IMPO STAFF
• Rosa Sowell, AICP, Principal Planner 1
• Anna Gremling, Executive Director
• Sean Northup, Deputy Director

FUNDING PARTNERS
• US Economic Development Administration
  • Indy Chamber

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS
• 16 Tech
• AAPP Indiana
• American Red Cross of Indiana
• American Structuros
• Anderson Corporation for Economic Development
• Arts Council of Indianapolis
• Assemble St. Vincent Hospital
• Aspire i+ Johnson County
• Back on My Feet
• Business Ownership Initiative
• Center for Leadership Excellence
• Central Indiana Corporate Partnership
• Central Indiana Regional Development Authority
• City of Carmel
• City of Franklin
• City of Greenwood
• City of Indianapolis
• City of Noblesville
• City of Southport
• City of Warsaw
• Cornerstone Environmental Health and Safety, Inc.
• Cunnins Inc.
• Duke Energy
• Eastern Star Jewel Human Services Corporation
• EmploSynd
• Engaging Solutions
• Fifth Third Bank
• First Merchants Bank
• Hamilton County Commissioners
• Hamilton County Economic Development Corporation
• Hancock County Commissioners
• Hancock County Economic Development Council

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
• Danielle Gerich, Planner 1
• Cole Jackson, Financial Analyst 2
• Nicholas Badman, Long-Range Planner

• Indiana Economic Development Corporation

• Health & Hospital Corporation
• Hendricks County Commissioners
• Hendricks County Economic Development Partnership
• Heritage Group
• Indiana Economic Development Corporation
• Indiana Institute for Working Families
• Indianapolis Municipal Public Policy Institute
• Indianapolis Neighborhood Housing Partnership
• Indianapolis Urban League
• Indy Black Millenials
• Indy Chamber
• Indy Hunger Network
• Indy Partnership
• Indy East Promise Zone
• IndyGo
• InnoPower
• Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI)
• Iowa Tech Community College of Indiana
• Jewish Federation of Greater Indianapolis
• Jaina M. Brown and Associates / Sagamore Institute/Mitchell Analytical, Inc.
• J ohn Bonner Neighborhood Centers
• KeyBank
• Lazhi
• Lumina Foundation
• Madison County Council of Governments
• Marion County
• MIBOR REALTOR Association
• Morgan County Commissioners
• Morgan County Economic Development Corporation
• OhioAmérica Economic Partners, Inc.
• PNC Bank
• PNC Foundation
• Prosperity Indiana
• Purdue University, Department of Technology Leadership & Innovation
• PwC, Quality Consulting

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

• President Jim Cooney
• Commissioner Denny Dawes
• Mike Dellinger
• Mike Delligere
• Mike DeWine
• Mike DiSanto
• Mike Fitch
• Mike Hurd
• Mike litter
• Ichiro Iwata
• Mike Layden
• Mike Lincoln
• Mike Merika
• Mike Reeder
• Mike Relyea
• Mike Rogers
• Mike Stenger
• Mike Tolson

• Lawrence McCormick
• Katie Meares
• Nathan Meuser
• Josh Messmer
• Genevieve Miller
• Mark Miller
• Jennifer Millerikan
• Kelli Mireaux
• Luci Montgomery Bean
• Andrew Murray
• Mayor Mark Myers
• Todd Rosenthal
• Mayor John Salladay
• Mayor Proctor
• Patty Pressler
• Lance O. Raball
• Jim Rasmussen
• Georgia Reynolds
• Nathan Ringham

STRATEGY COMMITTEE

• Bunny Althofen
• Mike Ash
• Dr. Stacy Atkinson
• Hannah Bast
• Megan Bauman
• Teresa C. Bennett
• Melinda Benton
• Brian Blerger
• Ben Bontrager
• Michelle Banks
• Anthony Bridgepan
• Jerry Bridges
• Dr. Jennifer Brown
• Matt Carter
• Brad Coфf
• Andy Cook
• Debbie Cook
• Margaret Conley
• John Corbin
• Dr. Tom Cook
• Jim Cooper
• Jeff Croft
• Aryn Schounce
• Mike Delligere
• David Diller
• Mike DeWine
• Mike DiSanto
• Mike Hurd
• Mike litter
• Ichiro Iwata
• Mike Layden
• Mike Lincoln
• Mike Merika
• Mike Reeder
• Mike Relyea
• Mike Tolson
• Mike Stenger
• Mike Tolson
• Mike strains
• Mike Tolson

• Lawrence McCormick
• Katie Meares
• Nathan Meuser
• Josh Messmer
• Genevieve Miller
• Mark Miller
• Jennifer Millerikan
• Kelli Mireaux
• Luci Montgomery Bean
• Andrew Murray
• Mayor Mark Myers
• Todd Rosenthal
• Mayor John Salladay
• Mayor Proctor
• Patty Pressler
• Lance O. Raball
• Jim Rasmussen
• Georgia Reynolds
• Nathan Ringham

STRATEGY COMMITTEE

• Bunny Althofen
• Mike Ash
• Dr. Stacy Atkinson
• Hannah Bast
• Megan Bauman
• Teresa C. Bennett
• Melinda Benton
• Brian Blerger
• Ben Bontrager
• Michelle Banks
• Anthony Bridgepan
• Jerry Bridges
• Dr. Jennifer Brown
• Matt Carter
• Brad Coфf
• Andy Cook
• Debbie Cook
• Margaret Conley
• John Corbin
• Dr. Tom Cook
• Jim Cooper
• Jeff Croft
• Aryn Schounce
• Mike Delligere
• David Diller
• Mike DeWine
• Mike DiSanto
• Mike Hurd
• Mike litter
• Ichiro Iwata
• Mike Layden
• Mike Lincoln
• Mike Merika
• Mike Reeder
• Mike Relyea
• Mike Tolson
• Mike Stenger
• Mike Tolson
• Mike strains
• Mike Tolson

TIP STRATEGIES, INC., is a privately held economic development consulting firm with offices in Austin and Seattle. TIP is committed to providing quality solutions for public sector and private sector clients. Established in 1995, the firm’s primary focus is economic development strategic planning.

