We foster this mindset through a stable regulatory environment that enables innovation rather than stifles it. Governor Cox's "Built Here" initiative plays a big role in this journey, showing our commitment to our people, our communities, and prosperity for all. We also have a generational, future-focused outlook as we work to secure water infrastructure, achieve energy dominance, and capitalize on our upcoming Olympic moment in 2034.

By striking a balance between attracting major global investments, supporting local entrepreneurs, and prioritizing social connections and statewide unity, we're determined to maintain our reputation as a place that overperforms and punches above its weight. We have the grit and ability to help businesses achieve long-term prosperity, providing the strategic advantages they need to thrive.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF JAY DASHUTAH OFFICE OF TOURISM

Business Facilities
The Source For Site Selectors

IN THE NEXT ISSUE



July/August 2026

Business Facilities' Annual Rankings Report

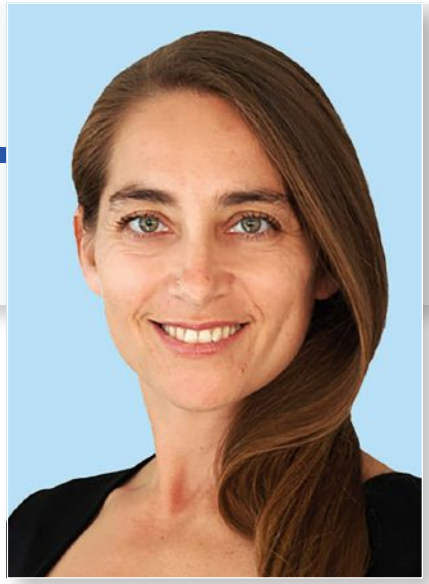
And...

The Impacts Of Infrastructure
USMCA & Site Selection

Read past issues of *Business Facilities* here...
https://businessfacilities.com/magazine/recent-issues/

The LAST WORD

with **Beia Spiller**, *Fellow and Director of the Transportation Program at Resources for the Future, an independent, nonprofit research institution in Washington, DC focused on improving environmental, energy, and natural resource decisions.*



THE RACE TO ESTABLISH ROBUST CRITICAL MINERALS SUPPLY CHAINS IS ON. A NEW REPORT EXAMINES THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE.

Critical minerals—the building blocks of advanced technologies—are now a centerpiece of U.S. industrial strategy. Policymakers in Washington, DC are spending billions to secure supply through tools ranging from tariffs and stockpiles to public investments and international agreements. But there is limited evidence on what these approaches cost taxpayers, how well they work, or whether they advance long-term supply security and broader policy goals.

A recent report I coauthored with colleagues at Resources for the Future (RFF) finds that recent efforts to onshore mineral supply chains appear to simultaneously try to achieve two competing objectives: improve access to mineral supplies at affordable prices (also called "mineral security") and achieve industrial policy goals (boost domestic jobs and manufacturing).

Our report challenges the notion that onshoring can realistically achieve these goals in the expected time frames and highlights that deployed policies may face high costs and unintended consequences.

In our report, we outline a few challenges that often make onshoring slow and expensive, and we propose policies that can reduce supply risk and cost-effectively support domestic markets at reasonable time scales.

Challenge #1: Market and economic constraints can deter investment.

Domestic projects often face higher costs (due to higher material costs, lack of infrastructure and technical know-how, and workforce constraints), thus requiring higher prices or sustained support to compete with minerals produced in countries like China. However, global prices for minerals are frequently volatile and often low, which raises financing risk and can stall investment for these high-cost projects.

Furthermore, each mineral is unique: geology, processing costs, and market structures vary widely. Even within a mineral, technology choice can drive large cost differences in extraction and processing. For example, some lithium resources are costly to extract, while newer processing approaches can lower overall costs.

Demand uncertainty—especially for electric vehicles, which require significant quantities of minerals for their batteries—can also deter investments in mineral extraction. Clearer demand signals can enable long-term, fixed-price offtake contracts, giving producers the revenue certainty needed to finance new supply.



PHOTO: ADOBE STOCK/ MARYNA

ADVERTISER INDEX

LOCATION	PAGE #
ALABAMA	
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE www.madeinalabama.com	65
GADSDEN-ETOWAH COUNTY IDA www.gadsdenida.org	45
ARIZONA	
ARIZONA COMMERCE AUTHORITY www.azcommerce.com	3
GREATER PHOENIX ECONOMIC COUNCIL www.anewwaytocity.com	23
CALIFORNIA	
CITY OF INDUSTRY cityofindustry.org	C-4
PORT OF LONG BEACH polb.com	59
DELAWARE	
SUSSEX COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT excitesussex.com/	69
FLORIDA	
FLORIDA'S GREAT NORTHWEST www.floridasgreatnorthwest.com	20
FLORIDA POWER & LIGHT www.poweringflorida.com	13
PORT TAMPA BAY www.porttb.com	60
ST. LUCIE EDC youredc.com	55
LOUISIANA	
LOUISIANA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT www.opportunitylouisiana.gov	1
CLECO POWER clecodev.com	19
MASSACHUSETTS	
MARLBOROUGH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORP. marlboroughedc.com/	71
MICHIGAN	
MICHIGAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION www.michiganbusiness.org	41
SHIAWASSEE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP www.sedpweb.org	18
MISSISSIPPI	
MISSISSIPPI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY www.mississippi.org	47
MISSOURI	
MISSOURI ONE START missourionestart.com/	37

LOCATION	PAGE #
NEVADA	
CITY OF HENDERSON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT www.hendersonnow.com	73
NORTH CAROLINA	
RALEIGH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT www.raleighecondev.org	7
WAKE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT www.raleigh-wake.org	5
PENNSYLVANIA	
MONTGOMERY COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT www.montgomerycountypa.gov/commerce	15
TENNESSEE	
TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT tnecd.com/	43
TEXAS	
AMARILLO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORP. amarilloedc.com/	35
COUNCIL FOR SOUTH TEXAS ECONOMIC PROGRESS (COSTEP) riosouthtexasregion.com	49
PORT OF CORPUS CHRISTI portofcc.com	51
PORT FREEPORT www.portfreeport.com	53
PORT HOUSTON www.porthouston.com	57
PFLUGERVILLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORP. www.pfdevelopment.com	83
TOMBALL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORP. www.tomballtxedc.org	79
VIRGINIA	
VIRGINIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP vedp.org	33
DOMINION ENERGY www.dominionenergy.com/economicdevelopment	21
HARRISONBURG ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT harrisonburgdevelopment.com	77
WISCONSIN	
WISCONSIN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORP. wedc.org	24-25
WASHINGTON, DC	
IEDC (INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL) www.iedconline.org	C-2
INTERNATIONAL/MEXICO	
AMISTAD www.amistadmexico.com	9

Challenge #2: Technical and workforce bottlenecks slow down projects.

Scaling U.S. mining and processing requires specialized labor, engineering capacity, and regulators with technical bandwidth—capabilities that have atrophied after decades of limited domestic buildout. Constraints in training pipelines and capacity at federal agencies can slow projects and weaken oversight.

Challenge #3: Long mineral development timelines are common, but community buy-in is still necessary.

Mines and processing plants can take many years—sometimes decades—to permit, finance, and build. Faster permitting may help expand domestic production, but streamlined bureaucracy won't remove the underlying economic and capacity constraints. Near-term resilience therefore cannot rely on domestic projects alone.

Weak or inequitable community engagement can trigger opposition, litigation, and delays—ultimately raising costs and jeopardizing projects. Cutting corners by simply accelerating permitting can backfire if it increases conflict with communities that host mining and processing facilities.

NEW AND EMERGING FEDERAL POLICIES

Recent U.S. federal policies aim to diversify the critical mineral supply and expand domestic extraction landscape. However, some of these tools raise tradeoffs for costs, effectiveness, and equity.

- Tariffs that make internationally sourced critical minerals more expensive in domestic markets may advantage domestic mineral producers, but tariffs can also raise downstream costs and distort markets, with uncertain benefits if producers can pass through costs or if demand shifts to substitutes.
- Government investment in critical mineral companies can relieve financing barriers for specific firms, but equity stakes do not strengthen the broader industry—and they heighten the need for transparent selection criteria and clear exit strategies to protect taxpayers.
- International agreements can diversify critical mineral supplies quickly while U.S. capacity scales, and agreements can be designed to encourage some domestic investment. But project choice matters: partners and locations should align with strong governance and environmental and social standards.
- Stockpiles can buffer short-term shocks but may be expensive and market-distorting depending on design.
- Permitting reforms may shorten project timelines, but durable progress requires preserving meaningful community input and environmental safeguards.

International agreements can diversify critical mineral supplies quickly while U.S. capacity scales… Partners and locations should align with strong governance and social standards.

A FRAMEWORK FOR PRIORITIZING INVESTMENT

Bigger picture, we note several ways in our report that the government could improve policymaking and prioritize investments that yield the greatest returns for taxpayers. For example, policymakers could:

- Invest in innovation to fund technologies that can reduce costs and improve timelines;
- Match policy tools based on whether the goal is near-term risk reduction or long-term domestic capability;
- Consider the connections across the supply chain when making policy; and
- Build technical capacity inside the government and expand workforce training.

When paired with diplomacy and multilateral agreements, these approaches can help ensure access to critical minerals in the near term, while building up the domestic supply chain in the long run.

TO READ THE REPORT

The RFF report, "Onshoring the Mineral Supply Chain: Structural Constraints, Policy Tools, and Research Gaps" is available for download at the RFF website. This report examines the economic, technical, workforce, infrastructure, and policy challenges of strengthening the U.S. critical minerals supply chain and proposes strategies to prioritize investments and improve supply resilience.

Spiller is Fellow and the Director of the Transportation Program at Resources for the Future (www.rff.org). She is an energy economist, with experience working on issues related to electricity, transportation, and critical minerals. She leads RFF's research on critical minerals and directs the Critical Minerals Research Lab. Prior to joining RFF, Spiller was Lead Senior Economist at Environmental Defense Fund, where she worked for almost a decade. She recently testified before a Congressional subcommittee on domestic critical mineral supply chains.

Registration is Now Open!



