

Avon, Indiana Economic Development Strategy

Demographic and Peer Community Analysis

There are a variety of statistical indicators that measure prosperity and successful economic development. They refer generally to three areas:

- Changes in population
- Changes in employment
- Changes in wealth

Communities with a dynamic economy and high quality of life are keeping native residents and attracting new ones. People move to where the opportunities are, for jobs, for an education, for cultural enrichment, for recreation, for a safe and healthy life. On the other hand, a declining population is a strong indication that the economy is stagnating and that basic amenities and public services are not competing well with the offerings in other communities.

Successful local economies will also be characterized by changes in employment that continue to position their communities to thrive in the changing global and national marketplace. This is especially true at the present time as the entire country continues its evolution from a manufacturing based to a knowledge-based and service-oriented economy. In response to continuing advances in technology and the migration of labor-intensive jobs to the third world, successful communities are implementing strategies to slow the loss of old line manufacturers while they aggressively recruit and cultivate employers participating in the new economy. Changes in employment by sector will indicate the extent to which communities are successfully making this transition.

Finally, changes in wealth should indicate an increasingly prosperous middle class and a declining poverty rate. Effective educational and workforce development opportunities address the needs both of employers of job seekers, whether they are just entering the workforce or are incumbent workers looking for a better opportunity. A successful local economy will minimize poverty by enlarging the middle class and raising its standard of living.

Fortunately, Avon demographic and economic indicators are quite strong. Thousands of people are attracted to Avon's high quality of life, excellent schools, and safe neighborhoods. Median household incomes are high and the existing employment base is relatively diverse. The key for Avon will be to take advantage of its many assets to create a distinct and vibrant economy.

The following analysis will examine Avon within two separate contexts. First, Avon's statistics are compared with those of Hendricks County and Indiana as a whole. Second, Avon is evaluated in relation to nine "peer" communities based on similar characteristics.

Peer Community Comparison

Avon is a relatively new community and, as such, it presents certain challenges for making historical comparisons with similar communities. Avon is among the fastest growing communities in Indiana (its population grew an astounding 800% between 1990 and 2005).

In order to assess Avon's transformation over the last few decades, SDG selected nine peer communities in the Midwest based on comparable characteristics. The community characteristics have been analyzed in six key areas including population, median household income, educational attainment levels, poverty, unemployment, and the distribution of jobs by sector. These community characteristics contribute to evaluating the Avon area economy in terms of population, education, wealth creation, and employment.

The following pages present the tables and charts with a short commentary on Avon's position in each. The data was retrieved from the United States Census Bureau and other public sources. The resulting analysis shows how the peer group as a whole has progressed and how Avon has fared as a part of the group.

The nine peer communities were primarily selected based similar population numbers, but location also played a role in selection. All nine communities are located on the outskirts of metro areas and have major thoroughfares in or near their boundaries.

Zionsville, Indiana (Boone County) is located just north of Avon. Zionsville shares many of the same assets as Avon: it is also in the Indianapolis metro area and is conveniently located near interstates and state roads. <http://zionsvilleindiana.net/>

Westfield, Indiana (Hamilton County) is along Highway 31 and close to Noblesville, Fishers, and Carmel. Westfield has enjoyed modest growth compared to other cities in the county. However, as those areas become increasingly congested, more people may want to move to Westfield. <http://www.westfieldtown.org/>

New Haven, Indiana (Allen County) is just southeast of Fort Wayne. Highway 34 runs directly into town and I-469 encircles New Haven in the loop that includes Fort Wayne. <http://www.newhavenin.org/>

Worthington, Ohio (Delaware County) is located north of Columbus, Ohio along Highway 23 and within the I-270 loop. Worthington is in the Columbus metro area. <http://www.worthington.org/>

Rantoul, Illinois (Champaign County) is north of the Bloomington-Normal metro area. Highway 136 intersects the town and I-57 runs along the west side of Rantoul. <http://www.village.rantoul.il.us/>

Morton, Illinois (Tazewell County) is on the outskirts of the Peoria metro area. Highway 150 and I-74 pass through the town of Morton. <http://www.mortonil.com/>

