



ELEVATE

**STRATEGIC PLAN**  
2026–2028



THE  
RIGHT PLACE

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Strategic Plan Leadership	02
Executive Summary	03
Key Metrics	04
Comparable Market Updates	05
Acknowledgements & Strategic Planning Approach	07
Our Strategic Lens	09
Strategic Pillars	11
Strategic Pillars: <b>People</b>	12
Strategic Pillars: <b>Place</b>	18
Strategic Pillars: <b>Prosperity</b>	24
Industry-Specific Strategies: <b>Advanced Manufacturing</b>	31
Industry-Specific Strategies: <b>Health Sciences</b>	35
Industry-Specific Strategies: <b>Technology &amp; Innovation</b>	38
Regional Partners Strategy	42
Regional Partners Strategy: <b>Ionia County</b>	49
Regional Partners Strategy: <b>Lake County</b>	51
Regional Partners Strategy: <b>Mason County</b>	53
Regional Partners Strategy: <b>Montcalm County</b>	55
Regional Partners Strategy: <b>Newaygo County</b>	57
Regional Partners Strategy: <b>Oceana County</b>	59
Comparable Market Data	61
Strategic Plan Team	64

# STRATEGIC PLAN LEADERSHIP

## BOARD LEADERSHIP



**Steve Downing\***  
**CHAIR**

President & CEO  
Gentex Corporation



**Bill Pink, Ph.D.\***  
**VICE CHAIR/TREASURER**

President  
Ferris State University

## BOARD MEMBERS

**Sara Armbruster**

President & CEO  
Steelcase, Inc.

**Rick Baker**

President & CEO  
Grand Rapids Chamber

**Matt Biersack, MD**

President & CEO  
Trinity Health Grand Rapids

**Luke Cherveny**

Grand Rapids Office  
Managing Partner  
PwC

**Michael Davenport**

President & CEO  
Jireh Metal Products, Inc.

**Lauren Davis\***

West Michigan Region President  
Huntington Bank

**Ron DeWaard**

Managing Partner  
Varnum LLP

**Katie Ferris**

Tax Office Managing Partner  
BDO

**Tina Freese Decker\***

President & CEO  
Corewell Health

**Nick Hrynyak**

CEO  
Lacks Enterprises

**Chris Hufnagel**

President & CEO  
Wolverine Worldwide, Inc.

**Josh Hulst\***

Co-founder & Managing Partner  
MichiganLabs

**Joe Hune**

VP & President  
West Michigan & Upper Peninsula,  
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan

**Jonathon Husby**

President & CEO  
ADAC

**John Kennedy**

President & CEO  
Autocam Medical

**William (Brad) Kessel**

CEO  
Independent Bank

**Rick Keyes\***

President & CEO  
Meijer, Inc.

**James Kolodziej<sup>1</sup>**

Operations Manager  
Flexco

**Charles W. Lott**

Senior Vice President  
Wells Fargo

**Philomena Mantella, Ph.D.\***

President  
GVSU

**Shane Napper**

President & CEO  
Rockford Construction

**Michael Nelson**

Chief Operating Officer  
Amway Corporation

**Andi Owen**

President & CEO  
MillerKnoll

**Michael Palizzi**

CEO  
Miller Canfield

**Rick Pappas, Ed.D.**

President  
Davenport University

**Stacy Paul<sup>2</sup>**

President & CEO  
Array of Engineers

**Robert Richard**

President & COO DTE Gas  
DTE Energy Co.

**Julie Rietberg**

CEO  
Greater Regional Alliance of Realtors

**Garrick Rochow**

President & CEO  
Consumers Energy

**Nelson Sanchez\***

CEO  
RoMan Manufacturing

**Tony Sarsam**

President & CEO  
SpartanNash

**John Shay<sup>3</sup>**

City Manager  
City of Wyoming

**Rich Sorota**

CEO  
Miller Johnson

**Tom Stritzinger**

West Michigan Regional President,  
Director of Middle Market  
& Business Banking  
Comerica Bank

**Renee Tabben**

MLWM Market Executive  
& Managing Director  
Merrill Lynch Wealth Management

**Randy Thelen\***

President & CEO  
The Right Place

**John Tuttle**

President  
Acrisure, LLC

**David Van Andel**

Chairman & CEO  
Van Andel Institute

**Al Vanderberg**

County Administrator/Controller  
Kent County

**Mike VanGessel**

President & CEO  
Voyage

**Mark Washington**

City Manager  
City of Grand Rapids

**Mark Wassink**

Managing Partner  
Warner, Norcross & Judd

**Dan Watts**

CEO  
US Signal

**Thomas Welch**

Regional President  
Fifth Third Bank, West Michigan

**Sean Welsh\***

Regional President  
Western Michigan, PNC Bank

\*Executive Committee Member

<sup>1</sup>Manufacturers Council Chair

<sup>2</sup>Technology Council Representative

<sup>3</sup>Community Partner Representative

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"We fight above our weight class" has long been the mantra of our region as we consistently outperformed our relatively small stature. Today, thanks to decades of strategic investment, private-public collaboration, and a sustained commitment to growth, Greater Grand Rapids has now moved up a weight class – benchmarking, competing, and winning against the highest performing metropolitan areas in the country. This dynamic comes with new challenges and exciting opportunities that demand bold thinking and action.

The Right Place's strategic plan reflects the significance of that shift, establishing a foundation for how we adapt, innovate, and lead in this new, more competitive landscape. The work we do today will define Greater Grand Rapids' future for years to come. Together, we are setting a vision that is both ambitious and achievable, and uniquely suited to the strengths of our region.

## MISSION

**To drive sustainable economic growth and shared prosperity for all in the Greater Grand Rapids Region.**

## VISION

**The Greater Grand Rapids Region will be the most resilient, productive, and equitable regional economy in the nation.**

## KEY INITIATIVES

### PEOPLE

The Right Place will position Greater Grand Rapids as a national leader in employer participation throughout the talent pipeline, promoting the region as a destination for talent at each career stage, and providing resources highlighting the region's opportunities for prospective residents.

### PLACE

The Right Place will lead efforts to ensure businesses have the space to grow, residents have places to call home, and an exceptional quality of life experience for everyone in the region. We will do this by expanding development-ready sites, spurring new placemaking initiatives, and deepening our collaboration with municipal and community leaders.

### PROSPERITY

The Right Place will expand prosperity throughout the region by supporting the growth of existing businesses, attracting new companies, and building on the region's core strengths in advanced manufacturing, health sciences, and technology. To do this, we will drive collaboration among companies to adopt technology, including Artificial Intelligence, further diversify customer bases, and capitalize on global opportunities.

# 4,500

Jobs Created/Retained

# \$700M

Capital Investment

# \$30<sup>Per</sup> Hour

Average Payroll

# \$200M

Community Development

# 100

Industry Education  
Partnerships

KEY METRICS

# COMPARABLE MARKET UPDATES

As Greater Grand Rapids has moved up in weight class, we now compete against larger, in some cases stronger, regions. In 2021, The Right Place began benchmarking against a cluster of peer and aspirational markets to understand how Greater Grand Rapids competes and identify opportunities.

Four primary growth indicators are used to compare the region across these communities: population growth, employment growth, gross regional product growth, and concentration of tech workers.

The rebound from the pandemic produced mixed results for our region. While Greater Grand Rapids continued to grow across all four primary metrics, the pace of growth did not match those of our new competitors in several cases. For example, while Greater Grand Rapids' population grew 2.1% (compared to 2% across the country), it was slower than the 3.3% growth averaged across the comparable markets.

We scored better on employment growth, adding jobs at a 7.5% clip (compared to 6.6% nationally), while comparable metros grew 5.7% on average. This resulted in our ranking rising three places among our peers.

The data, with more details found at the end of this plan, show that Greater Grand Rapids must transition from good to great, focusing on population, job, GRP, and technology growth. For the people and businesses of our region to enjoy a prosperous environment, we must continue to climb these charts.

**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau



# GREATER GRAND RAPIDS RANKINGS

## Population Growth

2021: **Rank #11** (3.5% growth) | 2024: **Rank #15** (2.1% growth)

Change in Rank: ▼4

Average growth rate across all comparable metros slowed by **1%**

## Employment Growth

2021: **Rank #15** (-0.9% growth) | 2024: **Rank #12** (7.5% growth)

Change in Rank: ▲3

Average employment growth across all comparable metros increased by **5.7%**

## GRP Growth

2021: **Rank #15** (12.0% growth) | 2024: **Rank #18** (3.13% growth)

Change in Rank: ▼3

Average GRP growth across all comparable metros slowed by **10.5%**

## Tech Jobs Concentration

2021: **Rank #12** (6.5% concentration) | 2025: **Rank #10** (6.5% concentration)

Change in Rank: ▲2

Average tech job concentration decreased 0.5% across all comparable metros

See the end of this plan starting on page 61 for the full charts of comparable markets.

**Sources:** U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, and Lightcast

**Note:** 2024 data compares 2021 to 2024  
and 2021 data compares 2016 to 2021

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS & STRATEGIC PLANNING APPROACH

Economic development is a team sport. For this strategic plan, The Right Place leaned heavily into that dynamic, engaging more than 500 business leaders, industry experts, and community stakeholders in a series of roundtables and strategic planning workshops.

This strategic plan represents a shared vision for our region's economic future, one that is shaped by those working, leading, investing, and living here. Special thanks go to our industry councils, regional partners, and the many stakeholders who contributed their insights, expertise, and time to this plan. We are confident this strategy will prove as insightful to you as your contributions were to us.



550+

Participants

22

Strategic Planning  
Sessions

1 Comprehensive  
Business Survey  
Across:

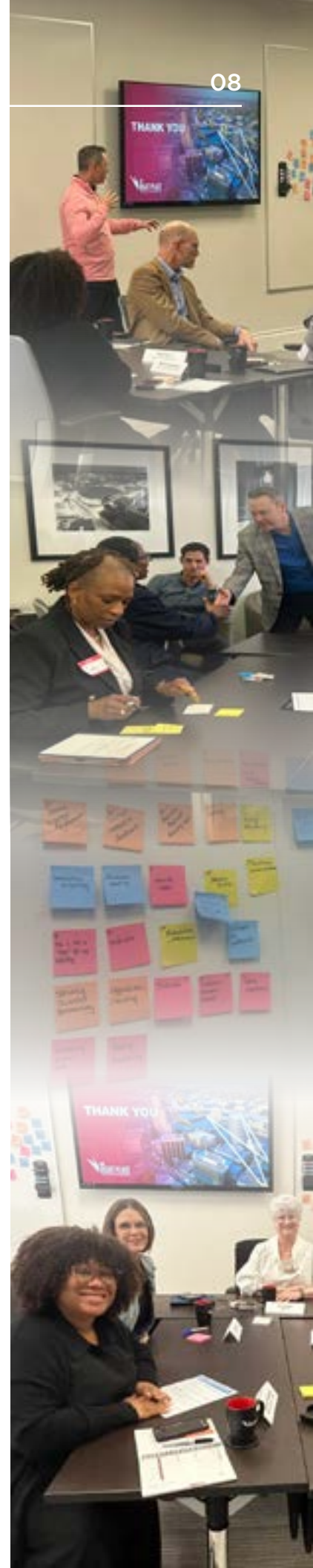
375 Businesses

166 Community Leaders

33 Educators



08



# OUR STRATEGIC LENS: THE POWER OF **PEOPLE, PLACE, AND PROSPERITY**

We know economic development is most effective when people, place, and prosperity efforts are aligned. This multi-faceted, comprehensive approach to economic development has few peers across the country.