CONTACT
TIP Strategies 2905 San Gabriel Street, Suite 309 Austin, TX 78705 Ph: 512.343.9113 www.tipsolutions.com

CONSULTING TEAM
• Jim Roberts, Managing Partner
• Elizabeth Scott, Senior Consultant
• Katrina Parkey, Consultant

Unless otherwise noted, photos in this report were licensed from Adobe Stock by TIP Strategies, Inc.
INTRODUCTION

CONTENTS

Introduction ................................................................. 1
Plan Snapshot ................................................................. 2
The Region ................................................................. 3
Planning Context ......................................................... 4
Summary ................................................................. 5
Economic Resilience Framework .................................. 7
Overview ................................................................. 8
Defining Recovery & Resilience .................................... 8
Resilience Focus Areas ............................................... 9
Moving Forward ....................................................... 10
Key Findings: .............................................................. 11
Themes and Takeaways .............................................. 12
Economic Context ....................................................... 12
Occupational Risk Tool .............................................. 16
Qualitative Input ......................................................... 17
SWOT Analysis ........................................................ 18
Strategic Plan ............................................................ 19
Goal 1. Talent ............................................................ 20
Goal 2. Innovation ...................................................... 23
Goal 3. Place ............................................................. 26
Appendix A. Evaluation Framework .............................. 29
Appendix B. Stakeholder Engagement .......................... 31
Appendix C. SWOT Analysis ......................................... 35
**THE REGION**

Known as the Crossroads of America for its prime location in the US, the Central Indiana region—Boone, Hamilton, Hancock, Hendricks, Johnson, Madison, Marion, and Morgan Counties—has a wealth of assets. Indianapolis, the 15th largest city in the US, has a long history as the sports capital of America. Events like the Indy 500 and the headquarters of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) bring international recognition in their wake. Annually, the region hosts executives, athletes, and tourists from around the world as they visit the region. Despite the uneven recovery from the pandemic, the region can overcome these economic development challenges. This plan provides a roadmap to guide local economic development efforts to build an inclusive economy. It offers Central Indiana the opportunity to leverage its strengths, to expand and scale effective programs, and to address its weaknesses through a long-term sustainable and coordinated effort. Community leaders are the key. If equitable growth and regional connectivity are embraced, Central Indiana can improve its competitiveness and attract talent.

Both nationally and for Central Indiana, the market for talent is becoming increasingly competitive. The Great Resignation is decimating the workforce, fueled not only by anxiety about the COVID-19 pandemic and the virus’s many variants, but also by concern over stagnant wages and rising costs. Despite the region’s diverse industries, job opportunities go unfilled. In particular, the pandemic took a heavy toll on the region’s hospitality sector, causing conventions and events to disappear overnight. Service industries, typically a reliable entry point for many workers, can no longer be counted on to ensure job advancement. Central Indiana must rethink its training programs to prepare students and displaced workers for jobs requiring higher skill levels. At the same time, the region must accelerate efforts to attract workers on a national level.

Some communities across the region, both urban and rural, suffer from the digital divide, with a higher percentage of residents lacking high-speed internet access, digital literacy skills, and broadband-ready devices. Too often, economic development efforts rely solely on business attraction and growth to increase the number of jobs in a community. In this economy, job creation cannot be the primary objective of a regional strategy. Emphasis must be placed on workforce development and skills training to improve access to good and promising jobs, innovative transit solutions to connect the region, and quality-of-life initiatives that attract and retain workers.

Despite the uneven recovery from the pandemic, the region can overcome these economic development challenges. This plan provides a roadmap to guide local economic development efforts to build an inclusive economy. It offers Central Indiana the opportunity to leverage its strengths, to expand and scale effective programs, and to address its weaknesses through a long-term and coordinated effort. Community leaders are the key. If equitable growth and regional connectivity are embraced, Central Indiana can improve its competitive advantage at a national and international level.
In March 2021, the Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization (IMPO) contracted TIP Strategies, Inc., (TIP) to develop a comprehensive economic development strategy (CEDS) under the guidelines of the US Economic Development Administration (EDA). The CEDS serves as a guide for economic development efforts across the Central Indiana region including Boone, Hamilton, Hancock, Hendricks, Johnson, Madison, Marion, and Morgan Counties. With funding from the EDA and grant support from the Indiana 21st Century Chamber and the Indiana Economic Development Corporation, this plan is designed to focus the region’s efforts to be more strategic and collaborative in responding to new economic development opportunities and challenges. Though a CEDS concentrates on strategies to be implemented over the next five years, the impacts of the Central Indiana region’s interconnectedness and working collaboratively to implement these strategies will have a much longer-lasting impact. This CEDS meets the requirements set forth by the EDA to designate the eight-county region as an Economic Development District (EDD).

Following TIP’s three phase planning process, the project launched in early 2021 with the discovery phase. This first phase consisted of data collection and analysis, roundtable participant input, and interviews with stakeholders to identify the region’s economic development challenges and assets. Insight from this work, in addition to regular input from a regional CEDS Steering Committee, formed the foundation of the plan. The second phase of the project aligned the CEDS vision, guiding principles, and plan structure with the themes and opportunities that emerged from the prior phase. With additional feedback from 12 working group sessions, stakeholders and action items were grouped into three goals: talent, innovation, and place. These goals, along with the strategies and action items, leverage other regional planning efforts for greater coordination, collaboration, and impact. The third and final phase of the planning process, the implementation phase, focused on co-creation of prioritized strategies, consensus building with identified partners, and shared execution of the plan.

This CEDS should be viewed as a living document that invites revisions and refinements as economic conditions in the Central Indiana region change. The vision statement provides the basis for the plan to capitalize on opportunities and address vulnerabilities. The vision statement describes where the region hopes to be, with the strategies and actions in the plan moving Central Indiana toward this vision. In partnership with community leaders and stakeholders across the eight county region, the following vision statement was developed:

The Central Indiana CEDS region is committed to partnerships that prioritize equitable growth and regional connectivity to ensure vibrant and resilient growth.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND CEDS STRUCTURE

The regional CEDS Steering Committee identified four guiding principles, as touchstones for current and future initiatives. These guiding principles, described in further detail below, are the connections unifying all the goals, strategies, and action items throughout the CEDS. Given the current state of the global economy, the subject of recovery and resilience appears as a guiding principle and as part of the economic resilience framework outlined in the next section.

• Partnerships and Regional Alignment: Align regional efforts to advance economic opportunities for all and build partnerships across the Central Indiana region.
• Equitable Growth: Seek to understand, address, and dismantle the root causes of outcome disparity along with the historic and existing barriers to participation in the local economy.
• Recovery and Resiliency: Target efforts that prepare the region to avoid, withstand, and recover from economic shocks and natural disasters.
• Connectivity: Embrace the interconnectedness of Central Indiana and the underlying foundation tying economic development efforts together.

Guided by the four principles, the plan structure divides strategies and action items under three goal areas: talent, innovation, and place.

VISION

As the cornerstone for a comprehensive economic development strategy, a strong vision statement provides the basis for the plan to capitalize on opportunities and address vulnerabilities. The vision statement describes where the region hopes to be, with the strategies and actions in the plan moving Central Indiana toward this vision. In partnership with community leaders and stakeholders across the eight county region, the following vision statement was developed:

As the cornerstone for a comprehensive economic development strategy, a strong vision statement provides the basis for the plan to capitalize on opportunities and address vulnerabilities. The vision statement describes where the region hopes to be, with the strategies and actions in the plan moving Central Indiana toward this vision. In partnership with community leaders and stakeholders across the eight county region, the following vision statement was developed:
ECONOMIC RESILIENCE FRAMEWORK
DEFINING RECOVERY & RESILIENCE

In 2015, the EDA released updated content guidelines for a CEDS, which included a requirement to address economic resilience. This shift recognized the direct connections between a region’s economic prosperity and its ability to deal with disruption. An emphasis on resilience is particularly fitting now that economies around the world have been forced to deal with a series of economic shocks.

Traditionally recovery has been defined as a return to previous economic conditions following a disruption to the business and employment base. But it has become increasingly clear that regardless of whether the disruption resulted from the loss of a major employer, or a natural disaster, or a health crisis, returning to an earlier status quo may not be possible. The Central Indiana region knows this all too well.

