

April 2018



REGIONAL PROSPERITY STRATEGY

A FIVE-YEAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN FOR NORTH IOWA

Working together to improve the lives of all North Iowans.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TIP Strategies would like to thank the many individuals and organizations who contributed to the development of the Vision North Iowa Economic Development Strategic Plan. Your insight and expertise helped us build a better understanding of the North Iowa region's assets and opportunities. We are especially grateful to the leadership of the Clear Lake Area Chamber of Commerce, Mason City Chamber of Commerce, and North Iowa Corridor EDC for their partnership, oversight, and investment in this important project. And a special thank you to the project steering committee and key stakeholders for devoting their time and input throughout the planning process.

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- Cerro Gordo County
- City of Clear Lake
- City of Mason City
- Clear Lake Chamber of Commerce
- Clear Lake Tourism
- North Iowa Corridor EDC
- Iowa Works
- John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center
- Mason City Chamber of Commerce
- North Iowa Area Community College
- United Way
- Various Community Groups
- Visit Mason City

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

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CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
ASSETS AND OPPORTUNITIES	1
CHALLENGES AND RISKS	1
STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN	5
PURPOSE STATEMENT	5
VISION STATEMENT	6
GUIDING PRINCIPLES	6
GOAL 1. BUILDING A REGIONAL COMMUNITY	7
GOAL 2. PEOPLE, PLACE, AND PROSPERITY	12
GOAL 3. INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP	17
GOAL 4. BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING	21
APPENDIX 1. ORGANIZING FOR IMPLEMENTATION	27
APPENDIX 2. PERFORMANCE METRICS	40
APPENDIX 3. ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD	41
APPENDIX 4. ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT	42
METHODOLOGY	42
KEY FINDINGS	43
SWOT ANALYSIS	44
DEMOGRAPHICS, EDUCATION, AND WORKFORCE	46
ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT	53
COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS	61
APPENDIX 5. TARGET INDUSTRY ANALYSIS	65
APPROACH	65
ADVANCED MANUFACTURING	67
VALUE-ADDED AGRICULTURE AND FOOD PROCESSING	70
HEALTHCARE	73
TRANSPORTATION AND WAREHOUSING	76
APPENDIX 6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NETWORK ANALYSIS	79
METHODOLOGY AND FRAMEWORK	79
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES	79
OPPORTUNITY AREAS	82
APPENDIX 7. COMMUNITY PERCEPTION SURVEY	83
APPENDIX 8. COMMUNITY VISION AND VALUES WORKSHOPS	95
KEY FINDINGS	95
SURVEY RESPONSE ANALYSIS	96
APPENDIX 9. BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES	100
REGIONAL COLLABORATION AND INTERNAL MARKETING	100
BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION PARTNERSHIP	103

PLACEMAKING AND TALENT MANAGEMENT 104

INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP 106

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January of 2017, the North Iowa region embarked on an economic development strategic planning process, the end product of which would serve as a roadmap for the region's economic development activities and investment over the next 5 years. To assist in this endeavor, a three-organization partnership including the North Iowa Corridor Economic Development Corporation (EDC), Clear Lake Chamber of Commerce, and Mason City Chamber of Commerce hired TIP Strategies to help facilitate the strategic-planning process.

Over the next 10 months, the consulting team developed the strategic plan based on the input of more than 1,000 stakeholders; a detailed analysis of demographic, economic, and market data; several community site visits; a 16-question community perception survey that yielded over 750 responses; fourteen focus group sessions, four public workshops; an economic development network analysis; findings from a review of relevant studies, plans, and other material provided by the Vision North Iowa executive committee and others; and TIP Strategies' 20 years of experience working with communities across the country. The result is a set of goals, strategies, and actions that will propel the North Iowa region toward its vision for the future.

ASSETS AND OPPORTUNITIES

North Iowa is full of rich assets and distinct opportunities. These assets and opportunities largely outweigh the region's challenges and risks. A few of the region's most significant assets include the following items.

- Location
- Quality and proximity of transportation assets
- Infrastructure
- Stable key industries
- Available sites
- North Iowa Area Community College (NIACC)
- Entrepreneurial assistance programs
- Affordable cost of living
- Strong local organizations
- Large potential for regional collaboration

CHALLENGES AND RISKS

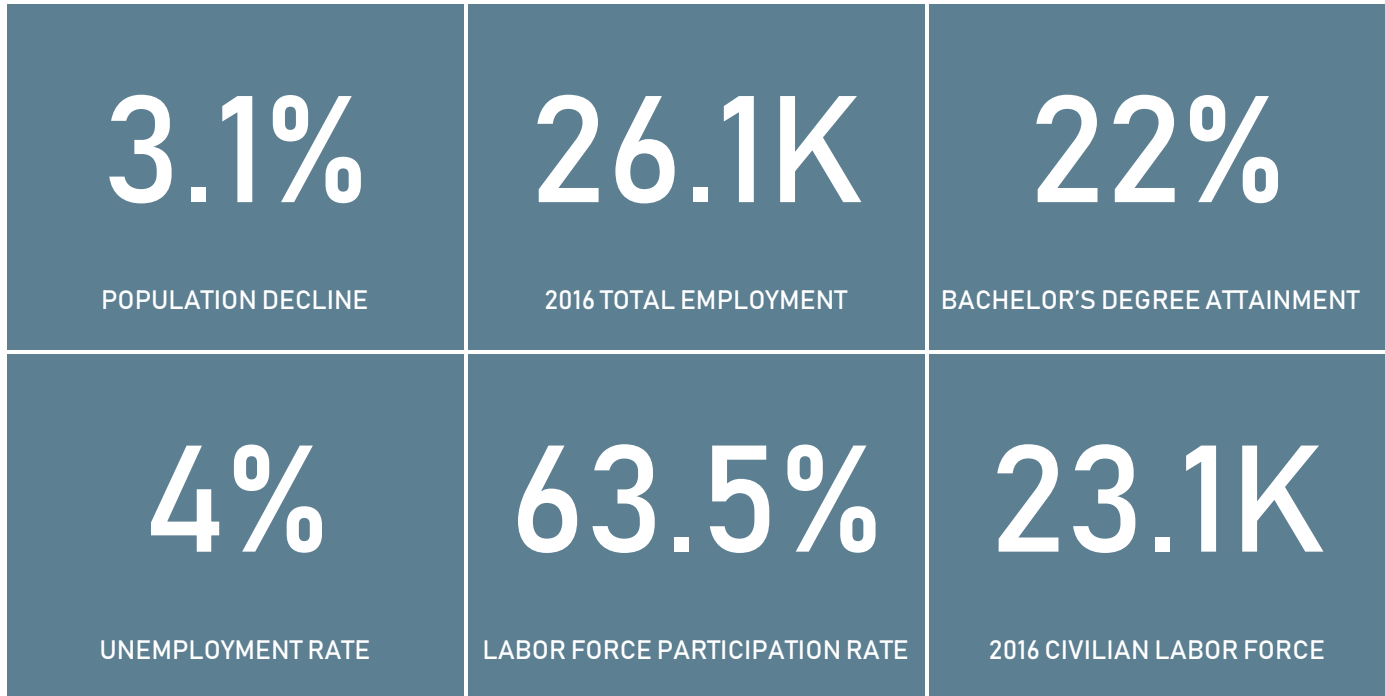
Despite the region's many strengths, there are some challenges and risks that could limit the region's potential for economic development if left unaddressed. Many of these challenges are not uncommon to similar regions across the US. Some of the region's most pressing challenges include the following items.

- Slow population decline
- Slow employment decline
- Shortage of high-wage jobs
- Comparatively low levels of bachelor's degree attainment compared to the state and US
- Imbalanced age distribution; shortage of young adults to replace retiring population

• Shortage of affordable mid-level housing

A comprehensive economic assessment was conducted as a part of the strategic planning project and can be viewed in Appendix 4. Key findings from are summarized in Figure 1 below.

FIGURE 1. CERRO GORDO COUNTY BY THE NUMBERS



In response to the various quantitative and qualitative data that was discovered, the Vision North Iowa partnership set out to create a strategic plan centered around the most promising opportunities for the region. The strategic plan is structured around a purpose statement, a vision statement, six guiding principles, and four goals that have the potential to set the stage for North Iowa's success through a new regional partnership. The strategies that support each of the four areas will help address North Iowa's primary weaknesses and position it to capitalize on its principal opportunities.

Figure 2 below provides a summary of the plan's goals and strategies.

FIGURE 2. SUMMARY OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

1. BUILDING A REGIONAL COMMUNITY*ESTABLISH A REGIONAL MINDSET THAT UNIFIES NORTH IOWANS AROUND A COMMON VISION.*

- 1.1** Formalize the Vision North Iowa partnership as a regional fixture for community collaboration and economic advancement.
- 1.2** Improve communication and collaboration within the region.
- 1.3** Create a favorable brand and image for the region, and launch an internal marketing campaign. Ensure residents, members, and partners all talk about North Iowa in a consistent, positive way.

2. PEOPLE, PLACE, AND PROSPERITY*CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT THAT RETAINS, EQUIPS, AND ATTRACTS A STRONG, DIVERSE TALENT PIPELINE AND INCREASES PROSPERITY FOR ALL NORTH IOWANS.*

- 2.1** Support regional efforts to increase K-12 and postsecondary student achievement and educational attainment of North Iowa citizens and ensure they are prepared for the future workforce.
- 2.2** Promote and enhance existing talent retention and attraction outreach efforts.
- 2.3** Launch new talent retention and attraction initiatives aimed at former residents and alumni to support employers in talent-recruitment efforts.
- 2.4** Champion and source potential placemaking projects that will create needed community amenities for young professionals and families. Leverage the success of past revitalization projects to catalyze this process.
- 2.5** Cultivate relationships with real estate developers, landowners, local businesses, and community partners to address shortages in affordable mid-level housing.
- 2.6** Strengthen existing partnerships and create new connections between North Iowa's employers, economic development organizations, workforce development entities, and educational institutions to ensure North Iowans are receiving optimal skills training to advance their careers.

3. INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP*ADVANCE THE REGIONAL ECONOMY BY RETAINING, EXPANDING, AND ATTRACTING HIGH-GROWTH COMPANIES. LEVERAGE EXISTING ASSETS TO STRENGTHEN THE CULTURE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND EXPAND THE INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM.*

- 3.1** Leverage, strengthen, and support the activities of Pappajohn Center. Raise awareness of North Iowa's entrepreneurial support resources and promote regional success stories.
- 3.2** Create an environment that retains and attracts startups, entrepreneurs, and small businesses in North Iowa.
- 3.3** Expand networking channels and relationship development between regional businesses to foster solidarity, learning, and collaboration.
- 3.4** Expand the availability of existing capital in the region and develop stronger ties to other sources of capital (for example, venture/angel capital, etc.) outside the area.

4. BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING

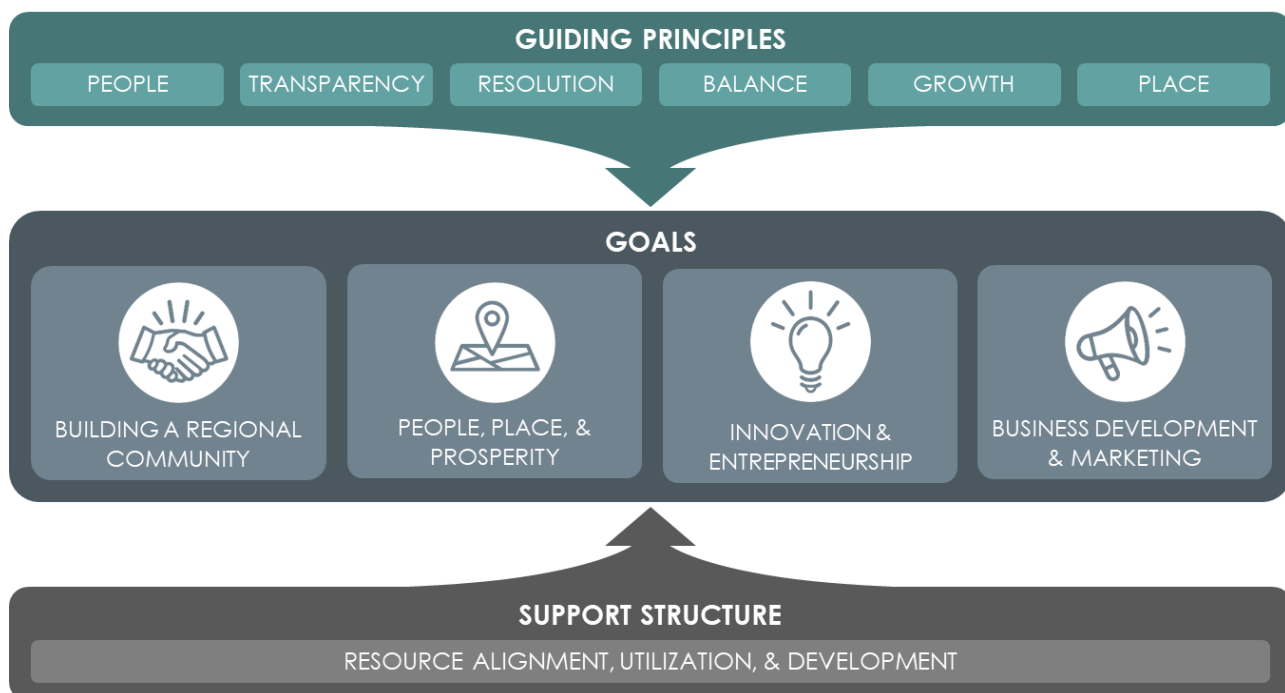
ENSURE SMART, SUSTAINABLE, AND SHARED ECONOMIC GROWTH BY STRATEGICALLY PROMOTING THE REGION AS A DESTINATION FOR BUSINESS INVESTMENT, RELOCATION, AND EXPANSION.

- 4.1 Continue and enhance the EDC's business retention and expansion outreach program to support the ongoing success of North Iowa's existing employers. Leverage the Vision North Iowa partnership for expanded outreach.
- 4.2 Focus North Iowa's business attraction efforts on four target industries (advanced manufacturing, value-added agriculture and food processing, healthcare, transportation and warehousing), which align with North Iowa's assets and represent the best opportunities for new investment and employment growth.
- 4.3 Enhance North Iowa's image as an attractive, affordable, and safe place to live and do business through targeted promotion (traditional and nontraditional media channels).
- 4.4 Identify and invest in new sites, buildings, and infrastructure—and leverage existing real estate, transportation, and infrastructure assets—to support the growth of existing employers and the attraction of new businesses.

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

This strategic plan will guide North Iowa's economic development efforts over the next 5 years. This plan is structured around a purpose statement, a vision statement, six guiding principles, four goals, and numerous strategies and actions. The strategic framework is presented below. Each strategy is built around existing assets and a realistic acknowledgment of limitations. This document provides a roadmap for Vision North Iowa's economic development efforts, but the ultimate success of the recommendations will depend on the unified implementation efforts of the North Iowa Corridor EDC and its partners.

VISION NORTH IOWA



PURPOSE STATEMENT

From the outset of the Vision North Iowa strategic planning project, a top priority of the steering committee has been alignment of resources and clarity regarding the purpose of the collective effort. The project's purpose has been articulated in a variety of ways, with one common underlying theme: *unified, collaborative economic development for the benefit of all people in North Iowa.*

The Vision North Iowa value-driven purpose statement has been formally set as this statement.

Vision North Iowa: Working together to improve the lives of all North Iowans.

This purpose statement will be used at the beginning of all presentation materials and documents to quickly and clearly communicate to people within the North Iowa region, state, and nation why Vision North Iowa exists. This statement captures the essence of why this planning effort began, how the planning effort is being executed, and who the plan is intended to serve. The purpose statement is an ongoing reminder to all involved why this work is so important to the future of North Iowa.

VISION STATEMENT

A comprehensive economic strategy must be driven by a clear vision. A community's vision is its "North Star" and long-term commitment to the future. Meaningful vision statements should be bold, provide a clear direction, and differentiate the community from its peers and competitors.

The following vision statement for the North Iowa region achieves those objectives and reflects its economic potential.

North Iowa works together in a collaborative and transparent manner to seize economic opportunities that result in diverse, balanced, and sustainable economic growth; an innovative and entrepreneurial mindset; and an enhanced quality of life.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

A community's guiding principles reflect its core values and provide a compass toward its vision, regardless of changing internal and external circumstances. Combined with a strong vision statement, a clear set of guiding principles provides a framework and reference point for identifying and prioritizing opportunities, as well as crafting the appropriate goals, strategies, tactics, and actions. Each guiding principle is forward looking and helps point the community toward growth and improvement. With this in mind, the following guiding principles were drafted for the Vision North Iowa project.

1. **People.** Commitment to increasing the educational attainment, skills, and well-being of current and future generations of North Iowans.
2. **Transparency.** Open, clear, and collaborative communication and decision-making, with a priority on the long-term benefit to the region.
3. **Resolution.** A singular focus on economic health that rises above complacency, conflict, or political agenda.
4. **Balance.** Smart, sustainable, and equitable economic growth while supporting the vital retail and tourism industries.
5. **Growth.** Increased economic advancement through collaboration, innovation, and an entrepreneurial mindset; while leveraging new industry sectors and existing leading industry sectors of healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and agriculture.
6. **Place.** Improvement to the region's quality of place while preserving its character, uniqueness, and quality of life.

GOAL 1. BUILDING A REGIONAL COMMUNITY

ESTABLISH A REGIONAL MINDSET THAT UNIFIES NORTH IOWANS AROUND A COMMON VISION.

Aristotle said it best: “The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.” The people of North Iowa have embodied this concept in countless ways over the region’s history. The establishment of the North Iowa Corridor EDC is just one example of the numerous successful collaborative efforts that testify to North Iowans’ commitment to their communities. In recent years, however, negative discourse and civic division have increasingly taken center stage. This negativity has significantly influenced community morale and civic pride. These sentiments were echoed in the public outreach conducted as part of the strategic planning process, which included a community perception survey and numerous public workshops, interviews, and focus groups. (See the SWOT analysis in Appendix 4, and Appendix 7 and Appendix 8 for analyses of these efforts.) Community stakeholders consistently expressed a strong desire for greater unity, vision, and positive economic progress.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

“Vision North Iowa: Working together to improve the lives of all North Iowans.”

VISION STATEMENT

“North Iowa works together in a collaborative and transparent manner to seize economic opportunities that result in diverse, balanced, and sustainable economic growth; an innovative and entrepreneurial mindset; and an enhanced quality of life.”

From the outset of this strategic planning process, a primary objective of the Vision North Iowa project has been to engage as many regional residents as possible in an ongoing dialogue, and address the issues that matter most to them. Below, Goal 1 lays out strategies and actions that speak to these issues, both in the short-, mid- and long-term. The strategic-planning process has begun to lay the foundation for fulfilling this goal. The initiatives outlined below broaden and formalize these efforts, which will help develop a strong regional coalition that advances the most important community and economic development activities around the region.

Moving forward, Vision North Iowa partner organizations and community leaders should continue to foster an ongoing dialogue about how best to enrich the community, advance the economy, and invest in strategic priorities. This communication must continue in a transparent manner, and should tell the positive story of a shared community vision, inclusive growth, creative problem solving, cross-sector collaboration, the numerous North Iowa assets, and the wealth of opportunities on the horizon.

STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

FORMALIZE THE PARTNERSHIP

- 1.1. Formalize the Vision North Iowa partnership as a regional fixture for community collaboration and economic advancement.
 - 1.1.1. Determine the geographic service area and partners (or members).
 - In the short-term, limit the geographic service area to Cerro Gordo County.
 - Determine partner (or member) organizations and define levels of involvement. Require endorsement of this strategic plan for participation. Refer to the economic development network matrix (see Figure 58 on page 81) for a full list of economic, development-related organizations that serve the region, as well as their respective geographic service areas and economic development roles.
 - In the mid-term, assess how the partnership can evolve outside the borders of Cerro Gordo County. Consider including all communities that significantly rely on and feed into the regional economy.

- In the long-term, consider soliciting participation or potential partnership from communities in southern Minnesota, such as Albert Lea, Austin, and Rochester. Leverage resources, activities, and successes occurring in these communities in relevant key industries (for example, medical manufacturing, warehousing, and meat processing).
- To avoid gaps and/or duplication of efforts, explore how Vision North Iowa can align with the geographic service area and activities of the North Central Iowa Alliance.
- Rename the partnership in accordance with the geographic service area, if necessary.

1.1.2. Determine the structure and governance of the partnership.

- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of North Iowa's economic development partners to build a shared framework for decision-making and ongoing collaboration.
- Institute performance metrics for initial partnership efforts. (See Appendix 2, "Goal 1. Building a Regional Community" on page 40.)
- Conduct a partnership retreat outside the county to plan for the future, explore differences, and bond as a team.
- Evaluate successful models of various partnership and association structures. Discuss with community partners and determine the best approach for the Vision North Iowa partnership. (See Appendix 9 on page 100 for a description of best practices in regional collaboration.)
- Designate the North Iowa Corridor EDC as the lead organization and "face" of the Vision North Iowa partnership.
- Consider designating multiple Vision North Iowa cochair(s) (a mixture of EDC board members and non-EDC board members) to serve a 2-year term. These individuals should be prominent community leaders who help lend credibility and marketability to the effort.
- Develop a policy manual that outlines formal processes and procedures of the partnership.
- In the long-term, explore the development of a separate 501(c)(3) organization.
- In the long-term, evaluate the need for a paid staff person to carry out the mission and daily activities of the partnership.

1.1.3. Establish a consistent funding stream(s) for the partnership that will advance and sustain long-term economic development endeavors and ensure regional competitiveness.

- Encourage collaboration and alignment of regional economic development resources to maximize efficiency and prevent gaps and redundancies in service provision.
- Consider the development of a consolidated funding mechanism for all regional economic development activities.
- Evaluate a "community foundation" concept versus a one-fund or superfund concept. Consider the Greater Dubuque 2022 Campaign as a potential model.

- Communicate the value of continued funding of existing economic development efforts.

COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

1.2. Improve communication and collaboration within the region.

1.2.1. Launch a new public outreach initiative when rolling out the strategic plan.

- Host a rollout event that introduces the Vision North Iowa strategic plan to the public and launches the ongoing public outreach forums.
- Explain why this effort is important to strategic plan implementation. Use the opportunity to educate the community on the important role that regionalism and economic development plays in the area's future.
- Share the vision, goals, and implementation plan during the event.
- Encourage local media to attend.
- Create media kits that assist the media in writing stories about the strategic plan, public outreach initiative, and the role of economic development in the community.

1.2.2. Host quarterly public outreach forums in different parts of the region.

- Structure the events to encourage civil, productive discussion.
- Reinforce the shared vision of the partnership.
- Educate audiences regarding 1) the important role of economic development in community advancement, 2) economic interdependencies between the communities in the region, and 3) demographic data and the danger of current trends.
- Raise awareness of North Iowa's assets and amenities; foster civic pride.
- Solicit input and build consensus on issues that matter most to citizens.
- Create a media kit for the initiative with an invitation to all planned events.
- Hold forums in a different location each quarter and identify interesting and attractive locations that represent significant community assets or new community projects (for example, Surf Ballroom, The Music Man Square, etc.).
- Inform regional stakeholders about implementation progress during the events.
- Encourage forward-thinking dialogue about the future of North Iowa. Utilize a real-time survey instrument such as Mentimeter during the public forums.

REGIONALISM

Regionalism, or regional collaboration, is an important economic development concept and mindset based on the principle that working together toward a common purpose is more efficient and effective than competing or operating in a vacuum. All partners of a regional body must buy in to this precept for the effort to have maximum impact. Regionalism has become an increasingly important tool in rural economic development because it pools resources for maximum impact, and allows communities with limited resources to be more competitive than they could on their own. Regionalism requires not just cooperation, but true collaboration, alignment of values, and leveraging of resources. Regionalism cannot be overemphasized as a useful tool for advancement of the North Iowa region.

The 2015 International Economic Development Council (IEDC) annual survey on the state of economic development found that 90 percent of respondents indicated that they had "entered into partnerships or combined resources with other community stakeholders to enhance economic development efforts" within the past year.

Source: IEDC Annual Survey on the State of Economic Development, 2016.

- 1.2.3. Conduct biannual surveys of regional stakeholders in both electronic format and on-site at public forums. Consider creating an online “suggestion box” to solicit ongoing commentary from the public.
- 1.2.4. Maintain transparency with implementation progress. Continue to post progress reports to the partnership website.

BRAND, IMAGE, AND INTERNAL MARKETING

- 1.3. Create a favorable brand and image for the region, and launch an internal marketing campaign. Ensure all residents, members, and partners talk about North Iowa in a consistent, positive way.
 - 1.3.1. Develop a permanent logo.
 - 1.3.2. Consider adopting the purpose statement as an outward-facing positioning statement.
 - 1.3.3. Consider developing and adopting an internal tagline.
 - 1.3.4. Establish a permanent web presence.
 - In the short-term, continue the current www.visionnorthiowa.com web presence through the Wix platform.
 - In the mid-term, consider outsourcing a crowdsourcing web service such as Chaordix (<https://www.chaordix.com/>), which specializes in building and engaging online communities to yield insights, ideas, and innovation. (See page 100, #LOVEYYC, best practice example.)
 - Consider conducting an online contest to engage North Iowans and harness their creative energy to tell North Iowa’s story and generate ideas to promote the region.
 - 1.3.5. Set up social media accounts and create a calendar of planned posts.
 - Utilize the Vision North Iowa partners’ social media platforms to educate the community about positive findings and lesser-known facts uncovered throughout the strategic planning process.
 - Develop a more consistent and strategic economic development voice across social media platforms, in particular LinkedIn and Twitter, to develop a greater awareness of economic development activities in North Iowa.
 - Solicit active social media users (individuals and organizations) to serve as ambassadors for the region. Develop a “social media tips sheet” to guide users on what to post.
 - Develop a social media calendar that allows each organization to proactively plan content based on specific topics or focused on community events.
 - Develop an external hashtag campaign, such as #WhyNI, or an internal hashtag campaign, such as #ILoveNI, and encourage North Iowa residents and ambassadors to tell positive stories about North Iowa.
 - Celebrate community successes via social media.
 - 1.3.6. Develop an annual report that showcases the Vision North Iowa body of work, provides a “state of the regional economy,” and forecasts economic conditions for the next year. Print a limited number to save on costs and consider creating a video format or utilizing a platform such as Joomag (www.joomag.com) to produce an interactive online version.
 - 1.3.7. Consider implementing a periodic e-newsletter that showcases partnership achievements, partnership organization happenings, new projects, and various community events. Consider merging this effort with the current North Iowa Corridor EDC newsletter. Encourage Vision North

Iowa partners to devote a portion of their existing newsletters to the Vision North Iowa effort and/or include the Vision North Iowa newsletters with their own.

1.3.8. Unify internal and external messaging among partner organizations.

- Ensure all regional partners are sending the same message regarding the economic vision and goals.
- Create talking points to share with partner organizations that touch on key messages.
- Consider asking partner organizations to include the Vision North Iowa logo on all marketing and communications materials, including email signatures. Create a graphic standards manual to guide proper usage and placement of the logo.

GOAL 2. PEOPLE, PLACE, AND PROSPERITY

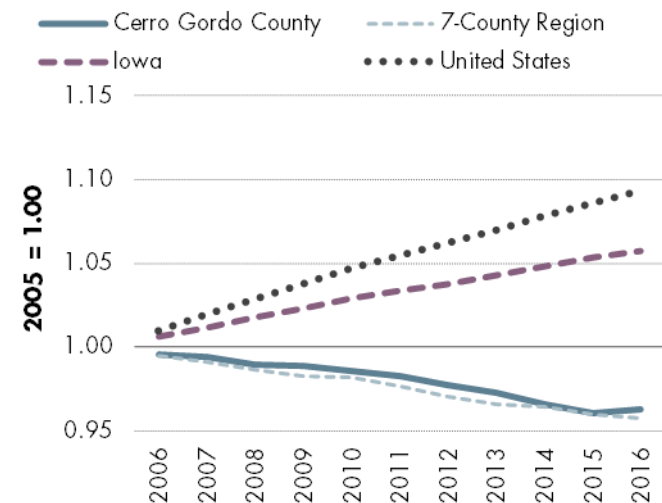
CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT THAT RETAINS, EQUIPS, AND ATTRACTS A STRONG, DIVERSE TALENT PIPELINE AND INCREASES PROSPERITY FOR ALL NORTH IOWANS.

People are North Iowa's greatest asset. They exemplify Midwest charm, culture, and values. North Iowans are passionate about issues that affect their communities and care deeply about the future of the region. The centerpiece of this strategic plan's purpose is investing in the people of North Iowa to ensure their continued well-being and prosperity. This goal, in particular, embodies this sentiment.

The availability of skilled labor is arguably the most critical concern for today's businesses (see Figure 5 on page 13). This phenomenon is occurring at the same time that the national economy is increasingly being driven by human knowledge rather than proximity to resources. In other words—people, rather than raw materials, are the most important asset to companies' value and growth prospects. This applies to all industries, including manufacturing, professional services, and technology. This shift of economic focus from resources to people has been accompanied by a change in what motivates talented workers to locate and stay in communities. Now, more than ever, attractiveness and livability dictate workers' location decisions. The knowledgeable worker now wants to live in a place that offers transportation and housing choices, recreational and cultural opportunities, vibrancy, and authenticity. As a result, placemaking has emerged as an important tool in economic development. Placemaking is the practice of creating or enhancing a community's assets to improve its overall attractiveness and livability. According to some experts, place will eventually become more important than incentives in business expansion decisions.

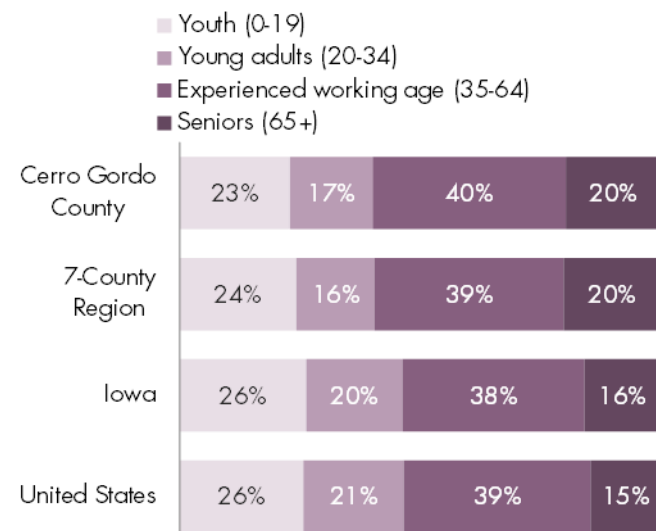
North Iowa has struggled to retain and attract workers, especially young professionals, in recent decades. This is verified by various demographic data, including a slow trickle of population loss, disparities in age distribution (see Figures 3 and 4 to the right), and a gradual decline in total employment. This struggle is not unique to the region—in fact, it's a national issue. However, the problem is often more challenging in rural areas that have fewer amenities than large metro areas. Nonetheless, North Iowa is well positioned to emerge as a destination for people and prosperity. The region has a variety of attractive amenities, many of which are experiencing an uptick in investment and development from both public and private sectors. The region also has many companies that are committed to enhancing their communities in order to retain and attract skilled workers. Continued investment in the region's workforce and quality of place are critical to future growth.

FIGURE 3. POPULATION TRENDS (2006-2016)



Source: US Census Bureau, Population Estimates program. Population figures are rounded to the nearest 100. Percentages are rounded to the nearest tenth. Note: via Moody's Analytics.

FIGURE 4. AGE DISTRIBUTION



Source: ACS via Moody's Economy.com.

FIGURE 5. TOP 10 SITE SELECTION FACTORS

	2015	2010	2005	2000	1995	1990	1986
Availability of skilled labor	92.9	85.9	87.2	87.7	87.9	87.1	84.8
Highway accessibility	88.0	97.3	91.4	95.9	93.6	92.3	91.3
Quality of life	87.6	62.1	54.7	58.8	70.4	70.6	60.4
Occupancy or construction costs	85.4	89.8	83.7	83.0	90.2	88.5	N/A
Available buildings	83.7	81.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Labor costs	80.8	91.0	87.9	91.6	94.2	92.1	96.6
Corporate tax rate	78.8	86.3	85.0	84.7	N/A	N/A	N/A
Proximity to major markets	76.3	66.4	83.2	76.8	74.5	74.9	84.8
State and local incentives	75.8	89.3	86.0	83.6	87.8	88.7	79.6
Energy availability and costs	75.3	82.1	82.8	77.7	89.6	88.1	N/A

Source: Area Development's Annual Survey of Corporate Executives—132 respondents for Q1, 2016.

STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

PEOPLE

- 2.1. Support regional efforts to increase K–12 and postsecondary student achievement and educational attainment of North Iowa citizens and ensure they are prepared for the future workforce.
 - 2.1.1. Promote the benefits of the skilled trades and other in-demand local careers, so that students understand there are viable options besides a 4-year degree.
 - 2.1.2. Support efforts to expand local science, technology, engineering, math (STEM) and career and technical education (CTE) programs that provide students with the skills they need to build careers in the regional economy. Encourage educational institutions to incorporate more entrepreneurship and business-related coursework into their academic programs.
 - 2.1.3. Support existing programs and create new dual credit programs that allow high school students to develop technical skills, obtain certificates, and transfer credits to area colleges and universities.
 - 2.1.4. Expand internship, apprenticeship, and work coop programs for high school and college students to expose the region's young talent to employment opportunities in the region's businesses, government entities, and nonprofit organizations.
 - 2.1.5. Improve affordability and accessibility to higher education.
 - Explore the creation of a local scholarship fund or tuition reimbursement program for students who graduate from high school and/or a local higher education institution with a minimum grade point average and intend to return and seek work in the area upon completion or graduation.
 - Facilitate the expansion of options for student assistance in applying for financial aid.
 - Consider other incentives programs for completion for certificates and degrees by adults over a minimum age threshold. (See page 105, Grand Valley State University, best practice example.)
- 2.2. Promote and enhance existing talent retention and attraction outreach efforts.

- 2.2.1.** On an annual basis, convene a talent retention and attraction task force within the region. Invite organizations with existing talent efforts or that are interested in being involved. Ensure there are no gaps or duplication of services.
- 2.2.2.** Continue the successful Mason City Chamber of Commerce “Community Concierge” program.
- 2.3.** Launch new talent retention and attraction initiatives aimed at former residents and alumni to support employers in talent-recruitment efforts.
- 2.3.1.** Use various publicly available data tools to target areas of the country where there is a high graduate oversupply, and target audiences might be finding it difficult or highly competitive to find a job.
- 2.3.2.** Locate residents who grew up in the area who have in-demand skills. Ensure these individuals are communicated with on a regular basis.
- 2.3.3.** Communicate how the decrease in cost of living will give them an immediate pay raise and that there are more opportunities for upward mobility.
- 2.3.4.** Partner with local high schools, North Iowa Area Community College (NIACC), and area universities and their respective alumni associations. Ask if they are willing to distribute content (via digital media outlets) to their alumni contacts.
- Target areas of the country where there is a high alumni concentration working in target industries or in-demand occupations. Consider conducting a recruitment mission or holding a career fair in that area, especially if it is within driving distance of North Iowa.
 - Showcase employment, business, and investment opportunities available in North Iowa.
 - Leverage the current inventory of community amenities to promote North Iowa’s quality of place. Promote potential future placemaking projects.
 - Promote Mason City’s Blue Zones Project® to show that the community has taken a bold initiative to care for residents’ well-being. Utilize the Blue Zones new resident toolkit as collateral material.
- 2.3.5.** Provide employers with promotional materials to more effectively promote North Iowa to potential employees.
- 2.3.6.** Expand the existing workforce by more proactively engaging immigrant communities in civic activities and professional opportunities. Encourage them to invite their nonresident relatives and friends to explore working in the region.
- 2.3.7.** Explore the creation of a program that offers partial student loan forgiveness for former residents who return to North Iowa for a job and agree to remain in the area for a minimum number of years.
- 2.3.8.** Leverage North Iowa’s tourists and visitors for talent attraction.
- Use intercept marketing (for example, brief surveys and interviews) to connect with and capitalize on business executives, company decision-makers, investors, and talented professionals who visit North Iowa for either a community event or vacation. Include questions about potential business expansion and relocation projects.

ELEMENTS OF QUALITY PLACES

- Mixed uses
- Quality public spaces
- Broadband enabled
- Multiple transportation options
- Multiple housing options
- Preservation of historic structures
- Community heritage
- Arts, culture, and creativity
- Recreation
- Green spaces

Source: *Place Matters: The Role of Placemaking in Economic Development*, International Economic Development Council

- Work with the chambers of commerce to attract events/festivals related to target industries.
- 2.3.9.** Engage the region's youth to inspire them to stay in, or return to, the community after graduation, and prepare them for becoming productive members of the region's workforce.
- Work with North Iowa school systems to connect students with local business and industry leaders. Facilitate business-speaking engagements in classrooms, as well as job-shadowing, internship, and apprenticeship programs. Work with the region's manufacturers to organize factory tours that showcase the advanced technologies and skills used in modern industrial operations.
 - Work with the region's K-16 educational institutions and the region's startup community to expose more high school and college students to entrepreneurship and innovation as a career path.

PLACE

- 2.4.** Champion and source potential placemaking projects that will create needed community amenities for young professionals and families. Leverage the success of past revitalization projects to catalyze this process.
- 2.4.1.** Establish placemaking and good urban planning as a regional priority.
- 2.4.2.** Identify a catalyst placemaking project. Consider the redevelopment of the downtown Mason City mall as a potential fit. (See page 104, Fort Collins Foothills Mall, best practice example.)
- 2.4.3.** Identify and invest in "first impression corridors" throughout the region. Enhance the "curb appeal" of areas that are highly traveled and visible to outsiders.
- Prioritize improvements to entryways into Clear Lake and Mason City from Interstate 35. Consider establishing a private funding consortium to fund such initiatives.
 - Continue brownfield redevelopment efforts at the former Andrews Concrete plant site near I-35 and Highway 18.
 - Continue brownfield redevelopment efforts at the Holcim Cement plant site in Mason City.
 - Continue redevelopment for grayfield sites in the region.
- 2.4.4.** Continue to support efforts to expand the region's recreational infrastructure (hike and bike trails, community centers, multipurpose event venues, etc.).
- 2.4.5.** Consider expanding the Blue Zones wellness initiative in other parts of the region. Continue implementing existing initiatives, especially the bike and pedestrian master plan and community gardens.
- 2.4.6.** Create a regional approach to develop and promote local farmers' markets.
- Work with the region's agricultural sector and existing farmers' markets to establish a collaborative effort to promote the ongoing success and growth of locally grown agriculture products.
 - Identify gaps in the region's farmers' markets that can be filled by the establishment of new, larger, or more permanent farmers' markets. Consider using public-private partnerships for this purpose.
 - Utilize farmers' markets as tools to promote placemaking to retain people in and attract people to the region.
- 2.4.7.** Facilitate and advance efforts to develop the riverfront in Mason City.

- 2.4.8. Explore the need for shuttle transportation to and from various destinations in Minneapolis–Saint Paul and Des Moines.
- 2.5. Cultivate relationships with real estate developers, landowners, local businesses, and community partners to address shortages in affordable mid-level housing.
 - 2.5.1. Explore the possibility of establishing an “employee home purchase program” through a collaboration of local employers and the public sector. Target mid-range housing for the effort. *(This also doubles as a talent attraction strategy.)*
 - Model a program similar to the Hausbeck Pickle Company’s employee home purchase program in Saginaw, MI, to increase and improve the inventory of mid-level housing in the region. (See page 104, Hausbeck Pickle Company, best practice example.)
 - 2.5.2. Explore the possibility of developing a “lease purchase bond” program, which would help decrease operating expenses for housing developers over 10 years.
 - 2.5.3. Identify a champion for housing issues. Consider designating the local real estate association to work in this capacity.
 - 2.5.4. Explore tax allocation district financing to incentivize redevelopment in underdeveloped or blighted areas. (See page 104, Allegheny Regional Asset District, best practice example.)

PROSPERITY/WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- 2.6. Strengthen existing partnerships and create new connections between North Iowa’s employers, economic development organizations, workforce development entities, and educational institutions to ensure North Iowans are receiving optimal skills training to advance their careers.
 - 2.6.1. Lead an effort to create a single workforce council. Align all workforce initiatives and efforts within the region to reduce redundancy and burnout among community volunteers. Work to consolidate efforts where possible, but ensure educational attainment, career preparedness, and labor participation remain primary topics. (See page 105, Great Lakes Bay Michigan Works! best practice example.)
 - 2.6.2. Facilitate efforts to upskill the existing workforce.
 - Partner with NIACC and Iowa Works to develop and offer training opportunities.
 - Continue to support efforts to address worker drug use. Support existing programs that mitigate this issue.
 - 2.6.3. Connect local businesses and schools to increase awareness of careers.
 - Continue hosting career fairs and expos with local business professionals from companies to tell students about the educational requirements for in-demand jobs to encourage them to make good choices toward a career goal while in school.
 - 2.6.4. Use business retention and expansion (BRE)/sector board data to identify key skills and training needs of business.
 - 2.6.5. Work with workforce development partners to designate a single point of contact or a few primary points of contact for employers who have job openings. The single point of contact should coordinate with a network of workforce training providers, communicate employers’ needs to the workforce network, collect and screen candidate résumés, and work with the employer to schedule interviews.
 - 2.6.6. Expand collaboration between employers and training providers to address the needs of local industries and build a pipeline of talent to fuel future business growth.

GOAL 3. INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

ADVANCE THE REGIONAL ECONOMY BY RETAINING, EXPANDING, AND ATTRACTING HIGH-GROWTH COMPANIES. LEVERAGE EXISTING ASSETS TO STRENGTHEN THE CULTURE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND EXPAND THE INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM.

A renewed focus on innovation and entrepreneurship is driving the rebirth of rural economies. These disciplines have the potential to boost local economies by tapping local talent and resources and by helping keep rural populations from declining even further. Through entrepreneurial growth, rural economies can diversify and become more resilient to the ups and downs affecting agriculture and other rural industries. In short, entrepreneurs can help ensure that rural communities will survive.

North Iowa possesses a wealth of assets to create a robust culture of entrepreneurship and a strong innovation ecosystem: several unique entrepreneurship and small business support initiatives; a large network of resources dedicated to economic development; top-notch higher education institutions; and strong, locally owned financial institutions. These assets set North Iowa apart from other communities around the nation, and are critical underpinnings that will drive growth across key industries. The sustenance and expansion of these assets is critical for the long-term success of North Iowa's economy.

Many of the necessary ingredients are already in place for North Iowa to become a hub for innovation and entrepreneurship. Nonetheless, a more proactive approach is needed. It is essential to the region's future prosperity to embrace entrepreneurship as a core component of its economic development strategy. The best approach is one that leverages and actively supports the effort of the NIACC John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center and the Small Business Development Center (Pappajohn Center), but also engages other organizations and private-sector leaders in an effort to strengthen the entrepreneurship ecosystem of the entire community.

STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

SUPPORT THE PAPPAJOHN CENTER AND RAISE AWARENESS

- 3.1. Leverage, strengthen, and support the activities of the Pappajohn Center. Raise awareness of North Iowa's entrepreneurial support resources and promote regional success stories.
 - 3.1.1. Create a regional entrepreneurship and startup ecosystem map that "connects the dots." The map should indicate the various programs, initiatives, and assets that are in place to drive forward new business activity. Make clear the "front door of entry" to these programs and services.
 - As a first step to this process, engage an outside firm to conduct an entrepreneurial ecosystem mapping exercise to determine gaps in the region. This can be done for a reasonable cost.
 - Based on the outputs of the above action, create an online map to help entrepreneurs, startups, and investors to navigate the region's existing innovation and entrepreneurship resources and network. (See page 106, Startup Seattle, best practice example.) Promote this map on all economic development partner websites.
 - Use this map as a tool to improve awareness of the region to outsiders, sending the message that North Iowa is a great place to launch a new enterprise or invest in a new venture.
 - Use this map to educate the local community about the spirit of entrepreneurship that exists and the startup activity that is taking place. The map can serve as a promotion piece to get the community thinking of itself as a hub for entrepreneurs.
 - 3.1.2. Leverage and expand on the success of the Pappajohn Center entrepreneurial education programs. Create an entrepreneurial showcase highlighting the innovation and creativity of these students.

- Sustain the Entrepreneur for a Day (E4D®) in North Iowa.
 - As part of the ecosystem mapping, connect all the programs focused on STEM, entrepreneurship, coding, innovation, and creativity.
 - Expand the E4D model to middle schools and high schools.
 - Support the development of the Verizon Innovative Learning partnership as a permanent fixture and advocate for NIACC to be a permanent program host.
- 3.1.3.** Encourage “grassroots” innovation among K–12 students and young adults throughout the community by facilitating the creation of programs at local educational institutions that emphasize innovation, technology commercialization, and business development.
- 3.1.4.** Building on NIACC’s success with the Pappajohn Center, encourage all the region’s higher education institutions to expand their focus on entrepreneurship as a way to retain graduates in the region.
- 3.1.5.** Promote the activities and successes of the Pappajohn Center to raise the profile of North Iowa as an entrepreneur support hub.
- Expand the innovation and entrepreneurship section on the EDC website with a more detailed description of programs and services and featured testimonials. Include the Pappajohn staff and contact information.
 - Expand and cross-promote the success stories and videos currently housed on the Pappajohn Center website across all economic development partner websites and social media platforms. Create more of this type of promotional material. Ask successful entrepreneurs to share why they chose North Iowa to start their businesses and how the region helped them succeed.
 - Promote the Pappajohn Center calendar of events across all economic development partner websites and social media platforms.
 - Pitch an “Entrepreneur Spotlight” series that profiles successful entrepreneurs and resources in the region. Promote the series to regional newspapers and magazines.
 - Market and promote the John Pappajohn Iowa Entrepreneurial Venture Competition across all economic development partner websites and social media platforms, which is a major asset for the region and the state. Utilize the competition’s success to elevate the region’s image as a great place for startups and entrepreneurs. Include success stories of past winners.
- 3.1.6.** Support and assist the Pappajohn Center in its planning, development, and partnership goals. Support efforts to expand existing sources of funding and identify new sources of funding for entrepreneurial initiatives.

CREATE A STRONG ENTREPRENEURIAL ENVIRONMENT

- 3.2.** Create an environment that retains and attracts startups, entrepreneurs, and small businesses in North Iowa.
- 3.2.1.** Prevent “startup poach.” As a part of the EDC’s business retention and expansion program, ensure that regular outreach is conducted to entrepreneurial companies in the region.
- Focus primary communication efforts on startups and second-stage growth companies.
 - Assist these companies in exporting strategies for locally made products.
 - Address generational transfer/re-startups in these meetings and promote the associated assistance at the Pappajohn Center. Communicate that the Pappajohn Center works with owners

and buyers to identify and access different federal, state, and local resources for a smooth handoff and long-term success of the business.

- Ensure that these companies see the city as hospitable to their continuing growth. Glean input to improve the region's culture of entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystem.

3.2.2. Explore the establishment of an innovation center to solve opportunities and problems faced by regional industries.

- Support this initiative with teams from target industries in the region.
- Consider creating a more regionalized new venture competition that is aligned with the John Pappajohn Iowa New Venture Competition.
- Explore the potential for spin-off companies and technologies from existing companies in the region.

3.2.3. Expand efforts to conduct research and development (R&D) in the region to encourage commercialization and the development of clusters.

- Connect research activities and technological innovation occurring at Iowa's regent institutions to the private sector. Ensure their discoveries are translated into jobs, investments, or other benefits.
- Work with the region's major employers and medical complexes to attract R&D spending from additional Iowa universities.
- Align research, education, and entrepreneurial resources with target industries. Map current research initiatives aligned with North Iowa's target industries.
- Engage officials at Iowa higher education institutions to learn how to potentially replicate commercialization programs that have been successful.

EXPAND NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

3.3. Expand networking channels and relationship development between regional businesses to foster solidarity, learning, and collaboration.

3.3.1. Support the expansion of networking groups, speaker series, and other events that bring together area entrepreneurs, small business owners, and investors.

3.3.2. Leverage the region's existing pool of executives to support the growth of local startups and high-growth small businesses.

- Launch a mentor program that connects regional business executives with entrepreneurs to expose emerging business leaders to the experience and expertise of seasoned executives.
- Continue to recruit regional executives to leverage their expertise, experience, and capital to fund entrepreneurs.

3.3.3. Work with the region's chambers of commerce and business associations to enhance networking opportunities available for entrepreneurs, investors, and small business owners.

3.3.4. Partner with local businesses (law firms, accounting firms, and other professional service businesses) that will benefit from the growth of local startups to sponsor and fund initiatives aimed at increasing the availability of startup capital within the region.

EXPAND CAPITAL AVAILABILITY

- 3.4.** Expand the availability of existing capital in the region and develop stronger ties to other sources of capital (for example, venture/angel capital, etc.) outside the area.
 - 3.4.1.** Explore the creation of a regional community bank consortium whereby loans are granted based on a cash flow basis versus a collateral basis.
 - 3.4.2.** As a part of the talent attraction plan (Strategy 2.3), leverage the alumni networks at NIACC and other 4-year public and private colleges to communicate with successful alumni looking to invest in or return to the region.
 - 3.4.3.** Create a seed/angel investment fund and become active members in the Iowa Venture Capital Association.
 - 3.4.4.** Further leverage the region's high net-worth individuals to feed the North Iowa Venture Capital Fund.
 - 3.4.5.** Engage the city's private equity and family wealth management/investment offices to explore the potential for developing a larger industry cluster and/or focus area for wealth management.
 - 3.4.6.** Explore crowdsourcing funding models as a way to support early-stage companies.
 - 3.4.7.** Connect area entrepreneurs to potential federal funding sources including Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grants, the Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) program, and other funding mechanisms available to entrepreneurs.

GOAL 4. BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING

ENSURE SMART, SUSTAINABLE, AND SHARED ECONOMIC GROWTH BY STRATEGICALLY PROMOTING THE REGION AS A DESTINATION FOR BUSINESS INVESTMENT, RELOCATION, AND EXPANSION.

The following section covers three vital baseline economic development activities: business retention and expansion, business attraction, and external marketing. The fourth strategy addresses a critical topic that supports all three activities: real estate and infrastructure. These activities are currently led by the North Iowa Corridor EDC, with community partners serving in a variety of support functions. The consulting team recommends continuing in the same manner with several key modifications and enhancements.

STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION

Existing industries and businesses form the foundation of the North Iowa economy and are among the region's most valuable assets. A strong business retention and expansion effort is, in many ways, the most important function of an economic development organization. A business retention and expansion program has a higher likelihood of creating jobs and attracting capital investment, and also aids in the business attraction process. Satisfied and thriving existing businesses are the best testimonials for new business prospecting.

BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION

A vibrant BRE program should be the cornerstone of any economic development program. When existing businesses thrive, so does the community. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce estimates that 40 to 80 percent of all new jobs are created by existing firms. Prosperous, competitive businesses are more likely to remain and grow in the community, providing the best opportunity to expand a community's tax base.

- 4.1. Continue and enhance the EDC's business retention and expansion outreach program to support the ongoing success of North Iowa's existing employers. Leverage the Vision North Iowa partnership for expanded outreach.
 - 4.1.1. Identify and incorporate additional outreach partners within the region for increased collaboration, resource-sharing, and reach. (See page 21, City of Grants Pass, OR, best practice example.) Target groups that have extensive local business interface. Educate these groups about economic development as needed. Reiterate that it is everyone's job and is in everyone's best interest, and that business retention and expansion activities receive the best return on investment among economic development activities. Examples of these groups include the following.
 - Local Government
 - Chambers of Commerce
 - Convention and Visitor Councils
 - Main Street Organizations
 - Professional Service Providers
 - Higher Education Institutions
 - Local Nonprofits
 - State-Level Organizations
 - 4.1.2. Continue to utilize a customer relationship management (CRM) software to manage contacts and document findings from industry outreach. Establish a central, shared database for business retention and expansion outreach that occurs across all partner organizations.
 - 4.1.3. Identify companies with the potential for a major expansion. Utilize publicly available information to aid in research. Consider subscribing to proprietary data services, such as D&B Hoovers, to obtain employment and financial information about local businesses. This data can also be used in the business attraction process to generate additional leads.

- 4.1.4. Identify companies at risk of losing growth momentum, relocating, or downsizing (that is, because of a recent merger or acquisition event). Develop a communications system with city and county government that notifies representatives of how they can mitigate issues that might impede growth or lead to a specific company closure or departure.
- 4.1.5. Build a close relationship with top management personnel of major employers within each of the city's target industries. Stay up-to-date on industry facts and trends and maintain an understanding of emerging opportunities.
- 4.1.6. Work to understand companies through various sources beyond relationships with target company key leadership. This includes relevant professional service providers with a different understanding of the company's needs and challenges, such as accounting firms, banks, legal firms, and commercial real estate professionals.
- 4.1.7. Create a prioritized annual visitation schedule based on employment level, local community investment, and growth projections. Visit four key employers per month throughout the year.
- 4.1.8. Continue coordinating incentives and infrastructure needs with local/state officials and utilities.
- 4.1.9. Develop stronger relationships with off-site leadership of major employers in the area. On an annual basis, invite these individuals to a hospitality function in conjunction with a community event.
- 4.1.10. Continue distributing a survey to local businesses to gauge needs and challenges. This should be done annually at a minimum.
- 4.1.11. To orient outreach partners, write a brief business visitation guide to outline the methodology for business outreach, communications procedures and scripting, frequency of communications, manner to conduct visits, sample questions, target length of meetings, processes to address immediate business needs, and follow-up procedures.
- 4.1.12. Continue to document the number of businesses identified and visited, keep a running log of retention and expansion projects, and maintain an inventory of company achievements and progress to report to the board and promote in various collateral materials.

BUSINESS ATTRACTION

In addition to supporting the growth of existing employers, the region should focus efforts on attracting new investment and job growth through business recruitment efforts. Since the economic recession ended, the battle for business attraction projects has grown increasingly competitive nationwide. Communities with appealing business attraction programs are reaping high returns on their investments. Promotional activities geared toward a focused set of target industries will be required for North Iowa to compete successfully for business expansion and relocation projects. Additionally, forming strategic partnerships within the broader region and capitalizing on North Iowa's proximity between two major metropolitan areas will be important in the business attraction process.

- 4.2. Focus North Iowa's business attraction efforts on four target industries (advanced manufacturing, value-added agriculture and food processing, healthcare, transportation and warehousing), which align with North Iowa's assets and represent the best opportunities for new investment and employment growth. (See Appendix 5 on page 65, Target Industry Analysis, for more information)
 - 4.2.1. Cultivate relationships and networks with target industry business executives, commercial real estate brokers, and site location consultants for the recruitment of new businesses to North Iowa.
 - Continue keeping a running log of contacts in each of these categories, in addition to dates contacted and conversation content.

- Compile and maintain resource information for each target industry cluster and key subsectors. This would include identifying trade and industry associations for each sector, (a partial list is available in Appendix 5 on page 65, Target Industry Analysis) as well as following industry trends by monitoring trade publications or purchasing industry data and reports from private sources.
- Cultivate business contacts through existing North Iowa companies in target industries to recruit new expansion projects.
- (a) Partner with North Iowa's major employers to pursue supply-chain businesses based on the University of Northern Iowa Supply Chain report. Start with industries that already have an existing cluster of suppliers and service providers.
- (b) Use BRE/survey data and supply-chain needs to identify top targets.

4.2.2. Continue increasing lead activity and respond quickly and effectively to incoming project leads.

- Continue to foster a positive relationship with state-level contacts who administer leads.
- Personalize and differentiate lead-response and proposal templates. Employ memorable design and/or content elements.
- Develop and document the standard procedure for coordinating lead responses and submitting proposals.
- Continue to maintain contact with 20 or more leads per year.

4.2.3. Capitalize on the region's proximity to Des Moines and Minneapolis–Saint Paul by cultivating strong relationships with industry decision-makers in those areas.

- Plan external recruitment missions to each metro area once a year based on the identification of key prospects in the region's target sectors. Utilize a lead generation firm on a project basis to set up meetings with key prospects.
- Take advantage of corporate traffic attending Super Bowl 2018 and Final Four 2019. Consider hosting an on- or off-site hospitality event for key prospects during the event.
- Target emerging and "gazelle" companies in business incubators/accelerators in these markets. Position North Iowa as a desirable landing spot.
- Track venture capital firms in the region that have recently funded high-growth, innovative businesses.
- Compile a detailed package of promotional materials aimed at real estate brokers, describing the attractive environment in North Iowa for business relocation. Use the material to educate local brokers about the top selling points of North Iowa compared with the Des Moines or Minneapolis metro area.
- Position the metro areas as high-cost, congested, and overrated locations and promote North Iowa as the up-and-coming, low-cost, high quality of life, convenient location for high-growth startups and young talent.

4.2.4. Establish stronger linkages between North Iowa's tourism and community events and the EDC's business development, marketing, and talent attraction activities. Below are several examples.

- The Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa (RAGBRAI)—During the years that the ride travels through North Iowa, create a signature VIP event in an overnight host community in the region. Provide door prizes and take-home gifts. Invite existing business contacts and prospects.

- North Iowa Band Festival—Given that this event is the largest free marching band competition in the Midwest, ensure the North Iowa brand is visible during the event. Consider sponsoring or hosting a private event.
 - Fourth of July Fireworks Show—Host a “watching” event in conjunction with this event.
 - School Homecomings—Host networking and hospitality events in conjunction with high school and college homecoming festivities.
 - Vacationers—Identify and develop relationships with business decision-makers who own vacation property in the area, either through existing contacts or tax records.
- 4.2.5.** Collaborate with chambers and visitors bureaus to attract more conferences and conventions to the area. Create a marketing package for visitors to promote the region.
- 4.2.6.** Expand relations and actively participate in joint business attraction efforts with regional economic development organizations, such as the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) North Central Iowa Alliance.

EXTERNAL MARKETING

Retaining, expanding, and attracting business to the region will require a thoughtful external marketing campaign. Utilizing the findings generated throughout this strategic planning process, Vision North Iowa should create customized marketing content for each of its target industries. Nonconventional media channels, such as digital platforms and earned media, will provide the most effective and least costly impact, compared to more expensive advertising and printed materials.

- 4.3.** Enhance North Iowa’s image as an attractive, affordable, and safe place to live and do business through targeted promotion (traditional and nontraditional media channels).
- 4.3.1.** Coordinate a consistent marketing theme that applies across the EDC, Vision North Iowa, city governments, chambers of commerce, and various additional organizations involved in economic development.
- 4.3.2.** Make select enhancements to the EDC website.
- To communicate key performance metrics, utilize the template provided as a part of this project to maintain an economic performance dashboard on the EDC’s homepage. Update on a quarterly basis. (See Appendix 3, Economic Performance Dashboard, on page 41.)
 - Utilize the target industry profiles in Appendix 5 to generate a dedicated a page for each industry. Promote associated strategic assets.
 - Utilize IEDC data standards as a guide to ensure comprehensive data is available on the website.
 - Promote North Iowa’s low cost of living on the “Advantages” and “Quality of Life” sections.
 - Create a catalog of all economic development tools and incentives available in the region and display on the website.
 - Expand the “Innovation and Entrepreneurship” section. Highlight existing testimonials.
 - Promote infrastructure capacity on “Advantages” section.
 - Track and promote various community rankings where the region fares well, such as POLICOM’s economic strength ranking (#76 out of 551 in 2017, up from 160 in 2016).
 - Promote job opportunities in a more prominent position on the website, such as the homepage.

- Promote the low overall crime rate in Cerro Gordo County.
- 4.3.3.** Generate editorial content in targeted publications that spotlights activities and successes in North Iowa.
- Publish interviews of North Iowa residents that highlight the things they like to do in the community to strengthen the community's pride and cohesion.
- 4.3.4.** Develop printed and digital marketing collateral and messaging in six primary areas: talent availability, open positions, target industries, specific development opportunities, shovel-ready sites, and infrastructure capacity.
- 4.3.5.** Develop a component of the marketing plan to promote the BRE program.
- Create a brand for the BRE program and promote through the website.
 - Promote BRE accomplishments on the website and in the EDC's annual report.
 - Create a one-page flyer or simple trifold brochure with a brief description, program goals, list of available resources, and contact information. This can be done in-house or in tandem with a marketing agency or freelance graphic artist.
 - Develop a webpage specific to the BRE program that describes services and tools available to local businesses. This should contain similar graphics and copy as the one-page flyer or brochure to maintain branding consistency. This will also help minimize expenses.
 - Recognize and publicize business achievements and milestones.
- 4.3.6.** Consider developing a series of in-bound marketing events and familiarization tours in the North Iowa region with site selectors and targeted prospects.
- 4.3.7.** Consider a sponsorship opportunity at major events in Midwest like the Final Four 2019.

FIGURE 6. LEADING SOURCES OF INFORMATION INFLUENCING EXECUTIVE PERCEPTION OF AN AREA'S BUSINESS CLIMATE



Source: Winning Strategies in Economic Development Marketing, 2014. Development Counsellors International.

REAL ESTATE AND INFRASTRUCTURE

It is critical for communities to have the appropriate real estate and infrastructure options available to attract new businesses and support the growth of existing businesses. Well-functioning basic infrastructure (water, wastewater, electricity, and natural gas) and transportation networks (including highways and rail, public transportation, and air travel access) that enable the efficient flow of people, products, and ideas (digital infrastructure) are essential for the long-term success of local and regional economies. North Iowa is fortunate to have a robust transportation network

of highways, rail, and airports. It will be important to maintain and fully capitalize on the region's existing infrastructure, but there are also opportunities to make strategic investments that will enhance the region's economic potential.

4.4. Identify and invest in new sites, buildings, and infrastructure—and leverage existing real estate, transportation, and infrastructure assets—to support the growth of existing employers and the attraction of new businesses.

4.4.1. Identify and map top development site and building options.

- Explore the types of sites and buildings most needed for successful economic development projects.
- Conduct regular, targeted outreach to potential private-sector development partners located within the county, and keep them up-to-date on strategic priorities and plans. This could also be executed in coordination with BRE outreach efforts.

4.4.2. Continue supporting critical local and regional transportation infrastructure investments.

- Support efforts led by local governments and transportation planners to maintain and improve the region's highways and local roadways, especially in areas that improve connectivity and the flow of goods and services in the region.
- Work with the region's higher education institutions, adult education providers, major employers, and other key constituents to identify ways to expand transit options to better serve the region's workforce. This might include extending public transportation into the evening hours in some cases. Ensure that key regional destinations (colleges, universities, and major employers) are served by public transportation.

4.4.3. Continue to expand high bandwidth, redundant broadband wireline, and wireless communications infrastructure. Place priority on areas of the region that do not currently have access to broadband.

4.4.4. Promote the industry-certified, shovel-ready site as a key location for prospects.

4.4.5. Streamline and expedite the county and city's development and inspection processes and improve customer service.

4.4.6. In accordance with the Mason City Municipal Airport's master plan, leverage and support efforts to more fully capitalize on its potential for economic development.

- Work with airport officials, major employers, and other large institutions to identify and aggressively pursue additional nonstop flights to major airports.
- Explore the potential to increase the amount of air cargo flowing in and out of the airport.
- Work with airport officials and the region's real estate community to identify opportunities to capitalize on the large amount of land at the airport.

4.4.7. Remain engaged with comprehensive planning efforts involving transportation, housing, utilities, recreation, and culture amenities. Ensure that the communities' comprehensive plans support the quality of life and quality of place priorities of this strategic plan.

4.4.8. Cultivate strong relationships with regional utility companies to facilitate deal flow.

APPENDIX 1. ORGANIZING FOR IMPLEMENTATION

A strong and dedicated economic development organization is essential for the region's future prosperity, but support from local and regional partner organizations will be required for North Iowa to achieve its full potential. The implementation matrix in this section sets the expectations for the partner organizations (listed below) that have the strongest impact on economic development in North Iowa and how they will contribute to successful implementation of this plan. These organizations have been split into two categories: 1) those with economic development as a core part of their mission and 2) those that play critical supporting roles.

CORE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

North Iowa Corridor EDC
 Cerro Gordo County
 City of Clear Lake
 City of Mason City
 Clear Lake Chamber of Commerce
 Mason City Chamber of Commerce
 Clear Lake Tourism
 Iowa Works
 North Iowa Area Community College (NIACC)
 Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center
 Visit Mason City

SUPPORTING PARTNERS

Clear Lake School District
 Iowa Economic Development Authority
 Mason City School District
 United Way
 University of Northern Iowa
 Waldorf University

ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE

The Five-Year Economic Development Strategic Plan for North Iowa is ambitious. It will require a transition of the current economic development methodology to a larger regional partnership effort with additional capacity and expertise. This will allow North Iowa to have one of the most robust and entrepreneurial economic development programs in the nation. The region's investment in economic development will yield a return that will strengthen the region's tax base, create economic opportunities, and transform the region to a vibrant and connected hub in the Midwest.