## ABOUT THE RIGHT PLACE

Founded in  
**1985**

**40**  
Years Celebrated



**50,000+**

New & Retained Jobs

**\$6.5B+**

In New Capital Investment



**#1 City on the Rise**  
LinkedIn

**#1 Most Entrepreneurial  
City in the Midwest**  
Dealroom.co

**#2 Small Manufacturing Hub**  
Business Facilities

**#3 Mid-Sized Metros with the  
Best Business Climates**  
Business Facilities

**#5 Metro Where Young Home  
Ownership is Accessible**  
Consumer Affairs

**#7 Grand Rapids Named a Top  
City for Tech Talent Growth**  
CBRE

**#14 US Cities With the  
Best Quality of Life**  
Business Insider

**#20 Best U.S. City for  
Women in the Workplace**  
Checkr

# STRATEGIC PILLARS

These initiatives will inform and guide The Right Place's work for the next three-year strategic cycle.

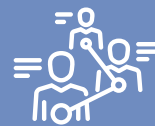
PEOPLE

PLACE

PROSPERITY



# PEOPLE



Talented, hard-working people are the foundation of every region's success. From early learners and educators to skilled tradespeople, entrepreneurs, and business leaders who have laid the groundwork for our growth, talent is our greatest asset. The Right Place recognizes that building a world-class regional economy requires a talent pipeline that is adaptable and aligned with the evolving needs of business.

Leveraging our long-standing and far-reaching business relationships across the region, we are focusing on bridging the gap between employers and education partners, helping develop the talent job creators need. We collaborate with business leaders, colleges, universities, workforce development organizations, and other stakeholders to anticipate workforce needs, help companies become talent-ready, and advance efforts that make our region more welcoming to both new residents and untapped local talent.



## TALENT DEVELOPMENT

**The Right Place** will lead the effort to greatly expand employer engagement with K-12, higher education institutions, and workforce development organizations in Greater Grand Rapids to ensure area learners are more prepared and more marketable as they launch their careers. Through greater exposure to a greater number of companies, our area's talent base will become the most work-ready in the nation.

### KEY INITIATIVES

- 1** Increase the number of regional business-education/training partnerships actively participating in talent pipeline initiatives with local colleges, universities, and workforce development organizations.
- 2** Serve as a strategic partner, connecting employers with workforce development programs, training providers, and educational institutions to support upskilling and career advancement.
- 3** Expand talent development opportunities by promoting and facilitating access to training programs and tools.
- 4** Assist training partners in developing a menu of business partnership opportunities, helping to streamline the process for companies to engage.

**43%** of the **572** companies interviewed in retention calls planned to increase employment in Greater Grand Rapids

*Source: The Right Place*



## TALENT ATTRACTION

**Greater Grand Rapids** will be recognized as a premier destination for talent, across industries, and at every career stage, from emerging professionals to accomplished leaders. The Right Place will work with employers, education leaders, and other stakeholders to highlight the region's wealth of opportunities and resources to prospective companies, candidates, and returning residents.

---

## KEY INITIATIVES

- 1** Strengthen talent attraction through targeted marketing campaigns and enhanced relocation support, using an ambassador program for high-potential talent considering a move to the region.
- 2** Increase college graduation retention rates for the region through expansive internship programming. Working with companies to elevate their internship offerings and with area colleges and universities to grow internship opportunities, the goal is to support 1,000+ intern opportunities each year.
- 3** Expand talent attraction marketing efforts, including new website and social media campaign, targeting boomerangs from area colleges and universities, along with a targeted campaign into Chicagoland.

## Greater Grand Rapids Population Growth

Demographic	2021	2024	Growth
Young Workers (25-34)	156,495	169,435	8.3%
Working Age (20-64)	637,148	682,264	7.1%
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>1,091,620</b>	<b>1,178,826</b>	<b>8.0%</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

## 25-34 Year Olds as % of Population

Previous Rank	City	2021 %	Current Rank	City	2024 %
1	Salt Lake City, UT	16.0%	1	Colorado Springs, CO	16.3%
2	Colorado Springs, CO	15.9%	2	Salt Lake City, UT	16.2%
3	Columbus, OH	15.2%	3	Columbus, OH	14.9%
4	<b>Grand Rapids, MI</b>	<b>14.3%</b>	4	Des Moines, IA	14.5%
5	Indianapolis, IN	14.2%	5	Indianapolis, IN	14.4%
6	Oklahoma City, OK	14.2%	6	<b>Grand Rapids, MI</b>	<b>14.4%</b>
7	Des Moines, IA	14.2%	7	Raleigh, NC	14.3%
8	Raleigh, NC	14.1%	8	Ann Arbor, MI	14.1%
9	Ann Arbor, MI	14.0%	9	Chattanooga, TN	14.0%
10	Louisville, KY	13.8%	10	Oklahoma City, OK	13.9%
11	Detroit, MI	13.7%	11	Detroit, MI	13.8%
12	Milwaukee, WI	13.7%	12	Louisville, KY	13.8%
13	Jacksonville, FL	13.6%	13	Milwaukee, WI	13.8%
14	Lansing, MI	13.5%	14	Kalamazoo, MI	13.6%
15	Kalamazoo, MI	13.3%	15	Jacksonville, FL	13.4%
16	Greenville, SC	13.3%	16	Lansing, MI	13.3%
17	Birmingham, AL	13.2%	17	Greenville, SC	13.3%
18	Chattanooga, TN	13.0%	18	Knoxville, TN	13.3%
19	Greensboro, NC	12.9%	19	Birmingham, AL	13.1%
20	Knoxville, TN	12.8%	20	Greensboro, NC	12.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

17.0% Percentage of GGR's diverse population in 2004

23.4% Percentage of GGR's diverse population in 2024

35.0% Predicted percentage of GGR's diverse population in 2050

Demographic	2004 to 2024
Two or More Races	116%
Asian	77%
Hispanic	60%
Black	32%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	30%
White	5%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	-3%

Source: Lightcast and RSQE

## TALENT PROGRAMMING

**The Right Place** will serve as a central resource, leveraging our Talent Report and connecting employers to available career pathways to build robust talent pipelines.

## KEY INITIATIVES

- 1** Develop a comprehensive workforce system directory to assist area companies in determining the right fit for their particular talent needs.
- 2** Produce an annual talent report, highlighting the latest demographic shifts and regional labor market trends, as well as the deep insights gained from the over 500 business retention visits conducted each year.
- 3** Provide focused workshops with area employers, helping employers grow their employer brand, enhance talent sourcing, and improve employee retention.

## Hello West Michigan

Hello West Michigan is a program focused exclusively on talent attraction and actively promotes Greater Grand Rapids as a place where businesses thrive and people want to live and work.

Hello West Michigan efforts help connect talent from outside the region to member companies throughout the area and support new residents as they find their fit in Greater Grand Rapids.

[Learn More →](#)

# PLACE



Greater Grand Rapids stands out as one of the Midwest's most vibrant regions, celebrated for its award-winning quality of life; a place where life feels full, adventurous, and distinctly connected. What truly sets us apart is our continued drive to be better each day, seizing opportunities to enhance public spaces, foster growth and collaboration, and thoughtfully develop places where people want to live, work, and gather.

At The Right Place, we see every street, park, and parcel as an opportunity — a chance to strengthen the ties that make our communities special. We are dedicated to elevating these opportunities and guiding projects and partnerships that make our region stronger, more connected, and even more remarkable for years to come.

Since its launch in 2021, the Place team has collaborated with communities across the region. Together, we have delivered \$58 million in public placemaking projects that enhance how people experience their neighborhoods, while sparking \$201 million in housing, mixed-use, and business development — including nearly 2,500 acres of build-ready industrial land.

Through this work, the Place team supports a thriving region, made up of a wide array of unique communities, where businesses, residents, and visitors alike can flourish.



## SITE READINESS

**The Right Place** will support the creation and activation of build-ready sites across industrial, office, commercial, mixed-use, and residential housing sectors.

---

## KEY INITIATIVES

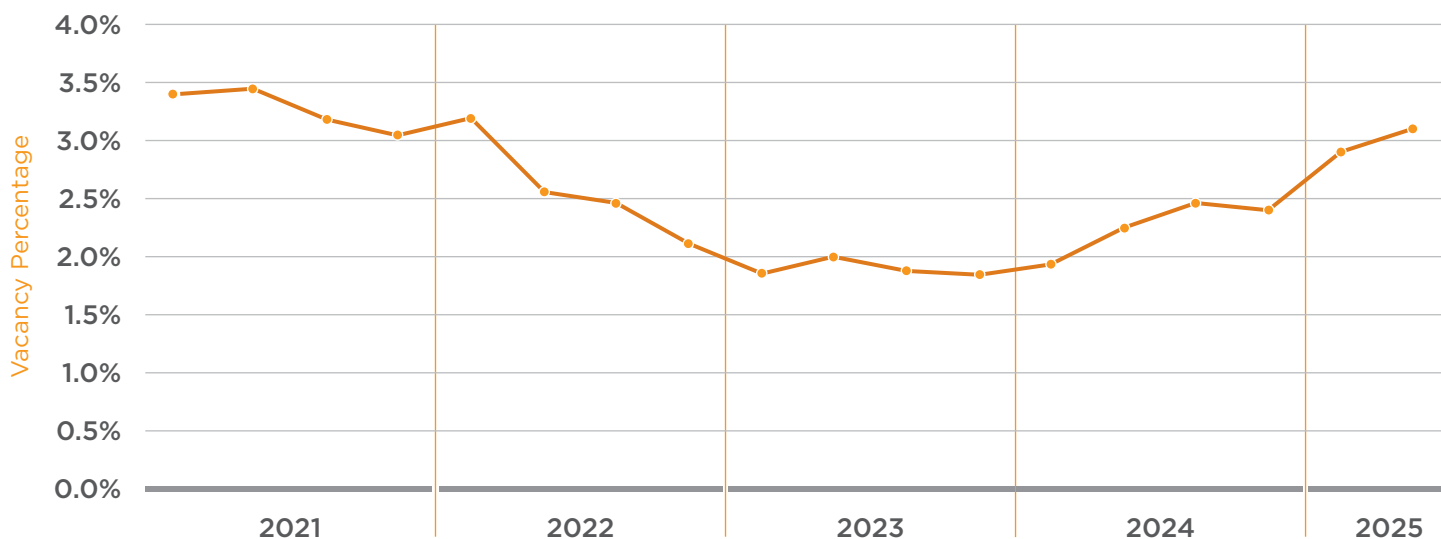
### Industrial Development

- 1** Conduct a regional industrial inventory and gap analysis identifying “Opportunity Sites” for new development. These sites will focus on both greenfield and urban infill redevelopment.
- 2** Provide insights and expertise regarding local, state, and federal resources to secure financial tools and incentives for site readiness.
- 3** Work with regional commercial brokers to market and advance these site opportunities.

### Housing/Mixed-Use Development

- 1** Work with local communities to inventory “Opportunity Sites” that would appeal to local and regional developers for housing or mixed-use projects.
- 2** Advise developers on state and local financial tools for housing and mixed-use development.
- 3** Expand developer outreach throughout the Midwest and select national targets.
- 4** Establish a regional Development Council to build a collaborative development ecosystem that supports innovation and increases the overall pace of development within the Greater Grand Rapids region.