Brentwood, Tennessee (Williamson County), just south of Nashville, is near I-65 and Hwy 31. It is close to several other medium-sized, growing suburban areas. Brentwood primarily serves as a bedroom community for Nashville and is 92% residential. While the Brentwood Chamber of Commerce oversees ED committees, it does not establish incentives for local economic development. The Williamson County Economic Development Council is responsible for business recruitment and incentives for the entire county. <http://www.brentwood-tn.org/>

Nicholasville, Kentucky (Jessamine County) is located in the Lexington-Fayette metro area with Hwy 29 running through town. <http://www.nicholasville.org/>

Fern Creek, Kentucky (Jefferson County) is on the western edge of the Louisville metro area. US 150 runs through town, which is within the I-265 loop that surrounds Louisville. <http://www.louisvilleky.gov/>

Peer Community Characteristics (2000)			
<i>Community</i>	<i>In Metro Area</i>	<i>Major Roadways</i>	<i>Land Area</i>
Avon, IN	Indianapolis, IN	US 36	6.4 sq. mi.
New Haven, IN	Fort Wayne, IN	US 30, US 24, I-469	8.2 sq. mi.
Westfield, IN	Indianapolis, IN	US 31	7.6 sq. mi.
Zionsville, IN	Indianapolis, IN	US 421, I-465	5.8 sq. mi.
Morton, IL	Peoria, IL	I-74, US 150	12.2 sq. mi.
Rantoul, IL	Bloomington-Normal, IL	I-57, US 45, US 136	7.2 sq. mi.
Fern Creek, KY	Louisville, KY	I-265, US 150	5.8 sq. mi.
Nicholasville, KY	Lexington-Fayette, KY	US 27, Hwy 29, Hwy 39, Hwy 169	8.5 sq. mi.
Worthington, OH	Columbus, OH	Hwy 161, Hwy 315, Hwy 710	5.7 sq. mi.
Brentwood, TN	Nashville, TN	I-65, Hwy 254	34.6 sq. mi.

Source: City-Data.com

Peer Community Nearest Amenities			
<i>Community</i>	<i>City with Pop. 50,000+</i>	<i>Hospital or Medical Centers</i>	<i>College or University</i>
Avon, IN	Indianapolis, IN (16.6 mi.)	3 within 15 miles	4 within 20 miles
New Haven, IN	Fort Wayne, IN (7.3 mi.)	3 within 10 miles	1 within 10 miles
Westfield, IN	Indianapolis, IN (16.7 mi.)	3 within 10 miles	4 within 30 miles
Zionsville, IN	Indianapolis, IN (14.0 mi.)	3 within 10 miles	4 within 30 miles
Morton, IL	Peoria, IL (12.6 mi.)	3 within 15 miles	2 within 30 miles
Rantoul, IL	Champaign, IL (15.2 mi.)	3 within 15 miles	2 within 30 miles
Fern Creek, KY	Louisville, KY (11.5 mi.)	3 within 10 miles	5 within 30 miles
Nicholasville, KY	Lexington-Fayette, KY (11.6 mi.)	3 within 15 miles	3 within 30 miles
Worthington, OH	Columbus, OH (7.3 mi.)	3 within 10 miles	6 within 15 miles
Brentwood, TN	Nashville, TN (11.0 mi.)	3 within 10 miles	6 within 30 miles

Source: City-Data.com

Population

Communities with a dynamic economy and high quality of life are keeping their citizens and attracting new ones. Residents remain in communities and move to communities that offer excellence and opportunity for jobs, education, cultural enrichment, recreation, and for a safe and healthy lifestyle.

Avon certainly offers many of these criteria. In the decade since the towns incorporation (1995), has continued to grow.

Avon, IN Population Estimates					
July 1, 2000	July 1, 2001	July 1, 2002	July 1, 2003	July 1, 2004	July 1, 2005
7,740	7,984	8,260	8,275	8,434	8,918

Source: STATS Indiana (http://www.stats.indiana.edu/population/sub_cnty_estimates/2005/e2005_places.html)

According to the 1990 U.S. Census, Washington Township's population included 14,706 people. That same year, the area that would later become Avon had a population of approximately 1,000 residents (approx. 6.8% of the township's population).