Where Site Selectors and Economic Developers Connect

Business Facilities

LIVEXCHANGE®

Fall Forum

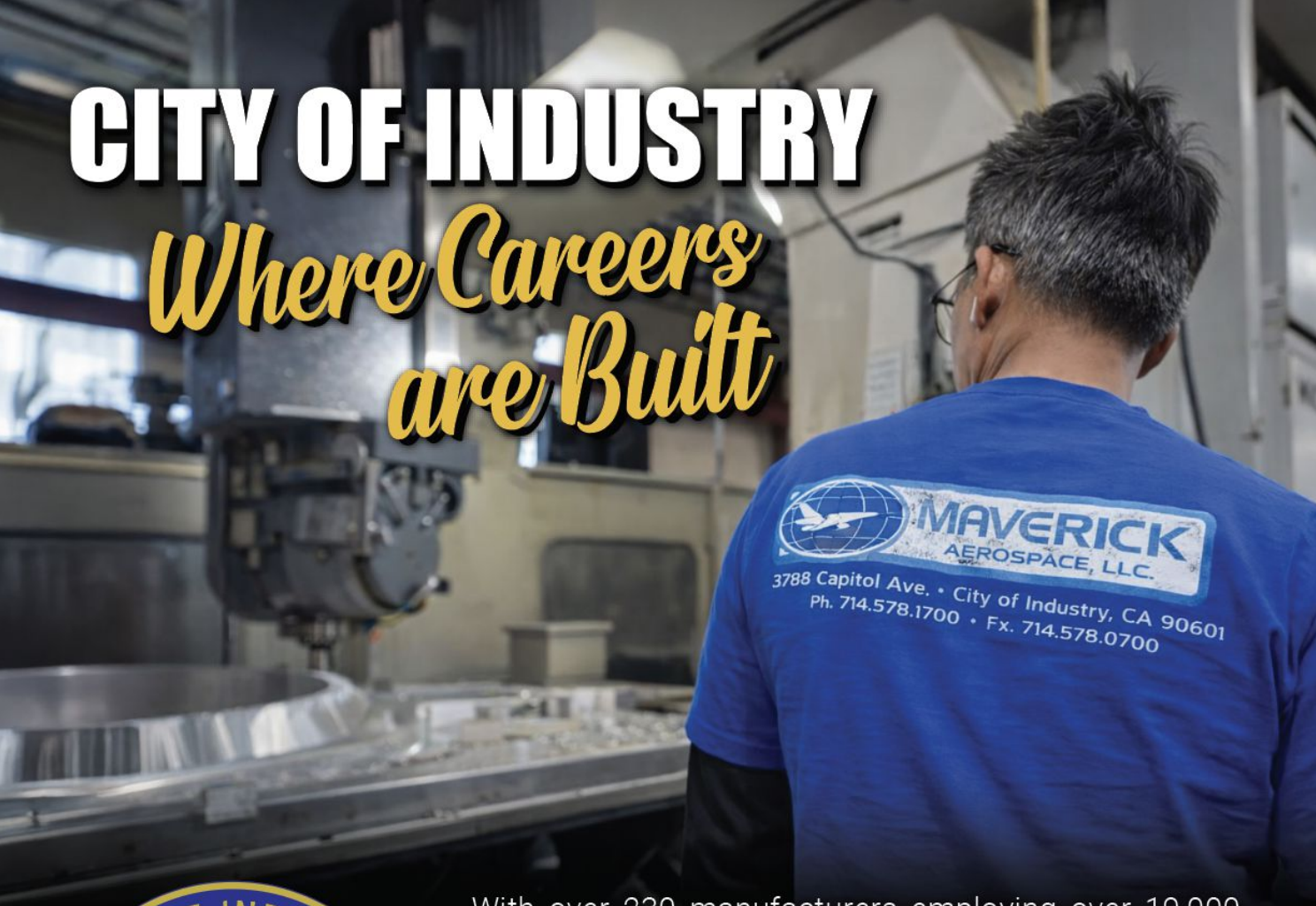
SEPTEMBER 23-25, 2026

RENAISSANCE TOLEDO DOWNTOWN HOTEL/
TOLEDO MUD HENS BASEBALL CLUB • TOLEDO, OH

BFLiveXchange.com/Fall-Forum/Attend

CITY OF INDUSTRY

Where Careers are Built



With over 230 manufacturers employing over 19,000 area residents, the City of Industry is the San Gabriel Valley's regional leader in providing high quality jobs. The City's initiative, ***"Made in the City of Industry"***, coordinates workforce development, career placement and connections for area residents to thrive in rewarding jobs with plentiful opportunities for growth.

The City of Industry was founded in 1957 with a laser-focus on its mission: ***Jobs, Enterprise, and Regional Infrastructure***. A commitment that continues to this day and into the future.

Featured Manufacturer

MAVERICK AEROSPACE, LLC.

www.mavaero.com

proudly

MADE IN CITY OF INDUSTRY

cityofindustry.org | industrybc.org

FOLLOW US | @industryca

STAFF REPORT

Item Number 6.B

SUBJECT:	ICSC Monterey Recap. (Faraz Mahmood/Daniella Stepek)
SUBMITTED BY:	City Clerk
DEPARTMENT:	City Clerk's Office
DATE:	June 10, 2026

STAFF REPORT

Item Number 6.C

SUBJECT:	Sales Tax Measure Update. (Sean Scully)
SUBMITTED BY:	City Clerk
DEPARTMENT:	City Clerk's Office
DATE:	June 10, 2026

STAFF REPORT

Item Number 7.A

SUBJECT:	Final Economic Development Action Plan Discussion. (Erin Frye and Daniella Stepek)
SUBMITTED BY:	City Clerk
DEPARTMENT:	City Clerk's Office
DATE:	June 10, 2026

ATTACHMENTS:

Lincoln Economic Development Action Plan FINAL.pdf

APP E Economic Development Implementation Workbook 052726 VD.docx

APP A_Phase I - Where are we now.pdf

App B_Phase II - Where do we want to be cover.pdf

APP C Lincoln Economic Development Pillars.pdf

APP D 5.13.26 Work Session Presentation.pdf

City of Lincoln

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN 2030

Building a strong local economy.
Preserving our character. Creating opportunity.









STRATEGIC GROWTH | STRONG PARTNERSHIPS | BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES | DESTINATION LINCOLN | SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

A distinctive and business-friendly community where economic vitality thrives. and quality of life. comes first.

Acknowledgement

Special recognition is extended to the Economic Development Committee for the significant volunteer leadership, project support, business engagement, and strategic guidance it has provided since its formation. Prior to the addition of dedicated economic development staff resources, the Committee played an important role in advancing economic development discussions, identifying opportunities, supporting local initiatives, and helping elevate economic development as a long-term City priority. The Committee continues to serve as an active advisory partner supporting Lincoln's long-term economic vitality and competitiveness.

This Economic Development Action Plan update was informed through economic and market analysis, review of local and regional conditions, studies and reports, the existing Economic Development Plan, implementation discussions, and stakeholder interviews whose time, insight, and collaboration helped shape this framework and align it with Lincoln's long-term economic and community priorities.

Name	Organization	Role
David Riccitiello	Economic Development Committee	Chair
Joann Hilton	Economic Development Committee	Vice Chair
Jason Price	Economic Development Committee	Member
Andrea Faria	Economic Development Committee	Member
Faraz Mahmood	Economic Development Committee	Member
Melanie Borchardt	Economic Development Committee	Member
Whitney Eklund	City Council & Economic Development Committee	Mayor Pro Tem, City Council Member (District 5)
John Reedy	City Council & Economic Development Committee	City Council Member (District 3)
Sean Scully	City of Lincoln	City Manager
Erin Frye	City of Lincoln	Economic Development & Communications Specialist
Daniella Stepek	City of Lincoln	Economic Development Specialist
Tom Indrieri	Lincoln Area Chamber	CEO
Kim Summers	Placer Valley Tourism	CEO
William Wong	Downtown Lincoln Association	President

Table of Contents

Acknowledgement 2
Introduction 4
Planning Process & Strategic Alignment 5
Economic Development Framework 8
Pillar 1 — Business Development (Jobs & Revenue) 9
Pillar 2 — Business Retention, Expansion & Creation 10
Pillar 3 — Competitiveness & Business Climate 11
Implementation Framework 12
Moving Forward 13
Appendices 14
- Appendix A – Phase I – Where are We Now 14
- Appendix B – Phase II – Where Do We Want to Be 14
- Appendix C – Economic Development Pillars (1 pg) 14
- Appendix D – May 13, 2026 Economic Development Committee Work Session 14
- Appendix E – Economic Development Implementation Workbook 14

Introduction

The purpose of this Economic Development Action Plan update is to align the City's existing Economic Development Plan with the Lincoln City Council's 2025–2027 Strategic Plan and current priorities related to long-term fiscal sustainability, more sustainable growth, economic vitality, infrastructure, and community capacity.

While Lincoln's previous economic development efforts established a broad and comprehensive foundation, this update is intended to create a more focused and implementation-oriented framework aligned with the City Council's priorities over the next several years.

The update recognizes that economic development plays an important role in helping the City:

- strengthen long-term fiscal sustainability,
- increase local investment and revenue generation,
- support business growth and expansion,
- improve economic competitiveness, and
- maintain Lincoln's quality of life and community character as the community continues to grow.

Based on economic and demographic conditions, a review of market conditions, and stakeholder input, the Action Plan organizes priorities into three Economic Development Pillars and associated focus areas intended to guide implementation, organizational alignment, and future economic development activities.

Pillar 1: Business Development. Purpose is to drive new investment and revenue generation.

Pillar 2: Business Retention Expansion & Creation. Purpose is to maintain and grow the existing base and support new business creation.

Pillar 3: Competitiveness & Business Climate. Purpose is to position the City for future investment.

This framework is designed to help focus City efforts on areas most critical to achieving the City Council's Strategic Plan priorities while remaining flexible as market conditions, opportunities, and community needs continue to evolve.

Planning Process & Strategic Alignment

The planning process followed a three-step approach intended to align economic conditions, stakeholder input, and City Council priorities into a practical and actionable strategy framework.



Step 1 — Where Are We Now?

The first phase focused on Lincoln's current economic-market realities, competitive position analysis, and review of local and regional trends. This work identified the key ***Headwinds,*** or challenges to be navigated, and ***Tailwinds***, strengths and opportunities to leverage and build upon.

The economic analysis indicates Lincoln is evolving from a primarily residential community toward a more balanced economy capable of supporting additional jobs,



investment, services, and long-term revenue generation. Appendix A[1]

Step 2 — Where Do We Want To Be?