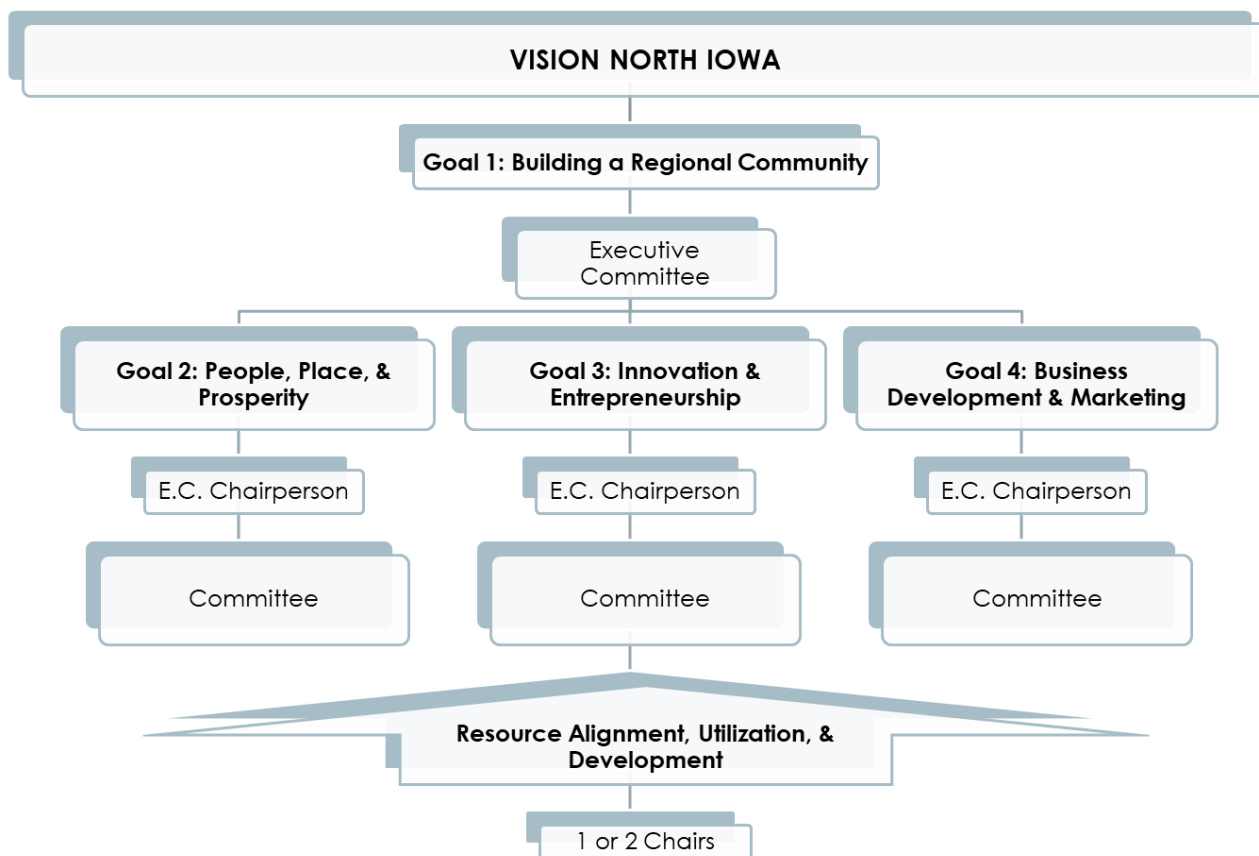
Because of its five-year scope, this strategic plan has a long list of strategies and actions. Implementing these will take time and can only be done as resources and capacity are added. To implement this plan, the Vision North Iowa partnership should first focus on organizing itself to be consistent with the strategic direction of the plan.

The recommendations below are based on the consulting team's knowledge of organizational best practices.

- Develop a core executive team consisting of five to eight people.
- Appoint one or two chairs to provide leadership for each goal and resource development.
- Charge chairs to organize a committee of key organizations and individuals to determine implementation roles and responsibilities and execute on strategies.

Below is the proposed organization structure for the Vision North Iowa partnership.

FIGURE 7. VISION NORTH IOWA ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE



IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

	LEAD IMPLEMENTER/ POTENTIAL PARTNERS	Ongoing	TIMEFRAME		
			Short-Term (12 Months)	Mid-Term (Years 1-2)	Long-Term (Years 3-5)
GOAL 1: BUILDING A REGIONAL COMMUNITY. ESTABLISH A REGIONAL MINDSET THAT UNIFIES NORTH IOWANS AROUND A COMMON VISION.					
Strategy 1.1. Formalize the Vision North Iowa partnership as a regional fixture for community collaboration and economic advancement.					
1.1.1. Determine the geographic service area and partners (or members).	VNI Executive Committee	■	■		
1.1.2. Determine the structure and governance of the partnership.	VNI Executive Committee		■		
1.1.3. Establish a consistent funding stream(s) for the partnership that will advance and sustain long-term economic development endeavors and ensure regional competitiveness.	VNI Executive Committee	■		■	
Strategy 1.2. Improve communication and collaboration within the region.					
1.2.1. Launch a new public outreach initiative when rolling out the strategic plan.	VNI Executive Committee	■			
1.2.2. Host quarterly public outreach forums in different parts of the region and various community and stakeholder groups.	VNI Partner Orgs	■			
1.2.3. Conduct biennial surveys of regional stakeholders in both electronic format and on-site at public forums. Consider creating an online “suggestion box” to solicit ongoing commentary from the public.	North Iowa Corridor EDC	■		■	
1.2.4. Maintain transparency with implementation progress. Continue to post progress reports to the partnership website.	VNI Executive Committee	■			
Strategy 1.3. Create a favorable brand and image for the region, and launch an internal marketing campaign. Ensure all residents, members, and partners talk about North Iowa in a consistent, positive way.					
1.3.1. Develop a permanent logo.	North Iowa Corridor EDC		■		
1.3.2. Consider adopting the purpose statement as an outward-facing positioning statement.	VNI Executive Committee		■		
1.3.3. Consider developing and adopting an internal tagline	VNI Executive Committee		■		
1.3.4. Establish a permanent web presence.	North Iowa Corridor EDC		■		

	LEAD IMPLEMENTER/ POTENTIAL PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME			
		Ongoing	Short-Term (12 Months)	Mid-Term (Years 1-2)	Long-Term (Years 3-5)
1.3.5. Set up social media accounts and create a calendar of planned posts.	VNI Partnership			■	
1.3.6. Develop an annual report that showcases the Vision North Iowa body of work, provides a “state of the regional economy,” and forecasts economic conditions for the next year. Consider a video format or utilizing a platform such as Joomag (www.joomag.com) to produce an interactive online version.	North Iowa Corridor EDC	■			
1.3.7. Consider implementing a periodic e-newsletter that showcases partnership achievements, partnership organization happenings, new projects, and various community events. Consider merging this effort with current partner newsletters. Encourage Vision North Iowa partners to devote a portion of their existing newsletters to the Vision North Iowa effort and/or include the Vision North Iowa newsletters with their own.	North Iowa Corridor EDC	■	■		
1.3.8. Unify internal and external messaging among partner organizations.	VNI Partnership	■	■		
GOAL 2: PEOPLE, PLACE, AND PROSPERITY. CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT THAT RETAINS, EQUIPS, AND ATTRACTS A STRONG, DIVERSE TALENT PIPELINE AND INCREASES PROSPERITY FOR ALL NORTH IOWANS.					
Strategy 2.1. Support regional efforts to increase K–12 and postsecondary student achievement and educational attainment of North Iowa citizens and ensure they are prepared for the future workforce.					
2.1.1. Promote the benefits of the skilled trades and other in-demand local careers, so that students understand all viable career options and pathways	NIACC/School Districts/ North Iowa Corridor EDC	■			
2.1.2. Support efforts like Future Ready Iowa to expand science, technology, engineering, math (STEM) and career and technical education (CTE) programs that provide students with the skills they need for careers in the region. Encourage educational institutions to incorporate more entrepreneurship and business-related coursework into their academic programs.	VNI Partnership	■		■	
2.1.3. Support existing programs and create new dual credit programs that allow high school students to develop technical skills, obtain certificates, and transfer credits to area colleges and universities.	North Iowa Corridor EDC/NIACC/School Districts	■			
2.1.4. Expand internship, apprenticeship, and work coop programs for high school and college students to expose the region’s young talent to employment opportunities in the businesses, government, and nonprofit organizations.	NIACC/School Districts	■			
2.1.5. Improve affordability and accessibility to higher education.	NIACC/School Districts	■			■

	LEAD IMPLEMENTER/ POTENTIAL PARTNERS	Ongoing	TIMEFRAME		
			Short-Term (12 Months)	Mid-Term (Years 1-2)	Long-Term (Years 3-5)
Strategy 2.2. Promote and enhance existing talent retention and attraction outreach efforts.					
2.2.1. On an annual basis, convene a talent retention and attraction task force within the region. Invite organizations with existing talent efforts or that are interested in being involved. Identify gaps or duplication of services.	North Iowa Corridor EDC	■		■	
2.2.2. Continue the successful Mason City Chamber of Commerce “Community Concierge” program.	Mason City Chamber of Commerce	■			
Strategy 2.3. Launch new talent retention and attraction initiatives aimed at former residents and alumni to support employers in talent-recruitment efforts.					
2.3.1. Use various publicly available data tools to target areas of the country where there is a high graduate oversupply, and target audiences might be finding it difficult or highly competitive to find a job.	North Iowa Corridor EDC	■		■	
2.3.2. Locate residents/alumni from North Iowa. Ensure these individuals are communicated with on a regular basis.	NIACC/School Districts	■		■	
2.3.3. Communicate how the decrease in cost of living provides a comparative pay raise and that there are more opportunities for upward mobility.	VNI Partnership	■		■	
2.3.4. Partner with local high schools, North Iowa Area Community College (NIACC), and Iowa universities and respective alumni associations. Ask if they will distribute content (via digital media outlets) to their alumni contacts.	North Iowa Corridor EDC	■		■	
2.3.5. Provide employers with promotional materials to more effectively promote North Iowa to potential employees.	North Iowa Corridor EDC/ Chambers of Commerce	■		■	
2.3.6. Proactively engage immigrant communities in civic activities and professional opportunities. Encourage them to invite nonresident relatives and friends to explore living and working in the region.	VNI Partnership	■			■
2.3.7. Explore the creation of a program that offers partial student loan forgiveness for former residents who return to North Iowa for a job and agree to remain in the area for a minimum number of years.	North Iowa Corridor EDC				■
2.3.8. Leverage North Iowa’s tourists and visitors for talent attraction to promote the region as a destination to not just visit, but live.	Clear Lake Tourism/Visit Mason City	■			
2.3.9. Engage the region’s youth to inspire them to stay in, or return to, the community after graduation, and prepare them for becoming productive members of the region’s workforce.	North Iowa Corridor EDC	■		■	

	LEAD IMPLEMENTER/ POTENTIAL PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME			
		Ongoing	Short-Term (12 Months)	Mid-Term (Years 1-2)	Long-Term (Years 3-5)
Strategy 2.4. Champion and source potential placemaking projects that will create needed community amenities for young professionals and families. Leverage the success of past revitalization projects to catalyze this process.					
2.4.1. Establish placemaking and good urban planning as a regional priority.	Cities of Clear Lake and Mason City	<div></div>			
2.4.2. Identify a catalyst placemaking project. Consider the redevelopment of the downtown Mason City mall as a potential fit. (See page 104, Fort Collins Foothills Mall, best practice example.)	Cities of Clear Lake and Mason City			<div></div>	
2.4.3. Identify and invest in “first impression corridors” in the region. Enhance the “curb appeal” of areas that are highly traveled and visible to visitors.	Cities of Clear Lake/Mason City/ Cerro Gordo County	<div></div>		<div></div>	
2.4.4. Continue to support efforts to expand recreational infrastructure (hike and bike trails, community centers, multipurpose event venues, etc.).	Cities of Clear Lake/Mason City/ Cerro Gordo County	<div></div>		<div></div>	
2.4.5. Consider expanding the Healthy Hometowns wellness initiative in other parts of the region. Continue implementing existing initiatives, especially the bike and pedestrian master plan and community gardens.	Cities of Clear Lake/Mason City/ Cerro Gordo County	<div></div>			<div></div>
2.4.6. Create a regional approach to develop and promote local farmers’ markets.	Healthy Harvest/ North Iowa Fresh	<div></div>		<div></div>	
2.4.7. Facilitate and advance efforts to develop the riverfront in Mason City.	City of Mason City				<div></div>
2.4.8. Explore the need/viability for shuttle transportation to and from various destinations in Minneapolis–Saint Paul and Des Moines.	NIACOG				<div></div>
Strategy 2.5. Cultivate relationships with real estate developers, landowners, local businesses, and community partners to address shortages in affordable housing.					
2.5.1. Explore the possibility of establishing an “employee home purchase program” through a collaboration of local employers and the public sector. Target mid-range housing for the effort.	North Iowa Corridor EDC/Cities				<div></div>
2.5.2. Explore the possibility of developing a “lease purchase bond” program in order to decrease operating expenses for housing developers over 10 years.	Cities of Clear Lake/ Mason City			<div></div>	
2.5.3. Identify a champion for housing issues. Consider designating the local real estate association to work in this capacity.	North Iowa Corridor EDC		<div></div>		
2.5.4. Explore tax allocation district financing to incentivize redevelopment in underdeveloped or blighted areas. (See page 104, Allegheny Regional Asset District, best practice example.)	Cerro Gordo County/Cities			<div></div>	

		TIMEFRAME			
		LEAD IMPLEMENTER/ POTENTIAL PARTNERS	Ongoing	Short-Term (12 Months)	Mid-Term (Years 1-2)
Strategy 2.6. Strengthen existing partnerships and create new connections between North Iowa’s employers, economic development organizations, workforce development entities, and educational institutions to ensure North Iowans are receiving optimal skills training to advance their careers.					
2.6.1. Create a single workforce council. Align all workforce initiatives and efforts within the region to reduce redundancy and burnout among community volunteers. Work to consolidate efforts where possible, but ensure educational attainment, career preparedness, and labor participation remain primary topics. (See page 105, Great Lakes Bay Michigan Works! best practice example.)	North Iowa Corridor EDC/Iowa Works/NIACC	<div></div>	<div></div>		
2.6.2. Facilitate efforts to upskill the existing workforce.	Iowa Works/NIACC	<div></div>		<div></div>	
2.6.3. Connect local businesses and schools to increase awareness of careers.	North Iowa Corridor EDC	<div></div>			
2.6.4. Use business retention and expansion (BRE)/sector board data to identify key skills and training needs of business.	North Iowa Corridor EDC/NIACC	<div></div>			
2.6.5. Work with workforce development partners to designate a single point of contact or a few primary points of contact for employers who have job openings. Coordinate with a network of workforce training providers, collect and screen candidate résumés, and work with the employer to schedule interviews.	Iowa Works			<div></div>	
2.6.6. Expand collaboration between employers and training providers to address the needs of local industries and build a pipeline of talent to fuel future business growth.	North Iowa Corridor EDC/NIACC/Universities	<div></div>			
GOAL 3: INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP. ADVANCE THE REGIONAL ECONOMY BY RETAINING, EXPANDING, AND ATTRACTING HIGH-GROWTH COMPANIES. LEVERAGE EXISTING ASSETS TO STRENGTHEN THE CULTURE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND EXPAND THE INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM.					
Strategy 3.1. Leverage, strengthen, and support the activities of the Pappajohn Center. Raise awareness of North Iowa’s entrepreneurial support resources and promote regional success stories.					
3.1.1. Create a regional entrepreneurship and startup ecosystem map that “connects the dots.” The map should indicate the various programs, initiatives, and assets that are in place to drive forward new business activity. Make clear the “front door of entry” to these programs and services.	Pappajohn Center		<div></div>		
3.1.2. Leverage and expand on the success of the Pappajohn Center entrepreneurial education programs. Create an entrepreneurial showcase highlighting the innovation and creativity of these students.	Pappajohn Center		<div></div>		

	LEAD IMPLEMENTER/ POTENTIAL PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME			
		Ongoing	Short-Term (12 Months)	Mid-Term (Years 1-2)	Long-Term (Years 3-5)
3.1.3. Encourage “grassroots” innovation among K-12 students and young adults throughout the community by facilitating the creation of programs at local educational institutions that emphasize innovation, technology commercialization, and business development.	Pappajohn Center			■	
3.1.4. Building on NIACC’s success with the Pappajohn Center, encourage the region’s schools to expand their focus on entrepreneurship as a way to retain graduates in the region.	Pappajohn Center	■	■		
3.1.5. Promote the activities and successes of the Pappajohn Center to raise the profile of North Iowa as an entrepreneur support hub.	Pappajohn Center	■			
3.1.6. Support and assist the Pappajohn Center in its planning, development, and partnership goals. Support efforts to expand existing sources of funding and identify new sources of funding for entrepreneurial initiatives.	VNI Partnership	■	■		
Strategy 3.2. Create an environment that retains and attracts startups, entrepreneurs, and small businesses in North Iowa.					
3.2.1. Prevent “startup poach.” As a part of the EDC’s business retention and expansion program, ensure that regular outreach is conducted to entrepreneurial companies in the region.	North Iowa Corridor EDC/Pappajohn Center	■			
3.2.2. Explore the establishment of an innovation center to solve opportunities and problems faced by regional industries.	Pappajohn Center/North Iowa Corridor EDC				■
3.2.3. Expand efforts to conduct research and development (R&D) in the region to encourage commercialization and the development of clusters.	North Iowa Corridor EDC/Pappajohn Center				■
Strategy 3.3. Expand networking channels and relationship development between regional businesses to foster solidarity, learning, and collaboration.					
3.3.1. Support the expansion of networking groups, speaker series, and other events that bring together area entrepreneurs, small business owners, and investors.	Pappajohn Center	■			
3.3.2. Leverage the region’s existing pool of executives to support the growth of local startups and high-growth small businesses.	Pappajohn Center	■			
3.3.3. Work with the region’s chambers of commerce and business associations to enhance networking opportunities available for entrepreneurs, investors, and small business owners.	Pappajohn Center	■			

	LEAD IMPLEMENTER/ POTENTIAL PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME			
		Ongoing	Short-Term (12 Months)	Mid-Term (Years 1-2)	Long-Term (Years 3-5)
3.3.4. Partner with local businesses (law firms, accounting firms, and other professional service businesses) that will benefit from the growth of local startups to sponsor and fund initiatives aimed at increasing the availability of startup capital within the region.	Pappajohn Center	■			
Strategy 3.4. Expand the availability of existing capital in the region and develop stronger ties to other sources of capital (for example, venture/angel capital, etc.) outside the area.					
3.4.1. Explore the creation of a regional community bank consortium whereby loans are granted based on a cash flow basis versus a collateral basis.	Pappajohn Center/North Iowa Corridor EDC			■	
3.4.2. As a part of the talent attraction plan (Strategy 2.3), leverage the alumni networks at NIACC and other 4-year public and private colleges to communicate with successful alumni looking to invest in or return to the region.	NIACC/North Iowa Corridor EDC	■	■		
3.4.3. Create a seed/angel investment fund and become active members in the Iowa Venture Capital Association.	Pappajohn Center			■	
3.4.4. Further leverage the region's high net-worth individuals to feed the North Iowa Venture Capital Fund.	Pappajohn Center			■	
3.4.5. Engage the city's private equity and family wealth management/investment offices to explore the potential for developing a larger industry cluster and/or focus area for wealth management.	Pappajohn Center				■
3.4.6. Explore crowdsourcing funding models as a way to support early-stage companies.	Pappajohn Center	■			
3.4.7. Connect area entrepreneurs to potential federal funding sources including Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grants, the Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) program, and other funding mechanisms available to entrepreneurs.	Pappajohn Center	■			
GOAL 4: BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING. ENSURE SMART, SUSTAINABLE, AND SHARED ECONOMIC GROWTH BY STRATEGICALLY PROMOTING THE REGION AS A DESTINATION FOR BUSINESS INVESTMENT, RELOCATION, AND EXPANSION.					
Strategy 4.1. Continue and enhance the EDC's business retention and expansion outreach program to support the ongoing success of North Iowa's existing employers. Leverage the Vision North Iowa partnership for expanded outreach.					

	LEAD IMPLEMENTER/ POTENTIAL PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME			
		Ongoing	Short-Term (12 Months)	Mid-Term (Years 1-2)	Long-Term (Years 3-5)
4.1.1. Identify and incorporate additional outreach partners within the region for increased collaboration, resource-sharing, and reach. (See page 21, City of Grants Pass, OR, best practice example.) Target groups that have extensive local business interface. Educate these groups about economic development as needed. Reiterate that it is everyone's job and is in everyone's best interest, and that business retention and expansion activities receive the best return on investment among economic development activities.	North Iowa Corridor EDC/Chambers of Commerce/Utility Providers	■			
4.1.2. Continue to utilize a customer relationship management (CRM) software to manage contacts and document findings from industry outreach. Establish a central, shared database for business retention and expansion outreach that occurs across all partner organizations.	North Iowa Corridor EDC	■			
4.1.3. Identify companies with the potential for a major expansion. Utilize publicly available information to aid in research. Consider subscribing to proprietary data services, such as D&B Hoovers, to obtain employment and financial information about local businesses. This data can also be used in the business attraction process to generate additional leads.	North Iowa Corridor EDC	■			
4.1.4. Identify companies at risk of losing growth momentum, relocating, or downsizing (that is, because of a recent merger or acquisition event). Develop a communications system with city and county government that notifies representatives of how they can mitigate issues that might impede growth or lead to a specific company closure or departure.	North Iowa Corridor EDC	■			
4.1.5. Build a close relationship with top management personnel of major employers within each of the city's target industries. Stay up-to-date on industry facts and trends and maintain an understanding of emerging opportunities.	North Iowa Corridor EDC	■			
4.1.6. Work to understand companies through various sources beyond relationships with target company key leadership. This includes relevant professional service providers with a different understanding of the company's needs and challenges, such as accounting firms, banks, legal firms, and commercial real estate professionals.	North Iowa Corridor EDC/Chambers of Commerce	■			
4.1.7. Create a prioritized annual visitation schedule based on employment level, local community investment, and growth projections. Visit four key employers per month throughout the year.	North Iowa Corridor EDC	■			

	LEAD IMPLEMENTER/ POTENTIAL PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME			
		Ongoing	Short-Term (12 Months)	Mid-Term (Years 1-2)	Long-Term (Years 3-5)
4.1.8. Continue coordinating incentives and infrastructure needs with local/state officials and utilities.	North Iowa Corridor EDC	■			
4.1.9. Develop stronger relationships with off-site leadership of major employers in the area. On an annual basis, invite these individuals to a hospitality function in conjunction with a community event.	North Iowa Corridor EDC/Chambers of Commerce	■		■	
4.1.10. Continue distributing a survey to local businesses to gauge needs and challenges. This should be done annually at a minimum.	North Iowa Corridor EDC	■			
4.1.11. To orient outreach partners, write a brief business visitation guide to outline the methodology for business outreach, communications procedures and scripting, frequency of communications, manner to conduct visits, sample questions, target length of meetings, processes to address immediate business needs, and follow-up procedures.	North Iowa Corridor EDC	■		■	
4.1.12. Continue to document the number of businesses identified and visited, keep a running log of retention and expansion projects, and maintain an inventory of company achievements and progress to report to the board and promote in various collateral materials.	North Iowa Corridor EDC	■	■		
Strategy 4.2. Focus North Iowa's business attraction efforts on four target industries (advanced manufacturing, value-added agriculture and food processing, healthcare, transportation and warehousing), which align with North Iowa's assets and represent the best opportunities for new investment and employment growth. (See Appendix 5 on page 59, Target Industry Analysis, for more information)					
4.2.1. Cultivate relationships and networks with target industry business executives, commercial real estate brokers, and site location consultants for the recruitment of new businesses to North Iowa.	North Iowa Corridor EDC	■			
4.2.2. Continue increasing lead activity and respond quickly and effectively to incoming project leads.	North Iowa Corridor EDC	■			
4.2.3. Capitalize on the region's proximity to Des Moines and Minneapolis–Saint Paul by cultivating strong relationships with industry decision-makers in those areas.	North Iowa Corridor EDC			■	
4.2.4. Establish stronger linkages between North Iowa's tourism and community events and the EDC's business development, marketing, and talent attraction activities. Below are several examples.	North Iowa Corridor EDC/Visit Mason City/Clear Lake Tourism			■	

	LEAD IMPLEMENTER/ POTENTIAL PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME			
		Ongoing	Short-Term (12 Months)	Mid-Term (Years 1-2)	Long-Term (Years 3-5)
4.2.5. Collaborate with chambers and visitors bureaus to attract more conferences and conventions to the area. Create a marketing package for visitors to promote the region.	Visit Mason City/Clear Lake Tourism				■
4.2.6. Expand relations and actively participate in joint business attraction efforts with regional economic development organizations, such as the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) North Central Iowa Alliance.	North Iowa Corridor EDC	■			
Strategy 4.3. Enhance North Iowa's image as an attractive, affordable, and safe place to live and do business through targeted promotion (traditional and nontraditional media channels).					
4.3.1. Coordinate a consistent marketing theme that applies across the EDC, Vision North Iowa, city governments, chambers of commerce, and various additional organizations involved in economic development.	North Iowa Corridor EDC/VNI Partnership	■	■		
4.3.2. Make select enhancements to the EDC website.	North Iowa Corridor EDC	■		■	
4.3.3. Generate editorial content in targeted publications that spotlights activities and successes in North Iowa.	North Iowa Corridor EDC	■	■		
4.3.4. Develop printed and digital marketing collateral and messaging in six primary areas: talent availability, open positions, target industries, specific development opportunities, shovel-ready sites, and infrastructure capacity.	North Iowa Corridor EDC			■	
4.3.5. Develop a component of the marketing plan to promote the BRE program.	North Iowa Corridor EDC		■		
4.3.6. Consider developing a series of in-bound marketing events and familiarization tours in the North Iowa region with site selectors and targeted prospects.	North Iowa Corridor EDC				■
4.3.7. Consider a sponsorship opportunity at major events coming to the Midwest such as the Final Four 2019.	North Iowa Corridor EDC			■	
Strategy 4.4. Identify and invest in new sites, buildings, and infrastructure—and leverage existing real estate, transportation, and infrastructure assets—to support the growth of existing employers and the attraction of new businesses.					
4.4.1. Identify and map top development site and building options.	North Iowa Corridor EDC	■		■	
4.4.2. Continue supporting critical local and regional transportation infrastructure investments.	North Iowa Corridor EDC	■			
4.4.3. Continue to expand high bandwidth, redundant broadband wireline, and wireless communications infrastructure. Place priority on areas of the region that do not currently have access to broadband.	North Iowa Corridor EDC	■			

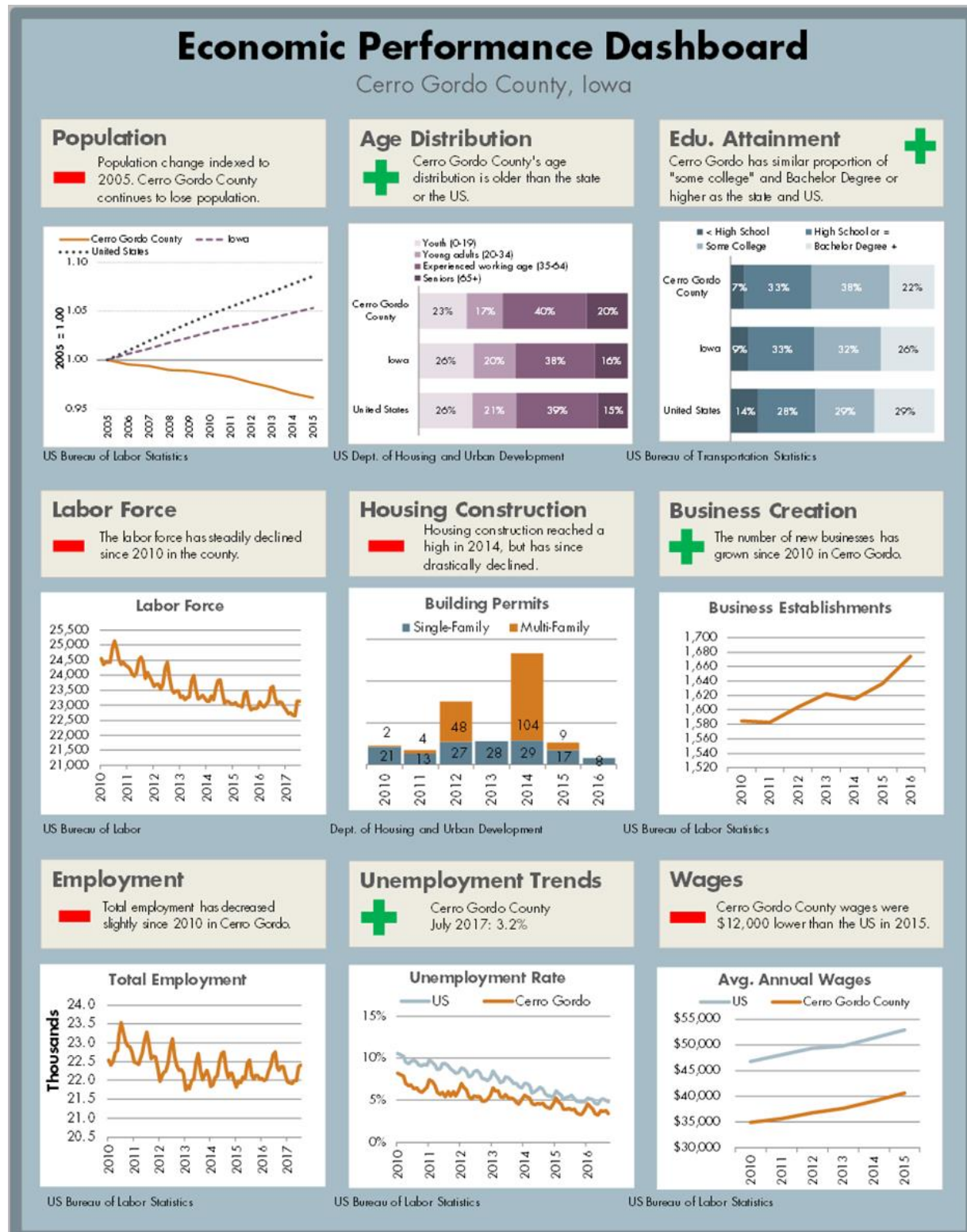
	LEAD IMPLEMENTER/ POTENTIAL PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME			
		Ongoing	Short-Term (12 Months)	Mid-Term (Years 1-2)	Long-Term (Years 3-5)
4.4.4. Promote the industry-certified, shovel-ready site as a key location for prospects.	North Iowa Corridor EDC	■			
4.4.5. Streamline and expedite the county and city's development and inspection processes and improve customer service.	North Iowa Corridor EDC/Cities	■			
4.4.6. In accordance with the Mason City Municipal Airport's master plan, leverage and support efforts to more fully capitalize on its potential for economic development.	North Iowa Corridor EDC	■		■	
4.4.7. Remain engaged with comprehensive planning efforts involving transportation, housing, utilities, recreation, and culture amenities. Ensure that the communities' comprehensive plans support the quality of life and quality of place priorities of this strategic plan.	North Iowa Corridor EDC/Cities/County/ Chambers of Commerce		■		
4.4.8. Cultivate strong relationships with regional utility companies to facilitate deal flow.	North Iowa Corridor EDC	■			

APPENDIX 2. PERFORMANCE METRICS

While it is difficult to directly connect the success of any economic development strategic plan to local-level macroeconomic statistics (for example, population increase, median household income, etc.), tracking some economic indicators provides a general understanding of the relative economic health of the North Iowa region. TIP Strategies recommends using the following indicators to measure program effectiveness and economic growth in the community.

GOAL	METRIC	DATA SOURCE
1. Building a Regional Community & 4. Business Development & Marketing	Number of jobs created/retained	In-house data collection, business interviews, surveys, and media reports
	Average wages of jobs created/retained	In-house data collection, business interviews, surveys, and media reports
	Growth of private capital investment	Business interviews, surveys, and media reports
	Private non-farm employment	Iowa Workforce Development (Labor Market and Career Information)
	Amount of new office space (square feet) added to regional market	Regional commercial real estate brokerage (for example, CB Richard Ellis)
	Amount of new industrial space (square feet) added to regional market	Regional commercial real estate brokerage (for example, CB Richard Ellis)
	Retail sales growth	Iowa Department of Revenue
	Growth of commercial tax base	Cerro Gordo County Assessor
	Hotel occupancy	Iowa Department of Revenue
	Annual air travel passengers	US Department of Transportation (Bureau of Transportation Statistics)
2. People, Place, & Prosperity	Population (especially those age 25+ with a bachelor's degree or higher)	US Census Bureau—American Community Survey (1-year estimates)
	Percent of the population age 20–34	US Census Bureau—American Community Survey (1-year estimates)
	New placemaking projects	In-house data collection
	Number of enrolled college and university students	NIACC, state 4-year public and private universities
	Annual unemployment rate	Iowa Workforce Development (Labor Market and Career Information)
	Graduation rates of area high schools	Regional independent school districts (ISDs)
3. Innovation & Entrepreneurship	Private business establishment growth	US Bureau of Labor Statistics (Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages)
	Number of new businesses formed	Business interviews, surveys, media reports
	Number and dollar value of venture capital and angel investment deals	Business interviews, surveys, media reports
	SBIR/awards	US Small Business Administration (www.SBIR.gov)
	Utility patent grants	US Patent and Trademark Office
	Growth of academic R&D investments	National Science Foundation, University of Northern Iowa

APPENDIX 3. ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD



APPENDIX 4. ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT

The Vision North Iowa initiative was formed to create a multijurisdictional strategy for economic growth and prosperity in the North Iowa region. The strategic plan will identify a diverse set of recommendations to bolster entrepreneurship and innovation in the area, position North Iowa among target industry decision-makers, support future growth sectors through effective workforce development initiatives, and enhance quality of place. The initiatives will balance the need to expand and diversify the region's industrial and employment base with the needs and interests of existing businesses and the local workforce.