Population Trends 1990-2005			
Area	1990	2000	2005 Estimates
Washington Township	14,706	26,319	30,126
Avon	1,000	6,248	8,918
% of Township population	6.8%	23.7%	29.6%

Source: STATS Indiana; U.S. Census

Since Avon was not incorporated at the time of the 1990 census, accurate population growth cannot be gauged. However, it is safe to say that the Avon area is matched only by Westfield, Indiana in terms of population growth between 1990 and 2000.

Population 1990-2000			
Area	1990	2000	% Increase
Avon, IN	NA	6,248	NA
New Haven, IN	9,320	12,406	33.1%
Westfield, IN	3,304	9,293	181.3%
Zionsville, IN	5,281	8,775	66.2%
Morton, IL	13,799	15,198	10.1%
Rantoul, IL	17,212	12,857	-25.3%
Fern Creek, KY	16,406	17,870	8.9%
Nicholasville, KY	13,603	19,680	44.7%
Worthington, OH	14,869	14,125	-5.0%
Brentwood, TN	16,392	23,445	43.0%
Peer Average	12,243	14,850	21.3%
Indiana	5,544,159	6,080,485	9.7%

Education

Educational attainment and educational opportunities are key to community success. Communities with higher average educational attainment levels have greater resources for leadership and community problem solving. It also contributes to the productivity and effectiveness of the workforce.

The quality of educational resources ensures that the intellectual capital to sustain the community and make it progress will remain in place. Strong local schools are also key factors in attracting new businesses and new residents.

Avon ranks near the top of this peer group in terms of the percent of the population with a high school diploma and in the middle of the pack in terms of higher education attainment.

Educational Attainment: % H.S. Degree Graduate or Higher 1990-2000			
Area	1990	2000	% Increase
Avon, IN	NA	92.4	NA
New Haven, IN	81.5	83.6	2.6%
Westfield, IN	85.1	90.5	6.3%
Zionsville, IN	93.9	94.4	0.5%
Morton, IL	87.9	90.0	2.4%
Rantoul, IL	89.7	88.5	-1.3%
Fern Creek, KY	84.7	89.0	5.1%
Nicholasville, KY	64.9	78.0	20.2%
Worthington, OH	94.0	96.1	2.2%
Brentwood, TN	95.0	97.4	2.5%
Peer Average	86.3	89.7	3.9%
Indiana	75.6	81.2	7.4%

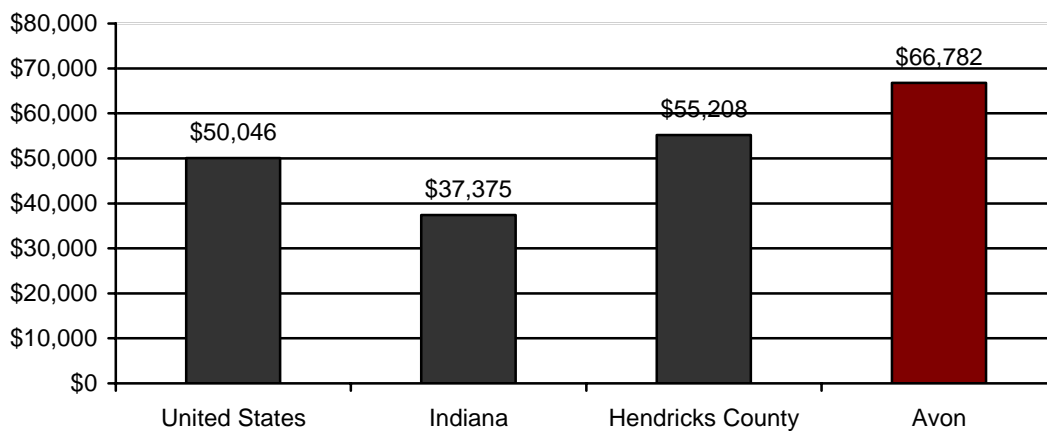
Educational Attainment: % Bachelor's Degree or Higher 1990-2000			
Area	1990	2000	% Increase
Avon, IN	NA	28.3	NA
New Haven, IN	10.6	12.4	17.0%
Westfield, IN	18.3	35.6	94.5%
Zionsville, IN	47.9	60.1	25.5%
Morton, IL	26.1	34.3	31.4%
Rantoul, IL	19.1	15.9	-16.8%
Fern Creek, KY	16.9	20.5	21.3%
Nicholasville, KY	10.3	14.0	35.9%
Worthington, OH	54.8	59.7	8.9%
Brentwood, TN	54.3	67.4	24.1%
Peer Average	28.7	35.5	23.7%
Indiana	15.3	19.4	26.8%