The second phase focused on stakeholder engagement. Several consistent themes emerged throughout the process, including:

1. Attract job-producing industries, expand local employment opportunities.
2. Activate the airport areas.
3. Capture retail leakage, attract higher-quality commercial development.
4. Improve business support, City responsiveness.
5. Invest in infrastructure.
6. Move from reactive to proactive economic development implementation.
7. Strengthen downtown as a destination.
8. Preserve Lincoln's small-town identity while supporting growth.

The second phase also focused on aligning City Council priorities, stakeholder input, market realities, and economic data creating an *alignment matrix* to help define Lincoln's economic development direction. Appendix B[2]

The process also reinforced the importance of aligning economic development efforts with the City Council's Strategic Plan priorities, particularly those related to sustainable growth, revenue generation, infrastructure, downtown improvements, airport activation, and long-term community sustainability.

Step 3 — How Do We Get There?

The final phase translated the economic analysis, stakeholder input, and City Council priorities into a focused Economic Development Action Plan organized around:

- a shared vision and mission,
- Economic Development Pillars,
- priority focus areas, and
- an implementation framework intended to guide future economic development efforts.

The result is a targeted framework focused on the areas expected to have the greatest impact on Lincoln's economic vitality, competitiveness, and long-term fiscal sustainability while remaining flexible as conditions and opportunities continue to evolve.

Support and referenced documents, briefings, matrices are included in the Appendix.

[1] Appendix A. Where are We Now? Economic Scan, Workforce Commute Patterns, Industry Composition, Talent Pipeline Trends, and Retail Demand.

[2] Appendix B. Where Do We Want to Be? *City Council Strategic Priorities, Stakeholder Input Summary, Alignment Matrix: Council Priorities + Stakeholder Input, Economic Conditions*.

The Economic Development Action Plan

The Economic Development Committee noted during the stakeholder engagement process a clear and concise Vision and Mission statement were needed to help ground the Economic Development Action Plan with a shared understanding of where Lincoln wants to be and how the community intends to get there.

The Vision defines the community's long-term direction and desired future position, while the Mission establishes the City's ongoing role in supporting thoughtful economic growth.

Together, they establish the framework for the Economic Development Pillars, focus areas, and implementation strategies outlined in this Action Plan.

Vision

Lincoln is a distinctive and business-friendly community within the Sacramento region where economic growth strengthens our safe, historic small-town character, quality of life and sense of community.

Thoughtful planning and a welcoming environment attract business and investment. Strong private and public partnerships are Lincoln's foundation for supporting entrepreneurship, developing local talent, creating opportunities for future generations, and building a resilient economy rooted in community character and long-term prosperity.

Mission

Advancing thoughtful development that enhances Lincon's quality of life and community character while fostering a business-friendly environment that encourages strategic investment, supports local entrepreneurship, creates diverse high-quality jobs, and drives sustainable economic growth.

Desired Outcomes

1. Increased job creation and local employment opportunities
2. Expanded revenue generation and reduced sales tax leakage
3. A defined portfolio of programs supporting business growth and investment
4. Preserved economic differentiation within the region

Economic Development Framework

After careful review and discussion, and suggested refinements, the Economic Development Committee accepted a three-pillar framework that is reflected below. The framework is organized by implementation priorities, aligned with City resources, with the intention of guiding future economic development efforts. The three pillars are structured to work together.



The top two focus areas within each pillar are considered the City's primary implementation priorities because they are expected to have the greatest impact on achieving City Council goals.

The shaded focus areas represent important ongoing activities that require continuous coordination with City departments, educational institutions, business organizations, workforce partners, and regional agencies.

Pillar 1 — Business Development (Jobs & Revenue)

Why This Matters

Lincoln must capture jobs and revenue currently leaving the city and grow its long-term tax base through business attraction, destination development, and investment-ready growth areas.

Primary Focus Areas

Commercial / Retail

Lincoln continues experiencing retail leakage and unmet commercial demand despite strong population and household growth. Strategic commercial and retail development can help:

- retain more local spending,
- strengthen sales tax generation,
- support neighborhood commercial services.

Focus areas may include:

- targeted retail recruitment,
- grocery and commercial attraction,
- support for investment-ready retail sites.

Airport / Industrial

The airport and surrounding industrial areas represent one of Lincoln's most significant long-term economic development opportunities.

The approximately 84-acre airport area provides opportunities to:

- attract job-producing businesses,
- diversify the economy,
- strengthen traded-sector activity.

Key implementation areas include:

- airport activation planning,
- infrastructure and utility readiness,
- target industry identification.

Ongoing Focus Areas

Downtown

Downtown Lincoln plays an important role as:

- a community gathering place,
- destination area,
- small business environment.

Continued partnership with downtown organizations and businesses will remain important to:

- activation,
- placemaking,
- business recruitment.

Sports & Visitation

Sports, recreation, and visitor activity represent secondary but meaningful economic opportunities. Lincoln's parks, sports facilities, community events, and quality-of-life assets can help:

- increase visitor spending,
- support local businesses,
- strengthen destination activity,
- improve community visibility within the region.

Pillar 2 — Business Retention, Expansion & Creation

Why This Matters

The fastest path to economic growth is supporting businesses already operating in Lincoln and helping them expand, invest, and create jobs locally.

Primary Focus Areas

Business Accelerator

The City should continue exploring partnerships and programs that support entrepreneurship, innovation, and business creation. Potential areas of focus include:

- Jessup and innovation partnerships,
- entrepreneurial support,
- and small business growth resources.

The long-term objective is to strengthen Lincoln's entrepreneurial ecosystem while supporting scalable local business growth.

Major Employer Engagement

Business retention and expansion efforts are critical to maintaining and growing Lincoln's economic base. The City should continue proactively engaging major employers to:

- identify operational challenges,
- understand expansion opportunities,
- and support long-term investment decisions.

Business retention visits and ongoing employer engagement can also provide important real-time market intelligence for future planning and implementation.

Ongoing Focus Areas

Small Business Support

Small businesses remain foundational to Lincoln's economy and community identity. Ongoing coordination with partner organizations and resource providers will remain important to:

- technical assistance,
- permit navigation,
- financing resources,
- and entrepreneurship support.

Workforce Alignment

Workforce development is increasingly connected to long-term economic competitiveness particularly as the labor market tightens. Continue partnering with:

- educational institutions,
- workforce organizations,
- and employers,

To better align workforce training and career pathways with business and industry needs, particular attention should focus on:

- skilled trades,
- early and mid-career workforce gaps,
- high school pathways,
- and future workforce pipeline development.

Pillar 3 — Competitiveness & Business Climate

Why This Matters

Lincoln competes in a regional market and must differentiate itself to attract and retain business, investment, and talent. Long-term competitiveness increasingly depends on responsiveness, infrastructure readiness, workforce alignment, investment certainty, and community identity.

Primary Focus Areas

Permitting Concierge / Process Improvement

Business responsiveness and development predictability are increasingly important competitive advantages.
The City should continue to:

- improve permit tracking,
- increase project responsiveness,
- tell the business-friendly development experience story.

The goal is not simply speed, but greater clarity, predictability, and customer service.

Identity & Positioning

Lincoln's small-town character, quality of life, and community identity represent important economic differentiators within the Sacramento region. Economic development efforts should lead:

- coordinated messaging,
- business marketing,
- destination positioning,
- and Lincoln's regional identity.

The goal is to clearly communicate why businesses, residents, and investors should choose Lincoln.

Ongoing Focus Areas

Workforce Strategy

Long-term workforce competitiveness will require continued focus on:

- retention of working-age households,
- career pathway development,
- alignment between employers and educational systems.

Infrastructure

Infrastructure readiness remains critical to economic development implementation. The City should continue evaluating:

- infrastructure constraints,
- site readiness,
- utility capacity,
- transportation improvements,
- funding mechanisms,
- and long-term infrastructure planning tools.

Infrastructure planning will remain closely connected to business attraction, industrial development, housing growth, and long-term fiscal sustainability.

Implementation Framework

This Economic Development Action Plan is intended to function as a practical implementation framework rather than a static planning document. *Appendix C is a one-page Economic Development Pillar graphic for easy reference for the Council and Committee.*

Implementation will occur through:

1) City staff actions per focus areas,
2) City Council direction,
3) departmental coordination,
4) regional and community partnerships,
5) ongoing business engagement,
6) Economic Development Committee review and input.

Economic Development Implementation Workbook

To support implementation, tracking, communication, and accountability, a companion Economic Development Implementation Workbook is organized around the Economic Development Pillars and focus areas.

The workbook is intended for staff to :

- maintain priorities and actions organized by pillar and focus area,
- document implementation activities and projects,
- identify timelines and responsibilities,
- track status and progress,
- support regular reporting and updates,
- and provide flexibility as priorities and opportunities evolve over time.

Designed to function as a living management and implementation tool.

Economic Development Committee

Prior to the addition of dedicated economic development staff resources, the volunteer Economic Development Committee played a significant leadership role in advancing economic development discussions, project support, business engagement, and strategic initiatives within the community.

Through the dedication and continued involvement of Committee members, the City was able to advance important economic development efforts, strengthen partnerships, elevate economic development as a City priority, and help lay the foundation for many of the strategies, projects, and initiatives that continue today.

As the City transitions toward a more implementation-focused structure supported by staff and this updated Action Plan, the Committee's role continues as an important Council-appointed advisory body supporting:

- implementation discussions,
- eyes and ears on the street and in the business community,
- business and stakeholder insight,
- identification of opportunities and barriers,

- review of priorities and progress,
- and communication between the business community and the City.

The Committee remains an important partner in helping support long-term economic vitality, organizational alignment, and implementation continuity as the Action Plan evolves over time.

Moving Forward

This Economic Development Action Plan is intended to provide a focused and practical framework aligned with the City Council's Strategic Plan priorities and Lincoln's long-term vision for economic vitality, fiscal sustainability, and community character.

The plan recognizes that economic development is not accomplished through a single project or initiative, but through consistent implementation, organizational alignment, partnerships, and ongoing responsiveness to changing market conditions and community needs.

The Economic Development Pillars and Focus Areas identified in this Action Plan are intended to help guide City efforts toward the areas expected to have the greatest long-term impact on:

- investment,
- revenue generation,
- business growth,
- economic competitiveness,
- workforce development,
- destination activity,
- and overall quality of life.

Just as importantly, the Action Plan recognizes that no plan should simply sit on a shelf. Successful economic development requires continued implementation, communication, evaluation, and adjustment over time.