The strategies contained in the plan will be formulated with the goal of developing successful people, businesses, and cultural initiatives by creating new jobs and opportunities, while building on the North Iowa region's existing priorities, unique asset base, and past successes. The plan will be supported by an implementation strategy outlining the tools needed to effectively execute on the recommendations.

METHODOLOGY

To provide a common framework for strategic recommendations, TIP Strategies conducted a demographic and economic assessment of the North Iowa region. We began by compiling quantitative data on Cerro Gordo County, with comparisons to the seven-county laborshed, state, and US where appropriate. Results of this analysis begin on page 46. We used this data as well as discussions with community stakeholders to prepare an analysis of North Iowa's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Results of this analysis, commonly referred to as SWOT, are presented on page 44. The purpose of the assessment is to understand the region's relative economic position and highlight its competitive advantages and disadvantages.

The findings presented in this section are based on the following elements.

- A review of relevant studies, plans, and other material provided by the Vision North Iowa executive committee and others.
- A review of economic and demographic data from primary and secondary sources, including the US Census Bureau, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Economic Modeling Specialists Inc. (EMSI), Moody's Analytics, and Esri geographic information.
- Findings from community site visits, interviews, and focus groups with over 100 community representatives and stakeholders over a 6-month period.
- Findings from a 16-question community survey, which received 736 responses.
- TIP Strategies' 20 years of experience working with communities across the country and compiling best practices.

KEY FINDINGS

The economic assessment revealed numerous insights into the North Iowa regional economy. The most significant findings are highlighted below.

- *Steady population decline.* Over the last decade, Cerro Gordo County's population declined by approximately 1,400 residents. The county experienced a sharper decline in total population than its peer communities, the state, and the US between 2010 and 2015. The population is projected to decline by 1,000 additional residents by 2020.
- *Imbalance in age distribution.* Cerro Gordo County's median age is higher than the state and US median age estimates by approximately 5 years. The county has a smaller than average young adult population (20–34) and a larger than average senior population (65+). This imbalance could present challenges in the future, as fewer young adult workers will be available to replace the experienced working-age population (35–64) as they retire.
- *Comparatively low levels of bachelor's degree attainment.* The county and seven-county region fall below the state and US in terms of the share of the adult population with a bachelor's degree or higher. However, the county and region have a greater number of residents with "some college" than the state and nation, which includes those who complete certificates, obtain associates degrees, or enter college but do not graduate.
- *Low income levels.* The median household income in Cerro Gordo County is \$45,012, which is approximately 15 percent less than the state median household income (\$52,716) and about 16 percent less than the national median household income (\$53,482).
- *Net importer of labor.* Cerro Gordo County is a net importer of workers, with a net increase in daytime population of about 2,200. Of the 21,720 workers who held jobs in Cerro Gordo County in 2014, 43 percent lived outside the county. Of the 19,437 residents employed in 2014, 37 percent commuted to jobs outside the county. The healthcare sector represents the largest share of inbound commuting workers, while the manufacturing sector pulls away the largest share of outbound commuting workers.
- *Higher-than-average labor force participation.* The county has a labor force participation rate of roughly 67 percent, which is 3.5 percentage points higher than the national average.
- *Steady employment decline and comparatively low average annual pay.* Total employment in Cerro Gordo County has mostly declined over the last decade. Among the peer communities represented in the competitive analysis, Cerro Gordo County saw the only decline in total employment between 2010 and 2015, while the two other Iowa communities and the state saw a significant increase in total employment. Cerro Gordo County had the second lowest average annual pay after Webster County, IA.
- *Concentration of employment in a stable industry sector.* Approximately half of the county's job base (44.9 percent) is comprised of three industries: healthcare, retail trade, and manufacturing. Healthcare represents the largest share at approximately 20 percent and is the most stable of the three. Healthcare is also projected to see the highest increase in total employment through 2020. While traditionally considered somewhat stable, the retail and manufacturing sectors are more susceptible to economic fluctuations and the impacts of globalization and technology changes that have occurred over the past couple of decades.
- *Shortage of affordable mid-level housing.* Cerro Gordo County was outpaced in housing development by the state and US in 2015. According to Figure 34 on page 62, housing in Cerro Gordo County is relatively affordable in relation to the rest of the US. However, the consulting team's community outreach indicated that, while sufficient entry-level housing is available, affordable intermediate housing is scarce.

SWOT ANALYSIS

In addition to TIP Strategies review of statistical data, our understanding of the North Iowa region was informed by discussions with stakeholders over a 4-month period. Based on this work, and our experience working in communities across the US, we have developed a SWOT analysis. The results of this analysis are based on 1) the statistical data analysis that begins on page 4646; and 2) qualitative research conducted to date, including seven stakeholder interviews, 18 focus groups, a community tour, a community perception survey, four community visioning and values workshops, and a target industry survey. In total, over 1,000 North Iowa residents contributed to the qualitative research that was conducted. Findings from the community perception survey, community visioning and values workshops, and target industry survey are incorporated in the SWOT analysis below. A more detailed community perception survey SWOT analysis is presented separately in Appendix 7 on page 83.

SWOT can be defined as follows.

- **STRENGTHS.** Assets and resources that can be built on to grow, strengthen, and diversify the local economy.
- **WEAKNESSES.** Liabilities and barriers to economic development that could limit growth potential.
- **OPPORTUNITIES.** Competitive advantages and positive trends that hold significant potential for the attraction of new businesses, investments, and skilled workers.
- **THREATS.** Unfavorable factors and trends (often external) that could negatively impact the local economy.



STRENGTHS

- Location (midcontinent, proximity to the I-35 corridor, and relatively short distance to two major metro areas)
- Quality and proximity of transportation assets (confluence of major roads and highways, access to a variety of rail lines, and an exceptional regional airport)
- Productive and stable key industries
- Infrastructure quality and capacity
- Work ethic
- Site availability
- Local financial capital outlets (decisions made locally)
- Low cost of living (20 points below the national average based on COLI figures compiled by C2ER—www.coli.org)
- Civic engagement among residents
- Diverse cultural landmarks and amenities (for example, music, architecture)
- Community events (for example, RAGBRAI, fireworks show)
- Economic hub status
- Agricultural influence
- Collaboration among Clear Lake, Mason City, and the County
- Quality and breadth of educational options (public and private)
- NIACC and Pappajohn Entrepreneurship Center
- POLICOM economic strength ranking of the Micropolitan Statistical Area (#76 out of 551 in 2017, up from 160 in 2016)
- Revitalization projects and public facilities upgrades
- Local television broadcast affiliate
- Quality of life and people (that is, friendly, welcoming, and community minded)
- Optimism among residents about the future of North Iowa



WEAKNESSES

- Economic stagnancy and lack of industry diversity
- Perception of agriculture industry dependency
- Population decline
- Availability of high-wage jobs
- Workforce age, availability, and skill level
- Shortage of appropriately sized existing buildings (prospect demand for ~200K SF of space)
- Largest employers are not locally owned
- “Flyover country” perception
- Shortage of mid-level affordable housing
- Shortage of young adult population
- Shortage of community facilities and activities for young families
- Limited entertainment and nightlife activities for young professionals
- Community polarization; negative perceptions of the community among some citizen groups
- Appearance of entryways into communities
- Regulatory environment viewed as too restrictive by some



OPPORTUNITIES

- Increased community collaboration and unity for economic success
- Increased coordination with NIACC to address industry needs (for example, skills training programs)
- Expansion of the entrepreneur ecosystem
- Capacity to provide incentives for the right project
- Leverage infrastructure capacity
- Certified site availability
- Communication strategy to increase community pride
- Increased youth civic engagement
- Young adult and former resident attraction
- Finding new ways to leverage tourism as a community branding and economic development tool
- Innovative agriculture
- “Changing the perception of change”
- Successful past projects as blueprints for future endeavors
- Regional branding
- Expanded carrier service at the airport



THREATS

- Continuation of demographic and economic trends
- Continuation or escalation of negative perceptions among internal and external audiences
- Global retail attrition
- Economic downturn
- Escalation of antimodern agriculture activism
- Shortage of healthcare professionals (especially physicians) for a key regional employer

DEMOGRAPHICS, EDUCATION, AND WORKFORCE

FIGURE 8. POPULATION TRENDS, CERRO GORDO COUNTY (2006-2016)
ANNUAL ESTIMATES JULY 1 OF EACH YEAR

Over the last decade, the population of Cerro Gordo County declined from approximately 44,500 to 43,100, or 3.1 percent. EMSI projects that the population will decline by 2 percent to around 42,100 by 2020.

Source: US Census Bureau, Population Estimates program. Projection provided by EMSI. Population figures are rounded to the nearest 100. Percentages are rounded to the nearest tenth. Note: via Moody's economy.com.

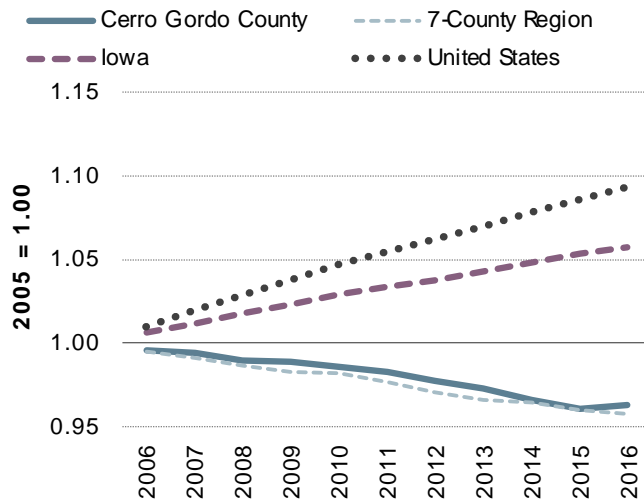
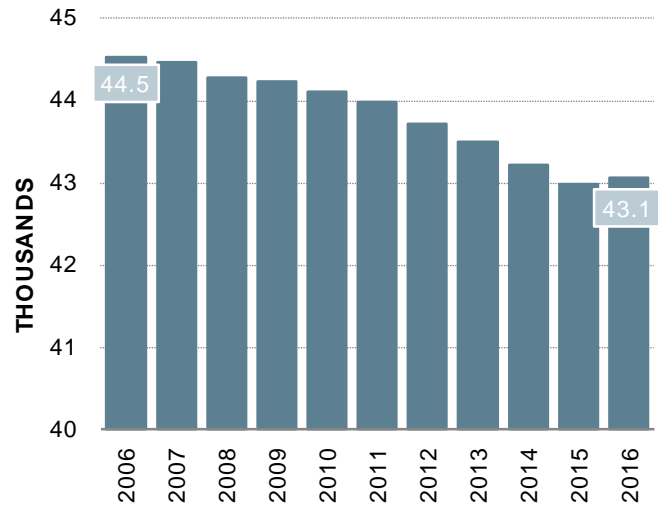


FIGURE 9. POPULATION TRENDS, CERRO GORDO COUNTY (2006-2016)

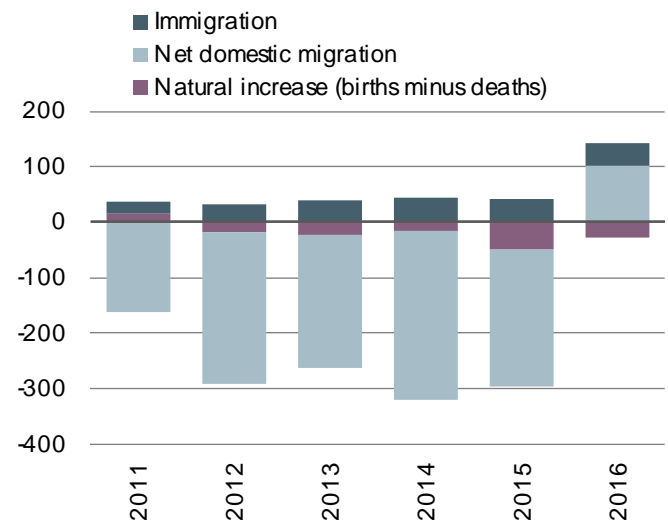
Between 2006 and 2016, the population of the seven-county region declined from 113,200 to 108,900, or 3.8 percent. At the same time, the state of Iowa's population increased by 5 percent and the US population increased by 8 percent.

Source: US Census Bureau, Population Estimates program. Population figures are rounded to the nearest 100. Percentages are rounded to the nearest tenth. Note: via Moody's Analytics.

FIGURE 10. COMPONENTS OF POPULATION CHANGE, CERRO GORDO COUNTY (2011-2016)

From 2011 to 2015, net domestic migration was negative and thus was the largest contributor to the county's population decline. Modest gains were realized in 2016. Natural increase was modestly positive in 2011 but has declined since then. Immigration held fairly constant over the five-year period.

Source: US Census Bureau (history) via Moody's Analytics.



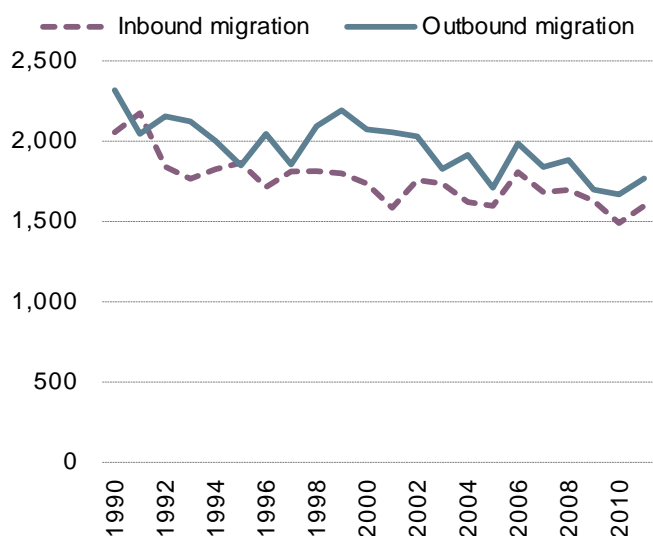


FIGURE 11. INBOUND AND OUTBOUND MIGRATION PATTERNS (1990–2010)

Outbound migration has primarily exceeded inbound migration since 1990. One exception occurred in 1992, when inbound migration spiked slightly—the high point for the 20-year period. In the last 4 years for which data was available, the difference between the inbound and outbound migration was lower than the previous 10 years.

Source: Internal Revenue Service via Moody's Analytics.

FIGURE 12. MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2009–2014)

As of 2014, Cerro Gordo County's median household income was \$45,012, approximately 15 percent less than the state median household income (\$52,716) and about 16 percent less than the national median household income (\$53,482).

In the last 5 years, Cerro Gordo County's median household income remained relatively stable. When adjusted for inflation, however, it decreased marginally.

Source: ACS via Moody's Economy.com.

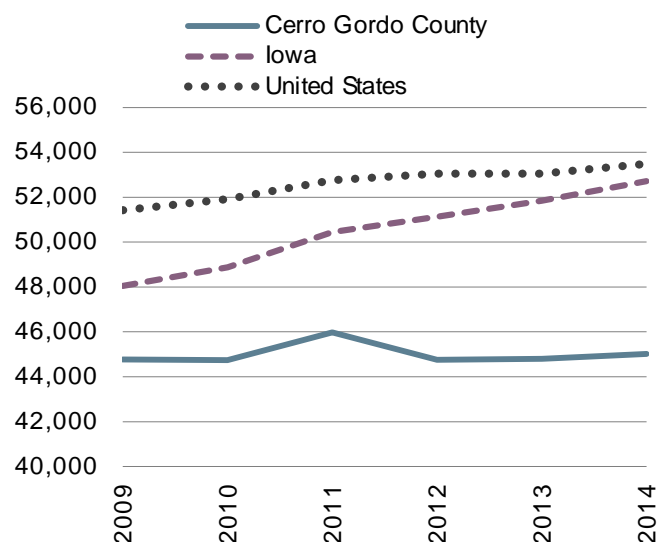


FIGURE 13. AGE DISTRIBUTION (2016)

Cerro Gordo County's median age was 42.7 years as of the 2010 census. Estimates for 2015 indicate an increase to 44 years. This is older than both the 2015 state and US median age estimates, at 38.1 years and 37.8 years respectively.

The young adults (20–34) cohort represents a smaller share of the population in the county and the region than at state and national levels, while the senior cohort (65+) is larger. The youth and experienced working-age populations are on par with those of the state and nation.

Source: ACS via Moody's Economy.com.

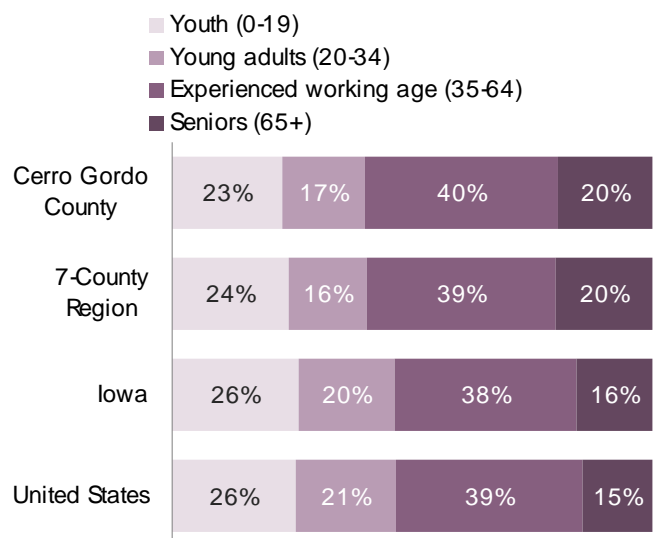
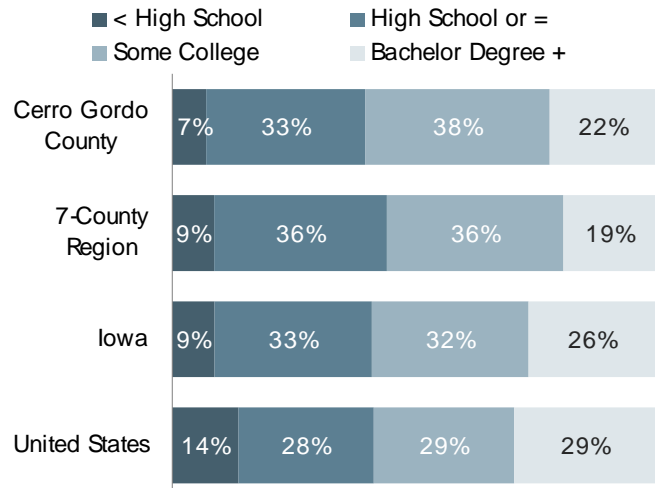


FIGURE 14. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT (2016)

At the low end of the educational attainment spectrum, the county, region, and state are between 5 percent and 7 percent below the national average. The percentage of county, region, or state residents with a high school diploma or equivalent, or “some college,” is greater than the nation. (The “some college” category includes those who complete certificates or associates degrees as well as students who enter college but do not graduate.) The region falls well below bachelor’s degree attainment compared to the nation. The county and state are incrementally higher, but fall short of the national average.

Source: ACS via Moody’s Economy.com.

**FIGURE 15. COMMUTING PATTERNS (2014)**

The graphic below illustrates the commuting patterns of Cerro Gordo County workers. Calculations of these figures conclude that the county is a net importer of workers and thus produces a net increase in daytime population of about 2,200. Figure 17 breaks down commuting flows by North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) industry sector.



Source: US Census Bureau, Local Employment Dynamics.

Note: Overlay arrows are for illustrative purposes and do not indicate directionality of worker flow between home and employment locations.

FIGURE 16. CERRO GORDO COUNTY INDUSTRY CLASS (2014)

The share of internal jobholders working in goods-producing industries and trade, transportation, and utilities is lower than in the shares of the same industries for inbound and outbound commuters. However, the share of internal jobholders who work in all other services is significantly higher than the other two groups.

Source: US Census Bureau, Local Employment Dynamics.

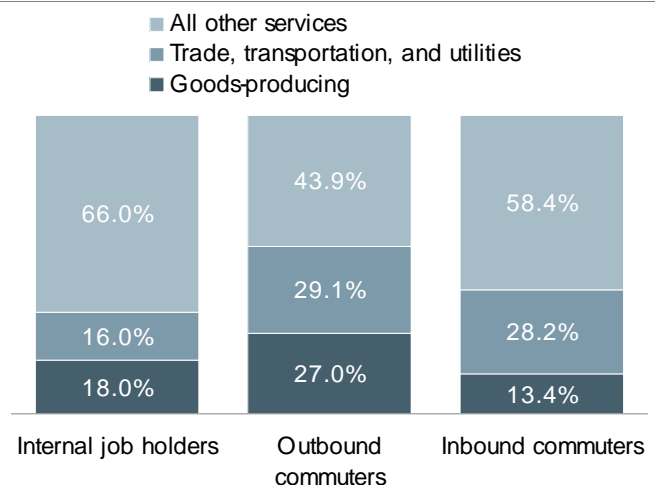
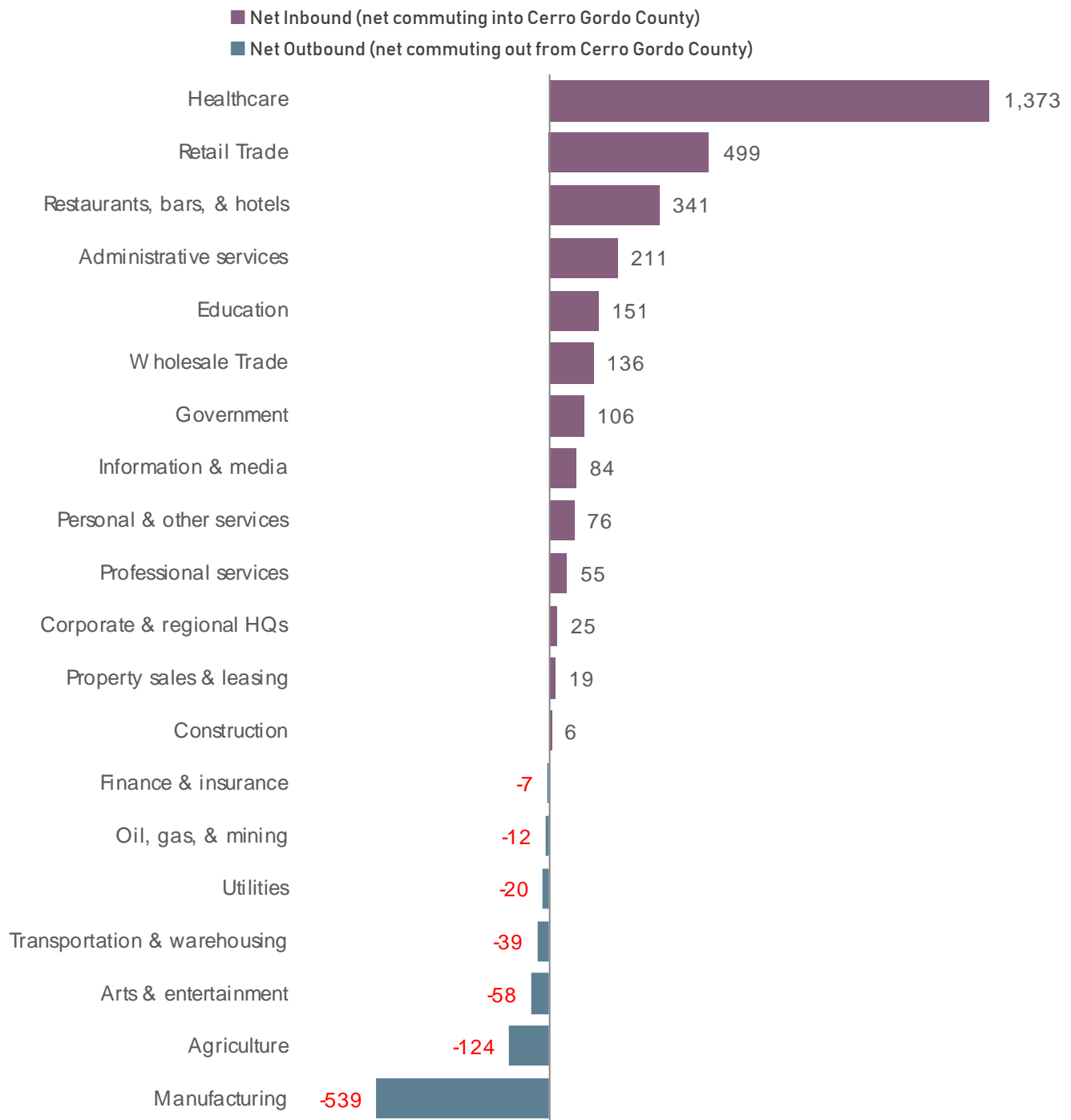


FIGURE 17. NET COMMUTING FLOWS BY NAICS INDUSTRY SECTOR (2014)

Source: US Census Bureau, Local Employment Dynamics.

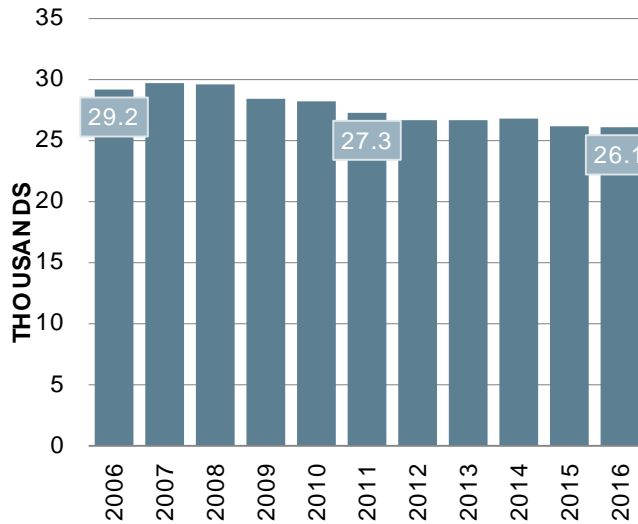


FIGURE 18. CERRO GORDO COUNTY TOTAL EMPLOYMENT (2006–2016)

After a brief and modest increase from 2007 to 2008, total employment in Cerro Gordo County declined steadily for the ensuing 8-year period. Between 2006 and 2016, total employment in Cerro Gordo County declined by 3,100 jobs, or 11 percent.

Source: EMSI 2017.1—QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed.

FIGURE 19. EMPLOYMENT CHANGE (2006–2016) WITH FOUR-YEAR PROJECTIONS

County and region employment growth has roughly tracked state and US growth through the Great Recession (2007–2009), while the county experienced some sharper declines in employment during 2009 and 2015. Growth is projected to converge between 2018 and 2019 and stabilize thereafter.

Source: EMSI 2017.1—QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed.

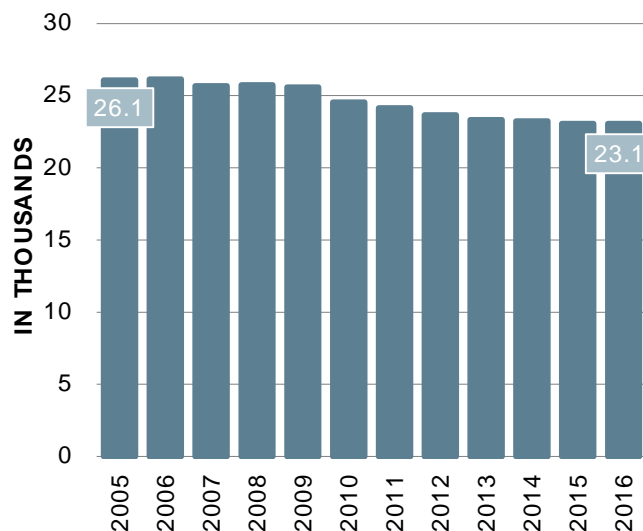
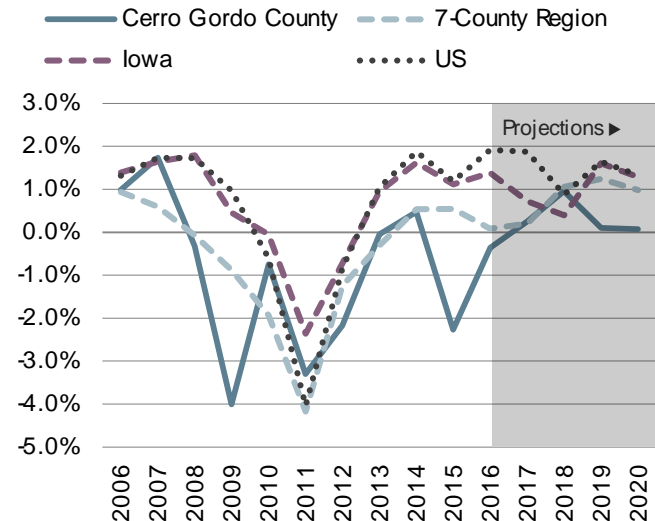


FIGURE 20. CERRO GORDO COUNTY CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE (2005–2016)

As of 2016, Cerro Gordo County had a civilian labor force of 23,100, after experiencing steady declines over the last 10 years. The figure translates to a labor force participation rate of roughly 67 percent, which is higher than the national average of 63.5 percent.

Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics via Moody's.

FIGURE 21. COMPARATIVE LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES (2014)
CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE, PERCENT OF TOTAL

The labor force participation rate of the county, seven-county region, and state are within just a few of percentage points of each another and several percentage points higher than the national rate.

Source: 2010--2014 American Community Survey.