## Industrial Vacancy



Source: NAI Wisinski

Kent County added **6,000** new housing units between **2022** and **2024**

**39,914** unit-shortfall in housing by **2030**

**11,775**  
in **For-Rent** units

**22,139**  
in **For-Sale** units

Source: Bowen National Research

## PLACEMAKING INVESTMENT

**The Right Place** will drive investment into vibrant public spaces across Greater Grand Rapids, expanding on the region's existing placemaking assets.

### KEY INITIATIVES

- 1** Collaborate with regional municipal partners to identify, prioritize, and activate high-impact public spaces through coordinated planning and partnership.
- 2** Leverage state resources to secure funding and partnerships that support public space development.
- 3** Partner with state and local outdoor recreation organizations and initiatives to strengthen existing assets and create new opportunities for outdoor recreation across the region.



# MUNICIPAL PARTNER SUPPORT

**The Right Place** will collaborate and support municipal partners to make Greater Grand Rapids one of the most connected, growth-oriented regions across the country.

## KEY INITIATIVES

- 1** Conduct periodic regional municipal meetings to support capacity building and knowledge sharing.
- 2** Meet regularly with individual municipalities to build and maintain strong, trust-based relationships with local leaders.
- 3** Work with local municipalities to collaborate on project identification and prioritization, with a special emphasis on downtowns and key commercial corridors.
- 4** Work with municipalities to strengthen their ability to market themselves with confidence.
- 5** Partner with municipalities, utilities, engineers, and state resources to assess current and future infrastructure needs, especially around water and wastewater system capacity and service. Prioritize high-impact projects and identify funding for critical investments.



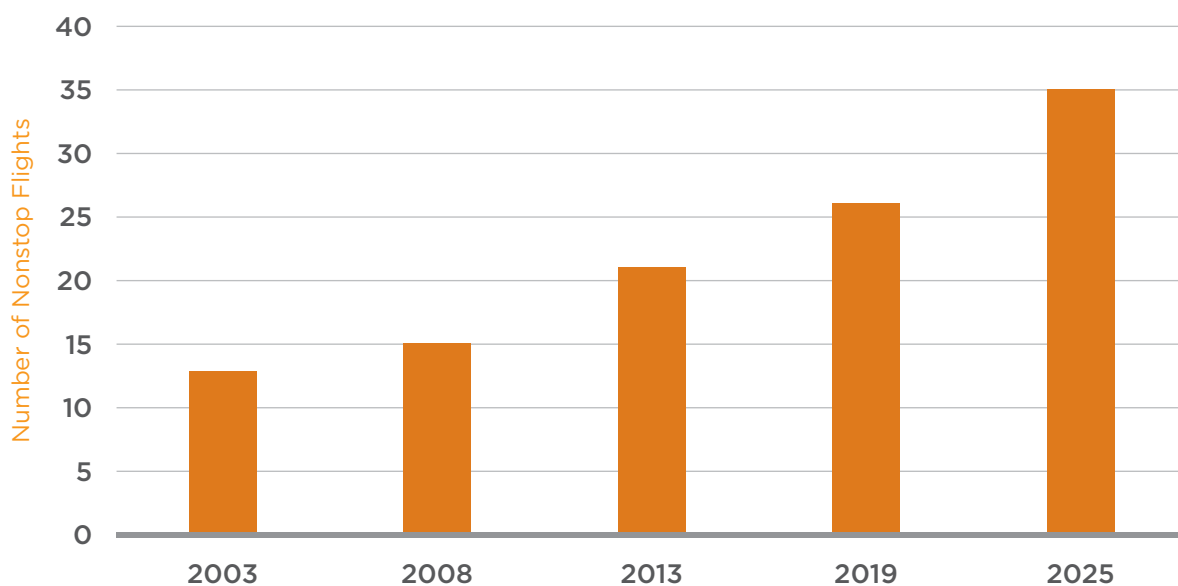
## AIRPORT SUPPORT

**The Right Place** will work with the Gerald R. Ford International Airport to expand and increase nonstop service supporting the business community.

### KEY INITIATIVES

- 1** Administer the Regional Air Alliance, providing an opportunity for business leadership to engage in airport strategy.
- 2** Fund and launch an incentive fund to attract more nonstop flights to more destinations, with emphasis on business destinations.
- 3** Engage with airlines to increase nonstop flight destinations for business travel.

### Nonstop Flight Destinations From Gerald R. Ford International Airport



**Source:** Gerald R. Ford International Airport

# PROSPERITY



New jobs, new wages, new buildings, new equipment; more businesses delivering more goods and services; more people working and making higher incomes; more investment driving more local tax base. This is the winning formula for economic growth and prosperity.

The Right Place is committed to assisting our existing business base, focusing on companies that sell their goods and services across the country and around the world, resulting in new money flowing into our region. We also welcome new companies to the region, targeting those bringing new economic diversification opportunities. Together, this focus on business growth helps expand the economy in a way that helps support existing and new small businesses—more customers earning more income to spend locally.

Our primary industry targets include:

**Advanced Manufacturing | Health Sciences | Technology**

While we are always open to opportunities to further diversify the regional economy, our proactive efforts are centered on these three targets that build on our existing strengths and advance our economic prosperity goals.

Through the work of The Right Place staff, Greater Grand Rapids has a robust effort in place to retain, grow, and attract businesses to the region. Conducting over 500 business retention visits annually and traveling the country and the world to seek new opportunities, The Right Place positions the region as the right place for doing business.



## BUSINESS RETENTION

**The Right Place** will lead the efforts to support the existing business community with proactive outreach and programming to ensure they grow and remain in Greater Grand Rapids.

---

### KEY INITIATIVES

- 1** Strengthen our best-in-class retention program by conducting formal visits with over 500 companies throughout the region each year.
- 2** Expand retention efforts to focus on the needs of high-growth, small, and locally-owned second stage companies.
- 3** Serve as a solution-provider, removing barriers, and delivering high value-added support for growth-minded companies.
- 4** Develop and promote an industry-diversification strategy across primary target industries.
- 5** Connect our advanced manufacturing industry to leading-edge training and consulting, along with encouraging and implementing tech adoption via our Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center-West team.

### THREE-YEAR GOAL

# 1,500

Business Retention Calls

# BUSINESS ATTRACTION

**The Right Place** will conduct extensive, proactive business attraction campaigns focusing on our target industries of advanced manufacturing, health sciences, and technology.

## KEY INITIATIVES

- 1** Implement sector-specific attraction plans targeting growth industries such as health sciences, aerospace, defense, food processing, and data centers, building on existing momentum in tech.
- 2** Target either an aerospace original equipment manufacturer (OEM) or medical device OEM to relocate or expand in the region.
- 3** Pursue a nationally-recognized tech company to invest in our region.



## MANUFACTURING SUPPORT

**The Right Place** will support small- and mid-sized manufacturers to diversify their customer base, adopt new technologies, and expand the region's manufacturing expertise.

### KEY INITIATIVES

- 1** Assess regional company needs to identify local supplier connections.
- 2** Leverage the Manufacturers Council to identify opportunities for industry diversification.
- 3** Focus The Right Place's business development team on assisting manufacturers with diversification efforts with an emphasis on aerospace, defense, the electric grid, and medical devices.

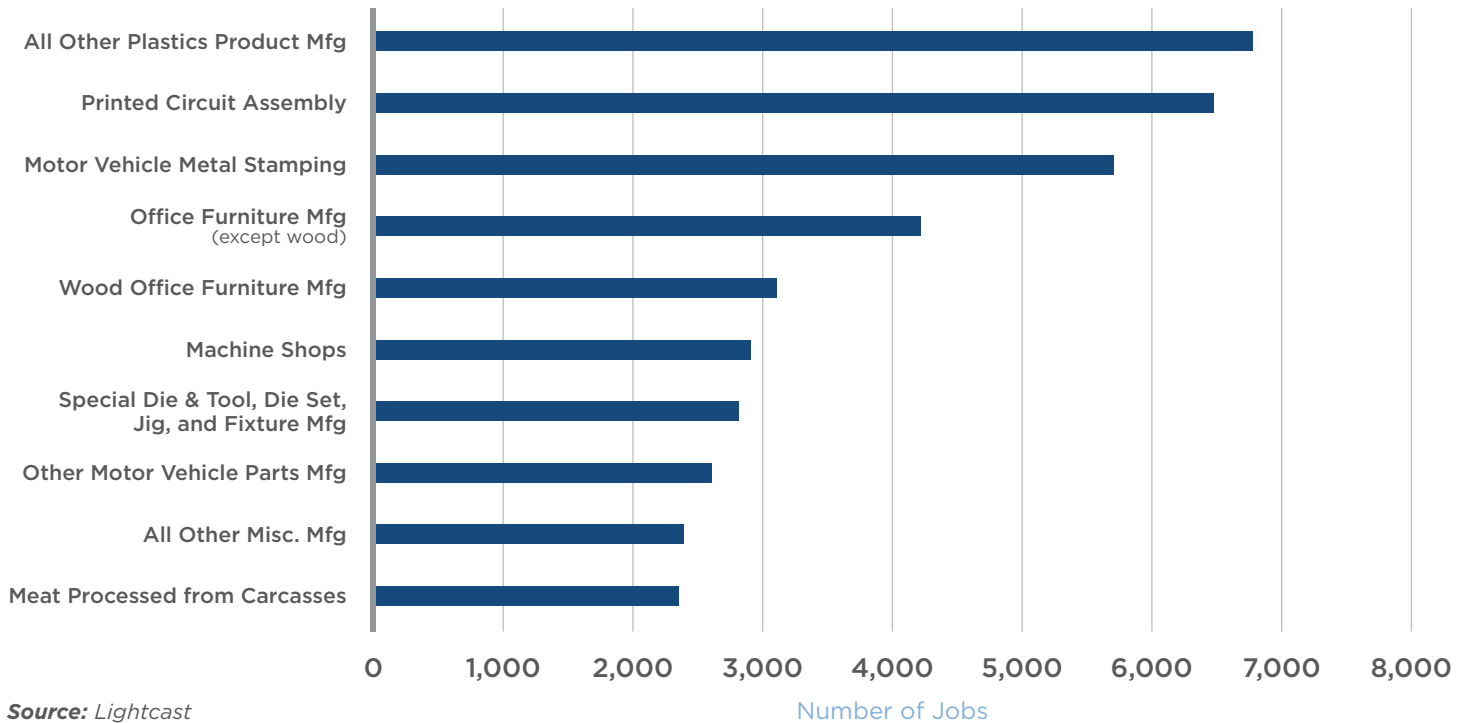
### MMTC-West

The Right Place is home to the Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center-West (MMTC-West). The MMTC-West team serves as trusted advisors to small- and medium-sized manufacturers to develop stronger operations, drive innovation, promote excellence and achieve greater profitability. Part of the federal Manufacturing Extension Program, the goal is to extend the latest technology and research within the advanced manufacturing sector to companies often too small to discover and deploy the new approach independently. Advisors for MMTC-West provide objective, straight-forward consulting and manufacturing technical support to manufacturers in the 13-county West Michigan region.