The Economic Development Implementation Workbook, ongoing City Council direction, staff coordination, Economic Development Committee involvement, and continued business and community partnerships are intended to help ensure the Action Plan remains active, measurable, and *implementation-focused*.

As Lincoln continues to grow and evolve, this framework will need to also evolve to those changes and shifts in the economy and in the City.

Appendices

Appendix A – Phase I – Where are We Now

Economic Scan Briefing, Workforce Commute Patterns, Industry Composition, Talent Pipeline Trends & Retail Demand

Appendix B – Phase II – Where Do We Want to Be

City Council Strategic Priorities, Stakeholder Input Summary, Alignment Matrix: Council Priorities + Stakeholder Input + Economic Conditions.

Appendix C – Economic Development Pillars (1 page)

Economic Development Pillars Graphic

Appendix D

Economic Development Committee Work Session Presentation (May 13, 2026)

Appendix E

Economic Development Implementation Workbook

Economic Development Implementation Workbook

Instructions and Tracking Guidance

Purpose of the Workbook

This workbook is intended to serve as a living implementation and tracking tool for the City of Lincoln Economic Development Strategy. The workbook will help staff, Economic Development Committee, Council, and partner organizations to

- organize and prioritize implementation activities,
- track ongoing economic development efforts and progress,
- align actions with City Council priorities,
- identify accountability, timelines, desired outcomes, and
- support regular ED Committee and City Council updates.

Economic Development Pillars

On May 13, 2026, the Economic Development Committee accepted an Economic Development Pillar Platform which is outlined below.

Pillar 1: Business Development – Outcome Expected: Drive investment and revenue in four focus areas.

1) Commercial / Retail – primary
2) Airport / Industrial – primary
3) Downtown – ongoing with partner Downtown
4) Sports / Visitation – ongoing with partner Visitor Bureau

Pillar 2: Business Retention, Expansion and Creation – Outcome Expected: Maintain existing and assist new growth and expansion in four focus areas.

1) Business Accelerator (Downtown) – primary
2) Major Employer Engagement – primary
3) Small Business Support – ongoing with partner agencies
4) Workforce Alignment – ongoing with education and workforce, address talent pipeline

Pillar 3: Competitiveness and Business Climate – Outcome Expected: Position for future investment in four focus areas.

1) Permitting Concierge and Process Improvement – primary
2) Identity and Positioning – primary
3) Workforce Strategy – ongoing with partner agencies
4) Infrastructure – ongoing with internal and external departments

How to Use the Workbook

Column 1. Focus Area – Each Focus Area represents a strategic implementation category within one of the three Economic Development Pillars. Examples:

- Commercial / Retail
- Airport / Industrial
- Downtown
- Small Business Support
- Infrastructure
- Workforce Strategy

Column 2. Tasks / Actions – This column is for including:

- Current projects that are already underway
- Planned future actions (specific tasks)
- Partner-led initiatives
- Grant opportunities
- Coordination meetings
- Infrastructure or planning efforts
- Business engagement activities

Tasks should be specific and action oriented. Where possible:

- add specific deadlines
- milestone dates
- or implementation phases

Column 3. Timeline – The timeline column is intended to identify the general implementation horizon for each activity. This could also be updated by staff to a more specific timeline to share with ED Committee and Council.

Standard Timeline Definitions

- Short-Term: 0–2 Years
- Mid-Term: 2–5 Years
- Long-Term: 5+ Years
- Ongoing: Continuous Activity

Where valuable for tracking purposes, staff are encouraged to add:

- target completion dates
- milestone deadlines
- or annual work plan dates

Examples:

- “Short-Term (Q1 2027)”
- “Mid-Term (2027 CIP Cycle)”
- “Ongoing – Quarterly Updates”

Column 4. Lead and Support – This column should list the responsible lead staff person on each task and any support person, department or other organization involved in implementing and completing the task.

Update outcomes over time as projects advance and additional metrics become available.

Column 5. Status – This column can be used to as a running status report and to track the progress of specific actions for the Focus Areas. This can provide Committee and Council with a report of progress at meeting and completing tasks, results, and adding new tasks to a Focus Area.

Each task should align back to one or more City Council Strategic

Partner Roles and Assignments – Economic development implementation is shared across multiple organizations and partners. These partners will normally be in support roles but could also be the lead and should be listed in Column 4.

Recommended Use

ED Committee

- Quarterly implementation review
- Identify barriers and opportunities
- Track progress on priority actions

City Council

- Annual economic development update
- Strategic alignment review
- Budget and priority discussions

Staff

- Work planning and coordination
- Grant and funding alignment
- Interdepartmental implementation tracking

Key Principle

This workbook is intended to function as a flexible implementation management tool — not a static planning document. It should evolve over time as priorities, opportunities, projects, planning and partnerships advance.

Pillar 1 — Business Development (Drive Investment & Revenue)

Why This Matters? Lincoln must strengthen its long-term tax base by advancing business attraction, destination development, and investment-ready growth areas that retain and capture jobs and revenue currently leaving the city.

Focus Area	Tasks / Actions	Timeline	Lead / Support	Status
Commercial/Retail	Develop targeted retail recruitment strategy	Short-Term		Choose an item.
Commercial/Retail	Identify opportunity sites and commercial nodes	Mid-Term		Choose an item.
Airport / Industrial	Complete Airport Action Plan	Short-Term		Choose an item.
Airport / Industrial	Identify target aviation / manufacturing sectors	Short-Term		Choose an item.
Airport / Industrial	Evaluate infrastructure and utility needs	Mid-Term		Choose an item.
Downtown				Choose an item.
Sports / Visitation				Choose an item.

Pillar 2 — Business Retention, Expansion & Creation

Why This Matters? The fastest path to economic growth is supporting businesses already operating in Lincoln and helping them expand, invest, and create jobs locally.

Focus Area	Tasks / Actions	Timeline	Lead/Support	Status
Business Accelerator	Strengthen Jessup / innovation partnerships	Mid-Term		Choose an item.
Business Accelerator	Explore incubators or small business support programs	Mid-Term		Choose an item.
Major Employer Engagement	Conduct business retention and expansion visits	Ongoing		Choose an item.
Major Employer Engagement	Identify expansion barriers and opportunities	Short-Term		Choose an item.
Small Business Support				Choose an item.
Small Business Support				Choose an item.
Workforce Alignment	Align to business needs	Mid-Term		Choose an item.
Workforce Alignment	Expand high school and career pathway coordination	Long-Term		Choose an item.

Pillar 3 — Competitiveness & Business Climate

Why This Matters? Lincoln competes within a highly competitive regional market and must differentiate itself through responsiveness, infrastructure readiness, workforce strategy, and a strong community identity.

Focus Area	Tasks / Actions	Timeline	Lead/Support	Status
Permitting Concierge & Process Improvement	Improve permit tracking and communication	Short-Term		Choose an item.
Permitting Concierge & Process Improvement	Evaluate process streamlining opportunities	Mid-Term		Choose an item.
Identity & Positioning	Develop coordinated economic messaging			Choose an item.
Identity & Positioning	Promote Lincoln's small-town and quality-of-life advantages			Choose an item.
Workforce Strategy	Expand high school and career pathway coordination	Long-Term		Choose an item.
Workforce Strategy	Develop targeted workforce attraction strategies	Mid-Term		Choose an item.
Infrastructure	Identify priority infrastructure constraints	Short-Term		Choose an item.
Infrastructure	Evaluate EFID and infrastructure funding tools	Mid-Term		Choose an item.

Background Information

1. Where Are We Now?

This section summarizes the current economic conditions affecting Lincoln, including:

- Workforce commuting patterns
- Industry composition
- Talent pipeline trends
- Retail demand and consumer spending patterns

The data reinforces that Lincoln has strong population growth, income levels, and market potential, but remains heavily residential and local-serving in its economic structure. The analysis also begins identifies opportunities to better capture jobs, investment, and spending currently leaving the community.

Project: City of Lincoln, Economic Development Update
Subject: Economic Conditions Summary (Data-Driven)

Lincoln's economic data, attached, reflects a community with strong fundamentals, but a structure that is still evolving. The data consistently points to a residential-driven economy with clear opportunities to capture jobs, spending, and growth locally.

What the Data Tells Us

1. Lincoln is a Workforce Exporter with Untapped Potential
   - Nearly 20,000 residents commute out daily, compared to ~9,500 local jobs
   - A significant share of local jobs are filled by non-residents

   What this means: Lincoln has a large, active workforce base, but much of its economic activity (jobs, daytime spending, professional services) occurs outside the city.

2. The Economy is Stable but Primarily Local-Serving
   - ~70% of employment is local-serving (retail, healthcare, education, services)
   - Traded sectors remain a smaller share of the economy

   What this means: The economy is stable and population-supported, but growth is tied to housing rather than external job creation or industry expansion.

3. Talent Pipeline is Strong, with Near-Term Constraints
   - Growth in experienced workers (+15%) and youth pipeline (+14%)
   - Slower growth in prime working-age population (+6%)

   What this means: Lincoln has a strong and growing talent base, particularly experienced workers, but may face short-term labor tightness in early- and mid-career roles.

4. Retail & Consumer Demand Signals Strong, Targeted Growth Opportunities
   - Median household income rising to ~$125K by 2030, supporting discretionary spending
   - ESRI data shows above-average demand (MPI >100) in several key categories:
     1) Dining & Restaurants
     2) Entertainment & Experiences
     3) Home Improvement & Services
     4) Health & Wellness
     5) Technology & High-Value Spending
     6) Travel & Hospitality Behavior

Project: City of Lincoln, Economic Development Update
Subject: Demographics & Social Economics

Community Snapshot

- **Population:** ~55,000–59,000 (steady growth trend)
- **Median Household Income:** ~$108,000–$112,000 (above national avg)
- **Homeownership:** ~83–84% (strong community stability)
- **Median Home Value:** ~$630,000–$650,000
- **Unemployment:** ~4.0–4.3% (moderate, trending with regional economy)
- **Poverty Rate:** ~7–8%

Lincoln is a growing residential community within the Greater Sacramento region, known for high homeownership, stable households, and a rising consumer base.

Lincoln continues to expand, with population estimates indicating ongoing growth into 2026 (World Population Review).

- **Population growth:** ~3% year-over-year and strong overall trend since 2020 (Data USA).
- **Population by Age Cohorts**
  - Under 18 years: 24.1% of the population
  - 18–64 years (working-age): 48.7%
  - 65 years and over: 27.2%
  - Larger share of seniors compared to national averages (senior share ~16–17% nationally) and a relatively smaller working-age share than many communities
- Median household income: approximately $108,000–$112,000 — above national averages (Data USA).
- Homeownership is very high (around 83–84%) (Census.gov).