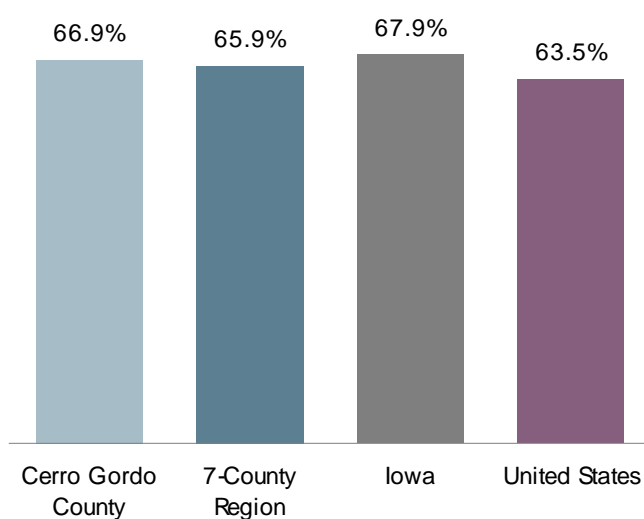
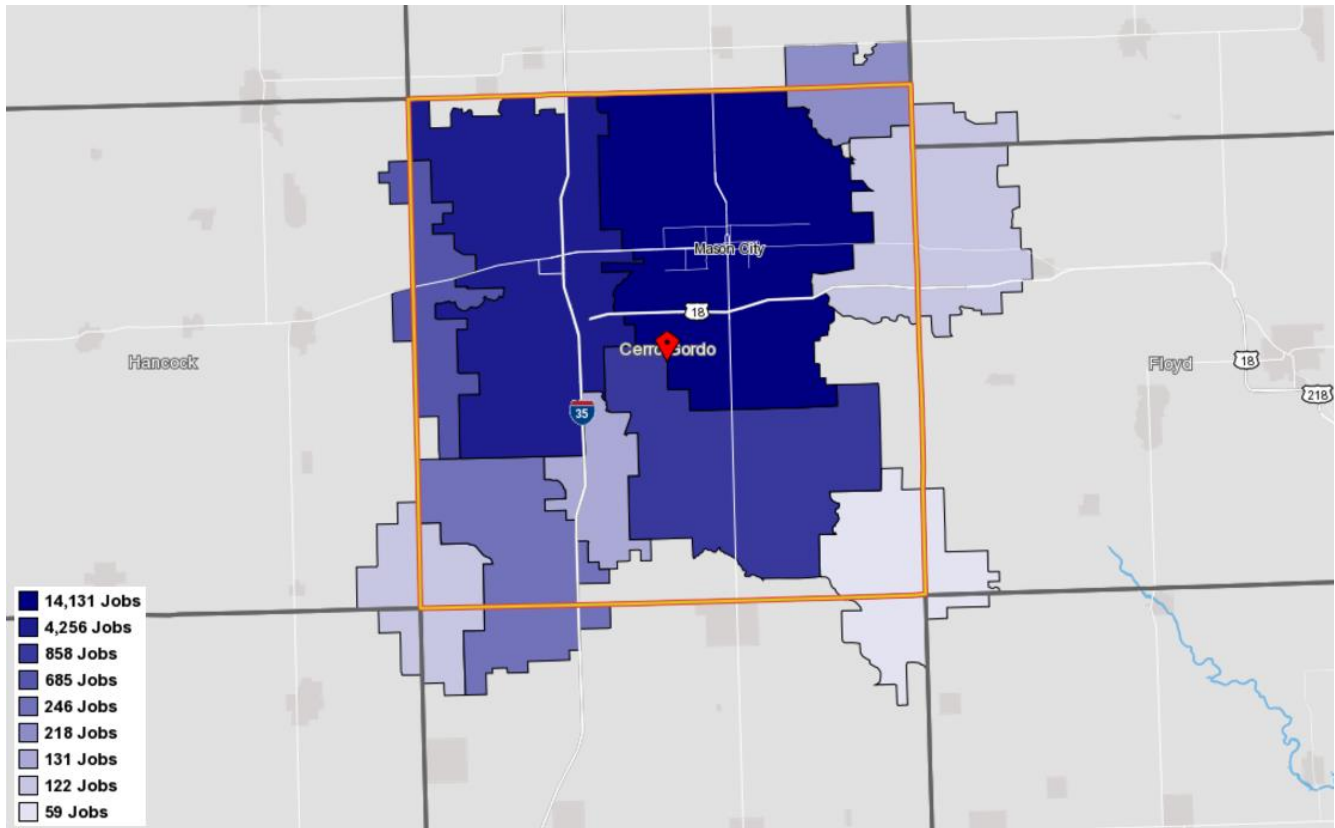


FIGURE 22. CERRO GORDO COUNTY LABORSHED (2014)
EMPLOYEES BY ZIP CODE

In 2014, about 78 percent of workers in Cerro Gordo County lived in the 10 ZIP Codes shown on the map below. Approximately two-thirds of workers lived in a single ZIP Code, 50401, which encompasses the Mason City area. The second largest share of workers, roughly one-fifth, lived in 50428.



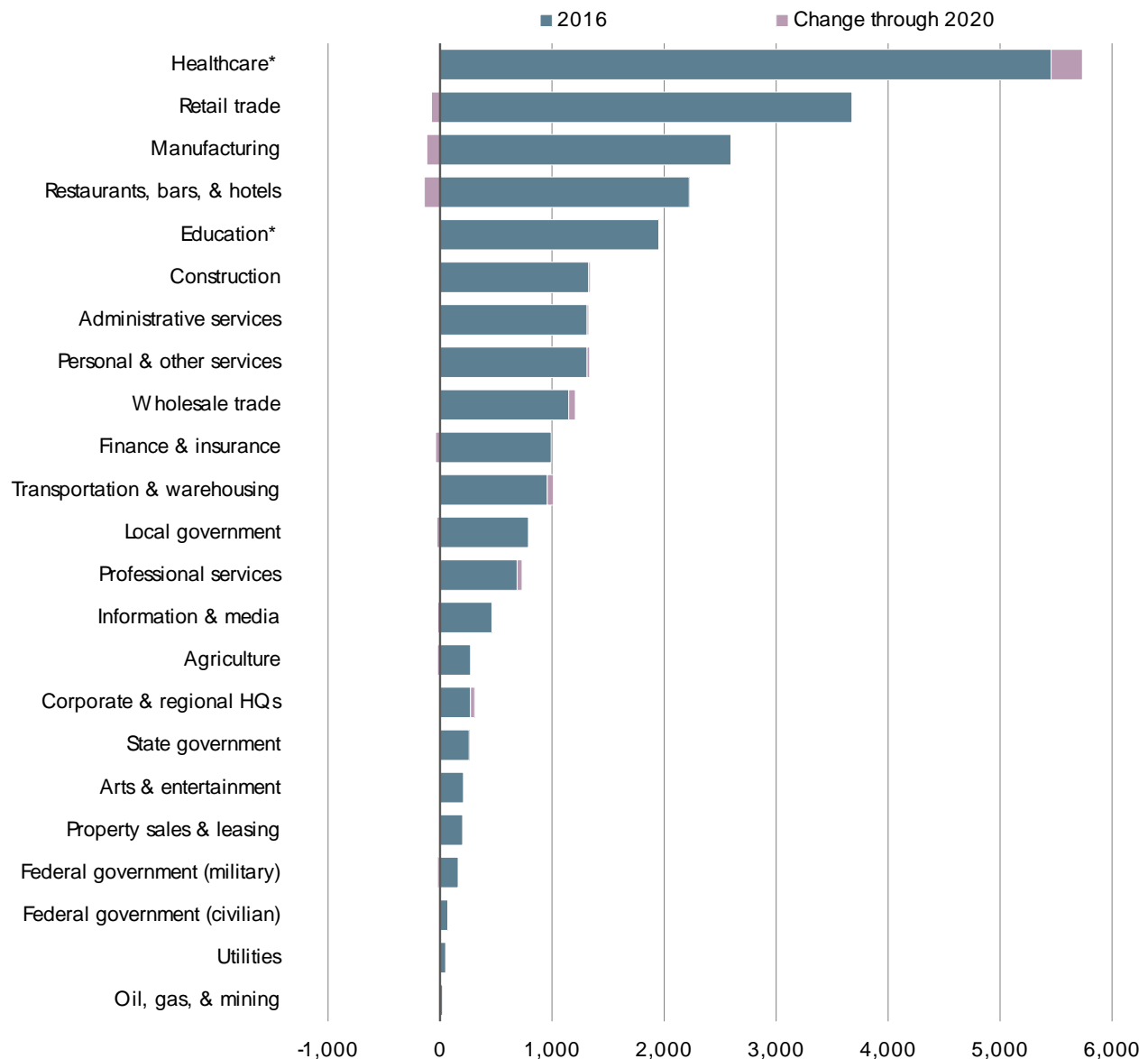
Source: LEHD, On the Map, TIP Strategies research.

Note: Top 10 ZIP Codes (in order) are 50401, 50428, 50469, 50482, 50479, 50464, 50477, 50457, 50458, 50433.

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

FIGURE 23. CERRO GORDO COUNTY TOTAL EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY
JOB BASE 2016 AND PROJECTED CHANGE THROUGH 2020

Healthcare holds the largest share of employment in the county. This industry is also projected to see the highest increase in total employment through 2020. While the county remains a regional center for retail, manufacturing, hospitality, and education, employment is projected to decline modestly in retail, manufacturing, and hospitality over the next 5 years.

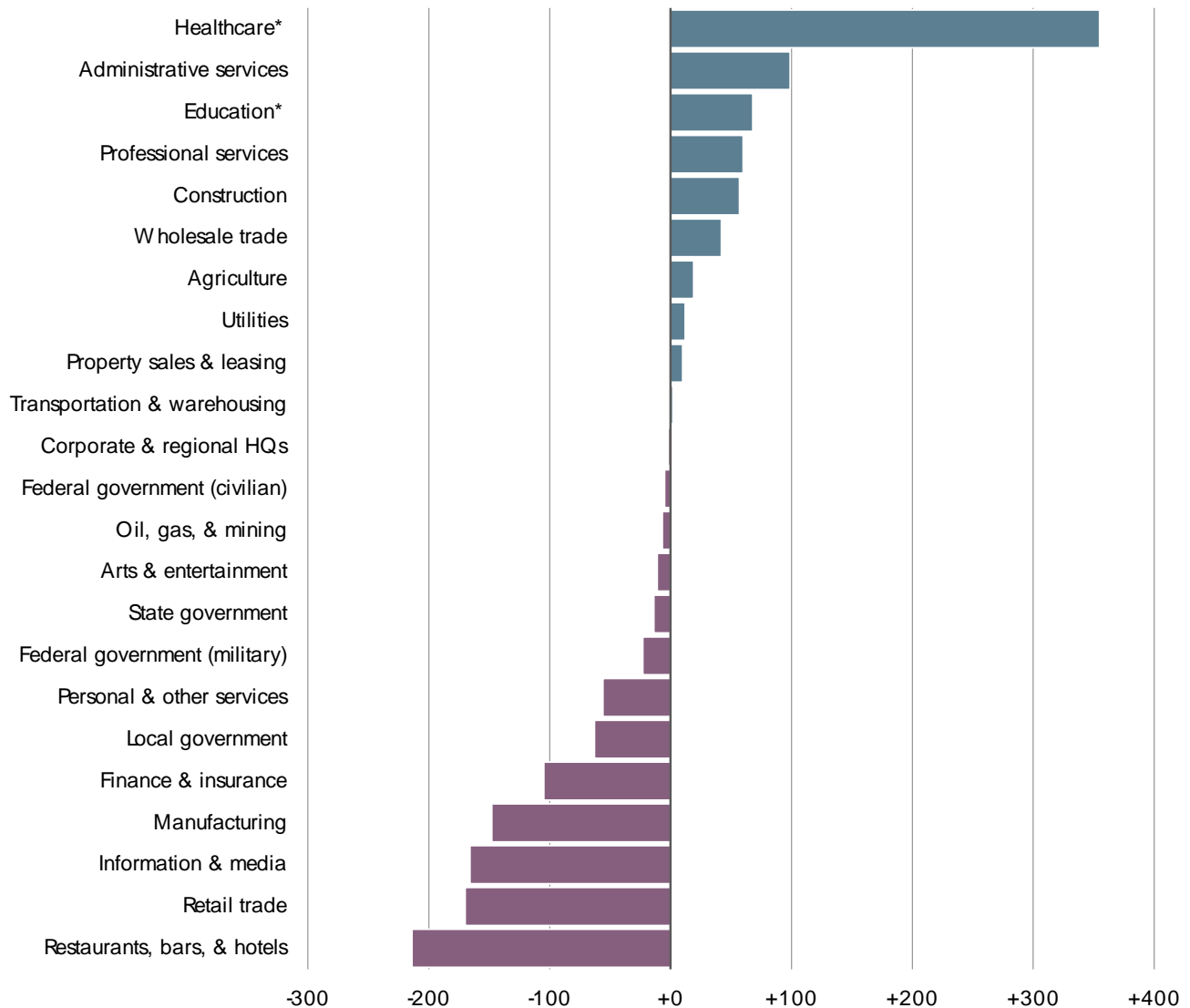


Source: EMSI 2017.1—QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed. Excludes military and unclassified employment.

*Note: Education includes all public schools, colleges, and universities. Healthcare includes all public hospitals.

FIGURE 24. CERRO GORDO COUNTY NET JOB CHANGE BY INDUSTRY (2011–2016)

Healthcare was also the dominant job creator in the county between 2011 and 2016, followed by administrative services**, education, professional services, construction, and wholesale trade. Restaurants, hotels, and bars; retail trade; information and media; manufacturing, and finance and insurance saw the largest declines during this period.



Source: EMSI 2017.1—QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed.

*Note: Education includes all public schools, colleges, and universities (that is, these jobs are not included with local or state government). Healthcare includes all public hospitals. Excludes military and unclassified employment.

**Industries in the administrative and support services subsector group establishments engaged in activities that support the day-to-day operations of other organizations. The processes employed in this sector (for example, general management, personnel administration, clerical activities, cleaning activities) are often integral parts of the activities of establishments found in all sectors of the economy. The establishments classified in this subsector have specialization in one or more of these activities and can, therefore, provide services to clients in a variety of industries and, in some cases, to households. The individual industries of this subsector are defined on the basis of the particular process that they are engaged in and the particular services they provide.

FIGURE 25. INDUSTRY DISTRIBUTION (2016, PERCENT OF TOTAL)
COMPARISON OF CERRO GORDO COUNTY WITH THE REGION, STATE, AND NATION

The county's top three industry sectors account for about half of the total employment base. Healthcare and retail account for a greater share of the county's employment base than they do in the region, state, and nation. Cerro Gordo's manufacturing sector accounts for a smaller share than in the region and state but accounts for a slightly larger share than in the nation.

NAICS Code & Description		Cerro Gordo County	7-County Region	Iowa	US
62	Healthcare & social assistance*	20.8%	15.6%	13.3%	13.3%
44-45	Retail trade	14.0%	10.9%	10.9%	10.6%
31-33	Manufacturing	9.9%	18.1%	12.6%	8.1%
72	Lodging, restaurants, & bars	8.5%	5.9%	7.2%	8.6%
61	Education*	7.4%	7.7%	10.4%	9.3%
23	Construction	5.1%	5.3%	5.9%	5.4%
56	Administrative & support services	5.0%	3.3%	4.4%	6.3%
81	Personal & other services	5.0%	5.7%	4.7%	4.9%
42	Wholesale trade	4.4%	4.3%	4.0%	3.9%
52	Finance & insurance	3.8%	3.3%	5.6%	3.9%
48-49	Transportation & warehousing	3.3%	3.3%	3.8%	3.5%
9039	Local govt.	3.0%	3.7%	3.2%	3.6%
54	Professional services	2.6%	2.0%	3.3%	6.5%
51	Information	1.8%	1.3%	1.4%	1.9%
11	Agriculture & forestry	1.0%	4.5%	3.2%	1.3%
55	Corporate & regional offices	1.0%	1.1%	1.1%	1.4%
9029	State govt.	1.0%	0.6%	1.1%	1.5%
71	Arts, entertainment, & recreation	0.8%	1.6%	1.3%	1.7%
53	Property sales & leasing	0.8%	0.5%	1.0%	1.7%
9011	Federal govt. (civilian)	0.6%	0.7%	1.0%	1.8%
22	Utilities	0.2%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%
21	Mining (incl. oil & gas)	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.4%

Source: EMSI 2017.1—QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed.

*Note: Education includes all public schools, colleges, and universities. Healthcare includes all public hospitals. Excludes military and unclassified employment. Three largest industries are highlighted.

FIGURE 26. INDUSTRY CONCENTRATION (2016, LQ)
COMPARISON OF CERRO GORDO COUNTY WITH THE REGION, STATE, AND NATION

Cerro Gordo County has a higher-than-average concentration of employment in healthcare and retail employment relative to the nation. The county also shows strengths in manufacturing, as evidenced by its LQ of 1.23. However, Cerro Gordo's employment levels in the sector lag that of the seven-county region and the state, with LQs of 2.25 and 1.57, respectively. In addition to its high manufacturing LQ, the region has concentrations of employment in agriculture and forestry-related employment (LQ = 3.64) and utilities (LQ = 1.21). Neither the county nor the region match the state's concentration in finance and insurance employment, illustrated by an LQ of 1.43 for the sector.

NAICS Code & Description		Cerro Gordo County	7-County Region	Iowa	US
62	Healthcare & social assistance*	1.56	1.17	1.00	1.00
44-45	Retail trade	1.34	1.04	1.04	1.00
31-33	Manufacturing	1.23	2.25	1.57	1.00
42	Wholesale trade	1.14	1.10	1.04	1.00
81	Personal & other services	1.03	1.18	0.98	1.00
72	Lodging, restaurants, & bars	0.99	0.69	0.84	1.00
52	Finance & insurance	0.97	0.85	1.43	1.00
48-49	Transportation & warehousing	0.97	0.96	1.10	1.00
23	Construction	0.94	0.99	1.09	1.00
51	Information	0.94	0.71	0.75	1.00
9039	Local govt.	0.84	1.04	0.89	1.00
11	Agriculture & forestry	0.83	3.64	2.56	1.00
56	Administrative & support services	0.80	0.52	0.70	1.00
61	Education*	0.80	0.83	1.11	1.00
55	Corporate & regional offices	0.73	0.75	0.79	1.00
9029	State govt.	0.68	0.40	0.76	1.00
22	Utilities	0.54	1.21	1.06	1.00
53	Property sales & leasing	0.47	0.33	0.58	1.00
71	Arts, entertainment, & recreation	0.47	0.92	0.75	1.00
54	Professional services	0.41	0.31	0.52	1.00
9011	Federal govt. (civilian)	0.33	0.36	0.56	1.00
21	Mining (incl. oil & gas)	0.18	0.39	0.29	1.00

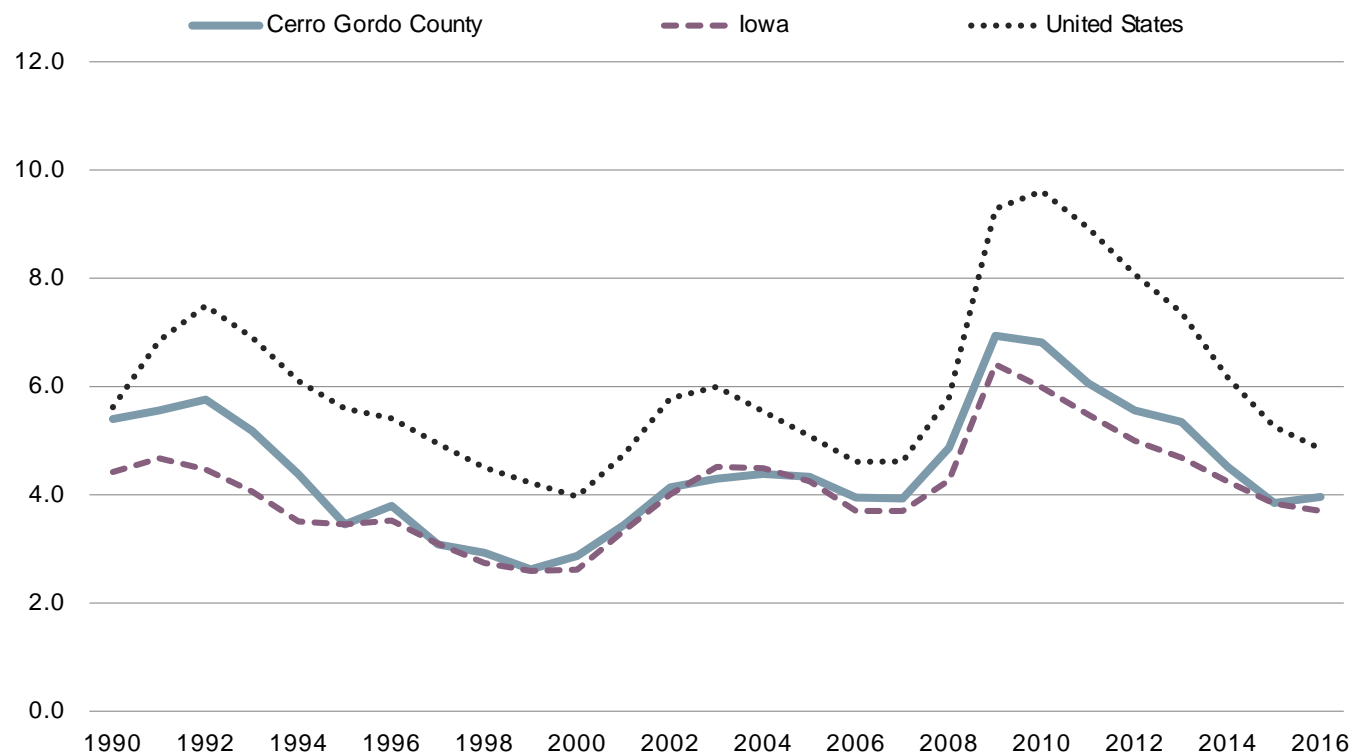
Source: EMSI 2017.1—QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed.

*Notes: Education includes all public schools, colleges, and universities. Healthcare includes all public hospitals. Excludes military and unclassified employment. LQs greater than 1.2 are presumed to show competitive advantage and are highlighted.

LOCATION QUOTIENT (LQ) ANALYSIS is a statistical technique used to suggest areas of relative advantage based on a region's employment base. LQs are calculated as an industry's share of total local employment divided by the same industry's share of employment at the national level. If the local industry and national industry are perfectly proportional, the LQ will be 1.00. LQs greater than 1.2 are presumed to indicate a comparative advantage; those below 0.75 suggest areas of weakness but also point to opportunities for expansion or attraction.

FIGURE 27. UNEMPLOYMENT (1990-2016)
ANNUAL RATE COMPARISON

As of December 2016, Cerro Gordo County's unemployment rate was 4 percent. This was marginally higher than the state unemployment rate of 3.7 percent and lower than the national rate of 4.9 percent. The chart below shows the county's unemployment rate in comparison to the state and nation over the last quarter century. The county's unemployment rate has largely been on par with the state rate but lower than the national rate.



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics (state and local), Current Population Survey (national)

FIGURE 28. ANNUAL UNEMPLOYMENT RATES
25-YEAR RANGE (1991-2016)

The chart to the right shows a comparison of county, state, and national unemployment rates with historical ranges of fluctuation (represented by the vertical line) over the last 25 years.

Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics (state and local), Current Population Survey (national).

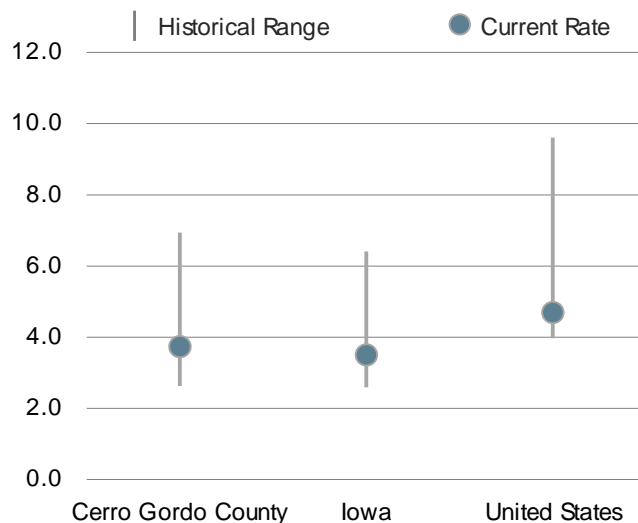


FIGURE 29. OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION (2016, PERCENT OF TOTAL)
COMPARISON OF CERRO GORDO COUNTY WITH THE REGION, STATE, AND US

Office and administrative support is the largest occupational group in Cerro Gordo County. Combined with sales-related jobs and food preparation and serving workers, the three occupational groups account for more than one-third of the county's total employment (34 percent). By comparison, these three groups account for a slightly smaller share of employment in the region (29 percent) and the state (31 percent). As noted previously, the county, region, and state have above--average levels of employment in manufacturing industries, suggesting an area of specialization. This specialization can also be seen when looking at employment by occupation. At the regional level, nearly 1 in 8 workers are employed in production occupations (12.9 percent), while at the national level this figure is closer to 1 in 17.

SOC Code & Description	Cerro Gordo County	7-County Region	Iowa	US
43 Office & Administrative Support	13.7%	12.4%	14.1%	15.2%
41 Sales & Related	11.1%	9.1%	9.2%	10.2%
35 Food Preparation & Serving Related	9.5%	7.6%	7.8%	8.4%
51 Production	8.0%	12.9%	9.1%	6.0%
53 Transportation & Material Moving	7.9%	7.6%	7.7%	6.6%
29 Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	7.2%	5.1%	5.0%	5.5%
11 Management	5.2%	6.9%	7.2%	5.5%
39 Personal Care & Service	5.1%	5.0%	4.3%	4.1%
25 Education, Training, & Library	4.9%	5.3%	5.9%	5.8%
47 Construction & Extraction	4.5%	4.9%	4.9%	4.5%
31 Healthcare Support	4.2%	3.5%	2.8%	2.8%
49 Installation, Maintenance, & Repair	3.8%	4.7%	4.4%	3.8%
37 Building/ Grounds Cleaning & Maint.	3.7%	3.4%	3.5%	3.8%
13 Business & Financial Operations	3.0%	2.8%	4.1%	5.1%
21 Community & Social Service	2.6%	1.9%	1.6%	1.6%
27 Arts, Design, Entertainment, & Media	1.3%	1.2%	1.5%	1.8%
15 Computer & Mathematical	1.2%	1.0%	2.0%	2.8%
33 Protective Service	0.9%	1.0%	1.4%	2.3%
17 Architecture & Engineering	0.7%	0.9%	1.2%	1.7%
45 Farming, Fishing, & Forestry	0.6%	2.0%	1.2%	0.8%
19 Life, Physical, & Social Science	0.5%	0.7%	0.7%	0.8%
23 Legal	0.2%	0.3%	0.5%	0.8%

Source: 2017.1—QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed.

Note: Excludes military and unclassified employment. Distribution table: Three largest occupations are highlighted.

FIGURE 30. OCCUPATIONAL CONCENTRATION (2016, LQ)
COMPARISON OF CERRO GORDO COUNTY WITH THE REGION, STATE, AND US

The county has a higher concentration of community and social service, healthcare support, production, and healthcare practitioners and technical occupations than the region, state, and nation. Occupations that are less concentrated relative to the nation include management (0.94) and farming, fishing, and forestry (0.73).

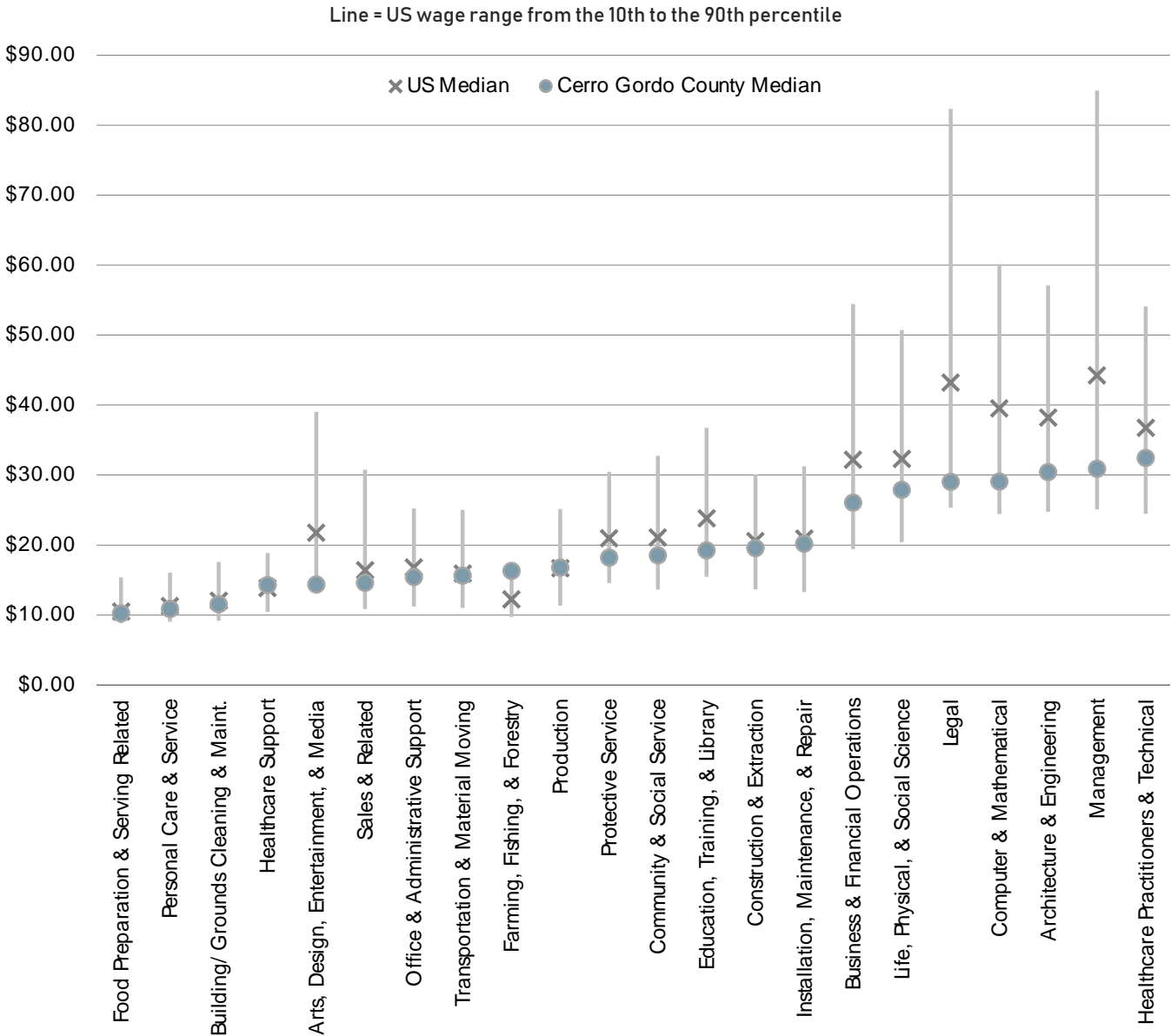
SOC Code & Description	Cerro Gordo County	7-County Region	Iowa	US
21 Community & Social Service	1.57	1.18	1.00	1.00
31 Healthcare Support	1.52	1.26	0.99	1.00
51 Production	1.34	2.13	1.50	1.00
29 Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	1.32	0.94	0.92	1.00
39 Personal Care & Service	1.23	1.21	1.05	1.00
53 Transportation & Material Moving	1.20	1.15	1.16	1.00
35 Food Preparation & Serving Related	1.13	0.90	0.92	1.00
41 Sales & Related	1.09	0.89	0.90	1.00
47 Construction & Extraction	1.01	1.08	1.08	1.00
49 Installation, Maintenance, & Repair	0.98	1.21	1.13	1.00
37 Building/ Grounds Cleaning & Maint.	0.97	0.90	0.93	1.00
11 Management	0.94	1.26	1.31	1.00
43 Office & Administrative Support	0.90	0.81	0.92	1.00
25 Education, Training, & Library	0.86	0.91	1.02	1.00
45 Farming, Fishing, & Forestry	0.73	2.53	1.55	1.00
27 Arts, Design, Entertainment, & Media	0.73	0.65	0.80	1.00
19 Life, Physical, & Social Science	0.66	0.83	0.87	1.00
13 Business & Financial Operations	0.59	0.55	0.82	1.00
17 Architecture & Engineering	0.44	0.55	0.70	1.00
15 Computer & Mathematical	0.43	0.35	0.71	1.00
33 Protective Service	0.41	0.43	0.63	1.00
23 Legal	0.28	0.31	0.60	1.00

Source: EMSI 2017.1—QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed.

Note: Excludes military and unclassified employment. Distribution table: Six largest occupations are highlighted. LQ table: LQs greater than 1.2 are presumed to show competitive advantage and are highlighted.

**FIGURE 31. CERRO GORDO COUNTY WAGES IN THE CONTEXT OF US WAGE RATES
BY MAJOR OCCUPATIONAL GROUP (2015)**

Among the 22 major occupational groups shown below, Cerro Gordo County’s median hourly wage rates are on par with US rates in 8 occupational groups, but fall below the US in the remaining 13. Farming, fishing, and forestry is the only occupational group with higher median wages than the US in 2015.



Source: 2017.1—QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed.

COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

As part of the economic assessment, TIP Strategies provided statistical comparisons between the North Iowa region and several similarly situated benchmark regions nearby and around the nation. State and US data was also included in these comparisons. The regions were chosen based on TIP Strategies research, stakeholder feedback, and responses from community surveys. They include Belknap County, NH (Laconia, NH); Carter County, OK (Ardmore, OK); Dubuque County, IA (Dubuque, IA); Mower County, MN (Austin, MN); and Webster County, IA (Fort Dodge, IA). Below are rationales for the two peers chosen outside the Midwest region.

BELKNAP COUNTY, NH (LARGEST CITY: LACONIA, NH)

Similarities

- Tourist area with a small city and a major lake (Lake Winnepesaukee)
- Two-hour drive time from Boston and Portland
- Similar micropolitan population size to North Iowa
- Includes an interstate highway
- Similar racial/ethnic composition

Differences

- More of a recreational economy than agricultural
- No architectural legacies

CARTER COUNTY, OK (LARGEST CITY: ARDMORE, OK)

Similarities

- Midway between the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex (2 hours) and Oklahoma City (2 hours)
- Along the same interstate that runs through North Iowa
- Agricultural region
- Micropolitan population size is similar to North Iowa
- Tourist lake area nearby (Lake Murray)

Differences

- Growing population (different dynamic than North Iowa)
- No architectural legacy to draw on

FIGURE 32. TOTAL POPULATION, 2010 AND 2016
WITH MEDIAN AGE (2015)

Cerro Gordo County experienced a sharper decline in total population than its peer communities, the state, and the US between 2010 and 2016, as shown in the chart below. Webster County, the closest community geographically to Cerro Gordo County, experienced a similar decline during the same period. The median age of Cerro Gordo's population was higher than the US, the state, and all the peer communities except Belknap County.