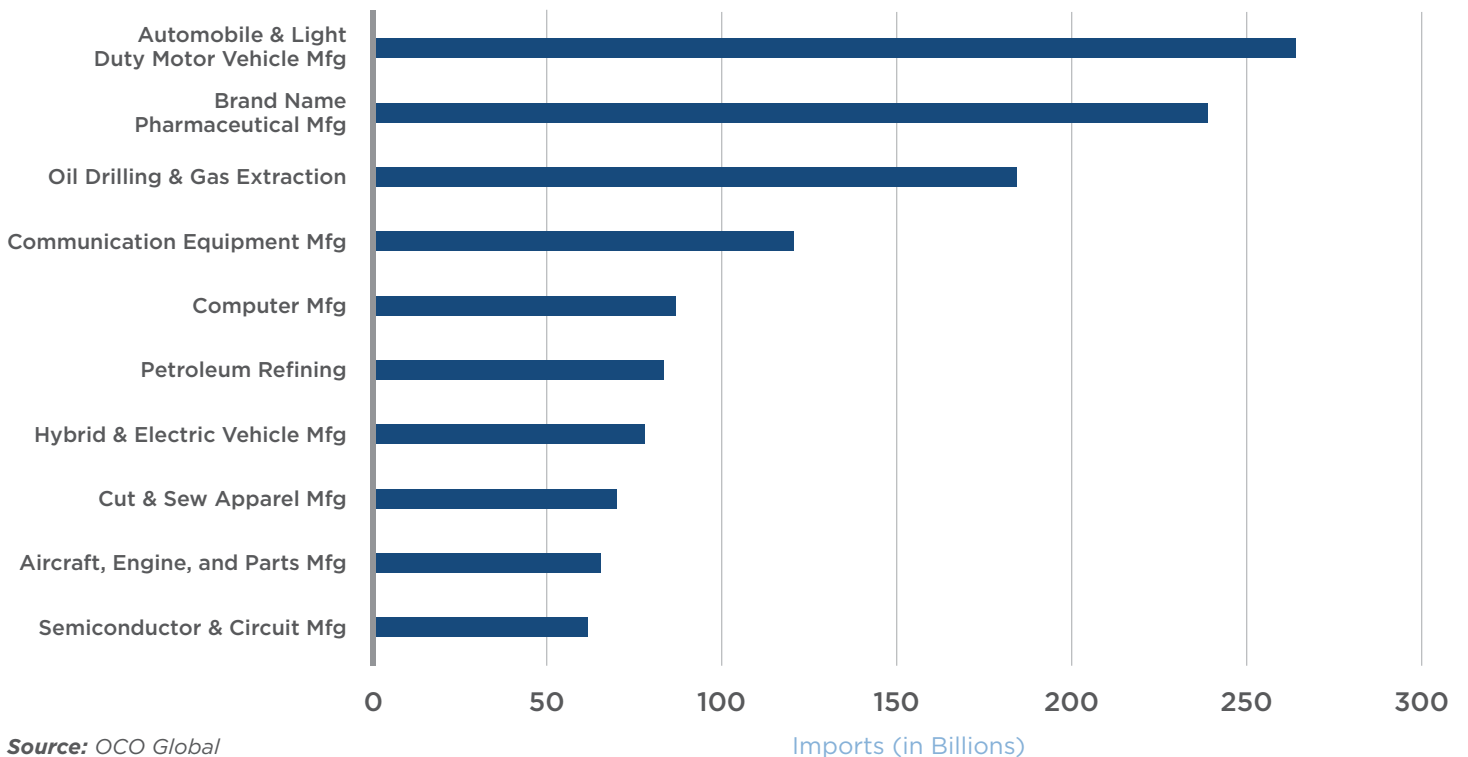
[Learn More →](#)



## Top 10 Manufacturing Industries in Greater Grand Rapids



## Top 10 Biggest Importing Industries in the US in 2025





# INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC STRATEGIES

With such a diverse industry base across Greater Grand Rapids, we recognize the need to offer sector-specific strategies to support key growth clusters. The following strategies focus on strengthening the region's advanced manufacturing, health science, and technology industries which are, and will continue to be, economic engines for our regional economy.

A close-up photograph of a robotic arm with a blue and silver body, positioned over a complex metal assembly. The scene is illuminated with a strong blue and green light, creating a high-tech, industrial atmosphere.

## ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

A photograph showing a multi-well microplate with several wells. A glass dropper is positioned over one of the wells, dispensing a small amount of liquid. The image is bathed in a vibrant purple and blue light, giving it a scientific and futuristic feel.

## HEALTH SCIENCES

A photograph of a server rack or data center equipment. The front panel features numerous blue indicator lights that are glowing, and a red light source is visible on the right side, casting a warm glow. The overall image conveys a sense of digital connectivity and technological advancement.

## TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

# ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

Advanced manufacturing is an economic pillar of Greater Grand Rapids. Leaning into the region's manufacturing strength, while leveraging advancements in technology, will further position Greater Grand Rapids as a global leader in advanced manufacturing.

**The Right Place** will expand the manufacturing services offered to accelerate the advanced technology capabilities of regional manufacturers.

## KEY INITIATIVES

- 1** Promote Industry 4.0 adoption through the AI in Manufacturing Roadmap, pilot programs, and training partnerships.
- 2** Expand Industry 4.0 assessments to help more manufacturers embark on digital transformation and to support them as they implement new technical solutions.

**130** Industry 4.0  
Assessments  
Conducted (2023-2025)

**60**  
in 2023

**29**  
in 2024

**43**  
in 2025

**MMTC**  
Companies  
Served  
Since 2023

**99**

**The Right Place** will evolve and grow the Manufacturers Council to engage more companies as Council members and extend the opportunity for knowledge-sharing to the 2,500 manufacturing firms in the Greater Grand Rapids region.

## KEY INITIATIVES

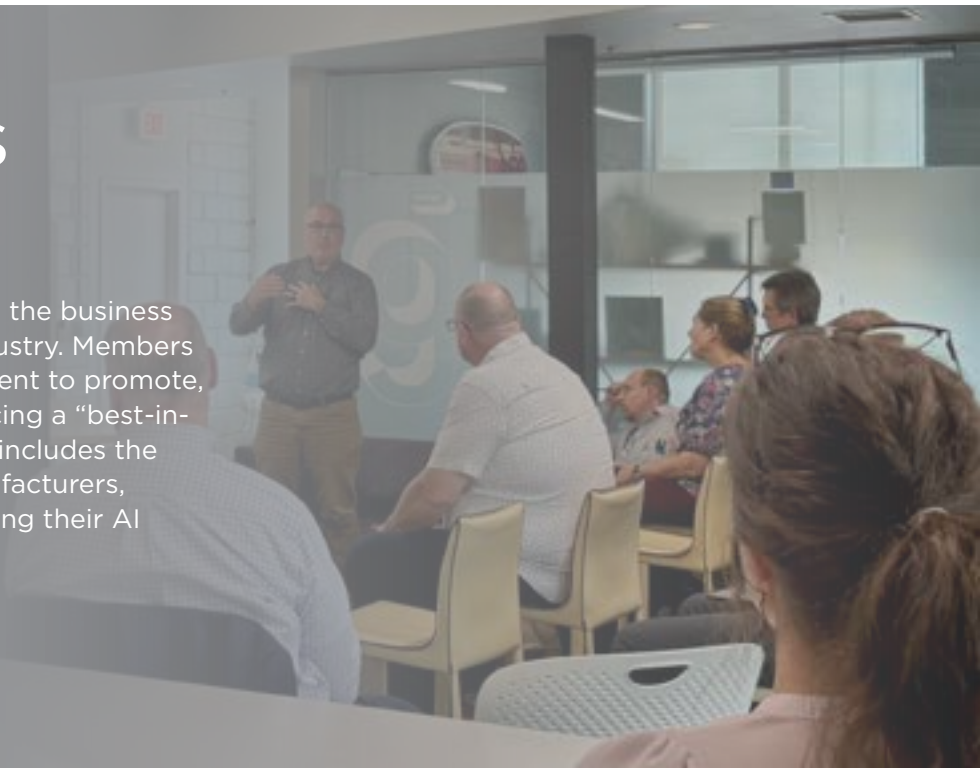
- 1** Increase cross-council interactions and infrastructure to promote peer-learning, address common challenges across industries, keep up to date with new technologies like AI, and increase local B2B spend.
- 2** Establish a hub-and-spoke model, allowing for manufacturing firms to participate in local subgroups and with larger regional programming.
- 3** Extend Council knowledge to non-Council manufacturing companies, helping to advance the entire manufacturing base.

**35** Current Manufacturers Council Members

## Manufacturers Council

The Manufacturers Council is dedicated to the business success of the region's manufacturing industry. Members work together in a collaborative environment to promote, facilitate, enable, and advocate for advancing a "best-in-class" manufacturing sector. Recent work includes the development of the AI Roadmap for Manufacturers, which assists area manufacturers in pursuing their AI adoption strategy.

[Learn More →](#)



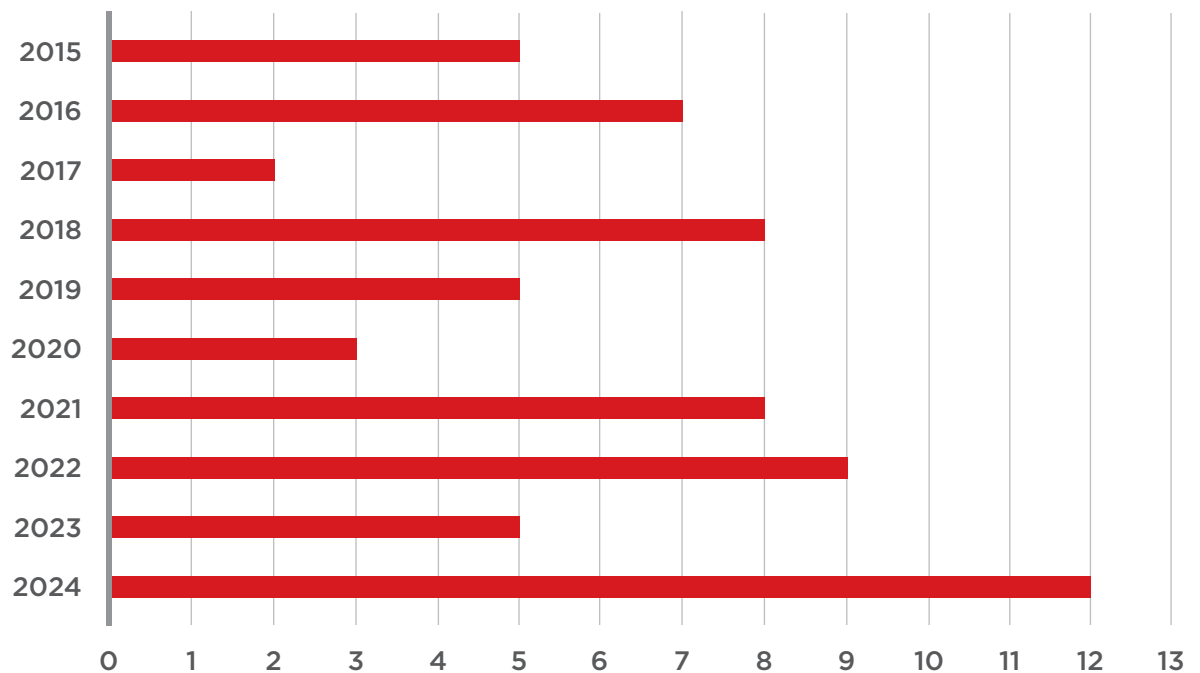
**Greater Grand Rapids** will leverage our advanced manufacturing capabilities and supporting ecosystem to attract reshoring opportunities to the region.