Lincoln functions as a suburban/community city anchored by a residential base, supportive of regional economic activity through its location near larger employment centers like Roseville and Sacramento. Its economic identity is tied to quality of life, housing, small business vitality, arts/culture/events, and local place-based assets such as open space and downtown character (City of Lincoln).

Population & Demographics

- Median age: early-to-mid 40s, with a significant proportion of residents 65+ (~27%) — indicating an aging population segment (Census.gov).
- Age Distribution
  - Youth (Under 18) About one-quarter of Lincoln's population is under 18 (~24%), reflecting a substantial family and youth presence.
  - Working-Age Adults (18–64) Less than half of the population (~49%) falls in the traditional working-age bracket, which is lower than many regional peers.
  - Seniors (65+) More than one in four residents is 65 or older (~27%), which is a significantly higher share than the national average and signals strong importance of senior services, retirement income effects, and age-related planning.
  - Take aways on age distribution
  - Workforce implications: Smaller working-age share may constrain local labor force participation and could influence priorities around jobs, transportation, and talent attraction.

- Economic profile: A larger senior cohort can influence spending patterns (healthcare, services) and income composition (retirement, Social Security).
- Service needs: Greater share of seniors heightens importance of housing suitable for aging residents, healthcare accessibility, and mobility services.

Income & Employment

- Median household income: $108,000–$112,000 with relatively low poverty (~7–7.7%) (Data USA).
    - Lincoln's income (~$108K+) is notably *above* the broader Sacramento metro median (~$97K), indicating stronger wage/supporting household earnings relative to many neighboring communities.
    - Compared with *Placer County* as a whole (~$112K–$115K), Lincoln is *very close* but modestly below the county median — meaning the city's households earn nearly as much as the county average.
- Income sources are diversified and reflective of population
    - Work earnings (wages/salaries) likely make up the majority of household income, especially among working age households.
    - Retirement and Social Security likely are a significant secondary component given Lincoln's older population segment.
    - Public assistance as a share of total income is probably small, reflecting relatively low poverty rates (~7–8%).
    - Investment and business income likely contribute meaningfully in higher income brackets (many households >$150K+).
- Unemployment is moderate (~4–4.3%) but varies with broader economic trends (HomeSnacks).

Housing & Cost of Living

- High rate of homeownership (83–84%) and stable households (Census.gov).
- Median home values around $628,000–$651,000 and rents around $2,080–$2,090/month (Data USA).
- Cost of living indices show housing remains a key driver of local expense pressures in the context of limited housing diversity (HomeSnacks).

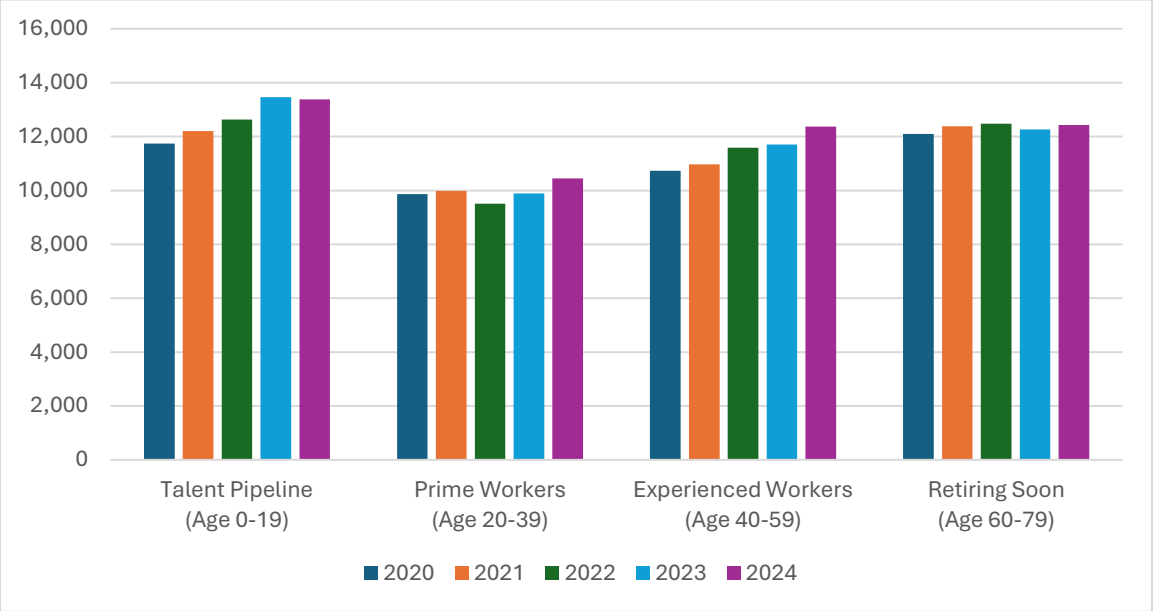
Visitor/Regional-Linked Economic Activities

- **Sports & Regional Tourism -** Lincoln is part of the Placer Valley tourism region along with Roseville and Rocklin, marketed collectively to attract sports events, hotel stays, and tourism. (Wikipedia)
- **Arts & Local Events -** The City actively promotes open space, arts, culture, local food/wine/ale events, and downtown activities to bolster visitor and local spending. (City of Lincoln)
- **Nearby regional attractions (outside city but impactful) -** Thunder Valley Casino Resort in nearby Placer County draws regional traffic and spending that can cross Lincoln's economy. (Wikipedia)

Challenges in Employment Dynamics

- Limited large employer anchors within Lincoln itself — many residents work outside the city, limiting local job gravity.
- Workforce access can be constrained if high-quality jobs are located elsewhere without local expansion or sector diversification.
- Visitor-linked employment (e.g., tourism, sports events) is seasonal and may not provide long-term job stability without broader ecosystem support.

Project: City of Lincoln, Economic Development Update
Subject: Talent Supply



Source: U.S. Census Data, ACS 5-year estimates; Table S0101

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Growth Rate
Talent Pipeline (Age 0-19)	11,739	12,209	12,634	13,461	13,380	14%
Prime Workers (Age 20-39)	9,868	9,983	9,507	9,888	10,441	6%
Experienced Workers (Age 40-59)	10,730	10,974	11,587	11,701	12,374	15%
Retiring Soon (Age 60-79)	12,097	12,381	12,479	12,270	12,429	3%

These trends tell a story about both **near-term workforce dynamics** and the **longer-term economic outlook** of the community.

1. Strong future pipeline, but delayed payoff
A 14% increase in ages 0–19 is significant—it signals a growing talent pipeline. In the short term, increase demand for:

- Education infrastructure
- Childcare services
- Family-oriented housing

2. Modest growth in prime workers = potential near-term labor tightness
The 6% growth in ages 20–39 (prime working and early career years) is relatively modest compared to other groups suggests:

- The core workforce isn't expanding as fast as demand might require

3. Expansion of experienced workers = major opportunity
The 15% increase in ages 40–59 is one of the most impactful insights. This group represents peak productivity, leadership, and earnings; and drives business ownership, management capacity, and tax base stability. This is a strong positive signal.

The community has a deep bench of skilled, experienced talent. There is opportunity to mentor younger workers and strengthen succession pipelines. There is a chance for higher household incomes and spending which boosts the local economy.

4. Slow growth in near-retirement population reduces immediate risk
The 3% growth in ages 60–79 is relatively low, which means the community is not facing an immediate wave of retirements (even though area is known for retirement) and there is less short-term pressure from workforce exits or dependency ratios.

Short-term (0–5 years) expectation:

- Potential labor shortages in early- and mid-career roles
- Strong economic stability driven by experienced workers
- Increased demand for family and youth services

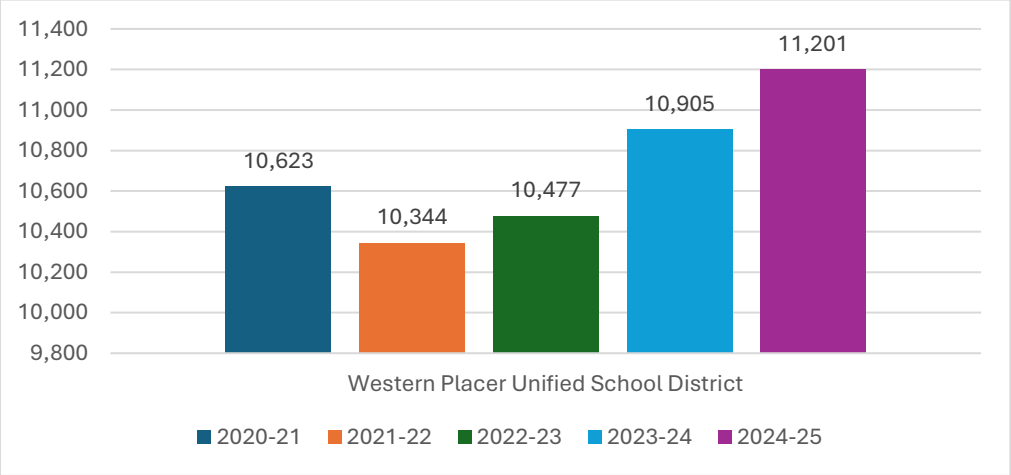
Medium-term (5–15 years):

- A well-positioned workforce transition as today's youth enter jobs
- Risk of a retirement cliff if the large 40–59 cohort exits without replacement

Economic implications:

- Positive: strong earning base, leadership capacity, future workforce growth
- Risk: mismatch between current job demand and available prime-age workers
- Strategic need: talent attraction + retention + workforce development

K-12 Enrollment Trends



Source: California Department of Education; DataQuest; All schools in district

The increase—from 10,600 to 11,201 students (+601 students, ~5.7% growth over 4 years)—is steady, not explosive, but very meaningful if it continues.

1. Indicator of community growth and family attraction is a positive economic signal

- More young families moving in or staying
- Strong housing demand, especially family-friendly units
- A community that is perceived as livable and stable

2. Long-term workforce implications
This connects directly to the Talent Supply data:

- Growing enrollment = expanding future labor force (if retained, it is a major economic asset)
- In ~10–15 years, this group will a) enter local jobs, b) support business expansion, c)replace retiring workers

Project: City of Lincoln, Economic Development Update
Subject: Commute Data

This information is 2023, 3 years old, but helps to understand underlying trends, movement of jobs and potential spending that affect Lincoln's economic growth.