Resiliency, on the other hand, can be defined as the ability to recover from an economic shock as well as the ability to withstand or even to avoid the shock altogether. Resiliency is forward-thinking, with an aim to bounce back and recover from these shocks while also building back better for the future. It involves enhancing the capabilities and capacities of communities to better recover from future stressors and to fortify the long-term economic durability of a region. A well-crafted strategy, such as a CEDS, can better position a region for a sustainable recovery and make it more resilient in the event of future shocks.

RESILIENCE FOCUS AREAS

1. Talent: Build a resilient workforce.
   - Strengthen the skilled talent pipeline (1.1).
   - Develop clear career pathways for residents (1.2).
   - Help workers overcome employment barriers (1.3).

2. Business: Diversify the industry base and promote business continuity.
   - Diversify the industry base and promote business continuity (2.1).
   - Build business retention and expansion programs (2.2).
   - Assist small businesses with tech adoption and modernization processes (2.3).

3. Connectivity: Expand strong communication channels and harden infrastructure.
   - Expand broadband infrastructure (2.5).
   - Modernize regional infrastructure systems (2.6).

A successful economic resilience framework relies on both steady-state and responsive initiatives. Steady-state initiatives are long-term strategies that aim to enhance preparedness for shocks to avoid a shock, while responsive initiatives aim to establish capacities for a region to be responsive following a shock.

With these guidelines, this economic resilience framework is designed to serve as a roadmap for the Central Indiana region to respond in the short term following an economic shock and to implement long-term processes that improve the region’s capabilities and capacities to better withstand future stressors. The framework centers on three focus areas described below and illustrated in Figure 2.

- **Talent:** Build a resilient workforce. Building a resilient workforce is a key component of recovery and resiliency. By strengthening the skilled talent pipeline, developing clear career pathways, Central Indiana residents can be better positioned to shift between jobs or industries if their core employment is threatened. This strategic area is complementary to the talent goal outlined in Figure 1. It calls on strategies and actions needed to develop the local workforce, especially those who have been historically underserved or disconnected from the local economy in partnership with support organizations.
- **Business:** Diversify the industry base and promote business continuity. This strategic area concentrates on providing support to businesses before, during, and after an economic disruption or shock to promote business continuity. This concept depends on business retention and expansion programs being adaptable to meet the changing needs of local businesses. Assisting businesses with tech adoption and modernization processes is one way to do that. Meanwhile, business recruitment efforts can help to ensure a diverse industry base and strong supply chains that can provide stability during economic downturns that disproportionately impact any single industry.
- **Connectivity:** Expand strong communication channels and harden infrastructure. Access to both reliable communication channels and utility services is essential in the aftermath of a shock. One strategy to meet this goal is to ensure redundancy in telecommunications and broadband networks. Additionally, hardening infrastructure, from electric and natural gas capacity to water and wastewater systems, helps ensure that Central Indiana residents have access to reliable services when they need them most.

By bolstering the region’s economic systems, including reimagining the local workforce and modernizing infrastructure systems, the Central Indiana region will be better positioned to recover and withstand economic shocks. While every strategy and action item in the CEDS touches on the concepts of recovery and resiliency, certain strategies are highlighted in Figure 2 because they support the skills, diverse industries, and connectivity needed to adapt to changing economic conditions.
MOVING FORWARD

The framework is designed in a way that allows regional leaders to act swiftly as economic conditions change. Responsive initiatives, regional collaboration, and coordination are critical. It is important for community leaders to maintain cross-sector partnerships and to act in a coordinated manner. Whether supporting business continuity or strengthening communication channels, collaboration across jurisdictional boundaries is essential.

Ultimately, the Central Indiana region’s shared desire is to build a resilient economy better able to withstand economic stresses. This shared desire comes at a unique moment in history. Federal funds, coupled with emerging technologies, will allow leaders to address long-neglected infrastructure needs as well as social inequities, each of which influence an area’s ability to recover from disruption. Central Indiana will have additional resources to build a flexible workforce, diversify the industry base, and harden infrastructure, all of which can create a more resilient and competitive economy.

FIGURE 3. RESILIENCY TOOLS AND RESOURCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENERAL</th>
<th>ACTIONABLE STEPS, CASE STUDIES, AND TOOLS TO REDUCE CLIMATE-RELATED RISKS AND BUILD RESILIENCE FOR BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITIES.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RESTORE YOUR ECONOMY (IEDC® &amp; EDA)</td>
<td>WEBSITE AND PLANNING MATERIALS WITH RESILIENCY STRATEGIES AND BEST PRACTICES.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US CLIMATE RESILIENCE TOOLS</td>
<td>ONLINE MAPPING TOOL DESIGNED TO SHOW PROPERTY FLOODING RISKS DUE TO A CHANGING CLIMATE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RISK FACTOR</td>
<td>INFORMATION ABOUT INDUSTRIES AND OCCUPATIONS MOST PREVALENT WITHIN A REGIONAL ECONOMY, HOW MANY JOBS ARE ACCESSIBLE TO WORKERS WITHOUT A BACHELOR'S DEGREE, AND AVAILABLE EDUCATION OR TRAINING PROGRAMS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TALENT</td>
<td>ONE ATL IS AN EXAMPLE OF A BEST PRACTICE FOR AN ECONOMIC MOBILITY, RECOVERY, AND RESILIENCY PLAN.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BECKS COMMUNITY INSIGHTS MONITOR</td>
<td>TOOLS TO PROTECT SMALL BUSINESSES AGAINST DISPLACEMENT.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INVEST ATLANTA</td>
<td>RESOURCES TO SUSTAIN SMALL BUSINESSES WHEN ECONOMIC SHOCKS OR NATURAL DISASTERS OCCUR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUSINESS</td>
<td>PROGRAM THAT HELPS BUSINESSES, SCHOOLS, AND ORGANIZATIONS BECOME PREPARED FOR DISASTERS AND OTHER EMERGENCIES.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMALL BUSINESS ANTIDISPLACEMENT TOOLKIT</td>
<td>INFORMATION AND RESOURCES RELATED TO BROADBAND EXPANSION AND POTENTIAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATIVE RECOVERY HUB</td>
<td>AN EXAMPLE OF A BEST PRACTICE FOR INCORPORATING GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AND RENEWABLE ENERGY RESOURCES.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMERICAN RED CROSS READY RATING</td>
<td>RESOURCES FOR CITIES ON RESILIENCY PLANNING, INCLUDING BEST PRACTICES FOR HARDENING INFRASTRUCTURE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONNECTIVITY</td>
<td>INFORMATION AND RESOURCES RELATED TO BROADBAND EXPANSION AND POTENTIAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDIANA BROADBAND</td>
<td>AN EXAMPLE OF A BEST PRACTICE FOR INCORPORATING GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AND RENEWABLE ENERGY RESOURCES.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GREENSBURG SUSTAINABLE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN</td>
<td>RESOURCES FOR CITIES ON RESILIENCY PLANNING, INCLUDING BEST PRACTICES FOR HARDENING INFRASTRUCTURE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CENTER FOR CLIMATE AND ENERGY SOLUTIONS</td>
<td>TALENT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THEMES AND TAKEAWAYS

Over the course of the planning process, common themes emerged from the quantitative analysis, one-on-one interviews, and roundtable discussions. These themes are outlined in this section, beginning with findings from an analysis of economic and demographic factors and an examination of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis on the region's labor force in terms of risk to health and earnings. Following the overview of the stakeholder and public engagement process, the section concludes with a summary of Central Indiana’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This analysis, commonly referred to as a SWOT analysis, was gleaned from quantitative and qualitative findings.