---

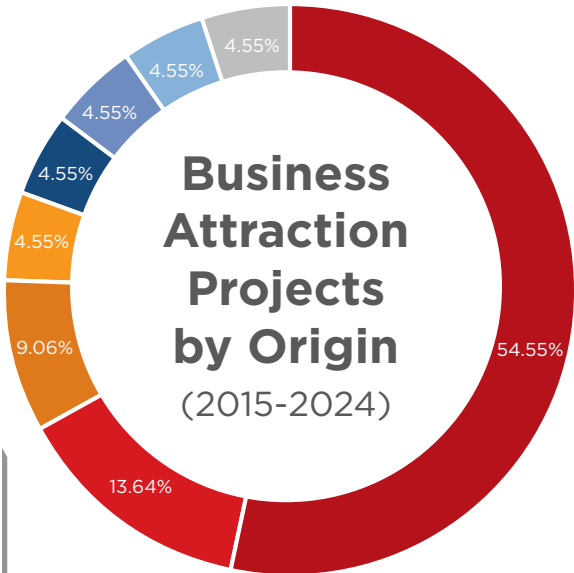
## KEY INITIATIVES

- 1** Expand company attraction efforts to additional overseas markets.
- 2** Identify companies that add new elements to the existing industrial supply chain to avoid duplication.

### Annual Foreign Direct Investment Projects

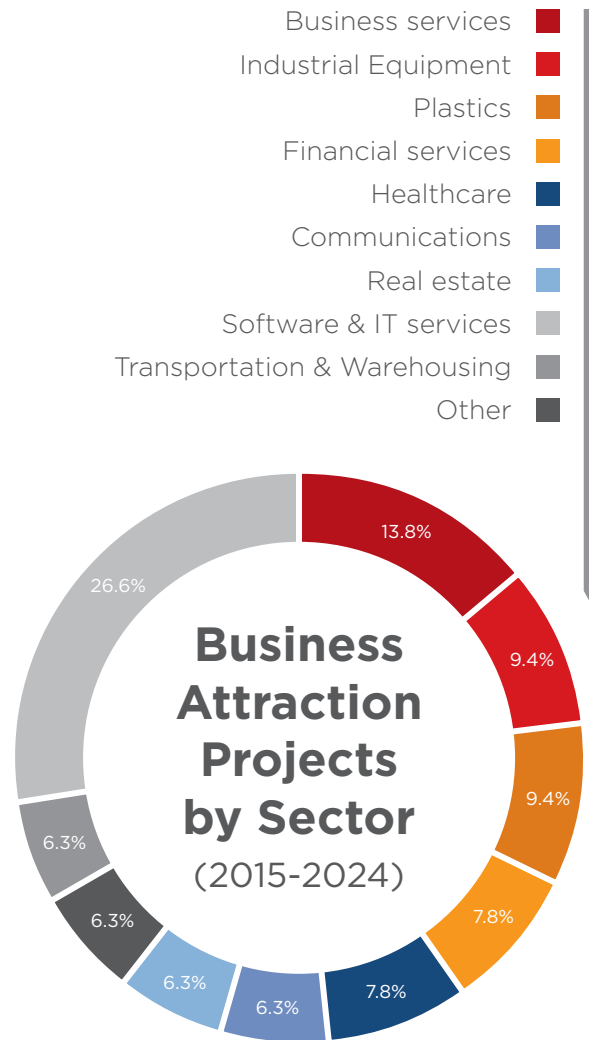


Source: OCO Global



- United States
- Mexico
- China
- Canada
- Germany
- India
- Malaysia
- Netherlands

Source: OCO Global



- Business services
- Industrial Equipment
- Plastics
- Financial services
- Healthcare
- Communications
- Real estate
- Software & IT services
- Transportation & Warehousing
- Other

# Supply Chain Management Council

Membership in the Supply Chain Management Council provides an opportunity to create new collaborations with other supply chain professionals. As part of a trusted group of leaders, members are the voice of the supply chain in West Michigan, and they work to solve common challenges by providing actionable insights on new developments. In addition to the annual Supply Chain Management Conference, which attracts over 300 area supply chain professionals, the Council proved invaluable during the COVID-19 pandemic in solving numerous supply chain crises, including sourcing critical PPE for area health systems.

[Learn More →](#)

# HEALTH SCIENCES

From the Medical Mile to medical device manufacturing to pharmaceutical production, Greater Grand Rapids is a hub for health sciences. As the national population ages, there is, and will continue to be, an acute need for medical breakthroughs. New developments in gene therapies, cell-based therapies, digital health tools, and AI have set the stage for the next generation of health science technologies. Our region is primed to lead this wave by leveraging the existing health science ecosystem, integrated care infrastructure through pillar institutions, and talent pipeline that we have built in Greater Grand Rapids.

2023 Market Value\*

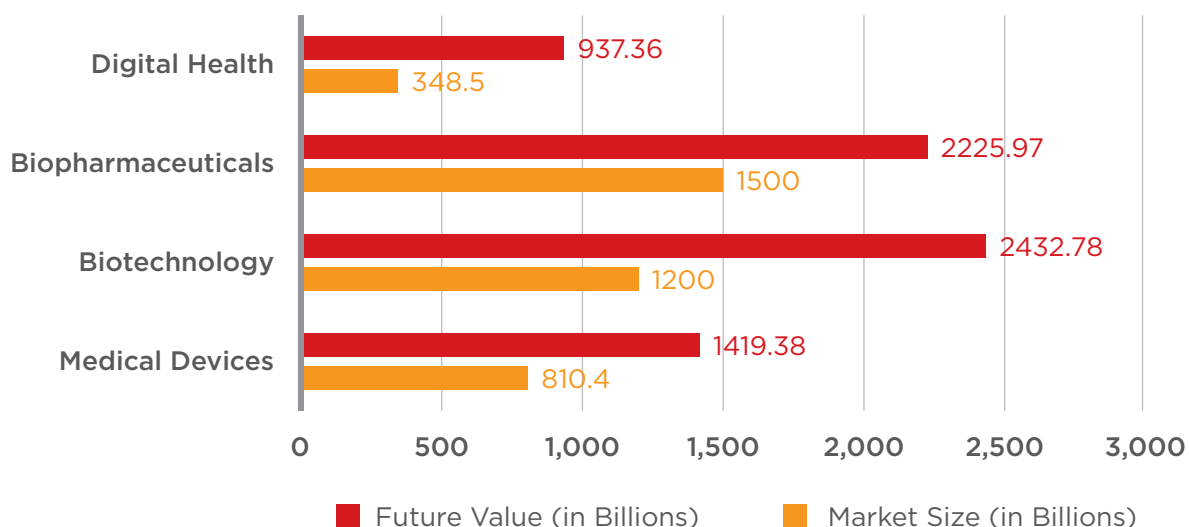
**\$21.2T**

2032 Market Value\* (projected)

**\$44.8T**

\*Market value refers to annual revenue.

## Market Value of Key Sectors



Source: OCO Global

**Greater Grand Rapids'** medical device manufacturing sector will continue its history of innovation and growth.

## KEY INITIATIVES

- 1** Increase membership in MiDevice, a consortium of medical device manufacturers based in Michigan, while providing additional opportunities for collaboration and cooperation.
- 2** The Right Place will partner with regional medical device companies to aggressively pursue trade shows, heightening Greater Grand Rapids' position as a medical device manufacturing hub.
- 3** The Right Place will target a medical device original equipment manufacturer as part of its business attraction strategy.

Global Market Size (2024)

**\$810.5B**

Projected Growth Rate (2024-2029)

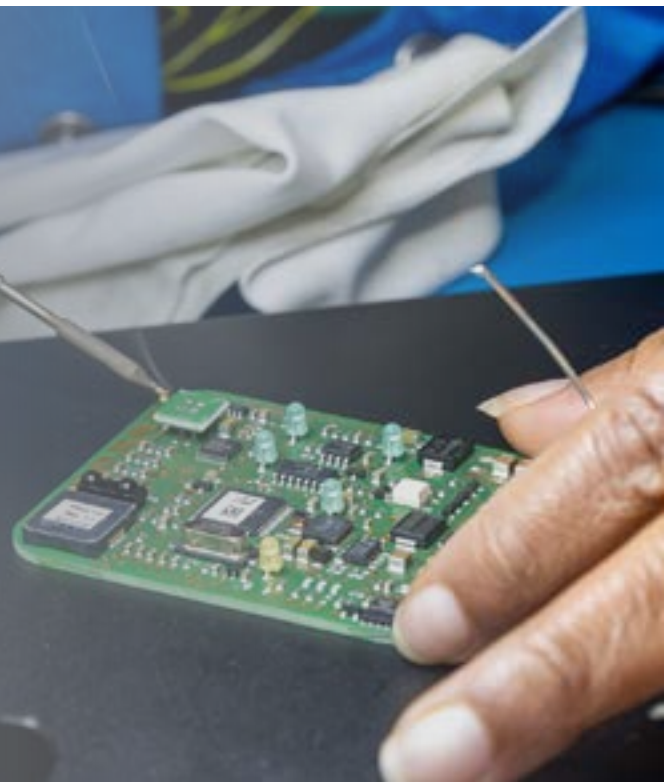
**9.8%**

Source: OCO Global

## MiDevice Council

MiDevice is the only Michigan-based organization dedicated to medical device design, development, manufacturing and distribution. MiDevice gives medical device companies the opportunity to collaborate, cooperate, and promote their expertise in the industry. In addition to best practice sharing and learning opportunities, the Council coordinates two major industry trade show delegations, bringing multiple area medical device companies together to grow overall exposure and impact.

[Learn More →](#)



**The Right Place** will intentionally drive innovation through the region's health sciences ecosystem.

---

## KEY INITIATIVES

- 1** Convene industry and community leaders to expand the region's wet lab incubator space.
- 2** Leverage cross-council collaboration between MiDevice, Manufacturers, and Technology Councils to drive health science innovations.
- 3** Investigate the health and life science supply chain to find new opportunities that capitalize on existing strengths in emerging sectors including: biopharmaceuticals, biotechnology, and digital health.
- 4** Convene higher education partners to support and build on the existing talent pipeline for health sciences.
- 5** Work closely with Greater Grand Rapids' entrepreneurial ecosystem and Technology Council partners to encourage new health science startups in the region.



# TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

In 2021, The Right Place and partners from across the region launched an ambitious tech strategy with the goal of positioning Greater Grand Rapids as the premier tech hub in the Midwest. Since then, Greater Grand Rapids has added 5,600 new tech jobs. Growing our region's tech industry remains a crucial priority for The Right Place and a key ingredient for a prosperous and sustainable economy.

**The Right Place** will drive regional engagement in technology by leading the organization of Tech Week Grand Rapids, an annual week-long series of events celebrating the region's tech ecosystem.

## KEY INITIATIVES

- 1** Continue to strengthen and grow Tech Week GR through collaboration, with a focus on attracting companies, investment, and talent from both inside and outside the region.
- 2** Highlight emerging trends and tech adoption during Tech Week GR to support the growth of our advanced manufacturing, health science, and tech clusters.

## Tech Week Grand Rapids

[Learn More →](#)



**The Right Place** will connect regional tech companies with the resources needed for growth, while attracting new high-tech firms to the region, inspiring further innovation and investment.

## KEY INITIATIVES

- 1** Leverage the purchasing power of our region's enterprise companies to attract tech companies.
- 2** Deepen business retention and expansion efforts and drive targeted attraction strategies to grow the region's tech sector.
- 3** Highlight the Greater Grand Rapids tech sector's strength by attending trade shows with groups of area companies.
- 4** Host prospects during Tech Week Grand Rapids.