Geography	2010	2016	2010 to 2016		Median Age (2015)
			Net Chg.	% Chg.	
United States	309,348,193	323,127,513	+13,779,320	+4.5%	37.7
Dubuque County (IA)	93,926	97,003	+3,077	+3.3%	38.8
Iowa	3,050,738	3,134,693	+83,955	+2.8%	38.1
Carter County (OK)	47,791	48,556	+765	+1.6%	38.6
Belknap County (NH)	60,100	60,779	+679	+1.1%	46.1
Mower County (MN)	39,188	39,163	-25	-0.1%	39.0
Cerro Gordo, IA	44,116	43,070	-1,046	-2.4%	44.2
Webster County (IA)	37,876	36,769	-1,107	-2.9%	39.7

Source: US Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program (population); ACS 5-year estimates (median age) accessed via Moody's Analytics.

FIGURE 33. RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PERMITS (2016)
TOTAL UNITS PERMITTED, SEASONALLY ADJUSTED ANNUAL ESTIMATES

Residential development was not as brisk as the rest of the state and US in 2016. However, significantly more building activity occurred in Cerro Gordo County compared to its closest neighbor, Webster County. Cerro Gordo's construction was on par with neighboring Mower County, MN.

Geography	Total Units 2016	Population 2016 (in thousands)	Total Units Permitted per 1,000 Residents
Iowa	14,317	3,135	4.6
Dubuque County (IA)	368	97	3.8
United States	1,206,642	323,128	3.7
Belknap County (NH)	198	61	3.3
Carter County (OK)	70	49	1.4
Mower County (MN)	39	39	1.0
Cerro Gordo, IA	38	43	0.9
Webster County (IA)	18	37	0.5

Source: Moody's Analytics seasonally adjusted annual estimates based on monthly permit data collected by the US Census Bureau.

FIGURE 34. HOUSING AFFORDABILITY (2015)
HOME VALUE TO INCOME RATIO

Cerro Gordo County falls in the middle in terms of housing affordability. The county has significantly lower housing costs compared to the US, but slightly more expensive housing than the state and two neighboring peer counties (Mower and Webster).

Geography	Median Home Values* (2015)	Median Household Income (2015)	Housing Affordability**
Belknap County, NH	\$219,600	\$62,159	3.53
United States	\$194,500	\$55,775	3.49
Dubuque County, IA	\$149,400	\$54,605	2.74
Cerro Gordo, IA	\$115,200	\$46,122	2.50
Iowa	\$129,200	\$53,183	2.43
Mower County, MN	\$111,700	\$49,427	2.26
Carter County, OK	\$97,000	\$44,531	2.18
Webster County, IA	\$85,900	\$42,408	2.03

Source: 2015 American Community Survey 5-year estimates accessed via Moody's Analytics.

Notes: *Owner-occupied units. **Housing affordability: home value/income ratio (lower = more affordable).

FIGURE 35. LABOR FORCE AND UNEMPLOYMENT RATES, 2010 TO 2016
LABOR FORCE IN THOUSANDS

Between 2010 and 2016, Cerro Gordo County experienced a more significant decline (5.6 percent) in labor force than its peers, the state, and the nation. It had a lower unemployment rate than Carter County and was close to par with Webster County. It had a higher unemployment rate than the remaining three peer communities.

Geography			2010 to 2016		Unemp. Rate (As of Nov 2016)
	2010	2016	Net Chg.	% Chg.	
Carter County (OK)	21.2	22.6	+1.4	+6.5%	5.4
United States	153,885.3	159,186.4	+5,301.2	+3.4%	5.3
Webster County (IA)	20.1	20.7	+0.6	+2.8%	4.1
Dubuque County (IA)	54.2	55.0	+0.8	+1.4%	3.4
Iowa	1,676.9	1,699.3	+22.4	+1.3%	3.8
Mower County (MN)	20.9	20.4	-0.4	-2.0%	3.2
Belknap County (NH)	32.3	31.4	-0.9	-2.7%	2.6
Cerro Gordo, IA	24.5	23.2	-1.4	-5.6%	4.0

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics accessed via Moody's Analytics.

FIGURE 36. TOTAL EMPLOYMENT, 2006 TO 2015

ALL DATA EXCEPT FOR PERCENTAGES AND AVERAGE ANNUAL PAY IN THOUSANDS

Among the peer communities, the state, and the US, Cerro Gordo County saw the only decline in total employment between 2010 and 2015. Similarly, Mower County only experienced a modest increase during the same period. The two other Iowa communities and the state as a whole saw a significant increase in total employment. Cerro Gordo County had the second lowest average annual pay after Webster County, IA.

Geography	2010	2015	2010 to 2015		Average Annual Pay
			Net Chg.	% Chg.	
Carter County, OK	22	24	+2	+10.6%	\$41,210.00
United States	1,278,204	+1,394,917	+116,713	+9.1%	\$52,876.00
Dubuque County, IA	54	58	+4	+8.3%	\$42,570.00
Webster County, IA	18	19	+1	+7.0%	\$42,200.00
Iowa	14,363	15,302	+939	+6.5%	\$43,530.00
Belknap County, NH	25	26	+1	+2.6%	\$40,260.00
Mower County, MN	16	+16	+0	+1.3%	\$47,490.00
Cerro Gordo, IA	24	24	-0	-1.4%	\$40,350.00

Source: Household Survey (CPS)—Employment and QCEW—annual wages via Moody's Analytics.

APPENDIX 5. TARGET INDUSTRY ANALYSIS

The selection of target industries is intended to help guide marketing and outreach efforts to support business recruitment and industry cluster development. The industry profiles that follow provide information on industry trends, strategic considerations specific to North Iowa, typical staffing patterns, and resources for networking and intelligence gathering. Steps for enhancing the area's marketing and recruitment program generally, as well as target-specific recommendations, are incorporated into the strategic plan in Strategy 4.2.

APPROACH

In reviewing target sectors for North Iowa, TIPS Strategies examined detailed industry data to identify which industries are well established in the region, how they performed over the last 5 years, and how they are expected to perform in the future. For this analysis, we looked at the following factors.

- **CRITICAL MASS:** Are there a significant number of firms and jobs in the sector?
- **COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE:** Does North Iowa have a higher concentration of employment in this sector than the nation overall?
- **GROWTH PROSPECTS:** Is the industry projected to grow nationally and/or within the region?
- **IMPACT:** Does growth in the industry spill over to other sectors?
- **ONGOING INITIATIVES:** Are there relevant cluster initiatives already in progress locally or at the state or regional level?

Potential targets were further narrowed based on an understanding of regional assets and local goals. Finally, consideration was given to how possible targets relate to the opportunities and challenges identified during the planning process, as well as national and global economic and demographic trends. An overview of the strategic framework for industry targeting is provided in Figure 37. A summary of North Iowa's strategic assets, which were considered as part of the industry selection process and which can be highlighted in regional marketing materials, is provided as Figure 38.

The following key sectors were identified and are profiled in the following pages.

- Advanced manufacturing
- Value-added agriculture and food processing
- Healthcare
- Transportation and warehousing

FIGURE 37. TARGETING FRAMEWORK



FIGURE 38. STRATEGIC ASSETS



MARKET ACCESS

- Economic, recreational, and cultural hub for a region of 150,000+ residents
- Intersection of two interstate highways (I-35 & IA-27)
- Short distance to two major metro areas
- Eleven million US residents within a half-day drive (200 miles)



INDUSTRIAL SITES

- 145-acre certified shovel-ready site
- Clear Lake Industrial Park
- Mason City Municipal Airport Industrial Park
- Ample inventory of available land located in incentive-qualifying zones and near major highway corridors



TRANSPORTATION

- Two Class I railroads and two commercial short-line railroads
- Strong regional airport with daily nonstop flights to Minneapolis–Saint Paul, Chicago O'Hare, and St. Louis
- Two-hour drive to two international airports
- Majority of Cerro Gordo County commuters (57 percent) travel fewer than 10 miles to work
-



UTILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

- Overall cost of utilities falls below the national average*
- Ample supply of reliable, safe power
- High water capacity and availability



WORKFORCE

- 40,000 currently employed individuals within a 30-minute drive
- 67,000 currently employed individuals within a 45-minute drive
- 100,000 currently employed individuals within a 60-minute drive



EDUCATION

- Strong community college presence with an in-house entrepreneur assistance center and business incubator
- National Career Readiness Certificate program
- Proximity to University of Northern Iowa
- Strong public and private K–12 systems

*Based on COLI figures compiled by C2ER—www.coli.org.
Source: TIP Strategies research.

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

The term “advanced manufacturing” is used to describe industries and companies that incorporate innovative technologies as part of their production processes. Advanced manufacturers tend to 1) have relatively high levels of capital expenditures; 2) pay above-average wages; and 3) invest heavily in R&D. Manufacturing (NAICS 31–33) employment in the regional laborshed expanded by 11 percent from 2010 to 2016. While employment in the county is projected to remain flat, manufacturing jobs in the laborshed should increase at a pace similar to the US.

FIGURE 39. SNAPSHOT (NAICS 31–33)

	CERRO GORDO COUNTY	LABORSHED
Employment, 2016	2,596	10,524
Change from 2010 (#)	-248	1,029
Change from 2010 (%)	-9%	11%
Location quotient (US=1.00)	1.23	2.25
Avg. earnings per job	\$63,004	\$61,595
Number of establishments	64	205

FIGURE 40. EMPLOYMENT TRENDS (NAICS 31–33)

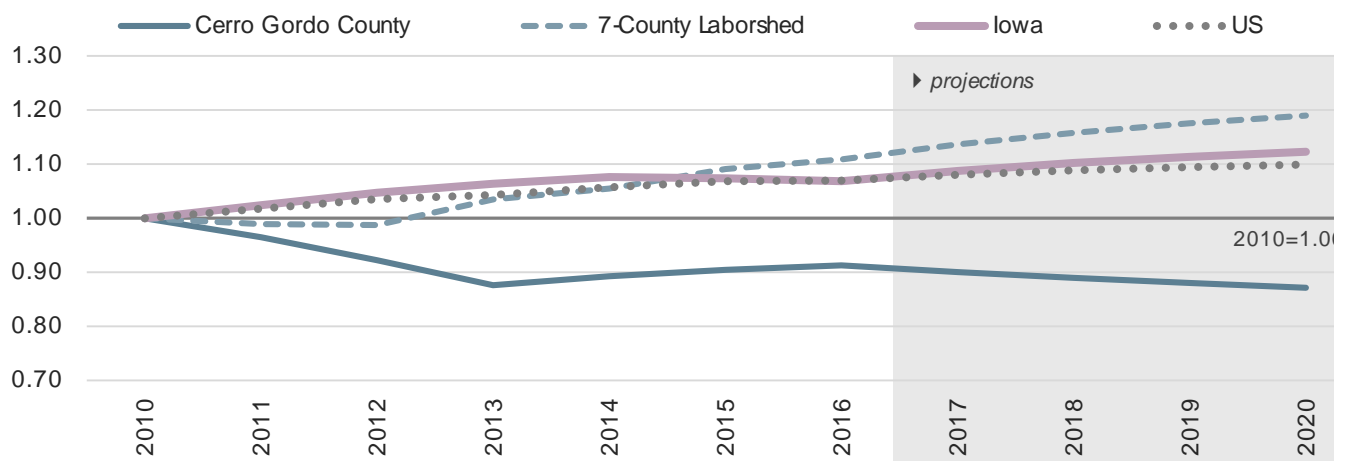


FIGURE 41. INDUSTRY DETAIL, CERRO GORDO COUNTY

NAICS	DESCRIPTION	2016 JOBS	CHG. FROM 2010		LQ (US=1.00)	AVG. EARNINGS /JOB
			#	%		
3323	Architectural and Structural Metals Manufacturing	511	-280	-35%	8.18	\$70,493
3219	Other Wood Product Manufacturing	243	-38	-14%	6.16	\$54,296
3371	HH and Institutional Furniture/Kitchen Cabinet Mfg.	235	+36	+18%	5.35	\$39,404
3273	Cement and Concrete Product Manufacturing	184	-5	-3%	5.77	\$77,992
3231	Printing and Related Support Activities	153	+22	+17%	1.94	\$40,407
3251	Basic Chemical Manufacturing	101	+44	+77%	4.04	\$81,267
3379	Other Furniture Related Product Manufacturing	69	-48	-41%	11.01	\$48,606
3222	Converted Paper Product Manufacturing	45	+4	+10%	1.00	\$43,481
3364	Aerospace Product and Parts Manufacturing	44	+15	+51%	0.53	\$128,397
3342	Communications Equipment Manufacturing	32	-13	-29%	2.18	\$68,101
3261	Plastics Product Manufacturing	32	-12	-28%	0.34	\$51,712
3331	Agriculture, Construction, & Mining Machinery Mfg.	25	—	—	0.67	\$69,630

Source (all figures): 2017.1—QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed. Note: LQs ≥ 1.25 are highlighted.

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING (CONTINUED)

Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers (SOC 53-3032) and Team Assemblers (SOC 51-2092) are the largest occupations in the sector. Other significant occupations include Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers (SOC 51-4121) and Laborers/Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand (SOC 53-7062). Several occupations register above-average LQs (greater than 1.25), meaning they appear at levels higher than would be expected based on national patterns. Only four of the largest occupations in the seven-county laborshed pay median hourly earnings above the US median. This suggests employers are generally not paying above-average wages to attract/retain workers for most occupations.

WHY NORTH IOWA?

- Large, established sector that accounts for nearly 10 percent of the county's employment and 20 percent of the region's employment
- Skilled workforce
- Strong partnerships between industry and education
- Midcontinent location
- Quality and proximity of transportation assets
- Low cost of doing business

FIGURE 42. LARGEST OCCUPATIONS (NAICS 31-33)

SOC	DESCRIPTION	% OF JOBS IN SECTOR	2016 JOBS	ANNUAL OPENINGS	MEDIAN HOURLY EARNINGS	LQ (US=1.00)
51-2092	Team Assemblers	12.9%	1,454	+57	\$14.50	3.45
51-4121	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, & Brazers	7.4%	897	+43	\$17.22	5.93
51-1011	First-Line Supvrs., Production & Operating Workers	3.5%	422	+14	\$22.80	1.84
51-9111	Packaging & Filling Machine Workers	2.9%	347	+23	\$15.26 ●	2.40
53-3032	Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	2.7%	1,505	+51	\$17.26	2.10
53-7062	Laborers/Freight, Stock, & Material Movers, Hand	2.5%	996	+44	\$13.80 ●	1.03
51-2099	Assemblers & Fabricators, All Other	2.2%	319	+11	\$14.07	3.63
41-4012	Sales Reps., Whls. & Mfg., Exc. Tech. & Scientific	2.0%	569	+21	\$25.36	1.03
11-1021	General & Operations Managers	1.9%	847	+33	\$32.48	1.02
51-9061	Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, & Weighers	1.8%	223	+11	\$16.61	1.15
49-9071	Maintenance & Repair Workers, General	1.8%	594	+24	\$17.66	1.09
51-7042	Woodworking Machine, Except Sawing	1.6%	170	+3	\$17.06 ●	5.95
51-9023	Mixing & Blending Machine Workers	1.6%	178	+11	\$15.01	3.65
51-9199	Production Workers, All Other	1.6%	238	+9	\$15.40 ●	2.42
51-4081	Multiple Machine Tool Workers, Metal/Plastic	1.4%	158	+4	\$15.98	4.00
51-9198	Helpers-Production Workers	1.3%	178	+9	\$12.47	1.09
11-3051	Industrial Production Managers	1.3%	151	+7	\$36.60	2.32
51-9121	Coating, Painting, & Spraying Machine Workers	1.3%	145	+5	\$14.04	4.32
51-7011	Cabinetmakers & Bench Carpenters	1.3%	137	+5	\$13.46	3.45
49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	1.2%	178	+12	\$20.95	1.42

Source: 2017.1—QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed.

Notes: LQs ≥1.25 are highlighted. Marker (●) indicates median hourly wage rates more than 5 percent above the US median.

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING (CONTINUED)

FIGURE 43. INDUSTRY INTELLIGENCE AND NETWORKING

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING		
TRADE ASSOCIATIONS		
National Council for Advanced Manufacturing (NACFAM)		www.nacfam.org
Recreational Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA)		www.rvia.org
Heavy Duty Manufacturers Association (HDMA)		www.hdma.org
Association of Equipment Manufacturers (AEM)		www.aem.org
Construction Industry Institute (CII)		www.construction-institute.org
National Association of Architectural Metal Manufacturers (NAAMM)		www.naamm.org
American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE)		www.asce.org
Motor & Equipment Manufacturers Association (MEMA)		www.mema.org
Home Builders Association of Iowa (HBA IOWA)		www.hbaiowa.org
RELEVANT CONFERENCES/EVENTS		
CII 2017 Annual Conference		
31 July–2 August 2017	Orlando, FL	www.construction-institute.org/ac/2017
Midwest RV Super Show		
10–13 August 2017	Elkhart, IN	www.rvshows.org/midwest-rv-super-show
NACFAM 2017 Annual Conference		
7–8 September 2017	Arlington, VA	www.nacfam.org/2017-nacfam-annual-conference
ASCE 2017 Convention		
8–11 October 2017	New Orleans, LA	www.2017.asceconvention.org
AEM Annual Conference		
1–3 November 2017	Palm Beach, FL	www.aem.org/events/conferences-and-seminars/aem-annual-conference
National RV Trade Show		
27–30 November 2017	Louisville, KY	www.rvia.org/?ESID=natshow
TRADE PUBLICATIONS		
<i>Advanced Manufacturing Insight</i>		www.advancedmanufacturinginsight.com
<i>RV Business Magazine</i>		www.rvbusiness.com/subscriptions
<i>RV Technician Today</i>		www.rvtechniciantoday.org
<i>Construction Equipment</i>		www.constructionequipment.com/current-issue
<i>Journal of Materials in Civil Engineering</i>		www.ascelibrary.org/journal/jmcee7

Source: TIP Strategies research.

VALUE-ADDED AGRICULTURE AND FOOD PROCESSING

Following declines from 2010 to 2013, employment growth in the agriculture and food processing sector has realigned with national patterns in recent years. Moreover, employment growth within the laborshed is projected to slightly surpass US levels by 2020. Jobs in Animal Food Manufacturing (NAICS 3111), Animal Slaughtering and Processing (NAICS 3116), and Grain and Oilseed Milling (NAICS 3112) have experienced the strongest growth within the county since 2010. The sector's largest industry as defined is Other Food Manufacturing (NAICS 3119), with 313 jobs in 2016.

FIGURE 44. SNAPSHOT (NAICS 311)

	CERRO GORDO COUNTY	LABORSHED
Employment, 2016	801	1,443
Change from 2010 (#)	-38	21
Change from 2010 (%)	-5%	1%
Location quotient (US=1.00)	3.08	2.49
Avg. earnings per job	\$67,325	\$59,977
Number of establishments	11	29

FIGURE 45. EMPLOYMENT TRENDS (NAICS 311)

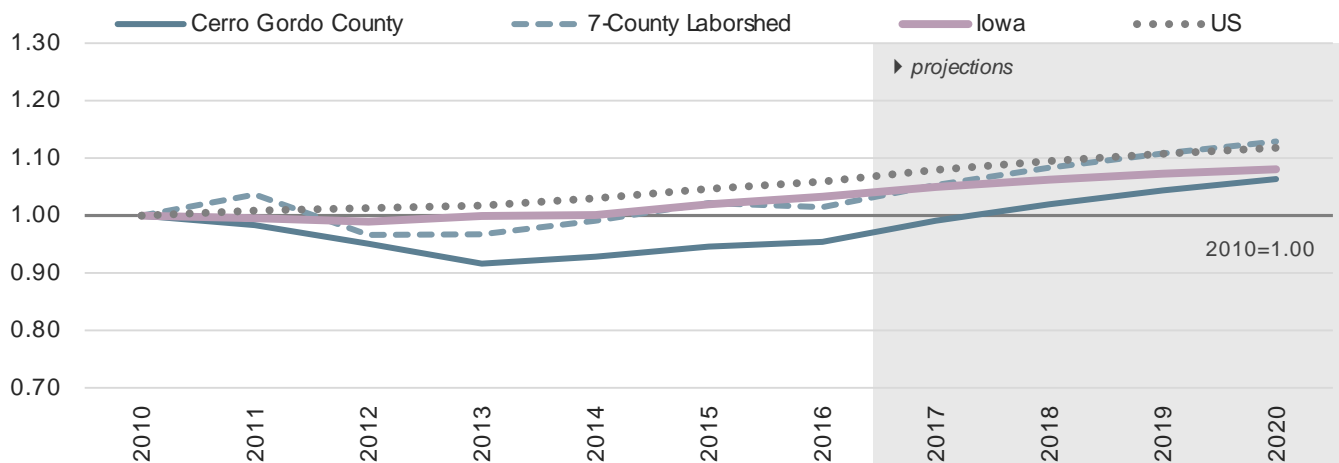


FIGURE 46. INDUSTRY DETAIL, CERRO GORDO COUNTY

NAICS	DESCRIPTION	2016 JOBS	CHG. FROM 2010 #	%	LQ (US=1.00)	AVG. EARNINGS /JOB
3119	Other Food Manufacturing	313	+8	+3%	9.22	\$70,556
3116	Animal Slaughtering and Processing	247	+49	+25%	2.99	\$67,659
3114	Fruit and Vegetable Preserving/Specialty Food Mfg.	108	-30	-22%	3.74	\$37,224
3111	Animal Food Manufacturing	57	+35	+158%	5.91	\$89,981
3112	Grain and Oilseed Milling	52	+24	+87%	5.16	\$94,508
3118	Bakeries and Tortilla Manufacturing	24	-65	-73%	0.45	\$44,236

Source (all figures): 2017.1—QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed. Note: LQs ≥ 1.25 are highlighted.

VALUE-ADDED AGRICULTURE AND FOOD PROCESSING (CONTINUED)

As with advanced manufacturing, Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers (SOC 53-3032) and Team Assemblers (SOC 51-2092) are the largest occupations in this sector. The large number of truck drivers and other distribution-related occupations reflects the importance of logistics in the timely movement of agricultural and food-related goods. The sector also includes several production occupations, including assembly positions, machine operators, and maintenance workers. The median hourly earnings for more than half of the largest occupations are above the national median. This suggests competition for this workforce, as employers are forced to pay a premium for workers.

WHY NORTH IOWA?

- Deep-rooted history in the region
- Proximity to agricultural operations and raw material
- Excellent transportation network
- Availability of sites
- High-quality, high-capacity water and wastewater capabilities
- High growth potential due to increasing regional, national, and international demand for specialty food products

FIGURE 47. LARGEST OCCUPATIONS (NAICS 311)

SOC	DESCRIPTION	% OF JOBS IN SECTOR	2016 JOBS	ANNUAL OPENINGS	MEDIAN HOURLY EARNINGS	LQ (US=1.00)
51-9111	Packaging & Filling Machine Workers	9.4%	347	+23	\$15.26 ●	2.40
51-3092	Food Batchmakers	6.9%	112	+5	\$15.46 ●	2.19
53-7062	Laborers/Freight, Stock, & Material Movers, Hand	4.5%	996	+44	\$13.80 ●	1.03
51-1011	First-Line Supvsr., Production & Operating Workers	3.7%	422	+14	\$22.80	1.84
51-3023	Slaughterers & Meat Packers	3.7%	56	+2	\$13.44 ●	1.84
51-3099	Food Processing Workers, All Other	3.6%	69	+3	\$14.27 ●	3.90
53-7064	Packers & Packagers, Hand	3.3%	260	+11	\$11.56 ●	0.95
51-9023	Mixing & Blending Machine Workers	3.1%	178	+11	\$15.01	3.65
53-3032	Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	3.1%	1,505	+51	\$17.26	2.10
51-3091	Food & Tobacco Machine Workers	2.8%	48	—	\$15.69 ●	6.09
49-9071	Maintenance & Repair Workers, General	2.7%	594	+24	\$17.66	1.09
51-9021	Crushing, Grinding, & Polishing Machine	2.4%	76	+3	\$17.15	6.40
51-3022	Meat, Poultry, & Fish Cutters & Trimmers	2.4%	41	—	\$13.95 ●	0.68
51-9198	Helpers—Production Workers	2.3%	178	+9	\$12.47	1.09
51-3093	Food Cooking Machine Workers	2.1%	32	—	\$19.76 ●	2.43
53-7061	Cleaners of Vehicles & Equipment	1.8%	183	+10	\$11.91 ●	1.31
49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	1.8%	178	+12	\$20.95	1.42
51-2092	Team Assemblers	1.8%	1,454	+57	\$14.50	3.45
51-9199	Production Workers, All Other	1.7%	238	+9	\$15.40 ●	2.42
53-7051	Industrial Truck & Tractor Operators	1.6%	158	+8	\$14.90	0.76

Source: 2017.1—QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed.

Notes: LQs ≥ 1.25 are highlighted. Marker (●) indicates median hourly wage rates more than 5 percent above the US median.

VALUE-ADDED AGRICULTURE AND FOOD PROCESSING (CONTINUED)

FIGURE 48. INDUSTRY INTELLIGENCE AND NETWORKING

VALUE-ADDED AGRICULTURE AND FOOD PROCESSING		
TRADE ASSOCIATIONS		
American Farm Bureau Federation (FB)		www.fb.org
Agricultural & Applied Economics Association (AAEA)		www.aaea.org
Council for Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST)		www.cast-science.org
American Association of Meat Processors (AAMP)		www.aamp.com
Food Processing Suppliers Association (FPSA)		www.fpsa.org
Grocery Manufacturers Association (GMA)		www.gmaonline.org
Iowa Grocery Industry Association (IGIA)		www.iowagrocers.com
Iowa Soybean Association (ISA)		www.iasoybeans.com
RELEVANT CONFERENCES/EVENTS		
2017 Iowa Grocery Industry Association Convention		
11–13 July 2017	Coralville, IA	www.iowagrocers.com/2017-convention.cfm
78th American Convention of Meat Processors & Suppliers' Exhibition		
20–22 July 2017	Lexington, KY	www.aamp.com/event-calendar/aamp-convention
2017 AAEA Annual Meeting		
30 July–01 August 2017	Chicago, IL	www.aaea.org/meetings/2017-aaea-annual-meeting
SmartIndustry2017		
18–20 September 2017	Chicago, IL	www.event.smartindustry.com
PROCESS EXPO 2017		
19–22 September 2017	Chicago, IL	www.myprocessexpo.com
Animal Care and Handling Conference		
19–20 October 2017	Kansas City, MO	www.meatinstitute.org/index.php?ht=d/sp/i/101361
2018 AFBF Annual Convention & IDEAg Trade Show		
5–10 January 2018	Nashville, TN	www.fb.org/events/afbf-annual-convention
ISA Research Conference 2018		
6–7 February 2018	Des Moines, IA	www.iasoybeans.com/calendar/isa-research-conference-2
TRADE PUBLICATIONS		
<i>Food Processing</i>		www.foodprocessing.com/issues/current
<i>FoodEngineering</i>		www.foodengineeringmag.com
<i>The National Provisioner</i>		www.provisioneronline.com/publications/3
<i>Meat&Poultry</i>		www.meatpoultry.com/Magazine.aspx
<i>iowa grocer</i>		www.iowagrocers.com/publications.cfm
<i>The Progressive Farmer</i>		www.dtnpf-digital.com

Source: TIP Strategies research.

HEALTHCARE

The healthcare sector includes a range of establishments, like physician's offices, testing laboratories, hospitals, and long-term care facilities. As defined, the sector employs almost 4,900 workers in the county and 7,300 workers in the laborshed. Healthcare has seen strong growth in the past 6 years, with local trends largely mirroring national growth patterns. With almost 2,000 jobs, General Medical and Surgical Hospitals (NAICS 6221) is the single largest healthcare subsector within the county. Since 2010, the largest employment gains were made in Offices of Physicians (NAICS 6211), which grew by 122 jobs (27 percent) through 2016.

FIGURE 49. SNAPSHOT (NAICS 621, 622, 623)

	CERRO GORDO COUNTY	LABORSHED
Employment, 2016	4,879	7,290
Change from 2010 (#)	378	410
Change from 2010 (%)	8%	6%
Location quotient (US=1.00)	1.87	1.26
Avg. earnings per job	\$65,353	\$56,257
Number of establishments	109	232

FIGURE 50. EMPLOYMENT TRENDS (NAICS 621, 622, 623)

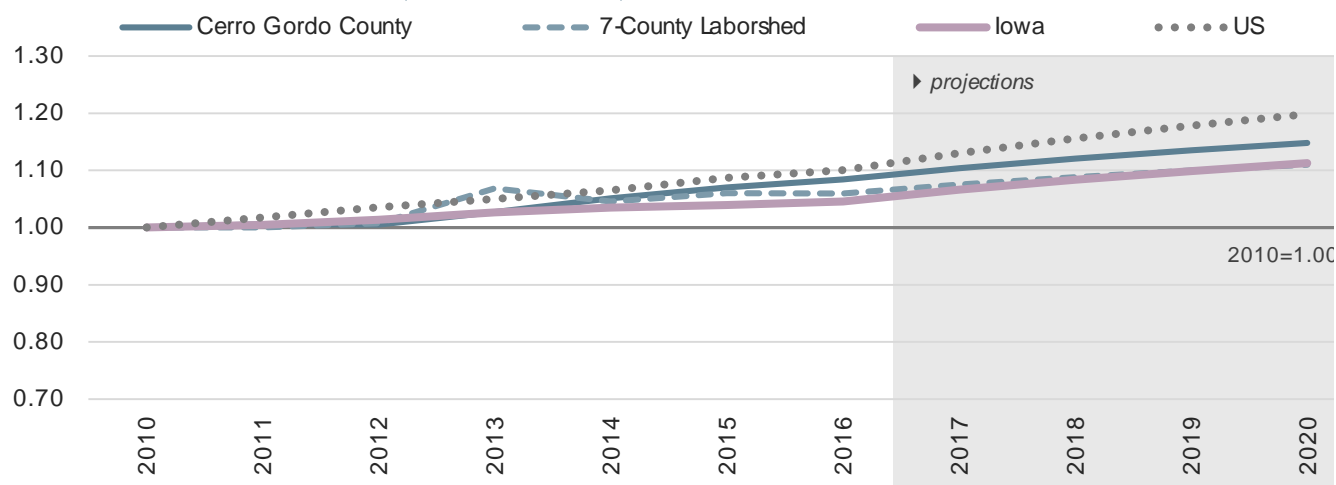


FIGURE 50. INDUSTRY DETAIL, CERRO GORDO COUNTY

NAICS	DESCRIPTION	2016 JOBS	CHG. FROM 2010 #	%	LQ (US=1.00)	AVG. EARNINGS /JOB
6221	General Medical and Surgical Hospitals	1,996	+36	+2%	2.61	\$72,122
6232	Residential Facilities	609	-127	-17%	5.86	\$27,198
6231	Nursing Care Facilities (Skilled Nursing Facilities)	594	-11	-2%	2.15	\$37,003
6211	Offices of Physicians	573	+122	+27%	1.32	\$131,708
6212	Offices of Dentists	223	+25	+13%	1.39	\$68,514
6239	Other Residential Care Facilities	189	—	—	6.86	\$43,507
6214	Outpatient Care Centers	185	+33	+22%	1.32	\$51,297
6213	Offices of Other Health Practitioners	154	+37	+32%	0.95	\$47,209
6233	Retirement Communities/ Assisted Living Facilities	109	+16	+17%	0.74	\$27,225
6216	Home Healthcare Services	105	-60	-36%	0.44	\$56,081
6223	Specialty Hospitals (except Psych. & Substance Abuse)	75	+75	—	2.00	\$98,251
6219	Other Ambulatory Healthcare Services	60	+47	+356%	1.12	\$35,209

Source (all figures): 2017.1—QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed. Note: LQs ≥ 1.25 are highlighted.

HEALTHCARE (CONTINUED)

Nursing Assistants (SOC 31-1014) and Registered Nurses (SOC 29-1141) account for about 27 percent of healthcare jobs in the seven-county laborshed. Several occupations have an LQ greater than the national average, indicating the region may have a competitive advantage in offering workers for the sector. Only three occupations register median hourly earnings greater than the national median. Moreover, only three occupations pay median hourly wages greater than \$20/hour.

WHY NORTH IOWA?