ECONOMIC CONTEXT

As part of the planning process, TIP conducted a broad analysis of the economic, social, and environmental conditions that influence economic vitality and relate to the region’s overall competitiveness. The full data analysis for each county in the CEDS region, as well as comparisons to statewide and national data, can be found in the Central Indiana CEDS Region Economic Explorer, an interactive Tableau workbook provided separately to the IMPO.

Ultimately, the findings of this analysis, summarized here, informed and guided the direction of the CEDS.

The region is growing rapidly with notable differences among counties. The region has seen steady growth since the late 1980s, expanding its population by nearly 50 percent in the past three decades. Marion County continues to be the most populous county with about one-half of the regional population. Marion County’s steady and more accelerated growth makes it a significant driver as well with more than 17 percent of the total population. Regional diversity tends to be split between Marion and the outlying counties. While more than one-quarter (27.6 percent) of Marion County residents are Black or of African descent, the remaining counties tend to be much less diverse and have more homogeneously White populations than the state overall. Educational attainment also varies across the region. Nearly 60 percent of Hamilton County residents have a bachelor’s degree or higher, a rate more than double that of the state. The less populous Boone County shares this high educational attainment rate, with about one-half of residents holding at least a bachelor’s degree, while Madison County lags with fewer than one-fifth (18 percent) of residents attaining this level of education. Differences in educational attainment also correlate with median household income. Hamilton and Boone Counties enjoy high annual incomes with more than one-half of households earning $80,000 annually—well above state and national medians—while Madison County sits below $50,000. The counties also have different household compositions. Nearly 40 percent of Hamilton County households have children, compared to less than 25 percent of Marion County households.
Hamilton County’s recent population growth is also reflected in its housing stock where nearly 80 percent of housing units were built after 1980, compared to about 60 percent in Marion County and across Indiana more broadly. Moreover, 45 percent of Hamilton County housing was built in the past 20 years, compared to about 16 percent at the state level. Low housing vacancy rates in Hamilton, Hendricks, and Hancock Counties also correspond with higher median housing costs, suggesting that demand has outpaced supply and driven up housing costs. County differences in housing across the region can also be viewed through the lens of equitable connectivity. About 13 percent of households in Marion and Madison Counties do not have computer access, a percentage that is higher than state (11.3 percent) and national (9.7 percent) levels, but this challenge is not shared by their regional peers. Additionally, more than one-fifth of households in these two counties do not have access to high-speed internet connections, further accentuating the divide between these and other counties in the region.

**Strong pre-COVID-19 employment growth may have strengthened resilience.**

The region has seen consistent employment growth in the inter-recessionary period between 2011 and 2019. In fact, the Central Indiana job base has grown more than 18 percent since the turn of the millennium, though this growth has somewhat underperformed the regional population growth rate during the same period (24.2 percent). Regional employment contracted by 3 percent in 2020—a smaller drop than state and national levels (3.7 and 4 percent, respectively). As with other trends, the COVID-19-induced employment contraction in 2020 did not apply equally in all counties in the region. Marion County saw the sharpest drop of 4.3 percent in 2020 (a loss of more than 28,000 jobs), while surrounding counties saw less severe decreases. Additionally, Boone and Hendricks Counties saw employment gains during this period, though small in magnitude given their smaller populations and employment centers (a gain of 3,000 jobs between the two counties, mostly in the transportation and warehousing sector). These two counties’ strong, consistent employment growth over the past two decades may have afforded their employment centers more resilience during the COVID-19-induced employment downturn they have doubled the number of county jobs since 2001. The connectivity divide among counties in the region also coincides with work from home rates. Hamilton, Boone, and Hendricks Counties, among the most connected, have above-average shares of workers who worked from home (9.0, 6.9, and 5.8 percent, respectively), compared to Marion and Morgan Counties, which sit below national and state levels with 3.5 percent of workers working from home.

**Healthcare and retail jobs grow while manufacturing fluctuates.**

Healthcare and retail continue to be the dominant regional employment sectors. However, retail employment has been on a downward trend since 2017 and has contracted by more than 10 percent in three years, while healthcare has steadily grown every year between 2001 and 2019. In recent years, accommodation and food services and administrative services had overtaken manufacturing as major regional employment sectors. However, the effects of the COVID-19 recession for these sectors especially hard, while manufacturing suffered fewer losses and regained its position as the third major sector in the regional employment landscape. Most sectors experienced declines or stagnant growth between 2019 and 2020, though there were gains in transportation and warehousing and professional services, continuing trends that have been prevalent since recovery from the Great Recession (2007–2009).

More detailed industry analysis can be undertaken through an examination of the Central Indiana CEDS Region Economic Explorer available on the IMPO Central Indiana CEDS web page. This interactive data visualization tool includes information on the Central Indiana region's competitiveness and factors that influence its economic vitality.
In the COVID-19 pandemic era, communities that understand the pain points of their local labor force are better equipped to respond effectively to the evolving needs of resident workers. TIP’s proprietary occupational risk tool combines data on jobs and residents to help users understand which workers are at risk in the current environment, where those workers are located, and their demographic context.

To understand the risks that workers are likely to face in the current crisis, the tool assigns two scores to workers across more than 700 occupations, measuring risk to personal health from the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic risk from job or income loss. The two scores are used to plot a position for each occupation along a quadrant with relatively high risk to both earnings and health that workers may experience as a result of their job. These vulnerabilities can be examined by race/ethnicity, gender, and earnings using an interactive data visualization delivered separately. The results can be mapped by ZIP Code to understand the geographic distribution of at-risk workers. Information can be disaggregated by individual occupations within major occupational groupings as well as by major industry sectors.

Workers in low-wage jobs face disproportionately higher risks to both their earnings and health. Risk is also disproportionately distributed among low-wage jobs. While 46 percent of the jobs in the region pay less than $20 per hour, these jobs comprise 83 percent of jobs with the highest level of risk to both earnings and personal health. Often, Black, Indigenous, and people of color (minoritized populations) are disproportionately employed in these low-wage jobs. Not only are minoritized populations employed in jobs with greater exposure to risks, but they are also earning less in those jobs.

The number of workers at risk varies considerably across the region. Workers who face the highest and lowest risks are not evenly distributed throughout Central Indiana. Instead, communities in northern Marion County and the city of Carmel tend to have higher concentrations of low-risk workers, who are also earning more in those jobs. Communities in the northeast in the city of Anderson and Madison County are at risk in the current environment, where those workers are located, and their demographic context.

To complement the quantitative analysis, TIP designed a robust stakeholder engagement plan, which included in-depth roundtable discussions, strategy working groups, workshops, meetings, and interviews. The IMPO maintained a CEDS website with presentations and recordings from all committee meetings, background reports about the strategy and planning process, and information to provide feedback.