## Tech Council

The Technology Council is a group of 60+ local tech companies, focused on leading the 10-year Regional Tech Strategy and strengthening Greater Grand Rapids' technology ecosystem. Together, the Tech Council members share best practices, embark on collaborative projects, and fuel the technology industry's growth throughout Greater Grand Rapids.

[Learn More →](#)



**Greater Grand Rapids** will ensure companies have the tools and resources to successfully navigate their digital transformation journeys, regardless of industry.

---

## KEY INITIATIVES

- 1** Leverage the expertise of the Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center-West and its initiatives to assist manufacturers with implementation of artificial intelligence, Industry 4.0, Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT), and other emerging technologies.
  - 2** Drive cross-council collaboration and programming across our Technology and Manufacturers Councils.
- 

**The Right Place** will ensure local tech companies gain greater exposure to customer relationships across the region, the country, and the world.

---

## KEY INITIATIVES

- 1** Launch an interactive Tech Directory of regional tech company capabilities that allows companies to submit proposals.
- 2** Increase the number of touchpoints between local tech companies and other Greater Grand Rapids businesses through events, council membership, and one-on-one connections and referrals facilitated by The Right Place.
- 3** Promote area firms through the Tech Directory, highlighting the region's tech community's capabilities to prospect companies across the globe.

**The Right Place** will collaborate with industry and university partners to drive opportunities for research and development throughout the region.

## KEY INITIATIVES

- 1** Foster partnerships between higher education, enterprise companies, and startups/entrepreneurs and apply what fits to Greater Grand Rapids.
- 2** Develop a University Innovation Consortium to encourage collaboration between various innovation related programs.
- 3** Develop a University Engagement Guide that lists each institution's applied research capabilities, project timelines, and key contact.

### Most Innovative Mid-Size Cities without an R1 University

	Top Most Innovative	Top Performing
Portland, OR	7th	31st
Sacramento, CA	15th	20th
Hartford, CT	39th	Lowest Tier
Jacksonville, FL	40th	6th
Tulsa, OK	42nd	26th
<b>Grand Rapids, MI</b>	<b>44th</b>	<b>30th</b>
Oklahoma City, OK	45th	19th
Fresno, CA	48th	32nd

**Source:** OCO Global

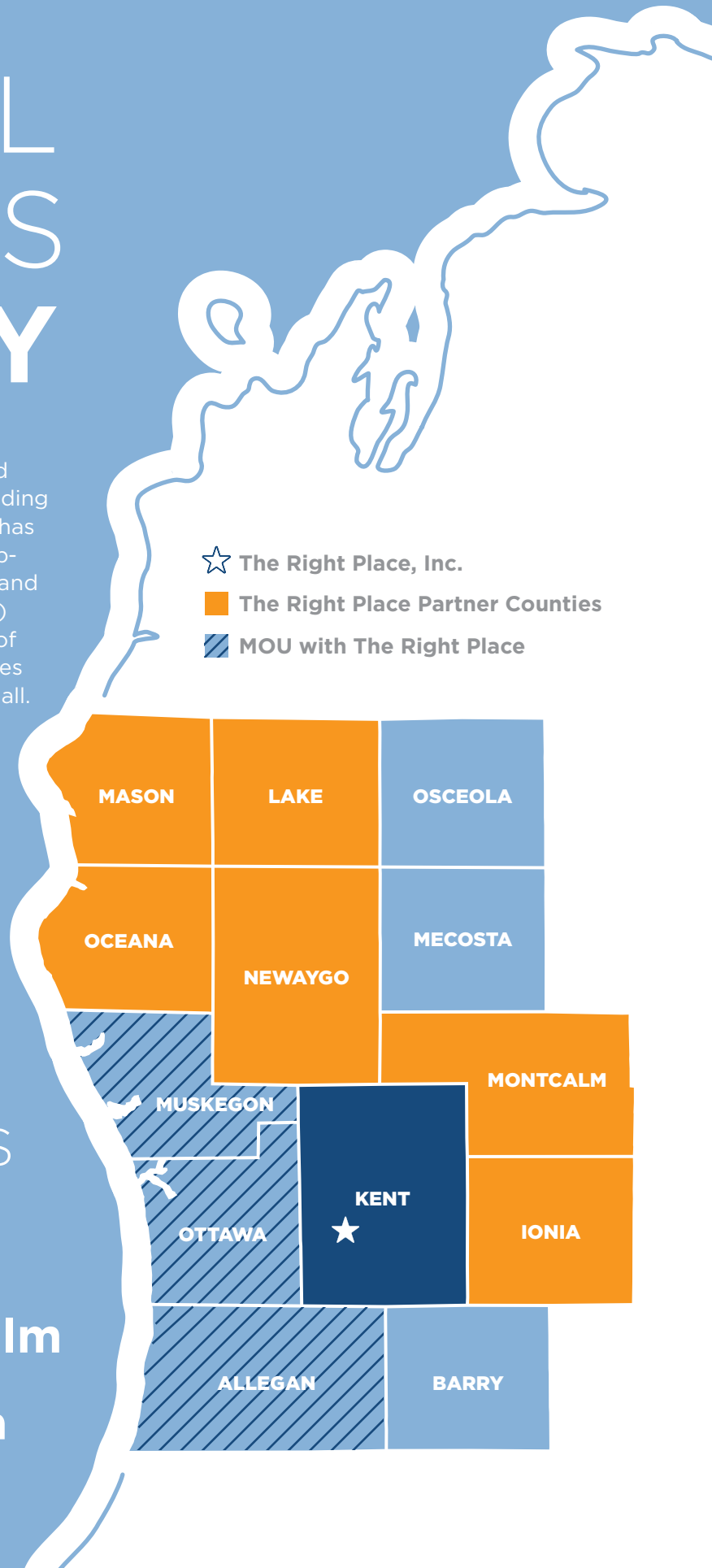
# REGIONAL PARTNERS STRATEGY

Economic development relies on collaboration and teamwork to succeed. In addition to our long-standing partnership serving Kent County, The Right Place has forged close partnerships with six economic development alliances throughout Greater Grand Rapids and has formal memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with two lakeshore partner organizations. Because of these close strategic partnerships, our work reaches more people and places, furthering prosperity for all.

The Right Place works closely with its six partner counties. Each partnership includes a full-time economic development staff member who serves their respective county as employees of The Right Place. This structure fosters collaboration, resource sharing, partnerships, and more. There is a mutual commitment to further strengthen these partnerships by guiding high-impact joint initiatives that are relevant across our seven-county footprint.

## THE RIGHT PLACE PARTNER COUNTIES

- **Ionia**
- **Lake**
- **Mason**
- **Montcalm**
- **Newaygo**
- **Oceana**



# PEOPLE

**The Right Place** will assist its county partners to build talent and leadership capacity throughout their communities.

---

## KEY INITIATIVES

- 1** Leverage the existing talent ecosystem and programs to connect area employers to talent development programming opportunities throughout the region, ensuring more employers are supporting the future workforce.
- 2** Expand career readiness and talent pipelines by connecting students, educators, and employers to strengthen awareness of local career opportunities and ability to upskill existing workforce.
- 3** Launch, facilitate, and support programming to develop the next generation of civic and business leaders. This helps to grow the number of growth-minded leaders throughout each county and across the region.

## THREE-YEAR GOALS

# 1,000+

Individuals engaged in  
career exposure activities

---

# 25+

More companies  
engaged in talent  
pipeline programming

---

# 50+

Participants in leadership  
programs by 2028

# PLACE

**The Right Place** will connect its county partners with the resources and tools needed to strengthen communities and improve infrastructure through housing and mixed-use development, industrial site development, placemaking, and municipal support.

---

## KEY INITIATIVES

- 1** Partner with developers, financial institutions, and municipalities to increase housing options.
- 2** Build out site-ready locations to meet the future growth needs of area businesses, including business park development and infrastructure improvements.
- 3** Activate downtowns and public spaces with investments and technical assistance.
- 4** Provide technical assistance and best practices to local governments for economic growth and development readiness.
- 5** Partner with state and local outdoor recreation organizations and initiatives to strengthen existing assets and create new opportunities for outdoor recreation across the region.

# 500+

New housing units supported regionally

---

# 5 Sites

Identification and advancement of mixed-use development sites

---

# 6 Sites

In partnership with local municipalities, identify sites for future industrial development opportunities

---

Invite regional developers to each County to highlight opportunities for development via Developer Day events and other direct outreach efforts

# PROSPERITY

**The Right Place** will support economic growth and long-term regional prosperity throughout the seven-county region.

---

## KEY INITIATIVES

- 1** Proactively support existing manufacturing, technology, and health science businesses while strategically marketing the region to new investors.
- 2** Leverage the capabilities of RPI's manufacturing programming, including MMTC-West and the Manufacturers Council, to assist local manufacturing companies in process improvements, technology deployment, and market diversification.
- 3** Expand support networks, mentorship, and capital access for startups and small businesses.

# THREE-YEAR GOALS

500

Retention visits

500

New jobs

\$50M

In new investment

50+

Companies actively engaged  
in manufacturing programming

1,000

Unique businesses supported



# IONIA COUNTY



At the **Ionia County Economic Alliance (ICEA)**, your business is our business. We are a nonprofit organization that offers free business assistance services to current and prospective Ionia County companies. For over twenty years, ICEA has collaborated with business and community leaders to ensure long-term economic prosperity for Ionia County. Ionia County residents recognize the positive impact this work has on our communities, from the increase in quality employment opportunities to the multiplier effect that growing businesses have on our economy.

Long-term, sustainable economic growth is the goal of the ICEA. By supporting existing businesses in Ionia County while attracting new business to the area, ICEA will provide a firm foundation for future growth of the county. Our Goal is to “Make Ionia County a Better Place to Live, Work, and Play!”

---

## PEOPLE KEY INITIATIVES

### Identify and act on opportunities to develop skills among young people

- 1** Work with educators and industry professionals to create new opportunities to directly inform and engage high school students including arranging business visits into schools and career fairs.
- 2** Collaborate with industry and educators to develop training pipelines, allowing Ionia County high school students to seamlessly transition into local business internships, co-ops, work study, and other opportunities.
- 3** Launch a tech-related initiative during Tech Week.
- 4** Leverage employer network to help increase workforce training program enrollment throughout the county.

## PLACE KEY INITIATIVES

### Facilitate collaborations among municipal leaders in Ionia County

- 1 Connect smaller townships with larger municipalities to assist with zoning, city planning, and other initiatives.
- 2 Meet with every local unit of government in Ionia County to foster partnerships and collaboration, and secure commitment to attend at least one ICEA meeting/event annually.
- 3 Host at least one annual meeting with local government leaders to discuss master planning and zoning, workshop grants, and other activities.

### Maximize community placemaking and outdoor assets

- 1 Bolster Ionia County's recreation industry sector by partnering and providing support to organizations specializing in this growing sector.
- 2 Leverage resources to assist in identifying funding and other support for placemaking initiatives, including but not limited to downtown beautification, redevelopment projects, and park improvements.
- 3 Collaborate with county communities to develop placemaking projects to enhance their appeal to current residents as well as to visitors.

### Bolster housing options across the economic spectrum

- 1 Convene community partners and encourage collaboration to identify and pursue strategies for increasing housing stock across the spectrum of affordability, including organized events targeting residential home builders, commissioning a housing study, and other methods.
- 2 Leverage results from the Montcalm and Ionia County Housing Plan to identify and partner with a housing-focused organization to increase the county's housing stock.
- 3 Host a Developer Day event to promote potential housing project locations.