Income and Employment

Wealth creation takes the form of investment in public works, private property, bank deposits, business ownership and community philanthropy. In addition, the strength of the population, educational resources, and job assets add to the overall intrinsic total of community wealth.

Avon enjoys a very high median income in comparison to Hendricks County and the state as well as within the peer group. Avon's median household income is nearly a full \$30,000 above Indiana's and \$11,000 above the Hendricks County.

Median Household Income, 1999



Only three peer communities have a higher median household income than Avon. As could be expected, the vast majority of Avon's labor force is employed. Avon's unemployment rate is among the lowest of the peer group and half the rate of Indiana on whole.

Median Household Income 1989-1999			
Area	1989	1999	% Increase
Avon, IN	NA	\$66,782	NA
New Haven, IN	\$33,868	\$41,802	23.4%
Westfield, IN	\$30,417	\$52,963	74.1%
Zionsville, IN	\$53,902	\$81,770	51.7%
Morton, IL	\$39,788	\$53,869	35.4%
Rantoul, IL	\$26,205	\$36,904	40.8%
Fern Creek, KY	\$37,633	\$53,688	42.7%
Nicholasville, KY	\$25,258	\$37,462	48.3%
Worthington, OH	\$49,851	\$68,568	37.5%
Brentwood, TN	\$70,287	\$111,819	59.1%
Peer Average	\$40,801	\$59,872	46.7%
Indiana	\$37,375	\$41,567	11.2%

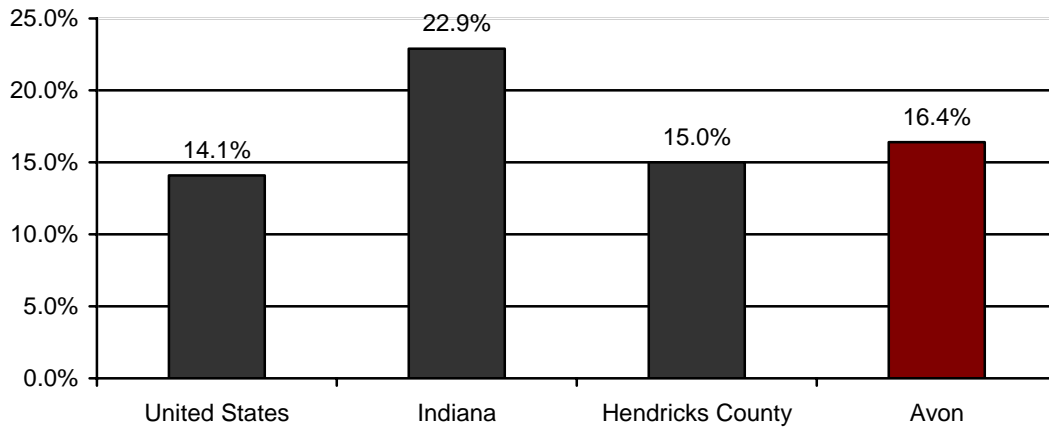
Unemployment 1990-2000			
Area	1990	2000	% Change
Avon, IN	NA	2.2	NA
New Haven, IN	6.1	3.9	-0.4%
Westfield, IN	5.7	2.7	-0.5%
Zionsville, IN	2.5	1.4	-0.4%
Morton, IL	1.7	3.0	0.8%
Rantoul, IL	3.4	4.7	0.4%
Fern Creek, KY	4.9	2.6	-0.5%
Nicholasville, KY	5.2	4.4	-0.2%
Worthington, OH	2.6	2.0	-0.2%
Brentwood, TN	3.1	1.9	-0.4%
Peer Average	3.9	3.0	-0.2%
Indiana	9.6	4.9	-0.5%