To gather real-time feedback, TIP hosted 12 working group sessions designed to validate preliminary findings, discuss potential solutions and existing efforts, and provide feedback about draft strategies. These working group sessions addressed four overarching topics: equitable growth, technology and innovation, workforce, and infrastructure. Finally, Mentimeter, an interactive polling platform, was used throughout stakeholder engagement efforts to gather real-time feedback. Additional information about the qualitative input can be found in Appendix B.
**SWOT ANALYSIS**

Using the findings from quantitative data and qualitative input from community leaders and area experts, TIP reviewed and compiled Central Indiana’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT). This analysis helped frame the CEDS goals and, ultimately, the strategies and action items.

**FIGURE 10. SWOT ANALYSIS**

Findings from the SWOT analysis were mapped to provide a visual representation of the degree to which the region can control the issues. The resulting diagrams are provided in Appendix C. Items closer to the center of the graph are more local in nature. Those at the outer corners are influenced by state, national, or global trends, placing them largely outside local leadership’s control. While it is important to be aware of national and global trends (many of which have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic), the focus should be on maximizing the strengths and opportunities.

**STRATEGIC PLAN**
Access to talent consistently remains a top concern in corporate investment decisions. This concern is especially pronounced as companies and workers alike recover from the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. With that, workforce development, talent attraction, and talent retention are as important as ever to sustain and grow a thriving regional economy. When it comes to workforce development, it is vital for Central Indiana’s existing labor force to have access to the education and training programs needed to access good and promising jobs as well as to prepare students for the jobs of the future. Although these jobs may not exist today, investing in digital literacy initiatives among regional employers, higher education institutions, workforce training programs, and adult training programs is critical to accomplish this objective. By bringing these partners together, the region can develop clear career pathways for residents. Under the guiding principle of equitable growth, the region has made the commitment to intentional investments in workforce and economic development. With vastly different educational attainment rates and workforce skills across Central Indiana, along with a growing diverse population, this commitment is warranted and can, in part, be accomplished by prioritizing career advancement opportunities and resources for underserved populations.

1. Strengthen the skilled talent pipeline by supporting investments starting from PreK-12 throughout adulthood with a focus on digital literacy in underserved populations and communities.

1.1. Continue to support and invest in PreK-12 education, especially around science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM).

1.1.1. Target support and investments in rural and underserved communities.
• Prepare students for the high-growth jobs of the future, including occupations in green and high-tech industries.

1.1.2. Increase career exposure and pathways to students beginning with PreK-12 and scale existing programs to have a stronger regional impact.

1.1.3. Engage the private sector in curriculum development to ensure work-ready skills and programs are deployed.

1.2. Partner with vocational schools and community colleges to strengthen programs that build a skilled and resilient workforce like cross-training and upskilling employees, especially for workers in rural and underserved communities.

1.2.1. Launch Sector Partnership Initiative framework.

1.2.2. Assess and map the skills and specialties of workforce partners to increase regional collaboration across training areas and technical skills.

1.2.3. Partner with vocational schools and community colleges to strengthen programs that build a skilled and resilient workforce like cross-training and upskilling employees, especially for workers in rural and underserved communities.

1.3. Implement and expand programs to help workers overcome employment barriers to access better career opportunities, especially in mini-urbanized populations.

1.3.1. Uplift and scale existing, successful programs that provide direct engagement and mentoring with populations who have employment barriers to access better career opportunities, especially in low-income communities.

1.4. Support digital literacy by improving access to broadband-ready devices across the region, especially in low-income communities (cross-referenced in strategy 2.3).

1.5. Access to talent consistently remains a top concern in corporate investment decisions. This concern is especially pronounced as companies and workers alike recover from the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. With that, workforce development, talent attraction, and talent retention are as important as ever to sustain and grow a thriving regional economy. When it comes to workforce development, it is vital for Central Indiana’s existing labor force to have access to the education and training programs needed to access good and promising jobs as well as to prepare students for the jobs of the future. Although these jobs may not exist today, investing in digital literacy initiatives among regional employers, higher education institutions, workforce training programs, and adult training programs is critical to accomplish this objective. By bringing these partners together, the region can develop clear career pathways for residents. Under the guiding principle of equitable growth, the region has made the commitment to intentional investments in workforce and economic development. With vastly different educational attainment rates and workforce skills across Central Indiana, along with a growing diverse population, this commitment is warranted and can, in part, be accomplished by prioritizing career advancement opportunities and resources for underserved populations.

1.1. Strengthen the skilled talent pipeline by supporting investments starting from PreK-12 throughout adulthood with a focus on digital literacy in underserved populations and communities.

1.1.1. Continue to support and invest in PreK-12 education, especially around science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM).

1.1.1.1. Target support and investments in rural and underserved communities.
• Prepare students for the high-growth jobs of the future, including occupations in green and high-tech industries.

1.1.2. Increase career exposure and pathways to students beginning with PreK-12 and scale existing programs to have a stronger regional impact.

1.1.3. Engage the private sector in curriculum development to ensure work-ready skills and programs are deployed.

1.2. Partner with vocational schools and community colleges to strengthen programs that build a skilled and resilient workforce like cross-training and upskilling employees, especially for workers in rural and underserved communities.

1.2.1. Launch Sector Partnership Initiative framework.

1.2.2. Assess and map the skills and specialties of workforce partners to increase regional collaboration across training areas and technical skills.

1.2.3. Partner with vocational schools and community colleges to strengthen programs that build a skilled and resilient workforce like cross-training and upskilling employees, especially for workers in rural and underserved communities.

1.3. Implement and expand programs to help workers overcome employment barriers to access better career opportunities, especially in mini-urbanized populations.

1.3.1. Uplift and scale existing, successful programs that provide direct engagement and mentoring with populations who have employment barriers to access better career opportunities, especially in low-income communities.

1.4. Support digital literacy by improving access to broadband-ready devices across the region, especially in low-income communities (cross-referenced in strategy 2.3).

1.5. Develop clear career pathways for Central Indiana residents by working with regional employers and education/training organizations to ensure strong communication on talent needs.

1.5.1. Create industry sector councils and/or sector partnerships to outline specific workforce training requirements and demand (cross-referenced action in 1.5).

1.5.2. Effectively communicate the workforce training needs of the private sector to education/training organizations to ensure that programs with the highest need remain accessible.

1.5.3. Leverage existing resources like industry associations that represent multiple employers and the Indiana Plan and Launch Sector Partnership Initiative framework.

1.5.4. Prioritize implementation of employment initiatives and expand regionwide, focusing on strengthening regional employer engagement by establishing consistent feedback loops and direct worker engagement.