9,530 – employed in City of Lincoln
2,036 (21.4%) city residents
7,494 (78.6%) commuting in from outside the city
19,976 people living in Lincoln are employed outside the city

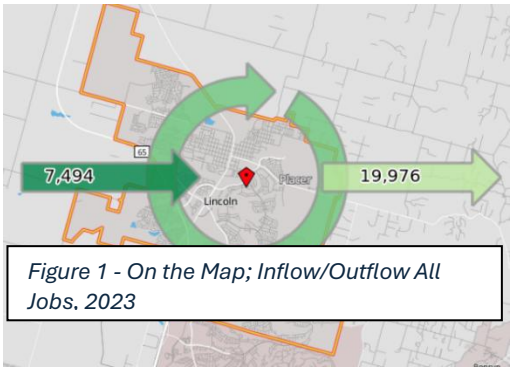


Figure 1 - On the Map; Inflow/Outflow All Jobs, 2023

Findings to be considered:

1. Lincoln is net exporter of workers

- ~20,000 residents leave daily for work
- ~9,500 jobs exist locally
- Primarily a bedroom community, not a primary job center
- The local economy depends heavily on external job markets
- Vulnerable to regional economic downturns, fuel costs, commute disruptions

2. Heavy in-commuting shows a job–housing mismatch

- 78% of local jobs are filled by non-residents
- Local jobs do not align with resident workforce skills, wages, or preferences, OR there is insufficient local labor supply for those roles

3. Potential "leakage" of income and spending

- When ~20,000 residents work elsewhere, much of their daytime spending (lunch, retail, services) and professional activity happens outside the city.

4. Question untapped opportunity: "capture own workforce"

- Large resident workforce (nearly 20,000 commuters), proven ability to support employment (9,500 jobs already)
- Is there ability to create jobs that fit local out commute skill sets.

5. Data supports there is a talent pipeline to fill jobs if investment of business is made in Lincoln.

- Match outbound commuters; if residents are leaving for professional / office jobs → recruit office employers, healthcare → expand medical sector, possible skilled trades → support industrial/flex space

6. Strategic positioning: transition phase

- There is a strong residential base, access to regional jobs, growing population
- But needs to convert from "housing center" to an "employment center"

Project: City of Lincoln, Economic Development Update
Subject: Industry Mix by Sector

	Industry Sector	Establishments	Employment
T	Ag, Forestry, Fishing, Mining	8	34
L	Utilities	2	7
T	Construction	99	509
T	Manufacturing	31	794
T	Wholesale Trade	17	99
V	Retail Trade	54	443
L	Retail Trade	54	444
T	Transportation & Warehousing	23	110
L	Information	18	147
L	Finance & Insurance	46	207
L	Real Estate, Rental, Leasing	48	407
L	Professional, Scientific Services	93	380
L	Management of Companies	2	5
L	Admin., Support & Waste Mgmt	39	93
L	Educational Services	39	1,501
L	Healthcare & Social Assistance	104	849
V	Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	11	115
L	Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	12	115
V	Accommodation & Food Services	44	523
L	Accommodation & Food Services	44	523
L	Public Administration	16	420
L	Other & Unclassified	226	933
	Traded Sector (goods producing)	178	1,546
	Local Serving	741	6,024
	Visitor Serving	109	1,081

Source: ESRI Business Summary Report (2025)

1. Economy is heavily local-serving driven

- 741 businesses / 6,024 jobs (~70% of total employment)
- The economy is largely supported by resident spending (retail, healthcare, education, personal services)
- Growth is tied to population growth**,** not external demand

2. Goods-producing sector is relatively small but important

- 178 businesses / 1,546 jobs (~18%)
- This is primary “export” sector
- It’s a key economic engine, even if it’s smaller in size
- Supports higher wages, supply chains, and economic diversification

3. Visitor-serving sector is underdeveloped

- 109 businesses / 1,080 jobs (~12%)
- Implies the city is not a major destination economy
- Lower levels of hotel activity, events/festivals, tourism-driven retail
- This sector can be a scalable growth lever with assets that exist (location, amenities, events)

7. Business ecosystem insight

High number of local-serving businesses (741) suggests:

Strong small business base

Entrepreneurial activity tied to population needs

Opportunities:

Scaling of these businesses (if demand is present)

Transition some into regional-serving or export-oriented firms

Project: City of Lincoln, Economic Development Update
Subject: Retail Demand Growth Matrix (to 2030)

Based on Market Potential (MPI + Household Growth), Source: ESRI
Growth demand signals using MPI (above 100 = above-average demand) + household growth to 2030.

Category	Demand Signal (Data)	What It Means	Target Retail Opportunities
Dining & Restaurants	Dining out MPI **110**; frequent dining MPI **112**	Strong and frequent dining behavior above U.S. avg	Sit-down restaurants, family dining, casual upscale, food clusters
Entertainment & Experiences	Movies MPI **107**; live theater **122**; casino/travel high	Residents spend on experiences, not just goods	Entertainment venues, live performance, family entertainment
Travel & Hospitality Spillover	Domestic travel MPI **110–137**; hotel stays **109**	Higher-income households with discretionary spend	Boutique retail, restaurants, hospitality-adjacent retail
Home Improvement & Services	Home improvement MPI **112**; cleaning services **137**	Strong homeowner base investing in homes	Home improvement retail, services, design, contractors
Health & Wellness	Gym exercise MPI **117**; vitamins **108**	Active, health-oriented population	Boutique fitness, wellness retail, supplement stores
Technology & Electronics	High spend tiers (>$1500 MPI **125–126**); Apple products high	Affluent, tech-adopting households	Electronics retail, Apple-focused services, smart home tech
Financial Capacity / Spending Power	High credit spend MPI up to **145**	Significant discretionary income growth	Supports higher-end retail + services
Automotive (High Dependence)	New vehicle MPI **129**; high vehicle ownership	Car-oriented community with strong spending	Auto sales, service, EV transition services
Apparel & Personal Goods	Clothing MPI **102–103**; shoes **103**	Steady, slightly above average demand	Mid-market apparel, family retail, lifestyle brands
Books / Learning / Media	Digital books MPI **118**	Educated, engaged population	Bookstores, hybrid retail/café concepts

2. Where Do We Want To Be?

This section includes:

1) Alignment Matrix: Council Priorities+Stakeholder Input+Economic Conditions=Alignment Direction
2) City Council Strategic Priorities
3) Stakeholder Input Summary

The stakeholder interviews identified recurring themes around:

- Business attraction and retention
- Downtown activation
- Airport and industrial development
- Retail leakage and commercial growth
- Business climate and permitting responsiveness
- Preserving Lincoln's identity while supporting growth

The accompanying alignment matrix demonstrates how stakeholder input, economic conditions, and Council priorities are strongly connected and can help guide strategic focus areas moving forward.

Project: City of Lincoln, Economic Development Update
Subject: City Council . 2025–2027 Strategic Plan

Council Direction & Economic Development Alignment Brief

1. Long-Term Fiscal Sustainability

- Review and assessment of Property Tax Sharing Agreements
- Explore revenue generation options to sustain and expand City services
- Develop an Airport Action Plan focused on growth and revenue

2. Smarter, More Sustainable Growth

- Use the General Plan review to pursue "better development strategies that support sustainable, smart growth"
- Evaluate the 40% open space requirement
- Discuss inclusionary and stand-alone affordable housing
- Revisit specific plan strategies through workshops

3. Economic Vitality & Implementation

- Continue development and implementation of an Economic Master Plan
- Improve permit tracking and transparency
- Strengthen downtown planning (truck traffic, master plan alignment)

4. Infrastructure & Community Capacity

- Library service and facility analysis
- Lighting & Landscape District research
- Infrastructure improvements and community engagement

Key Takeaways: Council's Purpose Behind These Projects

1. **Stabilize and Strengthen the Revenue Base**
   Council is signaling that fiscal resilience is foundational. Reviewing tax agreements, exploring new revenue tools, and activating the airport are about reducing structural vulnerability and ensuring sustainable funding for services.
2. **Shift from Growth Quantity to Growth Quality**
   The emphasis on smart growth, open space policy, affordable housing, and specific plan discussions shows Council wants development that aligns with Lincoln's character while improving long-term financial and infrastructure outcomes.
3. **Move from Planning to Implementation**
   The Economic Master Plan is no longer conceptual — it is an ongoing implementation priority . Council expects measurable execution.
4. **Modernize City Systems to Support Development**
   Permit tracking transparency and process improvements signal a desire to improve the development experience and operational efficiency .
5. **Protect and Enhance Community Identity**
   Downtown traffic, parks, library services, and engagement efforts reflect Council's interest in maintaining quality of life alongside growth.

Project: City of Lincoln, Economic Development Update
Subject: Stakeholder Interview Summary (What We Heard)

1. Priority Actions

1) Business Attraction & Job Creation
   - Recruit job-producing industries (industrial, professional services, aviation-related)
   - Align recruitment with resident workforce skills (capture out-commuters)
   - Focus on airport and industrial land as long-term economic drivers
2) Retail & Downtown Activation
   - Attract higher-quality and unique retail/dining not found in surrounding markets
   - Activate downtown with events, entertainment, and placemaking
   - Improve marketing and messaging to residents, brokers, and investors
3) Business Retention & Support
   - Strengthen existing business support and expansion efforts
   - Improve City responsiveness, permitting, and concierge services
   - Create clearer roles, structure, and mission for EDC and partners
4) Foundation Building
   - Invest in infrastructure and key sites (airport, major parcels)
   - Align actions with Council priorities and a focused implementation plan
   - Shift from reactive to proactive economic development approach

2. Key Challenges (What is Holding Lincoln Back)

1) Lack of Alignment & Consistent Vision
   - Changing priorities across leadership cycles
   - Need for unified direction across Council, staff, and stakeholders
2) Limited Capacity & Execution Bandwidth
   - Insufficient staffing/resources to pursue opportunities and follow-through
   - EDC structure and engagement challenges
3) Economic Structure Constraints
   - Heavy sales tax leakage to Roseville/Rocklin
   - Limited commercial space and development-ready sites
   - Over-reliance on local-serving economy
4) Infrastructure & Cost Barriers
   - High energy costs (PG&E vs SMUD)
   - Transportation constraints (Hwy 65, connectivity)
   - Limited funding for infrastructure improvements
5) Downtown Constraints
   - Parking, traffic, and underutilized assets
   - Lack of destination retail, dining, and nighttime activity