- Established sector that employs close to 5,500 in Cerro Gordo County
- Leading job creator between 2011 and 2016 with 350 new jobs
- Among all industries, projected to see the highest increase in total employment through 2020
- Mercy Medical Center headquartered in Mason City with an extensive regional network

FIGURE 51. LARGEST OCCUPATIONS (NAICS 621, 622, 623)

SOC	DESCRIPTION	% OF JOBS IN SECTOR	2016 JOBS	ANNUAL OPENINGS	MEDIAN HOURLY EARNINGS	LQ (US=1.00)
31-1014	Nursing Assistants	14.3%	1,142	+31	\$12.30	2.07
29-1141	Registered Nurses	12.6%	1,149	+41	\$24.98	1.08
39-9021	Personal Care Aides	8.6%	886	+18	\$11.06 ●	1.25
29-2061	Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurses	4.1%	340	+11	\$19.28	1.24
31-1011	Home Health Aides	2.7%	232	+7	\$11.90 ●	0.65
35-2012	Cooks, Institution & Cafeteria	2.6%	386	+11	\$11.34	2.41
37-2012	Maids & Housekeepers	2.4%	626	+25	\$9.46	1.11
11-9111	Medical & Health Services Managers	2.3%	211	+8	\$31.46	1.69
31-9091	Dental Assistants	2.2%	163	+7	\$19.87 ●	1.30
43-6013	Medical Secretaries	2.2%	182	+5	\$15.30	0.88
31-9092	Medical Assistants	2.1%	168	+8	\$14.37	0.72
21-1093	Social & Human Service Assistants	2.0%	290	+10	\$15.37	1.97
43-4171	Receptionists & Information Clerks	1.6%	271	+11	\$12.86	0.69
43-3021	Billing & Posting Clerks	1.4%	232	+8	\$16.18	1.20
43-6014	Secretaries/Admin. Asst., Exc. Legal, Med., & Exec.	1.3%	998	+21	\$13.97	0.98
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	1.3%	906	+31	\$14.79	0.73
29-2021	Dental Hygienists	1.3%	93	+3	\$33.34	1.21
29-2041	Emergency Medical Techs. & Paramedics	1.2%	136	+4	\$14.68	1.52
29-2071	Medical Records & Health Info. Technicians	1.0%	98	+3	\$17.26	1.31
37-2011	Janitors & Cleaners, Exc. Maids & Housekeepers	0.9%	871	+26	\$11.81	0.91

Source: 2017.1—QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed.

Notes: LQs ≥ 1.25 are highlighted. Marker (●) indicates median hourly wage rates more than 5 percent above the US median.

HEALTHCARE (CONTINUED)

FIGURE 52. INDUSTRY INTELLIGENCE AND NETWORKING

HEALTHCARE		
TRADE ASSOCIATIONS		
International Society for Pharmaceutical Engineering (ISPE)		www.ispe.org
American Health Care Association (AHCA)		www.ahcancal.org
American Medical Association (AMA)		www.ama-assn.org
American Hospital Association (AHA)		www.aha.org
Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA)		www.phrma.org
Iowa Health Care Association (IHCA)		www.iowahealthcare.org
Iowa Medical Society (IMS)		www.iowamedical.org
Iowa Hospital Association		www.ihaonline.org
Iowa Healthcare Collaborative (IHC)		www.ihconline.org
Iowa Emergency Medical Services Association (IEMSA)		www.iemsa.net
Iowa Physician Assistant Society (IPAS)		www.iapasociety.org
RELEVANT CONFERENCES/EVENTS		
2017 IHC Care Coordination Conference		
6 June 2017	Des Moines, IA	www.iihc.ihaonline.org/ihc_brochures/CCC17.pdf
IHCA Summer Quarterly Education Conference		
20 June 2017	Des Moines, IA	www.iowahealthcare.org/asp/EventCalendar.aspx?cal=y
25th Annual American Hospital Association Leadership Summit		
27–29 July 2017	San Diego, CA	www.healthforum-edu.com/summit/index.dhtml
ChangeMedEd 2017 National Conference		
14–16 Sept. 2017	Chicago, IL	www.ama-assn.org/events/changemeded-2017-national-conference
2017 ISPE Annual Meeting & Expo		
29 Oct.–1 Nov.	San Diego, CA	www.ispe.org/2017-annual-meeting
2017 IEMSA Annual Conference		
9–11 Nov. 2017	Des Moines, IA	www.iemsa.net/conference.htm
TRADE PUBLICATIONS		
<i>Pharmaceutical Engineering</i>		www.pharmaceuticalengineering.org
<i>The American Journal of Medicine</i>		www.amjmed.com
<i>Hospitals & Health Networks</i>		www.hhnmag.com
<i>Iowa Medicine</i>		www.iowamedical.org/iowa/iowa_Public/Public_Affairs/IMS_Publications.aspx
<i>Practice Manager</i>		www.iowamedical.org/iowa/iowa_Public/Public_Affairs/IMS_Publications.aspx
<i>IEMSA Voice</i>		www.iemsa.net/publications.htm

Source: TIP Strategies research.

TRANSPORTATION AND WAREHOUSING

Employment in Transportation and Warehousing (NAICS 48–49) rose by 9 percent in the county and 6 percent in the laborshed since 2010. While employment growth has remained relatively flat for the last couple of years, it is projected to accelerate over the next 4 years. General Freight Trucking (NAICS 4841) and Couriers and Express Delivery Services (NAICS 4921) are the county's largest subsectors by employment. Other Pipeline Transportation (NAICS 4869) saw the largest percentage growth over the period, albeit from a low base number.

FIGURE 53. SNAPSHOT (NAICS 48–49)

	CERRO GORDO COUNTY	LABORSHED
Employment, 2016	872	1,910
Change from 2010 (#)	74	105
Change from 2010 (%)	9%	6%
Location quotient (US=1.00)	0.97	0.96
Avg. earnings per job	\$61,478	\$56,820
Number of establishments	52	148

FIGURE 54. EMPLOYMENT TRENDS (NAICS 48–49)

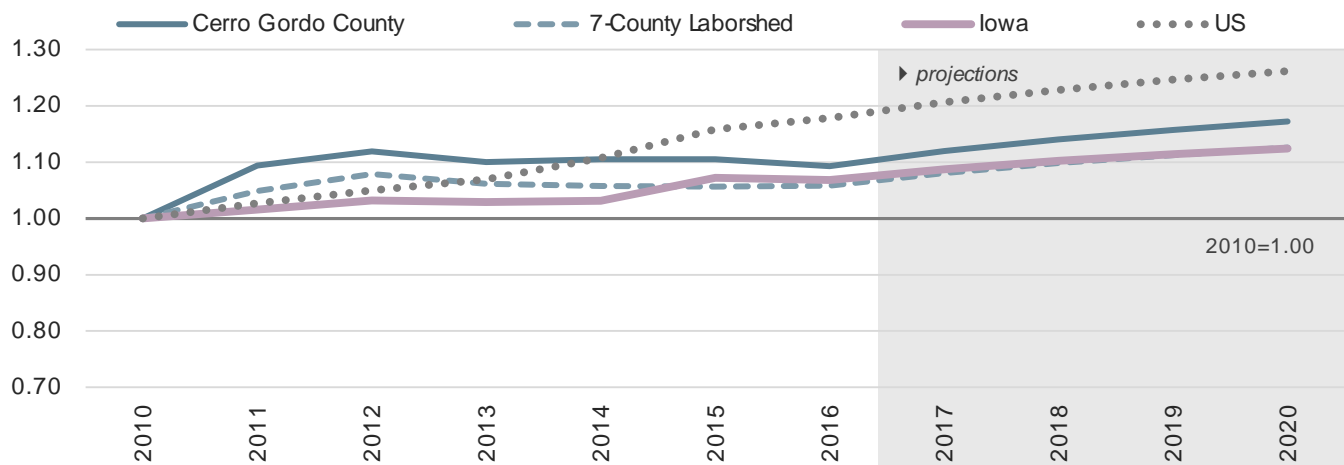


FIGURE 55. INDUSTRY DETAIL, CERRO GORDO COUNTY

NAICS	DESCRIPTION	2016 JOBS	CHG. FROM 2010		LQ (US=1.00)	AVG. EARNINGS /JOB
			#	%		
4841	General Freight Trucking	194	+33	+21%	0.97	\$66,263
4921	Couriers and Express Delivery Services	180	+24	+15%	1.87	\$50,195
4821	Rail Transportation	154	+15	+11%	3.68	\$83,714
4931	Warehousing and Storage	118	-6	-5%	0.80	\$52,950
4869	Other Pipeline Transportation	55	+42	+303%	38.49	\$123,160
4854	School and Employee Bus Transportation	54	+26	+89%	1.65	\$20,994
4842	Specialized Freight Trucking	54	+6	+13%	0.69	\$42,431
4884	Support Activities for Road Transportation	23	+7	+43%	1.24	\$47,053
4922	Local Messengers and Local Delivery	15	-7	-30%	1.24	\$36,259

Source (all figures): 2017.1—QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed. Note: LQs ≥ 1.25 are highlighted.

TRANSPORTATION AND WAREHOUSING (CONTINUED)

As might be expected, truck drivers account for a significant share of employment in the transportation and warehousing sector, representing roughly 4 in 10 jobs (41 percent). Other occupations that account for a significant number of jobs in this sector include freight and material movers, secretaries/administrative assistants, bookkeepers, and general operations managers. The region has an above-average concentration of workers in eight occupations as shown in Figure 56.

WHY NORTH IOWA?

- Quality and proximity of the regional transportation network
- Available sites along the I-35 corridor
- Short distance to two major metro areas and their respective international airports
- McKesson as a blueprint for future projects

FIGURE 56. LARGEST OCCUPATIONS (NAICS 48-49)

SOC	DESCRIPTION	% OF JOBS IN SECTOR	2016 JOBS	ANNUAL OPENINGS	MEDIAN HOURLY EARNINGS	LQ (US=1.00)
53-3032	Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	41.1%	1,505	+51	\$17.26	2.10
53-7062	Laborers/Freight, Stock, & Material Movers, Hand	9.6%	996	+44	\$13.80 ●	1.03
53-3033	Light Truck or Delivery Services Drivers	6.4%	419	+12	\$14.47	1.26
53-3022	Bus Drivers, School or Special Client	2.8%	231	+7	\$11.54	1.24
53-4031	Railroad Conductors & Yardmasters	2.2%	44	—	\$24.89	2.33
53-4011	Locomotive Engineers	2.0%	40	—	\$26.92	2.45
53-7051	Industrial Truck & Tractor Operators	1.8%	158	+8	\$14.90	0.76
49-3031	Bus/Truck Mechanics & Diesel Engine Specialists	1.6%	130	+6	\$18.12	1.29
53-1031	First-Line Supvrsr., Transp. & Material-Moving Ops.	1.4%	72	+4	\$26.42	0.92
11-1021	General & Operations Managers	1.4%	847	+33	\$32.48	1.02
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	1.2%	906	+31	\$14.79	0.73
43-5032	Dispatchers, Except Police, Fire, & Ambulance	1.2%	47	+2	\$21.80 ●	0.60
53-7064	Packers & Packagers, Hand	1.0%	260	+11	\$11.56 ●	0.95
11-3071	Transp., Storage, & Distribution Mgrs.	1.0%	52	+2	\$28.66	1.19
53-4021	Railroad Brake, Signal, & Switch Operators	1.0%	19	—	\$24.16	2.32
43-6014	Secretaries/Admin. Asst., Exc. Legal, Med., & Exec.	1.0%	998	+21	\$13.97	0.98
43-5081	Stock Clerks & Order Fillers	0.9%	590	+22	\$10.38	0.81
43-3031	Bookkeeping, Accounting, & Auditing Clerks	0.9%	876	+11	\$15.59	1.34
51-8092	Gas Plant Operators	0.8%	21	—	\$21.88	3.51
53-1021	First-Line Supvrsr., Helpers & Material Movers, Hand	0.7%	64	+3	\$21.28	0.94

Source: 2017.1—QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed.

Notes: LQs ≥1.25 are highlighted. Marker (●) indicates median hourly wage rates more than 5 percent above the US median.

TRANSPORTATION AND WAREHOUSING (CONTINUED)

FIGURE 57. INDUSTRY INTELLIGENCE AND NETWORKING

TRANSPORTATION AND WAREHOUSING		
TRADE ASSOCIATIONS		
International Warehouse Logistics Association (IWLA)		www.iwla.com
National Association of Wholesaler-Distributors (NAW)		www.naw.org
American Trucking Associations (ATA)		www.trucking.org
Intermodal Association of North America (IANA)		www.intermodal.org
Commercial Vehicle Training Association (CVTA)		www.cvta.org
Truckload Carriers Association (TCA)		www.truckload.org
Iowa Motor Truck Association (IMTA)		www.iowamotortruck.com
RELEVANT CONFERENCES/EVENTS		
CCJ Symposium 2017		
22–24 May 2017	Asheville, NC	www.ccjsymposium.com
2017 WorkForce Builders Conference		
12–14 June 2017	Riverside, MO	www.truckload.org/WFBCON-HOME
The Great American Trucking Show		
24–26 August 2017	Dallas, TX	www.truckshow.com
National Truck Driver Appreciation Week		
10–16 September 2017	US	www.trucking.org/Appreciation_Week.aspx
IMTA Annual Management Conference		
20–21 September 2017	Des Moines, IA	www.iowamotortruck.com/events.cfm
TCA's 80th Annual Convention		
25–28 March 2018	Kissimmee, FL	www.truckload.org/TCA17
TRADE PUBLICATIONS		
3PL Americas		www.iwla.com/library/publications/
FleetOwner		www.fleetowner.com
Truckers News		www.truckersnews.com
Heavy Duty Trucking		www.truckinginfo.com/magazine
Commercial Carrier Journal		www.ccjdigital.com
Lifeline Magazine		www.iowamotortruck.com/lifeline-magazine.cfm
Truckload Authority		www.truckload.org/TLA

Source: TIP Strategies research.

APPENDIX 6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NETWORK ANALYSIS

To ascertain how the Vision North Iowa partnership can best support regional economic development efforts, TIP Strategies documented major programs and initiatives offered by economic, community, and workforce development organizations that currently serve the North Iowa region. The matrix outlined in Figure 58 (page 81) provides an overview of the regional economic development network and is intended to 1) inform the partnership's understanding of current organizational roles within the network; 2) highlight potential gaps and redundancies in resources dedicated to economic development-related activities; and 3) identify resources that could be leveraged for specific projects and strategic plan implementation activities. The results of this analysis were also used to inform the visioning process and help shape the strategic framework. A matrix containing a full inventory of each of the organization's programs was created and provided to the project committees.

This analysis is intended to serve as a first step in a regional conversation about economic development roles and responsibilities. It is not a definitive measure of the organizations' respective capacities, capabilities, or performance. The overarching goal of this exercise is to ensure that regional economic development activities are coordinated and executed in the most efficient and effective manner possible. Because the economic development landscape and scope of each organization's work changes regularly, maintaining and updating the analysis should be a priority of the Vision North Iowa partnership moving forward.

METHODOLOGY AND FRAMEWORK

Research for this analysis was primarily conducted through web searches and stakeholder engagement activities. In total, 23 organizations offering over 100 programs were identified, including state, county, and city departments; higher education institutions; for-profit ventures; and various types of nonprofit organizations. Each organization was identified by type and geographic service area and reviewed across 11 economic development activity areas (detailed in the next section). Where applicable, activity areas were identified as either a "core function" or "support function." An activity area highlighted as a "core function" indicates that the organization has primary oversight over these activities and is positioned to lead or influence significant change within the region. An activity area noted as a "support function" indicates that the entity is involved in some degree of advancement, advocacy and/or education, but the activity area is secondary to the organization's mission.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Below is a brief description of each activity area to provide context on how each organization was assessed. This list encompasses the full spectrum of traditional and nontraditional economic development disciplines.

- [Business Retention and Expansion](#). A range of activities that ensures existing businesses stay, thrive, and grow in a community.
- [Target Industry/Business Recruitment](#). Actions to promote a community's strategic assets for the purpose of attracting a business and/or industry cluster to relocate or expand into the community.
- [Entrepreneurship/Small Business Assistance](#). Any activity that helps current or prospective business owners conceptualize, startup, and/or operate a business.
- [Workforce Development/Education](#). Activities, policies, and programs aimed at attracting, sustaining, and retaining a viable workforce that can support the current and future needs of employers.

- [Marketing](#). Targeted promotional activities that enhance the organization's and community's image and help further specific BRE, target industry/business recruitment, entrepreneurship/small business assistance, and workforce development activities.
- [Real Estate/Site Selection](#). The process of acquiring, managing, and/or promoting available real estate as a means to attract new business and industry or help existing business and industry expand.
- [Incentives/Financial Assistance](#). A variety of tools that can be used to motivate or encourage business and industry to locate, expand, develop, and/or make capital investment in a community.
- [International Outreach](#). Marketing and business attraction activities that are targeted to lure investment from foreign business and industry.
- [Community Development/Quality of Place/Tourism](#). Any activity that is focused on community development (that is, infrastructure, transportation, downtown revitalization, etc.) and/or promoting or enhancing a community's quality of life and desirability as a place to live, work, and/or visit.
- [Policy/Advocacy](#). Active engagement with governmental officials and/or constituents in support of a community or economic development-related issue.
- [Data Collection/Publication](#). The collection or distribution of quantitative or qualitative data to enhance awareness and/or educate the community and target audiences.

FIGURE 58. NORTH IOWA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

● Core Function ○ Support Function

ORGANIZATION	TYPE	GEOGRAPHY	Business Retention & Expansion	Target Industry/Business Recruitment	Entrepreneurship/Small Business Assistance	Workforce Development/Education	Marketing	Real Estate/Site Selection	Incentives/Financial Assistance	International Outreach	Community Development/QOP/Tourism	Policy/Advocacy	Data Collection/Publication
City of Clear Lake	City	Mason City						○	●		○	●	
City of Mason City	City	Clear Lake						○	●		○	●	
Clear Lake Chamber of Commerce	Chamber	Clear Lake	○	○	○	○	●			○	●	●	○
Clear Lake Enhancement and Restoration Project (CLEAR)	Community-led	Clear Lake									●		
Future Ready Iowa Alliance	State	Iowa				●							
Healthy Harvest of North Iowa	Nonprofit	North Iowa									●		
IASourceLink	Nonprofit	Iowa			●								
Iowa Association of Business and Industry	Trade Assoc.	Iowa				●	○					●	
Iowa Center for Economic Success	Nonprofit	Iowa	○		●							○	
Iowa Economic Development Authority	State/EDO	Iowa	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○
Iowa State University	Higher Ed.	Iowa			○	●					○		○
Iowa Women's Foundation	Nonprofit	Iowa							●		○	○	
Iowa Workforce Development	State	Iowa			○	●			○			○	●
Main Street Mason City	Nonprofit	Mason City	○				●				●	○	
Mason City CAN	Nonprofit	Mason City				●					○		
Mason City Chamber of Commerce	Chamber	Mason City	○	○	○		●			○	●	●	○
NIACC	Higher Ed.	North Iowa	○	○	○	●					○	○	●
NICA0	Nonprofit	North Iowa									●		
North Central Iowa Marketing Alliance	Nonprofit	North Iowa	○	●	○	○	●	○	○	○	○		○
North Iowa Area Council of Governments	Nonprofit	North Iowa									●	●	
North Iowa Corridor EDC	EDO	North Iowa	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○
North Iowa Events Center	CVB	North Iowa					○				●		
Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center	SBDC/Incubator	North Iowa	●	○	●	○							
Surf Ballroom & Museum	Nonprofit										●		
United Way of North Central Iowa	Nonprofit	North Iowa				○					●		
University of Iowa	Higher Ed.	Iowa			○	●					○		○
University of Northern Iowa	Higher Ed.	North Iowa			○	●					○		○
VentureNet Iowa	Venture Capital	Iowa			●								
Visit Mason City	CVB	Mason City					●				●		
Wright on the Park	Nonprofit	Mason City									●		
Total Organizations (Core Functions)			2	3	6	10	8	2	3	1	12	2	0
Total Organizations (Support Functions)			6	3	7	2	1	2	3	4	7	8	8
GRAND TOTAL			8	6	13	11	9	4	6	5	17	10	8

Source: TIP Strategies research.

OPPORTUNITY AREAS

The North Iowa region is fortunate to have a wealth of resources dedicated to economic development. While these resources speak highly of the area's commitment to economic prosperity, they also suggest potential areas of overlap or duplication of services.

Below are the largest potential areas of redundancy, with the number of organizations in core and supporting roles shown in parentheses. These areas warrant further exploration to determine if and how much redundancy is present.

- Community development/quality of place/tourism (*core function:12, support function:7*)
- Entrepreneurship/small business assistance (*core function:6, support function:7*)
- Workforce development/education (*core function:10, support function:2*)
- Marketing (*core function:8, support function:1*)

Having a large number of organizations involved in economic development marketing activities presents both positives and negatives. On the plus side, more organizations dedicated to marketing might translate to a larger number of "media outlets" and greater audience reach. One disadvantage of having multiple players in this space is that the community runs the risk of broadcasting fragmented or inconsistent marketing messages if coordination is lacking. In the case of the North Iowa network, this risk is multiplied by the fact that marketing was a core function for all but one of the organizations involved in this activity. Ideally, one organization would be at the helm of all economic development marketing activities, with the others taking a supporting role.

Each of the 11 activity areas is addressed by organizations to some degree, which suggests there are little or no gaps in the network. Only one activity area, "data collection/publication," is not covered as a core function by an organization. Rather, it is covered by four organizations as a support function. This suggests an opportunity to designate one organization to act as the regional clearinghouse for all data collection, maintenance, distribution, and publication. The 11 activity areas should be explored further to determine if gaps are in fact present and to what degree.

Other activity areas that have less coverage are listed below. These areas, especially those with less core function coverage, present potential opportunities for the North Iowa Corridor EDC and/or other appropriate organizations to take on more of a leadership role within the region. These activity areas include the following.

- Real estate/site selection (*core function:2, support function:2*)
- International outreach (*core function:1, support function:4*)
- Target industry/business recruitment (*core function:3, support function:3*)
- Business retention and expansion (*core function:2, support function:6*)

Last, almost half of the organizations identified in this analysis are state-level resources. While these organizations are a strong component of the network, it's important to note that local influence on these organizations can be limited. Consideration might be given to developing local contingency plans, in case state-level resources drastically change or are eliminated completely.

APPENDIX 7. COMMUNITY PERCEPTION SURVEY

Broad community involvement and support are essential elements of developing and implementing an effective strategic plan. From the outset, a primary objective of the Vision North Iowa project has been to engage regional residents in an ongoing dialogue to understand what community issues matter most, now and in the future.

In addition to conducting numerous stakeholder interviews and focus groups, a 16-question community perception survey was crafted to glean as much insight as possible. The survey questions were constructed in an open-ended format with no limitation on length of responses. The pool of questions was vetted based on the most relevant topics and their potential to extract the highest quality information possible regarding the community. The survey was made available online via the Vision North Iowa website, and was promoted through a number of media channels. Hard copies were also distributed on request. The survey opened on February 6, 2017, and closed on March 17, 2017, yielding 736 responses (650 online responses and 86 handwritten responses).

The final slate of survey questions was as follows.

1. Please provide your contact information (name, organization, email, phone, and home and work ZIP Codes).
2. What do you love most about living in the North Iowa region?
3. What would you like to see change about our region (within our collective control)?
4. What about our region would you like to keep the same?
5. Why should someone from outside our region choose to move here?
6. What is happening in your community that is working well?
7. What three words best describe North Iowa?
8. What would be the best way for North Iowa communities to collaborate for mutual success?
9. What have been some major successes in the region?
10. In your opinion, what is the proudest achievement for North Iowa and/or your community?
11. Are there peer regions we should look to for examples of success that can be replicated locally? Please list any that come to mind.
12. Are there potential challenges we must overcome to make this strategic planning project successful?
13. What are common or historical barriers to economic growth in the region?
14. What do you see as the most realistic threat(s) to the future?
15. Where do you see the most opportunity in the region?
16. May we follow up with you by phone or email if we have further questions?

The TIP Strategies team chose a representative group of 50 of the most comprehensive survey responses to identify recurring themes and opinions regarding the North Iowa region. The group consisted of an equal number of men and women from a diverse mix of occupations, from a high-ranking corporate employee to a stay-at-home parent, and even a high school student. A separate SWOT analysis was developed based on these responses as shown in the chart below. The findings are organized by recurring topic, which are followed by a sampling of direct quotes.

COMMUNITY PERCEPTION SURVEY SWOT ANALYSIS



STRENGTHS

COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

- *"Improvements to downtown."*
- *"River City Sculpture Tour, Historic Park Inn, development of 122 West...all revitalization projects."*
- *"The Historic Park Inn Hotel and other downtown MC growth spots, potentially the Reinvestment Plan that has the ice arena, performing arts center, hotel/conference center, and more."*
- *"Downtown revitalization of Mason City, RAGBRAI, shovel ready work sites, Tree Town."*
- *"In addition, we have a very progressive local government which has voted many community improvements including a new fire station, city hall remodel, expanded recreation facilities, and millions of dollars of infrastructure upgrades."*
- *"Downtown Clear Lake renovations, cleaning the lake, McKesson, combining EDC efforts into one."*

PEOPLE

- *"The community in general is very friendly and welcoming."*
- *"The communities and the people that call it home."*
- *"Strong community pride and support."*
- *"The people. It truly is a big neighborhood, where people will help you."*
- *"Great volunteers to support various in-kind efforts, and great city fathers."*
- *"Community support of activities, schools, and community festivities."*
- *"Friendly people, easy pace of life, many opportunities for community involvement."*

QUALITY OF LIFE / COMMUNITY EVENTS

- *"No crime, Thursdays on main, 4th of July festival."*
- *"The various events that happen in our area. With the Surf, as well as Band Fest and other events in the communities."*
- *"Parties, bands, concerts, hockey."*
- *"Band fest, Clear Lake 4th of July, Surf Ball Room concerts, North Iowa event horse shows."*
- *"It is a nice place to raise a family"*
- *"Recreation."*
- *"Relaxing."*
- *"FUN."*
- *"The momentum in growth of breweries, wine culture, restaurants, music, art and decor establishments."*
- *"Kite Festival, Christmas by the Lake, Fourth of July."*
- *"Good schools, safe and secure feel."*
- *"West side retail on 122, hosting many events in CL and MC. Promoting the Surf and Wright on the park, Beautiful school facilities."*
- *"Strong church community and no box stores, thriving downtown."*

QUALITY OF INDUSTRY AND WORKFORCE

- *"We have had major successes in expansions of businesses in Mason City, such as Cargill, Golden Grain Energy, and REG."*
- *"In terms of business and jobs: McKesson, Mitas Tires, Valent BioScience, Simply Essentials, expansions from Cargill, Mercy Medical, Cambrex, Grain Millers, and many others."*
- *"The McKesson facility. Mercy Hospital's continued expansion, NIACC growth, retention of Kraft and Curries."*
- *"NIACC-Park Inn Hotel—Medical facilities—Westward growth of the business area."*

QUALITY OF INDUSTRY AND WORKFORCE— CONTINUED

- *"The biofuel plants, Certa, etc."*
- *"Lower tax structure. Financial incentives (for business)."*



STRENGTHS

- *"Agriculture base, positive attitudes, entrepreneurship, manufacturing, great people."*
- *"The growth of new businesses coming in."*
- *"Job opportunities."*
- *"New business."*
- *"Golden Grain Energy."*
- *"Clear Lake continues to thrive due to strong support of local businesses."*
- *"We have a strong retail base that draws people here to shop."*
- *"We've had a lot of business-to-business partnerships at our brewery we are so excited about. When small businesses work together, everybody benefits."*
- *"Sukup Manufacturing Co., Winnebago, McKesson, Alliant Energy plant, Mercy Medical Center, NIACC, Kingland Systems."*
- *"We have a good educational system that allows for young people to be trained and get a job."*
- *"Variety of employers in C Lake."*
- *"The support and selection of businesses and industry that is here is good."*



WEAKNESSES

GOVERNMENT

- *"Lack of regional long-term goals; the eight or so Boards of Supervisors forming a group that meets quarterly to discuss areas of concern and areas of potential growth."*
- *"Iowa legislature, too conservative; unwilling to listen to anyone outside of the Golden Triangle."*
- *"Seek out consensus and don't try to duplicate resources."*
- *"Being too provincial."*
- *"I am relatively new to the area (2.5 years) but I have gathered that the city council (Mason City) has a hard time getting things done."*
- *"I have heard the Mason City Council has repeatedly opposed growth. I worry that there may be a racial component disguised as an economic one."*
- *"Lack of trust, faith, confidence in local elected leaders due to recent decisions and happenings, fixing the current government ON the people with government OF the people."*
- *"Tell the legislature to get serious about protecting water quality and don't be slaves to the agricultural interests. Have them provide \$ incentives to farmers, to support water quality practices."*
- *"A willingness to accept new ideas and projects"*

POPULATION/DIVERSITY

- *"It needs to grow."*
- *"Population growth."*
- *"Perhaps add to population diversity."*

POPULATION/DIVERSITY— CONTINUED

- *"Weather, and diversification. I think that many people in this area are afraid of people who are not like them that think differently, and I feel this is something to embrace."*
- *"I would like to see more young people choose to live here. I'd like to see more people become stakeholders in the future of the region rather than the few that have stepped up."*
- *"Stop worrying about growing our population and making things better for who we have here, and finding ways to keep the next generation interested in staying here."*
- *"An aging population and a lack of or negative overall growth."*



WEAKNESSES

- *"Limited population growth."*
- *"Continuing population decline."*

COMMUNITY IDENTITY/MINDSET

- *"Lack of identity in who we are as a community."*
- *"I would like to see a more positive (less defeatist) attitude by the majority of residents regarding what the region can achieve."*
- *"The attitude that nothing can be done, rivalries between communities."*
- *"Divisive, negative thinking and tone, lack of leadership, lack of regional cohesiveness and strategy. Each is looking out for its own (city, county) as opposed to ensuring the success of North Iowa."*
- *"I feel there are separations in the community, and we need to pull everyone together to get on the same page. We all have a lot of opportunity, but some feel as if they don't."*
- *"Less resistance to change. A newer approach to solving problems."*
- *"Make sure members of the communities work together, not in silos."*

QUALITY OF LIFE / COMMUNITY AMENITIES

- *"It's boring."*
- *"Depressing."*
- *"Isolated."*
- *"We need an indoor play area, children's museum, imaginative play area, better grocery stores with affordable organic meats, fruits, and vegetables. We need shopping outside Walmart, Target, and Kohls."*
- *"More 100–140K housing."*
- *"This is a good place to raise a family (but is not exciting enough/have enough activities for young adults)."*
- *"People being bored in Mason."*
- *"High cost of living, lack of community access to recreation, other communities attract our individuals due to wages, cost of living, weather."*
- *"Better environmental quality and concern."*
- *"Our last resurgence downtown is fading, market forces and proper decisions are whittling away at our downtown even after concerted effort has been made in last 10–20 years to make more parking and revitalize our downtown."*
- *"Better roads—clean up these neighborhoods, we have junkyards inside city limits."*
- *"Fewer blight-type houses (North End in MC and other neighborhoods, too), less drugs/crime."*
- *"Less violence at HS and North end of MC."*
- *"Not maintaining/building on what we have. MC is not a draw; it needs to be more attractive, appealing."*
- *"Demographics, thorough ways, cleanliness, high first responded service calls, community apathy, financial contributions."*

QUALITY OF INDUSTRY AND WORKFORCE

- *"Income. This area needs more of a career-oriented population, high-paying trade jobs."*
- *"Lack of workforce."*
- *"Not enough high-paying jobs, or the skilled workforce to cover everything we have now."*
- *"The traditional manufacturing base that is found in most of the Midwest."*
- *"The general public to have a better understanding of the businesses and industry we have locally. Not only what products and services they offer, but understanding what they do and what they need in order to prevail in this area."*
- *"More and better-paying jobs."*
- *"Quality-paying jobs."*
- *"Large corporations, low wages."*
- *"Need more jobs with good wages and benefits."*



WEAKNESSES

- *"More professional career opportunities."*
- *"Jobs growth."*
- *"After what happened in 2016 with Prestige—Nobody is going to be looking at us—why would they?"*
- *"We need to increase the population to keep our area viable. To do this we need viable jobs to draw people."*
- *"We need to draw business to the area that can provide jobs that can support families. Retail jobs do not do that, however."*



OPPORTUNITIES

COMMUNICATION/COLLABORATION/UNIFICATION

- *"I think we could reach out to Forest City, Garner, Charles City, Northwood, and even Hampton to make a solid NORTH IOWA AREA improvement. Think about all the natural resources, as well as the diverse population, the possibilities are endless!"*
- *"North Mason City, as well as redevelopment of the Mall."*
- *"We need to think regional; in the past regionalism for Mason City is the region comes and only relies on Mason City and Mason City is the hub of all activity."*
- *"We need to figure out how to have the Farm Bureau actively backing our goals at the Iowa legislature."*
- *"Regional grants."*
- *"More communication between so as not to conflict."*
- *"Unification on the direction we are going."*
- *"Share a common vision about who/what we are."*
- *"Combine more entities with Mason City and Clear Lake. Example: EDC (done already and working well), chambers (next easiest to do), and then eventually city services, including government (council, mayors, admin, utilities, etc.)."*
- *"Find common ground on what we do well, pull funding together into one regional effort. When funds and result measurement are done by county or city that tends to ensure local silos instead of one collaborative regional effort to market North Iowa. Each is only looking out for its own county."*
- *"Use the corridor to find additional ways to promote more area cooperation among local governmental units. It seems to me we have to find ways to build more trust among the councils and supervisors through more collective involvement possibly through the corridor."*
- *"Community meetings, leaders need to be open and up front about what is going on and how they are communicating with each other."*