1.5.5. Implement and expand programs to help workers overcome employment barriers to access better career opportunities, especially in mini-urbanized populations.
Entrepreneurship, innovation, and the adoption of new technologies are essential components to growing a vibrant regional economy. While the eight-county Central Indiana region has tremendous potential to leverage existing assets to drive innovation, much more can be done to shape the region’s narrative of being a thriving innovation ecosystem. Marketing entrepreneurial support resources, networking events, competitions, and even success stories can go a long way. Additionally, a commitment to small businesses and startups through technical support and workforce development is needed to continue to foster innovation and the entrepreneurial spirit in the region, especially for underserved entrepreneurs. Small businesses and startups alike can benefit tremendously from digitization support and increased access to flexible capital. Meanwhile, the region is home to a strong set of legacy clusters whose specialties can be leveraged in support of productivity growth and cross-sector synergies. A better network of connectivity via broadband infrastructure can provide stronger support to fuel innovative growth as well.

2.1. Support the work of chambers, local economic development organizations, and the Central Indiana Corporate Partnership (CICP) to strengthen existing businesses and bolster business recruitment efforts.

2.1.1. Continue partnerships with the region’s major employers to attract research and development funding to the region, especially within the region’s target sectors.

2.1.2. Identify barriers and opportunities for business expansion and recruitment projects, including transportation and infrastructure needs (see strategy 3.4).

2.1.3. Encourage cross-sector industry collaboration to bolster industry synergies that drive productivity.

• Deepen engagement with convention and conference attendees to encourage collaboration with local businesses to foster innovation (see the case study “Esports Sector Development”).

2.2. Foster an ecosystem that supports innovation and entrepreneurship.

2.2.1. Identify and coordinate with nontraditional economic development organizations, such as nonprofits and youth development programs, to identify young adults for skill development opportunities.

2.2.2. Seek additional funding streams to scale programs where there is greater need for service delivery.

2.2.3. Develop and expand mentorship programs that expose young adults to career opportunities and pathways, including entrepreneurship (cross-referenced in actions 2.3.2 and 2.5.2).

2.3. Enhance the region’s innovative workforce.

2.3.1. Highlight the region’s innovative workforce strengths and weaknesses in the context of regional needs (see strategy 2.5).

2.3.2. Based on industry sector councils and sector partnerships (cross-referenced in action 1.2.1), identify priority occupations for talent recruitment needs.

2.3.3. Create a talent recruitment toolkit and share it with regional employers to assist them in their efforts to recruit hard-to-fill, high-demand occupations and skills from the rest of Indiana and employers to assist them in their efforts to recruit hard-to-fill, high-demand occupations and skills from the rest of Indiana and beyond.

2.3.4. Enlist regional young professional societies to play a larger role in talent retention initiatives and career networking events.

2.4. Focus efforts on underserved and at-risk youth who are currently not in school or the workforce to connect them to good and promising jobs.

2.4.1. Grow the number of private and nonprofit employers offering paid internship and apprenticeship opportunities, including alternative and flexible learning opportunities that lead to career growth.

• Use national best practices and the Work and Learn Indiana program to expand funding opportunities for paid internships.

2.4.2. Strengthen programs that build a skilled and resilient workforce, such as cross-training and upskilling employees.

2.4.3. Map the skills and specialties of workforce partners to increase regional collaboration across training areas and technical skills.

2.5. Expand the region’s diverse workforce by attracting new talent in high-demand occupations to the region while supporting communities looking for growth.

2.5.1. Based on industry sector councils and sector partnerships (cross-referenced in action 1.2.1), identify priority occupations for talent recruitment needs.

2.5.2. Create a talent recruitment toolkit and share it with regional employers to assist them in their efforts to recruit hard-to-fill, high-demand occupations and skills from the rest of Indiana and beyond.

2.5.3. Enlist regional young professional societies to play a larger role in talent retention initiatives and career networking events.

2.6. Create a robust network of forward-thinking initiatives around business recruitment, entrepreneurial support, research and development, and technology adoption to fuel innovative growth.

• Deepen engagement with convention and conference attendees to encourage collaboration with local businesses to foster innovation (see the case study “Esports Sector Development”).
2.3. Develop inclusive tech ecosystems through comprehensive entrepreneurial support systems.

2.3.1. Share a regional entrepreneurship ecosystem map indicating assets across the region that drive new business activity. Highlight initiatives that market resources for traditionally underserved communities.

2.3.2. Facilitate structured entrepreneurial-minded mentorship and networking opportunities from as early as PreK-12 throughout adulthood (cross-referenced in actions 1.6.3 and 2.5.2).

2.3.3. Expand marketing efforts on entrepreneurial events in coordination with the local media, including reverse pitch competitions.

2.3.4. Work collaboratively with regional and local community development financial institutions (CDFIs), angel investors, and venture capitalists to improve access to seed capital, especially in rural and underserved communities and minoritized populations.

Support the Indianapolis Small Business CDFI Collaborative with attraction and development of assets available for lending.

2.3.5. Increase diversity within target clusters by uplifting and scaling equity programs across the region.

2.4. Assist small businesses with tech adoption, modernization processes, and innovation that drive efficiencies.

2.4.1. Prioritize workforce training and upskilling opportunities for the region’s existing workforce to utilize new technology and cross-train employees.

2.4.2. Increase joint business visits between economic development and industry partners.

2.4.3. Assist small businesses and startups with real estate acquisition, loans for furniture, equipment, and inventory, working capital, legal counsel, insurance, and marketing efforts.

2.5. Increase collaboration between higher education and the private sector to spur startups and research commercialization (tech transfer).

2.5.1. Explore reverse pitch competitions to expose new technology to legacy businesses and industries.

2.5.2. Expand mentorship programs between entrepreneurial leaders and students (cross-referenced in actions 1.6.3 and 2.3.2).

CASE STUDY
Esports Sector Development

Location: Atlanta, Georgia

More Information: Georgia Department of Economic Development

Over the past five years, the state of Georgia has invested heavily in the esports industry, from supporting the growth and development of workforce education to attracting cutting-edge gaming companies. In partnership with economic development, higher education, and the private sector, this support has translated to over 12,000 direct and indirect gaming jobs and a $350 million annual impact on the state’s economy. Higher education facilities across the state, including historically Black colleges and universities, have developed programs to cater to the thriving gaming development industry and esports facilities. Georgia is also home to Cxmmunity, an Atlanta-based organization dedicated to increasing the participation of minorities in esports and the video game industry. Through their work, Community was able to secure 15 student internships for Black, Indigenous, and people of color in high-profile esports companies in the spring of 2021.

In 2019, the Atlanta Sports Council (ASC), a division of the Metro Atlanta Chamber (MAC), launched the Atlanta Esports Alliance to connect the region’s public sector and the tech community to collaboratively address community challenges. For the first part, each agency/city/organization presented at least one challenge to an audience of problem-solving technology firms and then each technology firm pitched their problem-solving capacity to the audience of agencies. Following the pitches, teams from both sides ranked the presentations and matches were made by GPI. In the second part, agencies and tech companies that matched highest met one-on-one to answer questions, tackle additional problem solving, and plan potential next steps. Although this program is specifically aimed at connecting the public sector and the private sector, similar events could be held to connect startups to existing businesses or entrepreneurs to mentors.