## PROSPERITY KEY INITIATIVES

### Retain and grow businesses in key industry sectors

- 1 Pursue business development opportunities by providing resources and support to help retain companies in Ionia County and attract new businesses and entrepreneurs.
- 2 Further develop the MIPitch Initiative.
- 3 Develop and maintain a list of potential development opportunities throughout the county.

# LAKE COUNTY

## LAKE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE

*Powered by The Right Place*

**The Lake County Economic Development Alliance** has transformed the recommendations from our recent EDA-funded Economic Diversification Study into a Strategic Plan that leverages our greatest strengths to address our most pressing challenges. Building on recent momentum, we will collaboratively establish Lake County as both a thriving community for residents and a destination of choice for businesses and visitors.

## PEOPLE KEY INITIATIVES

**Strengthen the employability of workforce for living wage employment and career success**

- 1** Establish employer-recognized employability certification program with regional partners.
- 2** Support creation of a powersports tech apprenticeship program.
- 3** Co-host at least three Employer Exchanges featuring topics of interest to local employers.
- 4** Hold two Leadership Labs for emerging community leaders.



## PLACE KEY INITIATIVES

### **Maximize community assets and infrastructure for development and placemaking**

- 1** Identify and market priority sites for commercial/industrial development.
- 2** Provide technical assistance and best practices to local governments for economic growth and development readiness resulting in at least three community projects.

### **Improve housing inventory, availability and affordability**

- 1** Implement 2026-2029 Housing Plan with at least 100 units added or improved through collaborative partnerships.

### **Create effective county-wide tourism marketing and establish a sustainable collaborative mechanism for administering and funding marketing campaigns**

- 1** Participate in the First Impression Tourism Assessment.
- 2** Fund and create county destination branding and marketing assets.
- 3** Determine and launch accepted mechanism for sustainable tourism marketing, including structure, budget and staffing.

## PROSPERITY KEY INITIATIVES

### **Support growth of local businesses**

- 1** Perform at least 12 business resource visits annually to evaluate and support local employers' sustainability and growth.

### **Foster entrepreneurial success**

- 1** Support the creation of new businesses through entrepreneurial programming and resources including at least one local offering per year of CoLaunch.
- 2** Identify site, funding, partners, and program model for an entrepreneurial hub.

# MASON COUNTY



The **Chamber Alliance of Mason County**, headquartered in downtown Ludington, serves as the driving force behind economic vitality in Mason County. Working in partnership with The Right Place, the Chamber's economic development strategy is focused on three pillars: People (spearheading talent building and attraction initiatives), Place (spurring community infrastructure development like housing and trails), and Prosperity (supporting local business growth, retention, and attraction). The Chamber is a trusted community convener and hones relationships with other organizations including the Convention & Visitors Bureau, Community Foundation for Mason County, and the Mason County College Access Network. Through grants and collaboration with public, private, and nonprofit partners, the Chamber is proactively addressing Mason County's workforce, housing, and long-term economic development needs.

## PEOPLE KEY INITIATIVES

### Expand workforce and talent development

- 1 Align education and industry pathways by formalizing partnerships between K-12 schools, West Shore Community College, and major employers to create defined career pathways.
- 2 Grow work-based learning options for secondary students by working with the West Shore Educational Service District (WSESD) Work Based Learning (WBL) Network to create more opportunities and connect employers with providers through the network.
- 3 Build the next generation of Mason County leaders by refining the NextGen Community Leadership curriculum and expand access to more high school seniors.



## PLACE KEY INITIATIVES

### Address housing supply and affordability

- 1 Collaborate with local partners to identify priority sites, streamline permitting, and pursue gap financing for mixed-income neighborhoods.
- 2 Promote public-private partnerships by leveraging philanthropic and employer participation in housing solutions, such as employer-assisted housing or revolving loan funds.

### Facilitate multiuse trails development

- 1 Oversee multiuse trails development by facilitating the Mason County Multi Use Trail (MCMUT) Task Force and supporting trail segment subcommittees.
- 2 Create and execute a community engagement strategy between MCMUT leadership and residents around trail design, pathways, amenities, and accessibility.
- 3 Determine funding, ownership and maintenance plans for trail segments by working with local and state experts to determine an actionable funding plan for each trail segment, as well as ownership and maintenance of each.

## PROSPERITY KEY INITIATIVES

### Enhance business development opportunities

- 1 Create an entrepreneurial support network offering a variety of services, programming, and resources for those who want to start or scale a business.
- 2 Market Mason County as a great place to grow a business by highlighting talent development programs/processes, as well as recreation, cultural, arts, and education assets that can help source and retain talent.
- 3 Serve existing employers through a robust business/organization retention program that includes visits, education opportunities, and timely notifications about available resources.

### Support development of key economic sectors

- 1 Catalyze food production and processing sectors by providing programming to grow connections among food producers, processors, and buyers in the region.
- 2 Support development of industrial property by capitalizing on opportunities to develop property for expansion and attraction of companies with skilled jobs/positions, such as advanced manufacturing, energy, and technology companies.

# MONTCALM COUNTY



The **Montcalm Economic Alliance** enters this next chapter with a clear sense of direction and purpose. Over the past year, we've spent time listening to our communities, our partners, and the people who live and work here. Those conversations have guided our priorities and helped us understand how MEA can better serve as a trusted resource for growth and connection.

This plan reflects what we've learned. It's about acting on the insights shared with us, continuing to build trust, and creating results that matter for Montcalm County. Together, we're turning ideas into action, building a foundation for People, Place, and Prosperity that reflects our shared vision and the progress we create together.

## PEOPLE KEY INITIATIVES

### Encourage and grow the next generation of Montcalm County leadership

- 1** Coordinate countywide partnerships with schools, employers, chambers, nonprofits, and leadership programs to identify, connect, and cultivate the next generation of local leaders.
- 2** Host the next annual Next Gen Montcalm Leadership Summit.
- 3** Grow engagement in workforce development with ten additional Montcalm County Going PRO Talent Fund grant recipients.



## PLACE KEY INITIATIVES

### Leverage early housing wins to drive additional housing growth

- 1 Conduct a “Housing Momentum Roundtable” with municipalities to share best practices and lessons learned, and to identify countywide infrastructure and readiness needs, opportunity sites and promote a unified housing vision.
- 2 Develop a Housing Readiness Playbook outlining zoning, infrastructure, and partnership strategies to replicate success countywide.

### Build a comprehensive infrastructure readiness framework

- 1 Convene county and municipal leaders, utility providers, and economic partners to generate a standardized infrastructure inventory template.
- 2 Identify three priority infrastructure projects for investment or grant funding.

### Connect industry, developers, and municipal leaders to identify and complete projects

- 1 Create networking opportunities for stakeholders to increase collaboration between business leaders, real estate developers, municipal leaders, and other stakeholders across the community.
- 2 Host at least three Developer Day events highlighting one to three communities per event, showcasing local assets and opportunities for growth and progress.

### Advance community readiness as a pathway to prosperity

- 1 Collaborate with MEDC, The Right Place, and local governments to deliver hands-on education and guidance on the Redevelopment Ready Communities process, resulting in three municipalities reaching RRC “Engaged” or higher status.
- 2 Host an annual “Prosperity Through Readiness” workshop for local officials and planners.
- 3 Build a Playbook for “Marketing our Communities,” for each municipality to customize to their community features and benefits for development.

## PROSPERITY KEY INITIATIVES

### Strengthen regional prosperity through connection, collaboration, and entrepreneurship

- 1 Support regional businesses and encourage growth by completing retention and expansion calls with key county employers.
- 2 Expand business resources to ensure growth support reaches every corner of the county.
- 3 Host small business initiatives, such as an annual cross-county convenings, MIPitch, the Small Business Resource Event, Brownfield Brainstorming, and Workforce & Manufacturing Events.
- 4 Host the annual MEA Economic Exchange.

# NEWAYGO COUNTY



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

Powered by The Right Place

Since 2015, leaders across **Newaygo County** have partnered with The Right Place to drive long-term job creation and economic prosperity—resulting in more than \$215.8M in capital investment and 775 new jobs through successful business retention, expansion, and attraction efforts. As the county continues to grow and diversify, this new strategic plan builds on that momentum and positions Newaygo County for its next chapter of opportunity. We invite you to join us as we shape the future of our communities together.

## PEOPLE KEY INITIATIVES

### Support youth retention and talent development

- 1** Build diverse educational pathways and career exploration programs by expanding partnerships between schools, employers, and higher education.
- 2** Support Michigan Works! West Central through MICareerQuest, with participation from Newaygo County schools and employers.
- 3** Promote internship/work-study opportunities (15x annually) with local employers.

### Develop and strengthen leadership throughout Newaygo County

- 1** Create a unified leadership development strategy to reduce fragmentation and resistance to change across jurisdictions.
- 2** Develop a local government roundtable focused on economic development leadership/growth, prioritizing elected officials at townships, cities, and villages.
- 3** Host Newaygo County Leadership Empowerment & Advancement Program (NCLEAP), including crossover with other local/regional leadership cohorts if applicable.
- 4** Host future leader session focused on local governance.

## PLACE KEY INITIATIVES

### Provide support for municipalities for sustainable growth

- 1 Provide regular technical assistance and best practices to local governments for economic growth and development readiness.

### Activate downtowns and public spaces to support vibrant placemaking

- 1 Leverage opportunities from the 2024 Community Action plan to support at least two downtown/public space projects.
- 2 Track grants received that support downtown and placemaking.

### Develop a rural housing investment strategy leveraging multi-sector partnerships and supporting units at all income levels

- 1 Host a Developer Day focused on housing growth.
- 2 Promote NC Housing Partnership Fund.
- 3 Identify and promote shovel-ready sites within main community boundaries via Opportunity Sites Map platform.

## PROSPERITY KEY INITIATIVES

### Drive economic prosperity through business retention, expansion, and attraction efforts

- 1 Conduct 25 retention visits annually to support existing manufacturing, information technology, and health science businesses.
- 2 Strategically market the region to new investors.
- 3 Promote open industrial space.

### Support and grow entrepreneurship and business growth ecosystem efforts

- 1 Expand rural-focused entrepreneurial support model, including access to capital, mentorship, and regional funding alignment.
- 2 Host a local pitch event.
- 3 Host a local entrepreneurial resource event.

# OCEANA COUNTY

**OCEANA COUNTY  
ECONOMIC ALLIANCE**

*Powered by The Right Place*

**Oceana County Economic Alliance (OCEA)** is the county-wide economic development and community development non-profit organization with local funding and a board of local leaders. OCEA connects local organizations and prospective businesses with resources including site selection, research, education, networking opportunities, housing, placemaking, and workforce development, and partners closely with local, regional, and state agencies to connect resources to organizations throughout Oceana County. OCEA fosters economic prosperity as the central hub for the promotion and support of progress throughout Oceana County. OCEA was originally formed by Oceana County Commissioners as Oceana County Economic Development Corporation (OCEDC) in 1980, was reorganized in 2018, and began a strategic partnership with The Right Place.

## PEOPLE KEY INITIATIVES

**Create a symbiotic relationship where a skilled and available workforce attracts and retains businesses, and business needs inform workforce training programs**

- 1** Connect local HR and business leaders with state and local workforce development resources.
- 2** Support workforce programs and training for Oceana organizations and leaders.

**Improve the workforce pipeline by aligning educational programs with local industry needs.**

- 1** Partner with local schools to ensure high-quality Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs are in place to train a qualified workforce that meets local needs.
- 2** Collaborate with educational leaders and partners to expand workforce development efforts.