3. Opportunities (Where Growth Can Happen)

1) Airport & Industrial Development
   - 80+ acres and aviation advantage
   - Opportunity for:
     - Advanced manufacturing
     - Aviation/drone/robotics industries

    - Warehousing and logistics
2) Population Growth & Housing Expansion
    - Significant residential growth underway
    - Ability to capture retail demand and workforce locally
3) Retail & Commercial Expansion
    - Opportunity to:
        - Reduce leakage
        - Attract anchor and boutique retail
        - Develop larger commercial nodes (e.g., Village 5, Nelson area)
4) Sports, Tourism & Events
    - Strong base (70K+ visitors/year) but:
        - Need larger facilities
        - Better downtown connection
        - Additional amenities (hotels, venues, restaurants)
5) Downtown as a Destination
    - Strong "bones" with low vacancy
    - Opportunity to create:
        - Walkable, social, entertainment district
        - Arts, culture, and events hub
6) Regional Positioning
    - Growth pressure from Roseville/Rocklin buildout
    - Ability to attract businesses seeking:
        - Lower cost
        - Available land
        - Flexible, business-friendly environment

4. Lincoln's Differentiator (Economic Identity)

1) "A Small-Town Community with Big Growth Capacity"
   Core Strengths:
    - Available land + airport (rare in region)
    - Strong housing growth pipeline (15+ years capacity)
    - Affordable relative to nearby cities
    - High quality of life (safe, family-oriented, community-driven)
    - Authentic, historic downtown (unique in region)
2) Cultural Advantage:
    - Business-friendly, flexible, willing to structure deals
    - Community-oriented with strong local identity
    - Opportunity to shape growth intentionally (not built out yet)
3) Strategic Position:
    - Between established markets (Roseville/Rocklin) and future growth
    - Can offer:
        - Space to grow
        - Lower costs
        - More flexibility

Lincoln Economic Development – Key Takeaways

1. Priority Focus

- Attract job-producing industries (industrial, office, aviation-related)
- Strengthen retail and downtown as a destination
- Improve business support and City responsiveness

2. Core Challenges

- Lack of consistent vision and limited capacity to execute
- Sales tax leakage and limited commercial development
- Infrastructure costs and constraints (power, transportation)

3. Major Opportunities

- Airport and available land for industry growth
- Population growth driving retail demand
- Downtown potential as a walkable, entertainment-focused destination

4. Lincoln's Differentiator

- Small-town character + room to grow
- Available land, affordability, and quality of life
- One of the few cities in the region that can still shape its future economy

Project: City of Lincoln, Economic Development Update

Subject: City Council 2025-2027 Strategic Plan Priorities - Economic Development Alignment

Alignment of Data + Stakeholder Input + Council Priorities

Council Priority	What the Data Shows	What Stakeholders Said	Alignment / Direction
1. Fiscal Sustainability	• Sales tax leakage • Economy driven by local-serving uses (~70%) • Limited traded sector	• Need job-producing industries • Airport as major economic driver • Higher-quality retail needed for revenue	**Grow revenue base** through job creation, airport activation, and targeted retail
2. Smarter Growth	• Strong housing & population growth • Functions as bedroom community	• Concern about growth impacting character • Need balance: housing + jobs + infrastructure	**Shift from housing-led growth to balanced growth** (jobs + services + infrastructure)
3. Economic Vitality & Implementation	• Workforce leaving daily • Untapped local job potential • Strong retail demand signals	• Need business attraction & retention • Downtown activation • Improve City responsiveness	**Move to execution**: recruit, retain, expand businesses, workforce alignment, improve permitting & support
4. Infrastructure & Capacity	• Growth increasing demand on systems • Infrastructure needed to support expansion	• Power costs (PG&E), Hwy 65 constraints • Limited funding for infrastructure	**Invest in enabling infrastructure** to support business growth and development
5. Community Identity & Quality of Life	• High-income, family-oriented market • Strong lifestyle and retail demand	• Downtown is unique but underutilized • Desire for entertainment, walkability, identity	**Leverage Lincoln's identity**: historic downtown, small-town feel, destination experience

City of Lincoln

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PILLARS

Three pillars working together to build economic vitality and achieve long-term fiscal sustainability.

1. BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT (JOBS & REVENUE)

Why: Lincoln must capture jobs and revenue currently leaving the city and grow its tax base.

Focus Areas:

- **Commercial / Retail**
  Reduce leakage, grocery, centers
- **Airport / Industrial**
  84-acre site, opportunity if we can activate
- **Downtown**
  As a destination
- **Sports & Visitation**
  Secondary but valid

2. BUSINESS RETENTION, EXPANSION & CREATION

Why: The fastest path to growth is supporting businesses already in Lincoln and helping them expand.

Focus Areas:

- **Business Accelerator**
  Jessup / innovation hub
- **Major Employer Engagement**
  Site visits, expansion
- **Small Business Support**
  Permit assistance, spotlight, partnerships
- **Workforce Alignment**
  Trades, HS pipeline gap

3. COMPETITIVENESS & BUSINESS CLIMATE

Why: Lincoln competes in a regional market and must differentiate to attract and retain businesses.

Focus Areas:

- **Permitting Concierge / Process Improvement**
  Faster, easier, more predictable
- **Identity & Positioning**
  Tell the Lincoln story
- **Workforce Strategy**
  Gap in early/mid-career talent
- **Infrastructure**
  Power, Hwy 65, site readiness, EFID

OUR GOAL: Grow investment. Strengthen local economy. Enhance quality of life.

Economic Development Update

May 13, 2026

Purpose

Update City of Lincoln's Economic Development Plan to align with the City Council's 2025–2027 Strategic Plan and current priorities:

1. Long-Term Fiscal Sustainability
2. Smarter, More Sustainable Growth
3. Economic Vitality & Implementation
4. Infrastructure & Community Capacity

Work Session Objectives

1. Review Process
2. Review Alignment Matrix
3. Confirm Desired Outcomes
4. Confirm *recommended* Economic Development Plan Framework Pillars
5. Confirm Economic Development Plan aligns and achieves Council priorities
6. Identify Challenges and Opportunities to Implementation

Our Process: Three Steps to a Focused, Actionable Plan

We are updating Lincoln's Economic Development Strategy to align with City Council priorities, address current economic pressures, and position the community for long-term success.

1 WHERE ARE WE NOW?



PURPOSE

Understand Lincoln's current economic conditions, trends, and market realities.

This establishes a clear picture of our strengths, challenges, and opportunities.

2 WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE?



PURPOSE

Align City Council priorities, stakeholder input, and data to define our shared economic development direction.

This identifies the themes and priority areas that matter most for Lincoln's future.

3 HOW DO WE GET THERE?



PURPOSE

Translate our direction into a focused, implementable Economic Development Action Plan.

This step will identify key priorities, actions, roles, timelines, and measures of success.

1 WHERE ARE WE NOW?



PURPOSE

Understand Lincoln's current economic conditions, trends, and market realities.

This establishes a clear picture of our strengths, challenges, and opportunities.

Headwinds

- Lincoln remains heavily residential and local-serving
- Nearly 20,000 residents commute outside city for work
- Limited traded-sector and major employer presence
- Leakage of jobs, spending, and daytime activity
- Modest growth in prime working-age workforce
- Visitor economy and destination activity remain underdeveloped
- State – federal economy and uncertainty

Tailwinds

- Strong population and household income growth
- High homeownership and community stability
- Growing talent pipeline and experienced workforce
- Strong retail spending and consumer demand potential
- Regional location within the Sacramento market
- Existing quality-of-life and destination assets
- Small town character in an urban setting

2 WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE?



PURPOSE

Align City Council priorities, stakeholder input, and data to define our shared economic development direction.

This identifies the themes and priority areas that matter most for Lincoln's future.

Stakeholders consistently emphasized the need for a more balanced economy focused on job creation, business growth, implementation capacity, and protecting Lincoln's community character.

Consistent Themes from Stakeholder Interviews

1. Attract job-producing industries-expand local employment opportunities
2. Activate the airport areas
3. Capture retail leakage-attract higher-quality commercial development
4. Improve business support, City responsiveness
5. Invest in infrastructure
6. Move from reactive to proactive economic development implementation
7. Strengthen downtown as destination
8. Preserve Lincoln's small-town identity while supporting growth

2 WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE?



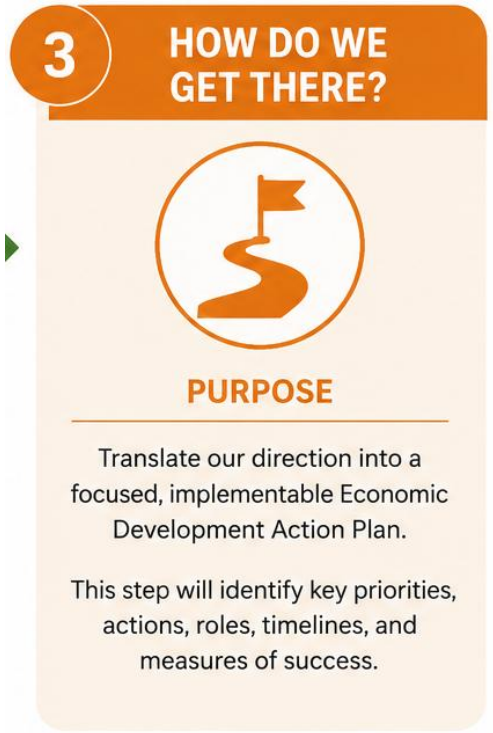
PURPOSE

Align City Council priorities, stakeholder input, and data to define our shared economic development direction.

This identifies the themes and priority areas that matter most for Lincoln's future.