CASE STUDY
Reverse Pitch Competition

Location: Portland, Oregon

More Information: The Greater Portland Tech Challenge

In response to the Portland, Oregon, Smart City goals, Greater Portland Inc (GPI) developed a two-part reverse pitch competition and networking event to connect the region’s public sector and the tech community to collaboratively address community challenges. For the first part, each agency/city/organization presented at least one challenge to an audience of problem-solving technology firms and then each technology firm pitched their problem-solving capacity to the audience of agencies. Following the pitches, teams from both sides ranked the presentations and matches were made by GPI. In the second part, agencies and tech companies that matched highest met one-on-one to answer questions, tackle additional problem solving, and plan potential next steps. Although this program is specifically aimed at connecting the public sector and the private sector, similar events could be held to connect startups to existing businesses or entrepreneurs to mentors.
A strong quality of life is crucial to support all aspects of economic development. It helps to create a competitive local talent pool, to advance infrastructure investments in support of growth, and to strengthen local businesses. With that, a major component of improving Central Indiana’s quality of place revolves around access. Increased mobility access and within the eight-county region is critical for residents to access employment opportunities and amenities. Hardening infrastructure will ensure that those living in Central Indiana have access to reliable electric and natural gas capacity, water and wastewater infrastructure, and telecommunications/broadband infrastructure. Meanwhile, businesses seek out vibrant communities to access talent more easily through attraction and retention efforts. While the Central Indiana region offers residents a variety of sports venues and a vibrant arts and culture scene, more can be done to invest in quality and placemaking amenities that will, in turn, become investments in Central Indiana’s workforce and businesses.

3.1. Create vibrant and inclusive communities that support businesses and promote amenities for residents and visitors.

3.1.1. Identify park, parklet, and green space development opportunities to increase the percentage of residents in the region that live within a 10-minute walk to a public space.

3.1.2. Explore options to bring free wireless network zones to parks and activity centers throughout the region.

3.1.3. Encourage development of complementary businesses and land uses near regional recreational amenities.

3.1.4. Adopt complete streets practices that improve safety, comfort, and access for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists, especially in underserved communities. Utilize the IMPO Vision Zero toolkit to improve road safety and support communities’ efforts to adopt a vision zero policy.

3.2. Target greyfield and brownfield remediation and redevelopment to maximize the impact of existing funding opportunities while prioritizing historically under-resourced communities.

3.2.1. Develop communications and educational materials about redevelopment opportunities and funding/financing opportunities to share with regional developers.

3.2.2. Develop a list of best practices and remediation guidelines in coordination with regional partners.

3.2.3. Advance mechanisms for land banking and land assembly initiatives, especially to aggregate land parcels for larger scale development opportunities, such as industrial or mixed-use.

3.3. Expand and preserve a full range of housing opportunities (owner and rental), including attractive workforce housing and transit-oriented development (TOD).

3.3.1. Leverage the American Rescue Plan Act and other near-term funding sources to invest in attainable housing and diversify the housing stock.

3.3.2. Implement area plans for the IMPO’s Regional Activity Centers.

3.3.3. Explore zoning policy changes to reduce barriers to housing development.

3.3.4. Identify municipal county-controlled land in urban areas for residential housing units as well as in-fill opportunities, especially in downtown Indianapolis.

3.3.5. Advance community land trusts as a mechanism for long-term development opportunities, such as industrial or mixed-use.

CASE STUDY

Location: Kansas City, Missouri

More Information: Kansas City Coalition for Digital Inclusion and KC Digital Drive

Kansas City, Missouri, is a leader in telecommunications access. Google Fiber paved the way in 2011 when the community was selected to be the first city in the US to receive the company’s ultra-high speed internet service. In 2015, the Kansas City Coalition for Digital Inclusion was created to help alleviate barriers to broadband access. The organization continues to lead projects and initiatives to increase access to devices and service. Kansas City was also one of the first cities in the US to launch a Smart City plan in 2016. By the end of that year, in partnership with Sprint and Cisco, 54 blocks of downtown had free public Wi-Fi along the KC Streetcar line. The wireless network system has bolstered streetcar ridership, prepared the city for the adoption of autonomous vehicles, and made the area more user friendly for residents and visitors. The city continues to explore ways to extend the free Wi-Fi service to traditionally underserved neighborhoods on Kansas City’s east side. In addition to the Kansas City Coalition for Digital Inclusion, KC Digital Drive continues to lead broadband expansion projects across the region.

Kansas City Coalition for Digital Inclusion

Fiber paved the way in 2011 when the community was selected to be the first city in the US to receive the company’s ultra-high speed internet service. In 2015, the Kansas City Coalition for Digital Inclusion was created to help alleviate barriers to broadband access. The organization continues to lead projects and initiatives to increase access to devices and service. Kansas City was also one of the first cities in the US to launch a Smart City plan in 2016. By the end of that year, in partnership with Sprint and Cisco, 54 blocks of downtown had free public Wi-Fi along the KC Streetcar line. The wireless network system has bolstered streetcar ridership, prepared the city for the adoption of autonomous vehicles, and made the area more user friendly for residents and visitors. The city continues to explore ways to extend the free Wi-Fi service to traditionally underserved neighborhoods on Kansas City’s east side. In addition to the Kansas City Coalition for Digital Inclusion, KC Digital Drive continues to lead broadband expansion projects across the region.

More Information: Kansas City Coalition for Digital Inclusion and KC Digital Drive

FUNDS

- Share lessons learned and initiatives across the region regarding local plans to increase housing, including multifamily categories.
- Preserve and maintain existing affordable housing by increasing access to home improvement grants and weatherization programs.

3.3.2. Implement area plans for the IMPO’s Regional Activity Centers to concentrate future housing growth in appropriate areas.

- Ensure new housing developments have adequate connectivity to job centers through shared mobility systems and nonmotorized routes.

3.3.3. Explore zoning policy changes to reduce barriers to housing development.

- Identify municipal county-controlled land in urban areas for residential housing units as well as in-fill opportunities, especially in downtown Indianapolis.

3.3.4. Identify and map environmentally sensitive areas (see action 3.5.2).

- Host a panel to share findings.

- Achieve highly interconnected and multimodal transportation that connects residents to regional centers of economic opportunity, and nonmotorized routes.

More Information: Kansas City Coalition for Digital Inclusion and KC Digital Drive

- Identify and map environmentally sensitive areas (see action 3.5.2).

- Host a panel to share findings.
3.4. Enhance transportation options, including nonmotorized routes and shared mobility services, for residents to access better employment opportunities across the entire region (see action 2.1.2).

3.4.1. Expand public-private partnerships for joined-up private transit and connector services to help bring workers to jobs.

3.4.2. Successfully implement regional transit and route improvement projects as well as build momentum to expand public mass transportation beyond county lines.

• Continue to support regional bus rapid transit (BRT) expansion with the IndyGo Blue and Purple Lines.

• Identify opportunities to secure funding to complete the proposed bikeways in the 2030 Regional Bikeways Plan as well as projects that improve rider safety, especially in high traffic areas.

3.4.3. Build on the success of the regional trail systems and implement planned trail networks.

3.4.4. Support adoption of no/low emission vehicles for transit vehicles, increased access to bike share and bike facilities, and increased access to electric vehicle charging.

3.5. Modernize regional infrastructure systems to withstand disruption, improve efficiency, and enhance connectivity to ensure the region remains resilient and competitive.