**Provide resources, technical assistance, and connections for workforce agencies in Oceana County**

- 1** Promote support service agencies addressing barriers to work, including access to housing, childcare, and transportation.
- 2** Encourage collaboration and sharing resources with support service agencies.

## PLACE KEY INITIATIVES

### **Support downtown activation, investments in public spaces, and technical assistance to support arts, culture, recreation, and community events**

- 1** Support downtown/public space projects and events.
- 2** Connect resources to local partners to support downtown projects and placemaking.

### **Provide technical assistance and best practices to local governments for economic growth and development readiness**

- 1** Host local government Roundtables focused on economic development leadership/growth, prioritizing elected officials at townships, villages, and cities.
- 2** Foster further collaboration by attending public meetings and meeting with local government and agency leaders.

### **Promote development activity including housing, downtown mixed-use, and industrial**

- 1** Host programming promoting development in Oceana County.
- 2** Meet with developers, government leaders, and utilities to plan for development.

## PROSPERITY KEY INITIATIVES

### **Proactively support existing manufacturing and agricultural industries while strategically marketing the region to new investors**

- 1** Conduct 25 retention visits and 300 business assists annually.
- 2** Support business expansion, retention, and attraction projects.

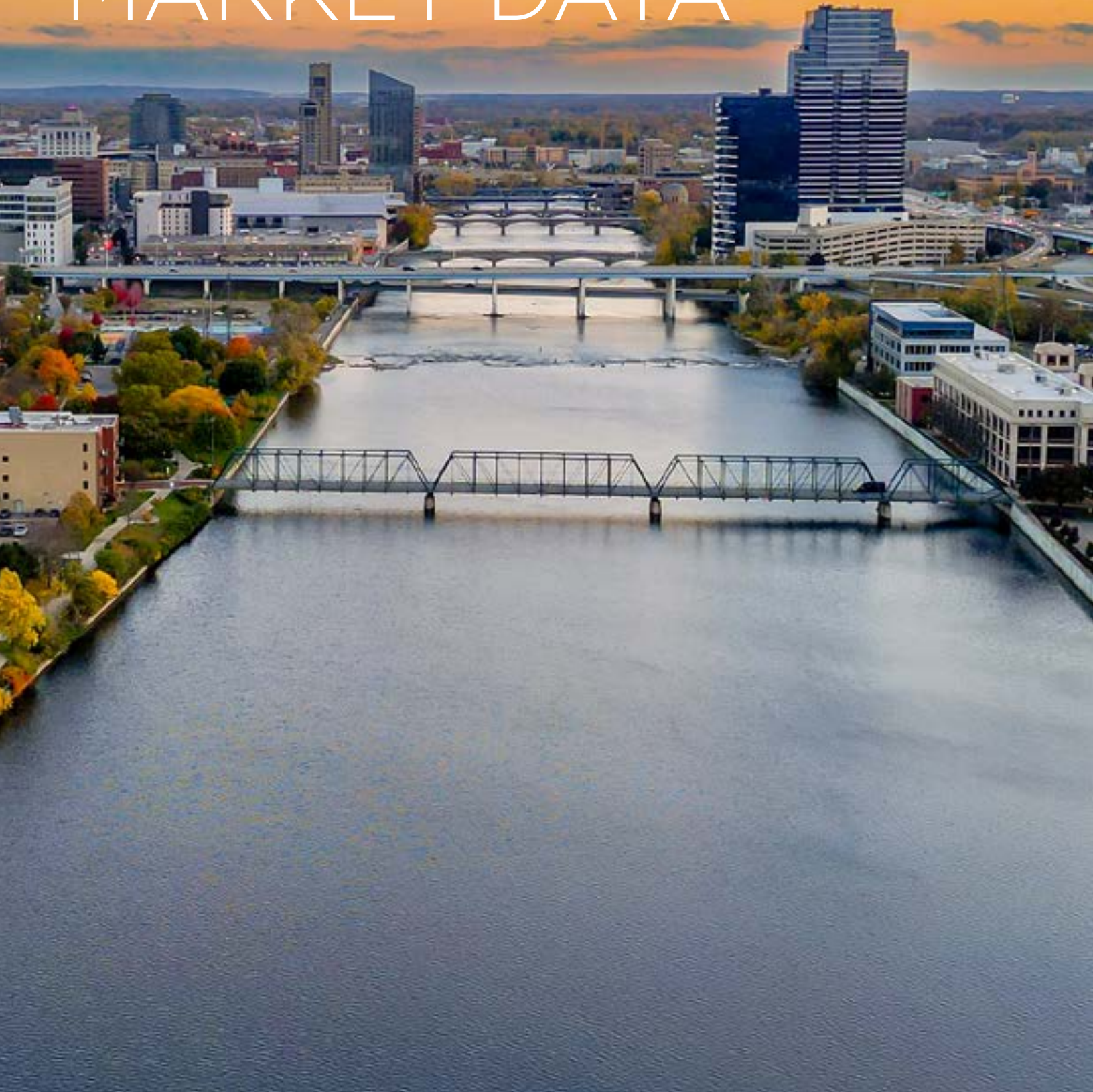
### **Expand rural-focused entrepreneurial support model**

- 1** Support programming and local resources that serve entrepreneurs and small business owners, including The Starting Block.
- 2** Connect entrepreneurs and small business owners to resources, including access to capital and mentorship.

### **Foster collaboration between the business community, local government, and non-governmental organizations to address economic challenges collectively**

- 1** Support Oceana County's continued success as a great place to do business.
- 2** Invite shared prosperity through public-private partnerships.

# COMPARABLE MARKET DATA



## Population Growth

City	2024 Rank	2024 Growth	Change in Rank (from 2021)
Raleigh, NC	1	7.6%	— 0
Jacksonville, FL	2	7.2%	— 0
Greenville, SC	3	5.8%	▲ 3
Des Moines, IA	4	4.6%	▼ 1
Knoxville, TN	5	4.5%	▲ 3
Lansing, MI	6	4.3%	▲ 14
Oklahoma City, OK	7	3.7%	▲ 2
Columbus, OH	8	3.6%	▲ 2
Chattanooga, TN	9	3.5%	▲ 4
Indianapolis, IN	10	3.2%	▼ 3
Salt Lake City, UT	11	3.0%	▼ 6
Greensboro, NC	12	2.9%	▲ 2
Ann Arbor, MI	13	2.4%	▲ 4
Louisville, KY	14	2.4%	▲ 1
<b>Grand Rapids, MI</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>2.1%</b>	<b>▼ 4</b>
Colorado Springs, CO	16	1.8%	▼ 12
Kalamazoo, MI	17	1.6%	▲ 1
Birmingham, AL	18	1.0%	▼ 6
Detroit, MI	19	0.7%	▼ 3
Milwaukee, WI	20	0.7%	▼ 1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

## Employment Growth

City	2024 Rank	2024 Growth	Change in Rank (from 2021)
Chattanooga, TN	1	13.2%	▲ 7
Raleigh, NC	2	12.2%	— 0
Lansing, MI	3	10.3%	▲ 17
Knoxville, TN	4	10.1%	▲ 1
Oklahoma City, OK	5	9.9%	▲ 5
Greenville, SC	6	9.6%	▲ 1
Jacksonville, FL	7	9.4%	▼ 4
Colorado Springs, CO	8	9.4%	▼ 4
Indianapolis, IN	9	8.7%	▼ 3
Des Moines, IA	10	8.2%	▲ 1
Salt Lake City, UT	11	7.7%	▼ 10
<b>Grand Rapids, MI</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7.5%</b>	<b>▲ 3</b>
Ann Arbor, MI	13	7.3%	— 0
Kalamazoo, MI	14	7.1%	▲ 2
Louisville, KY	15	6.7%	▼ 1
Detroit, MI	16	6.5%	▲ 2
Columbus, OH	17	6.1%	▼ 8
Birmingham, AL	18	5.4%	▼ 6
Milwaukee, WI	19	3.5%	— 0
Greensboro, NC	20	3.3%	▼ 3

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

## GRP Growth

City	2024 Rank	2024 Growth	Change in Rank (from 2021)
Jacksonville, FL	1	10.89%	▲ 1
Raleigh, NC	2	9.51%	▲ 1
Greenville, SC	3	6.99%	▲ 3
Lansing, MI	4	6.53%	▲ 9
Oklahoma City, OK	5	6.37%	▲ 15
Knoxville, TN	6	6.27%	▼ 1
Colorado Springs, CO	7	6.20%	▼ 3
Indianapolis, IN	8	6.09%	— 0
Salt Lake City, UT	9	5.95%	▼ 8
Ann Arbor, MI	10	5.56%	▼ 1
Chattanooga, TN	11	5.02%	▲ 1
Detroit, MI	12	4.86%	▲ 6
Kalamazoo, MI	13	4.30%	▼ 2
Milwaukee, WI	14	4.13%	▲ 3
Louisville, KY	15	3.63%	▼ 1
Greensboro, NC	16	3.35%	▲ 3
Birmingham, AL	17	3.33%	▼ 1
<b>Grand Rapids, MI</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>3.13%</b>	▼ 3
Columbus, OH	19	3.07%	▼ 12
Des Moines, IA	20	-0.45%	▼ 10

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

## Tech Jobs Concentration

City	2024 Rank	2024 Growth	Change in Rank (from 2021)
Raleigh, NC	1	13.7%	— 0
Colorado Springs, CO	2	11.6%	— 0
Salt Lake City, UT	3	11.2%	▲ 2
Ann Arbor, MI	4	10.7%	▼ 1
Detroit, MI	5	10.3%	▼ 1
Knoxville, TN	6	7.0%	▲ 1
Columbus, OH	7	6.8%	▲ 1
Des Moines, IA	8	6.6%	▲ 1
Milwaukee, WI	9	6.5%	▼ 3
<b>Grand Rapids, MI</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6.5%</b>	▲ 2
Greenville, SC	11	6.3%	— 0
Indianapolis, IN	12	6.2%	▼ 2
Jacksonville, FL	13	5.9%	▲ 1
Lansing, MI	14	5.7%	▲ 1
Birmingham, AL	15	5.0%	▼ 2
Louisville, KY	16	5.0%	— 0
Oklahoma City, OK	17	4.9%	▲ 1
Greensboro, NC	18	4.8%	▼ 1
Kalamazoo, MI	19	4.5%	— 0
Chattanooga, TN	20	4.0%	— 0

Source: Lightcast

# STRATEGIC PLAN TEAM

**Randy Thelen**

President & CEO  
The Right Place, Inc.

**Brad Comment**

Senior Vice President, Strategic Initiatives  
The Right Place, Inc.

**Dr. TaRita D. Johnson**

Senior Vice President, Talent & Diversity  
The Right Place, Inc.

**Tim Mroz**

Senior Vice President, Community Development  
The Right Place, Inc.

**Andria Romkema**

Senior Vice President, Business Development  
The Right Place, Inc.

**John Wiegand**

Business Intelligence & Research Manager  
The Right Place, Inc.

**Katrina Panzlau**

Marketing & Communications Director  
The Right Place, Inc.

---

**Jason Hoffer**

Senior Manager  
Crowe X-Lab

**Wes Keely**

Senior Manager  
Crowe X-Lab

**Seth Starner**

Senior Manager  
Crowe X-Lab

**Ian Hunter**

US Director  
OCO Global

**Alex Robinson**

Consulting Manager  
OCO Global