COMMUNICATION/COLLABORATION/UNIFICATION—CONTINUED

- *"Neighboring small towns partnering with MC and Clear Lake. A greater North Iowa partnership?"*
- *"Hold quarterly networking events."*
- *"a) Decide what M.C. wants to do (goals). b) Decide if M.C. can do it alone. c) If not alone, then work with other communities, employers, and colleges. d) Do it all in a sustainable way."*
- *"Communities have to discuss what type of North Iowa they want and achieve a unified plan to try to make it happen. Clear Lake was definitely against having a hog processing plant built in Mason City. We have one economic development group in the North Iowa corridor that is to work for all residents in Mason City, Clear Lake, and Cerro Gordo County. Because of Prestige I have heard rumblings that Clear Lake should, as in the past, go it alone for economic development."*
- *"Have the city councils meet or discuss what could benefit each other at the city level and county level."*

QUALITY OF LIFE / COMMUNITY AMENITIES

- *"Better restaurants and shopping, redevelopment of downtown Mason City and Clear Lake."*
- *"I would like to see a more vibrant downtown, more local shopping and boutiques as well as a box store like Gordmans. More "fun" activities for the young adults."*
- *"Increase in bike/running trail system."*



OPPORTUNITIES

- *"Health/wellness centers, options, trail systems."*
- *"Outdoor recreational spaces (trails) need to be expanded. It would help with recruitment. People want access to their environment, and they want it to be clean. Stronger action plan for change."*
- *"Festivals, concerts, bars (locally owned) festivals (beer fests, themed festivals), food trucks."*
- *"Build off of our success! Grow lake access, increase small business and employees, provide more recreation for community/visiting individuals."*
- *"More bike paths"*
- *"Continue to look at options for restaurants and retail shopping that is not currently here. Entertainment offerings increased would be nice as well."*

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND REVITALIZATION

- *"More airlines out of Mason City, Clear Lake—Better parking downtown Mason City—no 2-hr limits—More events and back up from Main Street and Mason City Chamber."*
- *"Hockey in Mall Event Center, Mason City—continue to revitalize downtown in both cities."*
- *"Continue moving in a forward direction with renovations and updates to downtown Mason City, including the building of the multipurpose arena. I would also like to see our lower-income areas receive some attention to clean up the city."*
- *"I love what has been done in downtown MC and look forward to us continuing our movement in a forward direction."*
- *"Grow the downtown. Celebrate the cold. Get rid of or build up the downtown Mall. More economic growth, easy access in and around northern Mason City; possible bypass to Western Commerce corridor. More commerce, shopping on eastern side of Mason City"*

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

- *"More activities for youth—personally I would love to see us become a regional training center for youth activities that draws from all of North Iowa. We should be leading the way in this area and many others."*
- *"Providing opportunities for youth: it could provide economic impact through trainings and tournaments offered in many sports. Ames and Ankeny have something going on almost every weekend and they have the facilities to do it. I would love to be a part of this for North Iowa!"*

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS— CONTINUED

- *"More/diverse cultural opportunities and festivals."*
- *"Heightened cultural events."*
- *"Convention center—I travel to central Iowa at least once a month for some type of agriculture conference. Those could be bringing people here!"*
- *"Promote what we have going on. So many times I hear people say there's nothing to do. Every weekend of the year could be filled if you look to a neighboring ZIP Code."*
- *"Have unique celebrations (seasonal)."*

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

- *"What can we capitalize on with this quality: distribution centers, data centers?"*
- *"Tourism, technology, and distribution points."*
- *"Developing, retaining, and recruiting young professionals and those in technology fields."*
- *"From a 'macro' perspective I see a tremendous amount of opportunity in our region for production, manufacturing, and distribution industries. We have low cost of living, safe neighborhoods, and good schools. These are necessary to attract new workforce considering moving from other areas. We also have prime location to support transportation out of those facilities."*
- *"The momentum in growth of breweries, wine culture, restaurants, music, art, and décor establishments."*
- *"NIACC—agribusiness—medical care—small businesses."*



OPPORTUNITIES

- *"We need a REAL greenhouse—not big box vendors."*
- *"Look to growing smaller businesses (including retail). People come to shop at the big box stores, but we need an artsy shopping district too."*
- *"Development of technology-based jobs—provided our broadband infrastructure is up to speed."*
- *"I think it's in production. We have a community college that can provide training to new and existing workers, and the production industry we attract will only enhance the service industry sector that we already have."*
- *"I also think that if we were to invest in our regional internet capability it would expand on opportunity to telecommute for work and increase opportunity for things like telehealth."*
- *"Agriculture and potential employment growth."*
- *"New logistical/shipping centers taking advantage of our solid transportation access, insurance companies looking to expand in Iowa to take advantage of domicile laws here, food production facilities that can benefit from our access to ag products"*
- *"I see the continued opportunity in agriculture supporting industry and process of food products."*



THREATS

GOVERNMENT

- *"Lack of expanding local control from the feds and state governments."*
- *"Transparency and the people who are against everything."*
- *"Improve communication between the cities as well as the county officials."*
- *"The competition between cities (residents and city officials)."*

GOVERNMENT—CONTINUED

- *"Perception by some that certain areas of the city receive more attention/money than others."*
- *"Many. Political challenges. Financial challenges, turf challenges. Long-term engagement and commitment."*
- *"All of the major organizations need to collaborate; the chambers, visitors bureau, EDC, Main Street, Pappajohn Center, etc. This has worked well for others such as Fort Dodge and Burlington. The lack of collaboration has caused us to fall behind."*
- *"Long-time leaders need to share power and work with new leadership. Organizations need to come out of their silos and collaborate."*
- *"City and state zoning restrictions, funding, lack of high paying jobs."*
- *"MC council all on the same page; collaboration, not divisive."*
- *"In Mason City, in particular, I fear that the group of leaders that have been advocating for change and development will be disheartened by recent defeats and simply give up. Is there a group of people in North Iowa that are willing to keep fighting against those whose response to anything new or different is 'No, we can't/shouldn't/won't do that.'"*

DEMOGRAPHICS

- *"Young Millennials not choosing to live and work in North Iowa. As a whole, North Iowa is a very old demographic. We need more college grads and young entrepreneurs to WANT to reside here and work. Otherwise what will happen to all entry-level jobs? Stores will close, and the opportunity of a work force is gone."*
- *"Young people are more interested in living in a metro area."*
- *"Demographics are not favorable—little to no population growth for many decades."*
- *"Aging population creates threats. The need for new, young families is great."*



THREATS

- *"We send our best kids off to college and we expect them to never come back. We need to emphasize that there is no shame in learning and working in the trades."*
- *"An aging population combined with a Millennial generation that is attracted to the city life."*

WORKFORCE

- *"We have seen (are seeing) a continued challenge to get young professionals back to this area."*
- *"It makes it very hard to be in the professional service industry during this time (can't find people to hire)."*
- *"Lack of skilled workforce, aging workforce."*
- *"Workers who are not equipped to handle 21st-century jobs (and often can't pass a drug test)."*
- *"Young people move out of area for job opportunities, low unemployment rate, availability of workers."*
- *"Business leaving. Winnebago moving executive positions to Minneapolis could have a very negative affect on many area cities."*
- *"Not enough local risk takers who will try to start their own business, stagnant and declining population that hinders new business from moving to the area, older population with a shrinking labor pool, very dependent on agriculture profitability. When farmers make money, we all make money. When farmers do not make money, the entire region suffers."*
- *"No mid- to upper-level jobs. Some smaller town got a phone/call center. Great idea for working moms. (St. Ansgar, or maybe a town in southern MN.)"*

KEYWORD ANALYSIS

Specific questions were selected for keyword analysis based on their applicability and subject matter. “Word clouds” were constructed as visual representations of the most commonly used words and phrases contained in participant responses. Words lacking specific meaning (a, an, the, and, is, are, etc.) were filtered out for clarity. The relative size of the words represents their frequency among responses.

FIGURE 59. QUESTION 2 WORD CLOUD

Question two asked participants, “What do you love most about living in the North Iowa region?” The word cloud below indicates that the most common themes in question two were “community” (appearing 101 times), “small town” (83), and “family” (59). A total of 736 responses were received for this question.



FIGURE 60. QUESTION 3 WORD CLOUD

Participants were asked to describe what they would like to see change about the region (within their collective control), in question three. The most frequent responses were “jobs” (appearing 81 times), “activities” (76), and “business” (65), out of 685 responses.

**FIGURE 61. QUESTION 5 WORD CLOUD**

Question five asked participants, “Why should someone from outside our region choose to move here?” The word cloud below reveals that the most common themes in question four were “living” (103), “community” (91), and “place” (81). A total of 736 responses were received for this question.



FIGURE 62. QUESTION 7 SUMMARY**MOST COMMON WORDS USED TO DESCRIBE NORTH IOWA**

Question seven asked participants to provide three words they felt best described North Iowa. The graphic below represents the most common responses, regardless of the order in which they were provided.

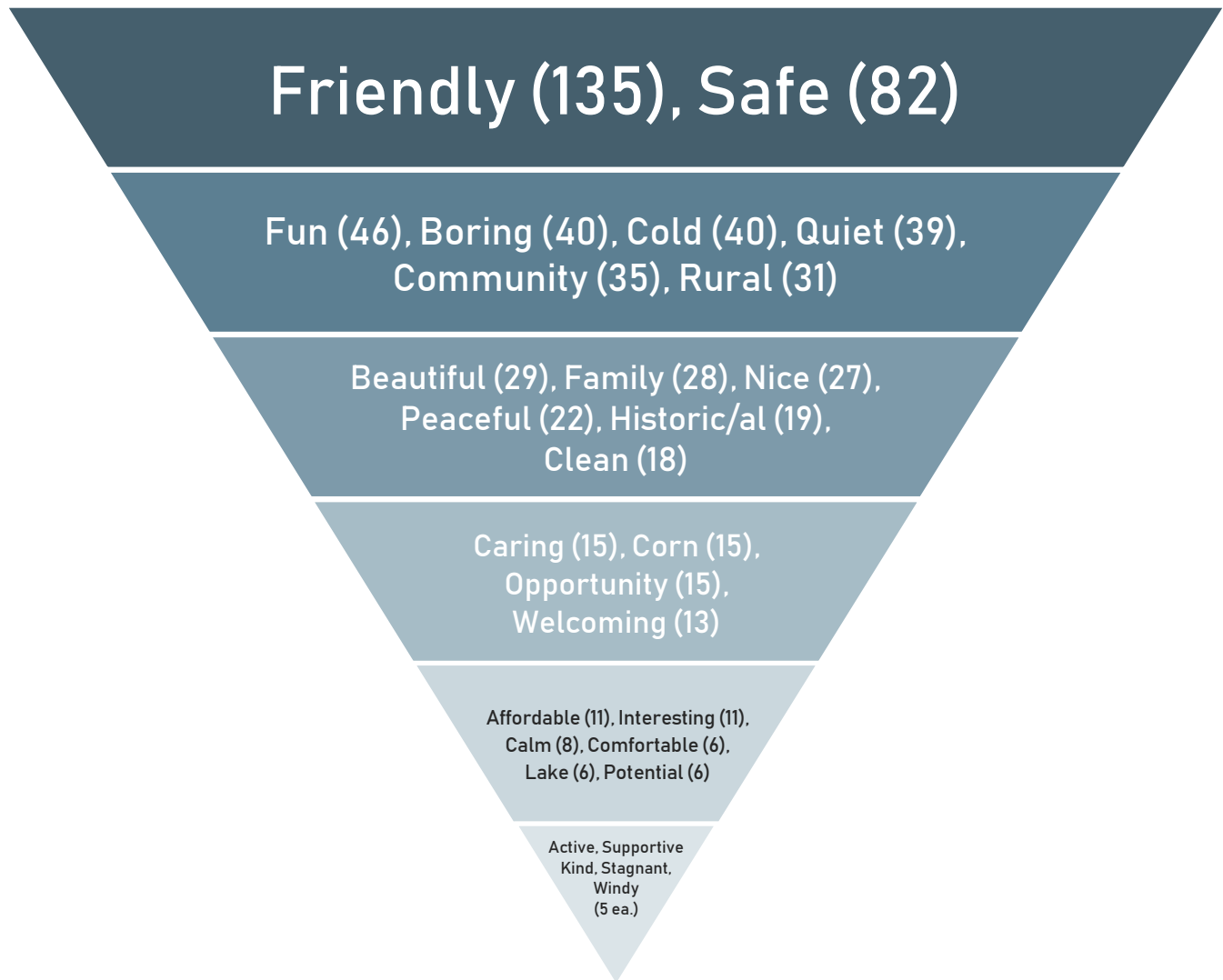


FIGURE 63. QUESTION 9 WORD CLOUD

In question nine, participants were asked, “What have been some major successes in the region?” The most frequent responses were “McKesson” (108), “Park” (70), and “Clear Lake (66), out of a total of 736 open-ended responses. It might be concluded that “Park” in this context refers to the Historic Park Inn hotel revitalization.



APPENDIX 8. COMMUNITY VISION AND VALUES WORKSHOPS

In June 2017, the TIP Strategies consulting team and Vision North Iowa partnership conducted a series of four community workshops to gain a better understanding of North Iowa community values, build consensus, and create a shared vision for North Iowa's economic future. Input received during the workshops is outlined in the following pages and was used to guide development of the Vision North Iowa economic development strategic plan.

The objective of the workshops was to ensure as many North Iowan voices as possible were heard and to do so in an organized, efficient, and constructive manner. The workshops were structured to help the project partnership continue to glean insight into three important questions at the forefront of the project's discovery phase.

1. Who are North Iowans? (that is, What qualities characterize the people of North Iowa?)
2. What do North Iowans care about?
3. What do North Iowans want the economy to look like in the future?

Two workshops were held at the Surf Ballroom and Museum in Clear Lake on June 13, and the remaining two workshops took place at The Main Event in Mason City on June 14. In each community, the workshops were offered at noon and 6:00 p.m. and lasted 2 hours. The workshops were promoted through several media outlets and were attended by approximately 115 people.

Interested participants were asked to register, and registered attendees were randomly assigned to tables led by table facilitators. After the consulting team presented a brief project overview and summary of preliminary key findings, the lead facilitator and table facilitators walked attendees through a set of seven questions. Tables were given approximately 10 minutes to discuss each question and come to a consensus on their response. If the opinions among table attendees differed, potential responses were prioritized and discussed further. If an agreement still wasn't reached, tables took a vote, but only as a last resort. The final responses were submitted by the table facilitator through Mentimeter, an online survey tool. The aggregated results were projected for the entire audience to view. This format allowed those who were uncomfortable speaking in public to share their thoughts and prevented others from monopolizing more than their share of the meeting time.

The survey questions were as follows:

1. Describe the current economy of North Iowa in just a few words.
2. What are the most important issues facing North Iowa over the next 5–10 years?
3. What do you want the North Iowa economy to look like in 20 years?
4. Using just one word, what is holding the region back from achieving economic success?
5. What are the top three qualities that define the character of the people of North Iowa?
6. Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the future of North Iowa?
7. Are there any additional comments we should capture as a part of this process?

KEY FINDINGS

Key findings from survey responses are summarized below. All responses were documented and shared in electronic format with the Vision North Iowa executive committee. These files included various attendee comments captured by table facilitators but not officially submitted as survey responses.

1. The most frequently recurring themes describing the current North Iowa economy were 1) stagnant/slow growth, 2) low wages, and 3) lack of available workforce.
2. According to a weighted average of responses, the most important issue facing North Iowa over the next 5–10 years is “collaboration and unity; moving toward a common purpose,” followed by “quality of life,” and “continuation of economic trends.”
3. The most frequently recurring themes regarding how the North Iowa economy should look in 20 years were “increased economic diversity” and “economic growth.”
4. “Vision” was regarded as the top barrier to economic success, followed by “fear,” “leadership,” and “complacency.”
5. “Work ethic” was the most-referenced quality that defined the character of North Iowans, followed by “hardworking,” “caring,” and “friendly.”
6. Workshop attendees were overwhelmingly optimistic (93 percent) about the future of North Iowa.

In summary, the community workshops were successful in gaining additional understanding about the character and aspirations of North Iowans.

SURVEY RESPONSE ANALYSIS

The figures below provide an analysis of responses from each survey question.

FIGURE 64. DESCRIBE THE CURRENT ECONOMY OF NORTH IOWA IN JUST A FEW WORDS (Q1)

Question one was one of two open-ended questions limited to a 140-character response. The table below lists recurrent themes by frequency. Only responses that occurred three or more times are listed.

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY
Stagnant/slow growth	10
Low wages	7
Lack of available workforce	6
Lack of quality-paying jobs	4
Opportunities	4

FIGURE 65. THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES FACING NORTH IOWA OVER THE NEXT 5–10 YEARS (Q2)
 RATED ON A SCALE OF 1 (LEAST IMPORTANT) TO 5 (MOST IMPORTANT)

Question two asked respondents to rate a list of statements on a scale of 1 to 5 based on perceived importance for the economic future of North Iowa. “Collaboration and unity; moving toward a common purpose” was rated the highest by a significant margin according to a comparison of the weighted averages.

	1	2	3	4	5	Weighted Average
Continuation of demographic trends	2		5	6	14	4.11
Continuation of economic trends	1	1	3	5	17	4.33
Collaboration & unity; moving toward a common purpose			6	6	15	5.57
External perceptions about the region	1	2	6	12	6	3.74
Internal perceptions about the region			4	13	10	4.22
Quality of life			3	8	16	4.48

FIGURE 66. WHAT THE NORTH IOWA ECONOMY SHOULD LOOK LIKE IN 20 YEARS (Q3)

Question three was the second open-ended question also limited to a 140-character response. The table below lists recurrent themes by frequency. Only responses that occurred three or more times are listed. The top two responses occurred more often than other responses by a significant margin.

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY
Increased economic diversity (industry and jobs)	15
Economic growth	12
Entrepreneurship/innovation growth	7
Growing population	6
Growing younger population	5
Vibrant community	5
Welcoming culture/cultural diversity	5
Growing infrastructure	3
Higher income/pay	3

FIGURE 67. WHAT IS HOLDING THE REGION BACK FROM ACHIEVING ECONOMIC SUCCESS? (Q4)
DESCRIBED IN ONE WORD

As shown in the word cloud below, “vision” was the most recurrent barrier to achieving economic success in the North Iowa region. “Fear” was second most-used word, followed by “complacency” and “leadership.”



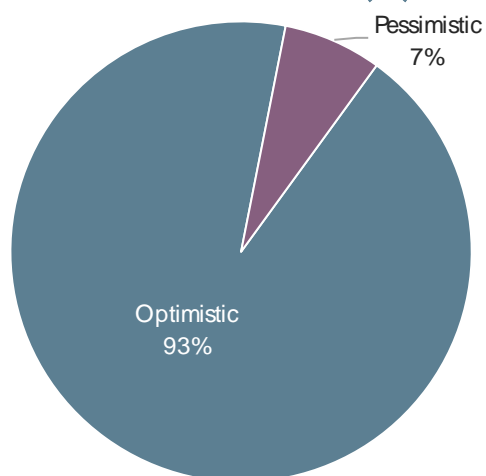
FIGURE 68. TOP THREE QUALITIES THAT DEFINE THE CHARACTER OF THE PEOPLE OF NORTH IOWA (Q5)

According to workshop respondents, “work ethic” was the top quality that defines the character of North Iowans, followed by “hardworking,” “friendly,” and “caring.”



Respondents were overwhelmingly optimistic about the future of North Iowa. Out of a total of 29 total votes, 27 of the tables came to consensus that they felt “optimistic” about the future of North Iowa, and only two tables felt “pessimistic.”

FIGURE 69. ARE YOU OPTIMISTIC OR PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE FUTURE OF NORTH IOWA? (Q6)



APPENDIX 9. BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES

REGIONAL COLLABORATION AND INTERNAL MARKETING

CALGARY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



#LOVEYYC is an internal marketing and crowdsourcing initiative created by Calgary Economic Development to bring together Calgarians from all different backgrounds, who share a common passion for living and working in

their city. It was developed as a place to share thoughts and ideas, ask questions, help solve challenges, and help advance Calgary's economy. The initiative was launched with the understanding that innovation is a group process and that a region's residents are an integral part of driving toward the best idea. This community is open 24/7 to share thoughts, experiences, and ideas. On a regular basis, economic development officials invite the public to participate in contests, poll questions, and discussions. The most recent contest was an elevator pitch competition to bring Amazon's HQ2 to Calgary.

For more information, visit <https://loveyyyc.chaordix.com/dashboard>.

PUGET SOUND REGIONAL COUNCIL



The Prosperity Partnership is a coalition of more than 300 government, business, labor, and community organizations dedicated to improving long-term economic prosperity for the central Puget Sound region. Created by the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) in 2004, the Prosperity Partnership emerged because the leaders of the region decided to take more control of its economic destiny—to chart a course that ensures Puget Sound is competitive with every other region in the world. The partnership also created the region's first unified economic strategy. Achievements include the following.

- Founded the Washington Clean Technology Alliance, the first trade association dedicated to clean technology in the state (2007).
- Published a report on the “size, scope, segments, and growth potential” of the region's clean tech cluster as well as its niche advantages and how to pair them with export-oriented industries (November 2009).
- Founded the Washington Global Health Alliance, which markets Washington as an “epicenter of global health discovery, development, and delivery” (2007).
- Published a foreign direct investment (FDI) toolkit to aid local and state governments in attracting FDI (January 2009).
- Established the International Regions Benchmarking Consortium, a gathering of “metropolitan regions that find it mutually beneficial to learn from each other” by comparing data and research findings, with financial support from Microsoft and Boeing (2008).
- Created the Washington Defense Partnership to serve as a central coordinating body for the military presence and mission in Washington as well as families, veterans, and the defense-contracting community (2009).
- Spearheaded efforts to secure a “Transportation Partnership Account” worth \$8.5 billion that would target “safety, freight, efficiency, and capacity projects” (2005).

- Launched the Washington Aerospace Partnership, a “coalition of business, labor, and local government leaders working to sustain and grow aerospace industry jobs in Washington,” which is home to more than 600 aerospace manufacturers that employ more than 100,000 people.

PSRC develops policies and coordinates decisions about regional growth, transportation, and economic development planning within King, Kitsap, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties. Its membership is composed of more than 80 county, city, port, transit, tribal, and state agencies serving the region.

For more information, visit <http://www.psrc.org>.

FUND FOR OUR ECONOMIC FUTURE—NORTHEAST OHIO



The Fund for Our Economic Future is an alliance of funders—foundations, corporations, education institutions, healthcare systems, business and civic organizations, and government entities—from across Northeast Ohio, who pool their resources and collective know-how to strengthen and sustain the regional economy in ways that also increase access to opportunity for all people. The members of the Fund all agree that a healthy economy is necessary to advance their diverse missions.

Formed in 2004, the Fund is organized as a 501(c)(3) and supported by a small, professional staff. Since its founding, the Fund has raised more than \$100 million to improve regional economic competitiveness through grantmaking, research, and convening. The Fund works in partnership with private- and public-sector leaders to align activities to increase economic growth and opportunity through improved job creation, job preparation, and job access. The Fund’s footprint consists of the 18 counties of Northeast Ohio, a region responsible for \$226 billion per year in gross regional product and encompassing more than 4 million people in and around the metropolitan areas of Akron, Canton, Cleveland, and Youngstown.

For more information, visit <http://www.thefundneo.org/>.

MCKNIGHT FOUNDATION AND CORRIDORS OF OPPORTUNITY



Corridors of Opportunity was a broad-based initiative to accelerate the buildout of a regional transit system for Minneapolis–Saint Paul in ways that would advance economic development and ensure people of all incomes and backgrounds could share in the resulting opportunities.

It focused on seven transitway corridors that at the time were planned, under construction, or operating in the region. These corridors connect valued local places, institutions, and commercial districts to one another and to the entire region.

The Corridors of Opportunity work with the stakeholders along the corridors encompassed nearly two dozen planning and implementation activities that promoted the following.

- Transit-oriented development
- Affordable housing
- Small business support and investment
- Community outreach and engagement

- Demonstration projects, tools, and policy studies

Corridors of Opportunity was supported by funding from two national initiatives as well as local sources and was governed by a 26-member policy board made up of top leadership from government, philanthropy, nonprofit, and private-sector interests.

For more information, visit www.corridorsofopportunity.org/.

CENTER FOR BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: SAGINAW VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY



The Center for Business and Economic Development (CBED), housed within Saginaw Valley State University (SVSU), plays an important role in supporting the economic growth of East Central Michigan. The CBED mission is to enhance the economic vitality of the region by providing technical support for existing businesses; personal and professional development opportunities; programs and services for the manufacturing sector; and commercialization of ideas and inventions whether from within SVSU or from business startups across the region. The CBED supports the region's businesses through five entities: 1) Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center, Northeast; 2) Office of Continuing Education and Professional Development; 3) Osher Lifelong Learning Institute; 4) Independent Testing Laboratory; 5) Saginaw Valley Research and Development Corporation. The Independent Testing Lab (established in 1982), in particular, plays a key role in supporting the region's manufacturing industry by providing analytical services and technical support with the latest laboratory equipment needed to improve existing products and bring new products to market.

For more information, visit www.svsu.edu/cbed.

BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION PARTNERSHIP

CITY OF GRANTS PASS, OR



In 1998, the City of Grants Pass, OR, in partnership with the Grants Pass/Josephine County Chamber of Commerce, launched its award-winning business retention and expansion (BRE) program to improve the local business climate. The program focuses on keeping local firms in business and in the community, increasing their competitiveness, and helping them grow and expand.

A cornerstone of the award-winning program is a comprehensive survey of Josephine County businesses, conducted every 3 years, most recently in 2014. Traded-sector firms are invited to complete a professionally developed standard survey instrument. The business is then interviewed by a pair of volunteers who use the survey responses to probe about specific issues. In total, between 50 and 60 volunteers participate in the program, with the goal of conducting face-to-face interviews with every traded-sector business in the county. Grants Pass' reliance on community leaders as volunteers differentiates its BRE effort from many others. City economic development (ED) staff found that this approach fosters solid relationships with local businesses and is extremely cost effective.

Findings from the survey are used to celebrate successes (an important, yet often overlooked, aspect of BRE programs) and to identify "red flag" issues. These issues are then incorporated into the program of work of relevant organizations in the county. The survey findings are invaluable to local BRE efforts, as they paint a clear picture of how City and Chamber staff can assist the local business community. In the 2 years between surveys, for example, the chamber provides workshops and other educational forums to address needs identified through the survey. The program has been credited with improving relationships between the public sector and the local business community and has led to other results, including a new industrial park to accommodate some of the quickly expanding businesses identified in the original 1999 effort.

Objectives of the Grants Pass BRE program include the following.

1. To demonstrate to local businesses that the community appreciates their contributions to the local economy.
2. To help existing businesses solve problems.
3. To assist businesses in using programs aimed at helping them become more competitive.
4. To anticipate future local business issues and trends and develop strategies to address these.
5. To build community capacity to sustain growth and development.
6. To specifically identify those businesses poised to expand that need assistance to grow.
7. To develop collaborative relationships for participating in comprehensive long-range retention and expansion activities.
8. To identify opportunities to attract support businesses.

PLACEMAKING AND TALENT MANAGEMENT

PLACEMAKING: RENAISSANCE ON THE FRONT RANGE—FORT COLLINS FOOTHILLS MALL REDEVELOPMENT



As a retail hub for Northern Colorado, the City of Fort Collins, CO, and several public and private community partners began exploring the redevelopment of one of its aging malls as a catalyst placemaking project in 2010. The mall fit into the City of Fort Collins urban development plan, including meeting goals to make the area more pedestrian and bike friendly. The original mall footprint was expanded to over 75

acres, and included over 660,000 SF of retail, two outdoor plazas, 446 residential units, a parking garage, and a youth activity center. The project was funded by a combination of property tax increment financing, sales tax increment financing, a public improvement fee, a district levy, and district specific ownership taxes.

For more information, visit <http://www.fcgov.com/foothillsmall/>.

TALENT ATTRACTION: CHATTANOOGA IS LITERALLY PERFECT



As unemployment rates continued to drop, scarcity of talent to fill new jobs became a critical issue for many Chattanooga Area Chamber member investors. Anticipating member needs, the Chamber shifted its economic development marketing and communications approach to focus on talent recruitment outside the region. The Chamber's staff teamed with Chamber member video producers to create and launch a video series that reached more than 160,000 viewers, with one video outstripping all

prior records—all at low cost. To date, this successful video series has won three ADDY Awards from the American Advertising Federation as well as a Grand Award and the first ever "Literally Perfect" award from the American Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE).

For more information, visit <http://www.chattanoogatrend.com/literallyperfect>.

TALENT RETENTION AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT HAUSBECK PICKLE COMPANY EMPLOYEE HOME PURCHASE PROGRAM



Saginaw-based Hausbeck Pickle Company launched an innovative pilot program (in partnership with Saginaw Future and the Saginaw County Land Bank) to assist employees with becoming homeowners by matching employees with single-family home properties in Saginaw. The company makes investments to bring the property up to code and then finances the employee's purchase with a 5–10 year land contract. The ultimate goal of this initiative is to improve the economic success of employees and enhance the prosperity of

Saginaw's neighborhoods.

For more information, visit www.wsgw.com/common/more.php?m=15&r=1&item_id=23921.

INVESTMENTS IN REGIONAL AMENITIES: ALLEGHENY REGIONAL ASSET DISTRICT



The Allegheny Regional Asset District was authorized in the Pennsylvania Legislature (Act 77 of 1993) to administer grants from 50 percent of the proceeds of a 1 percent Allegheny County sales and use tax, which is paid by residents and visitors to Allegheny County (the central county of the Pittsburgh metro area). Allegheny County receives an additional 25 percent of the funds, while the remaining 25 percent goes to other municipal governments. The grants support regional assets throughout the county, such as civic, cultural, and recreational

entities; libraries; parks; and sports facilities. Since 1995, the local 1 percent sales tax has resulted in a nearly \$3 billion investment in the region's public libraries, parks, museums, cultural organizations, major regional facilities, and local municipal services, such as the police force and roads.

For more information, visit www.radworkshere.org.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COLLABORATION: GREAT LAKES BAY MICHIGAN WORKS!



East Central Michigan's three workforce development groups, led by Great Lakes Bay Michigan Works!, are planning to consolidate into a single agency that serves the eight-county region. This unprecedented collaboration is a direct response to the opportunity and need for a more regional approach to workforce development. The new partnership will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of workforce development programs across the region, with the ultimate goal of better serving

the needs of the region's employers and workforce.

For more information, visit www.michiganworks.com.

FINANCIAL INCENTIVES FOR ON-TIME GRADUATION: GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY



Many of Michigan's public universities struggle with low graduation rates. In fact, only 3 of the state's 15 public universities have graduation rates above the 31 percent US average. These three institutions include the state's two flagship schools (University of Michigan and Michigan State University) and Grand Valley State University (GVSU). In 1990, GVSU also struggled with low graduation rates of about 15 percent. To address this problem, university leaders implemented a unique program that cut tuition for students that stayed on track to graduate within 4 years,

basically paying seniors to graduate on time. Since 1990, GVSU's graduation rate has more than doubled, thanks in large part to the financial incentives offered to students for on-time graduation. This program could serve as a model for other public universities in Michigan as a way to reduce costs associated with higher education for students, parents, and the economy as a whole.

For more information, visit www.bridgemi.com/2014/07/paying-students-to-graduate.

INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

ENTREPRENEURSHIP ECO-SYSTEM MAP: STARTUP SEATTLE



Startup Seattle is an initiative and website created by the city's Office of Economic Development designed to help entrepreneurs navigate the city's resources and connections. One of the most valuable components of the Startup Seattle website is the entrepreneurship eco-system map, which graphically displays the locations of nearly 2,000 organizations (startups, investors, incubators, and others) in 25

different categories. The Startup Seattle website provides other information for entrepreneurs, including events (free postings for tech startup events); resources (an ever-expanding list of organizations and services for tech startups); jobs (a curated collection of tech startup career opportunities); blog articles (tips and trends, profiles of startups and community leaders); and a newsletter.

For more information, visit www.startupseattle.com/reso.