Alignment Matrix

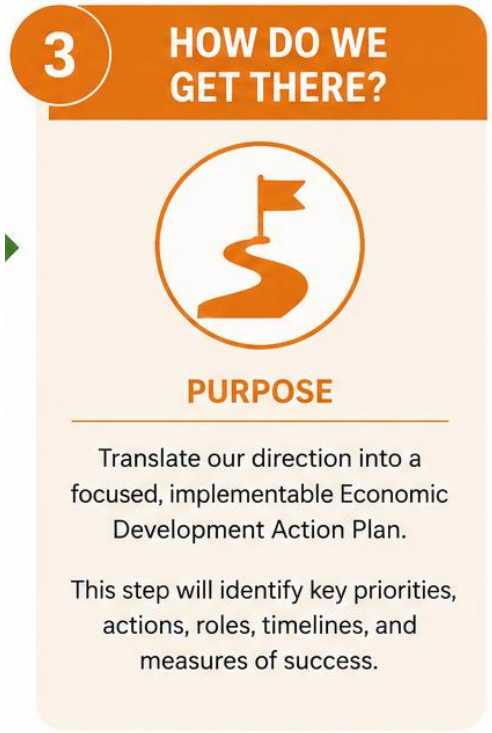
Council Priority	What the Data Shows	What Stakeholders Said	Alignment / Direction
1. Fiscal Sustainability	• Sales tax leakage • Economy driven by local-serving uses (~70%) • Limited traded sector	• Need job-producing industries • Airport as major economic driver • Higher-quality retail needed for revenue	**Grow revenue base** through job creation, airport activation, and targeted retail
2. Smarter Growth	• Strong housing & population growth • Functions as bedroom community	• Concern about growth impacting character • Need balance: housing + jobs + infrastructure	**Shift from housing-led growth to balanced growth** (jobs + services + infrastructure)
3. Economic Vitality & Implementation	• Workforce leaving daily • Untapped local job potential • Strong retail demand signals	• Need business attraction & retention • Downtown activation • Improve City responsiveness	**Move to execution**: recruit, retain, expand businesses, workforce alignment, improve permitting & support
4. Infrastructure & Capacity	• Growth increasing demand on systems • Infrastructure needed to support expansion	• Power costs (PG&E), Hwy 65 constraints • Limited funding for infrastructure	**Invest in enabling infrastructure** to support business growth and development
5. Community Identity & Quality of Life	• High-income, family-oriented market • Strong lifestyle and retail demand	• Downtown is unique but underutilized • Desire for entertainment, walkability, identity	**Leverage Lincoln's identity**: historic downtown, small-town feel, destination experience



Organizational & Implementation Questions

Stakeholder Feedback Also Identified the Need For:

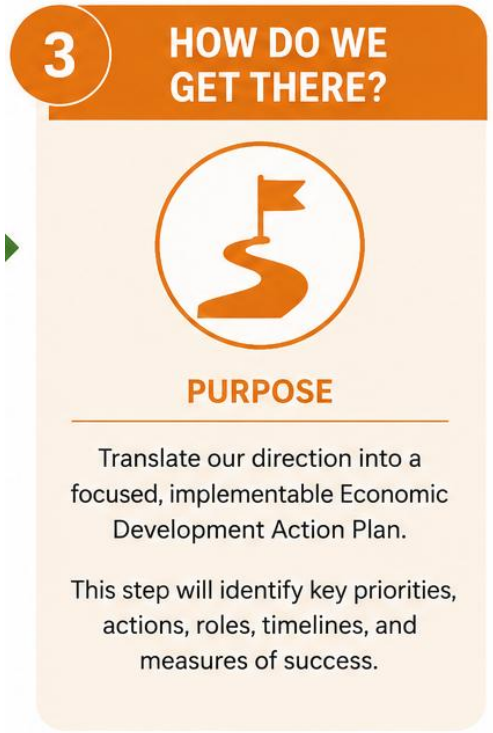
1. A clearer long-term economic vision
2. Better alignment around mission and priorities
3. Greater clarity on the role of the ED Committee
4. Stronger implementation structure and accountability



Draft Economic Vision

Lincoln is a distinctive and business-friendly community within the Sacramento region — where economic growth continues to strengthen our small-town character, quality of life, and sense of community.

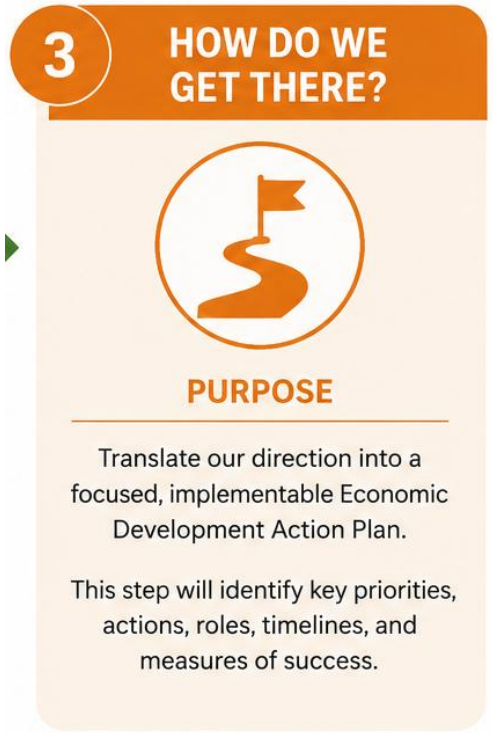
Through thoughtful planning, strong partnerships, and a welcoming environment for business and investment, Lincoln supports entrepreneurship, develops local talent, creates opportunities for future generations, and builds a resilient economy rooted in community character and long-term prosperity.



Draft Economic Development Mission

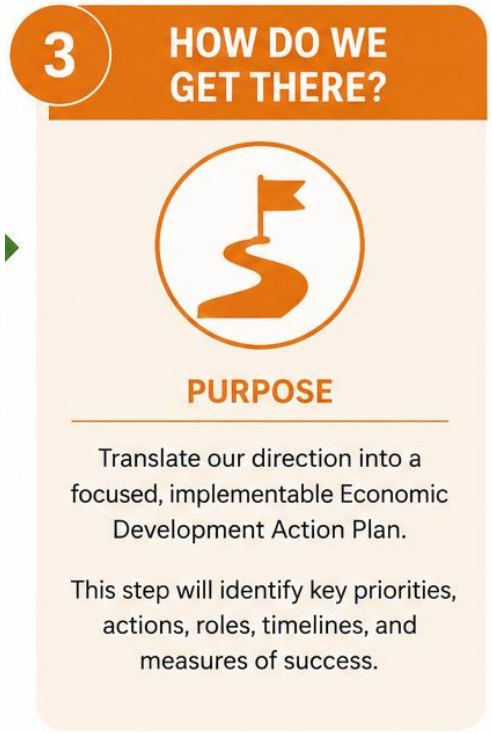
(started with City of Lincoln website)

Foster a business-friendly environment that supports strategic investment, local entrepreneurship, quality jobs, and sustainable economic growth — while advancing thoughtful development that continues to enhance Lincoln's quality of life and community character.



Draft Desired Outcomes

1. Increased job creation and local employment opportunities
2. Expanded revenue generation and reduced sales tax leakage
3. Create a defined portfolio of programs supporting business growth and investment
4. Preserve clear economic differentiation within the region



Economic Development Committee

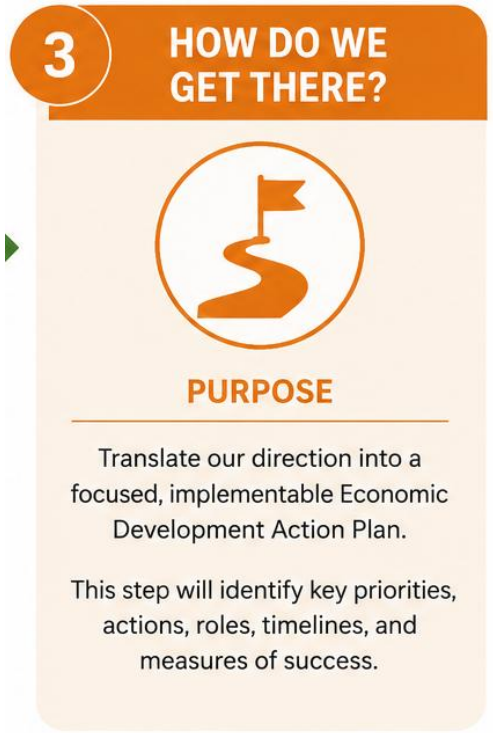
Based on research of California City ED Committees

Core Responsibilities

- Advise on economic development strategy, priorities, and policies
- Provide market insight on business needs, trends, and opportunities
- Serve as a liaison between the business community and the City
- Review and provide input on key initiatives before Council consideration
- Support business retention, attraction, and expansion efforts
- Promote a positive business climate and economic identity

Key Functions

- Help explore issues/opportunity in greater detail
- Bring forward recommendations and ideas
- Engage stakeholders and industry partners
- Support implementation discussions



Draft Economic Development Pillars

1. Business Development (Jobs & Revenue)
2. Business Retention, Expansion & Creation
3. Competitiveness & Business Climate

Three pillars working together to build economic vitality, strengthen our community, and achieve long-term fiscal sustainability.

1. BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT (JOBS & REVENUE)

Why: Lincoln must capture jobs and revenue currently leaving the city and grow its tax base.

Focus Areas:

- **Airport / Industrial**
  84-acre site, opportunity if we can activate
- **Commercial / Retail**
  Reduce leakage, grocery, centers
- **Downtown**
  As a destination
- **Sports & Visitation**
  Secondary but valid

2. BUSINESS RETENTION, EXPANSION & CREATION

Why: The fastest path to growth is supporting businesses already in Lincoln and helping them expand.

Focus Areas:

- **Major Employer Engagement**
  Site visits, expansion
- **Business Accelerator**
  Jessup / innovation hub
- **Small Business Support**
  Permit assistance, spotlight, partnerships
- **Workforce Alignment**
  Trades, HS pipeline gap

3. COMPETITIVENESS & BUSINESS CLIMATE

Why: Lincoln competes in a regional market and must differentiate to attract and retain businesses.

Focus Areas:

- **Permitting Concierge / Process Improvement**
  Faster, easier, more predictable
- **Workforce Strategy**
  Gap in early/mid-career talent
- **Infrastructure**
  Power, Hwy 65, site readiness, EFID
- **Identity & Positioning**
  Tell the Lincoln story

Key Work Session Questions

Framework Confirmation

Do these three pillars appropriately capture major opportunities and challenges Lincoln must address to achieve the Council's priorities?

Prioritization

Of these focus areas, which should become Lincoln's

-3 Primary Actions

-3 Secondary Actions

Alignment

Do these priorities align with the Council's Strategic Priorities?

Implementation Reality

What could prevent success?

What gives Lincoln the best opportunity to succeed?

Post-Work Session Tasks



Refine any adjustments and/or add work session notes



Develop an Implementation Workbook for staff



Package draft Action Plan for Council consideration

- Vision
- Mission
- Desired Outcomes
- Committee Role & Responsibilities