3.5.1. Launch a feasibility study for hardening infrastructure systems most vulnerable to changes in climate and weather patterns, such as droughts, severe storms, and flooding.

3.5.2. Develop a map of environmentally sensitive areas throughout the region that is available to view online (see action 3.2.3).

• Encourage innovative mitigation solutions if a proposed project is expected to have adverse environmental impacts.

3.5.3. Invest in the installation and maintenance of stormwater mitigation systems across the region, which may include rain gardens, bioswales, wetlands, permeable surfaces, and green spaces to improve resiliency.

• Partner with the Indiana University Environmental Resilience Institute and workforce development organizations on recruitment and training of individuals to maintain stormwater mitigation systems. Work with the Urban Land Institute, Indiana Housing & Community Development Authority, Affordable Housing Association of Indiana, and similarly situated stakeholders in the real estate industry to encourage housing development practices that reduce water consumption, stormwater runoff, and irrigation, while promoting water conservation education and efforts.

3.5.4. Support and adopt the use of sustainable and renewable energy generation.

• Increase awareness of green energy options available to the private sector, especially in high energy use industries.

• Develop goals to increase the use of renewable energy generation by municipalities.

• Deploy strategies, in alignment with existing plans, to increase the number of solar energy installations throughout the region.

3.6. Coordinate regional support for water supply and demand management, including wellfield protection, existing water sources, and future expansion needs, and work toward collective impact in moving the White River Vision Plan forward.

3.6.1. Identify funding streams and secure grants to implement critical work related to river restoration and to expand recreational opportunities.

3.6.2. Expand the 2019 White River Plan framework to the entire region, applying it to other watersheds where applicable, ensuring inclusion of all current and future water sources including wells, surface water, aquifers, and other systems.

3.6.3. Build on the Indiana Water Summit to expand regional coordination of water management efforts, working toward the creation of water agreements.
EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Metrics to track plan implementation are a vital component of the CEDS. An evaluation framework should include both broad indicators of community health as well as unique metrics that correlate back to the CEDS goals.

The community indicator metrics, or baseline CEDS performance metrics, include publicly available data sources at the national level, which allow for longitudinal tracking and comparison to peer and aspirational communities. These metrics, described in Figure 11, serve as a baseline to evaluate the region’s competitive position. Where possible, all indicators should be disaggregated by gender and race/ethnicity.

To supplement these broad measures, additional metrics should be identified and added throughout the plan’s implementation. Examples of these metrics are provided in Figure 12; however, they should be expanded as strategies and actions are deployed. Furthermore, just as the CEDS is designed to be a dynamic and evergreen plan, evaluation metrics are also adaptable to changing conditions. Due to the five-year planning horizon of the CEDS, not every metric needs to be tracked at project onset. Furthermore, some metrics may require additional resources to track, extending the timeline for their implementation.

This evaluation framework allows for transparent communication on progress toward plan implementation and provides a mechanism for determining if the strategies are meeting the defined objectives of the CEDS. The IMPO will continue to maintain a CEDS website with metrics tracking and updates on plan implementation, including dates for upcoming Strategy Committee meetings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVALUATION FRAMEWORK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 11. BASELINE CEDS PERFORMANCE METRICS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INDICATORS OF GENERAL COMMUNITY HEALTH AND PROGRESS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topic</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Figure 12. STRATEGIC ACTION METRICS** |
| **INDICATORS OF PROGRESS ON CEDS IMPLEMENTATION** |
| **Goal** | **Description** |
| Goal 1: Talent | 1. Report job growth within target industries and the percentage of hires from minoritized populations. |
| | 2. Track the number of workers moving to the eight-county Central Indiana region. |
| Goal 2: Innovation | 1. Track the number of companies in the region that work with higher education institutions for tech use or development. |
| | 2. Follow the number and dollar value of CDFI, seed, angel, and venture capital investments in Central Indiana companies. |
| Goal 3: Place | 1. Track the number of new projects advanced and completed (brownfield/greyfield site readiness, transit and route improvements, etc.). |

Source: (both figures) TIP Strategies, Inc.
The CEDS Steering Committee was committed to inclusive and thoughtful stakeholder engagement throughout the duration of the planning process. Over 100 individuals, representing dozens of organizations, participated in topic-specific roundtables, working groups, community and stakeholder meetings, and interviews to provide insights about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing the region (see Figure 10). In addition to targeted meetings and interviews with community leaders, a series of topic-specific roundtables were held with more than 75 individuals representing public, private, and philanthropic sectors across all eight counties in Central Indiana. A partial list of roundtables participants is provided in this section.5

Following the roundtables, working groups were formed around four topics that emerged as key concerns for the CEDS: equitable growth, infrastructure, technology and innovation, and workforce. The working groups were comprised of subject area matter experts from across the region. Within each focus area, recovery and resiliency strategies were also discussed as well as how to integrate and align existing economic development efforts with the CEDS. Each group met three times over the course of three months to examine the challenges and opportunities within each area and develop strategies that were incorporated into the strategic action plan.

### Roundtable Participants

#### Chambers of Commerce/Local Economic Development Orgs.
- Brian Bilger
- Mike Dellinger
- Mark Fisher
- Allyson Gutwein
- Christian Mashawski

#### Convention & Visitors Bureaus/Destination Organizations
- Matt Carter
- Brenda Myers

#### Entrepreneurship
- J. Ryan Joiner
- Staffannie Peabody

#### Environment
- Jole Crewe
- Taylor Frechette
- Tedd Grain
- Lindsay Hollande
- J. Jesse Taylor

#### Infrastructure
- J. Amy Bridges
- Brian Giddens
- Anna Geimer
- Lance Lantz
- Lucas Mastin

#### Life Sciences
- Keith Lauter
- Michael O’Connor

#### Manufacturing/Distribution/Logistics
- Brian Bilger
- Kristin Brier
- Bryce Carpenter
- Andrew Klinger
- Lawrence McCormack
- Nathan Mosser

#### PREK-12 Education
- Tina Ruggles
- Sherry Seiver

#### Sports Development
- Ron Taylor

#### Talent Attraction
- Emily Krueger
- Hannah Northup
- Joe Pelman
- Aaron Renn

#### Talent Development
- Hannah Bost
- Teresa A. Bennett
- Emil Elyor
- Sherry Peak

#### Workforce Housing
- Jennifer Wilkens
- Karl Wiegand
- Chris Pyor
- Jim Rawlinson
- James Taylor

#### Workforce Development
- Jody Metcalf
- Flix Rechcitschatter
- Dr. Shaun Smith

### Working Group Participants

#### Equitable Growth
- Matt Carter
- Lawrence McCormack
- J.osh Mosser
- Manisha Moyo
- Nathan Ringham

#### Infrastructure
- Matt Carter
- Austin Dixon
- Mark Fisher
- Anna Geimer
- David Host

#### Technology and Innovation
- Emily Krueger
- J.osh Mosser
- J.ula Saltsgaver
- Arin Schouen

#### Workforce Development
- Victoria Ross-Frost
- Austin Dixon
- Mark Fisher
- Anna Geimer

---

5. These lists may not reflect all individuals who participated. Attendees were asked to opt in to be included here.
APPENDIX C. SWOT ANALYSIS