Jobs by Sector

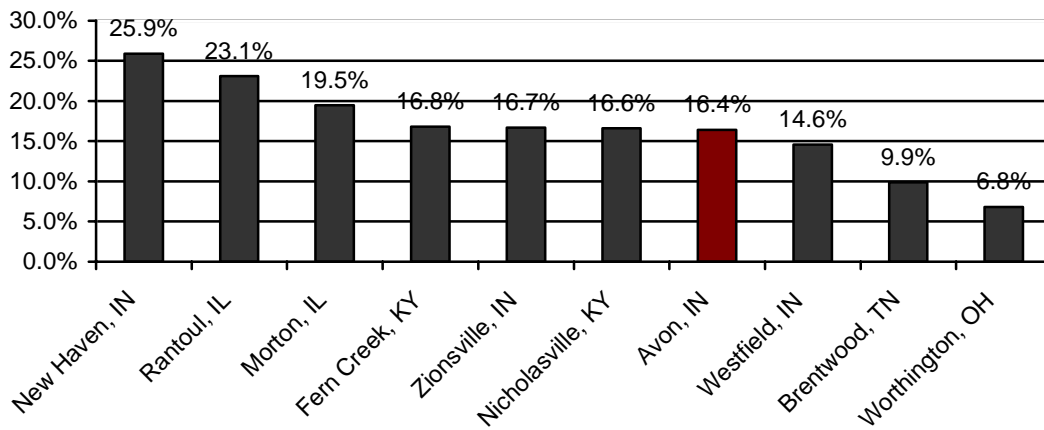
The changes in the percentage of jobs by sector can be an indication of how communities are transitioning from old line manufacturing to the high tech, knowledge-based, service-oriented economy. As the higher paying manufacturing jobs decline, the quality of the service sector jobs replacing them becomes paramount.

Median Household Income 1989-1999				
	Avon	Indiana	Hendricks County	U.S.
Public administration	4.1	3.3	3.7	4.8
Other services (except public administration)	4.1	4.7	5.3	4.9
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accomodation and food services	5.2	7.3	5.5	7.9
Educational, health and social services	16.6	19.3	17.7	19.9
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	11.1	6.3	7.3	9.3
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing	7.2	5.7	7.3	6.9
Information	2.2	2.1	2.4	3.1
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	15.1	5.2	11	5.2
Retail Trade	9.3	11.8	11.9	11.7
Wholesale Trade	3.1	3.4	4.2	3.6
Manufacturing	16.4	22.9	15	14.1
Construction	5.3	6.6	7.8	6.8

Manufacturing as Percentage of Total Employment, 2000

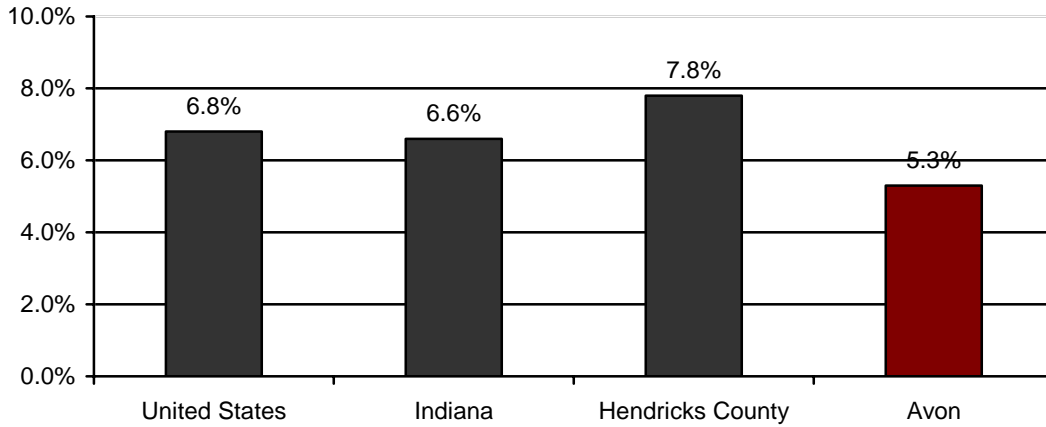


Manufacturing as Percentage of Total Employment, 2000

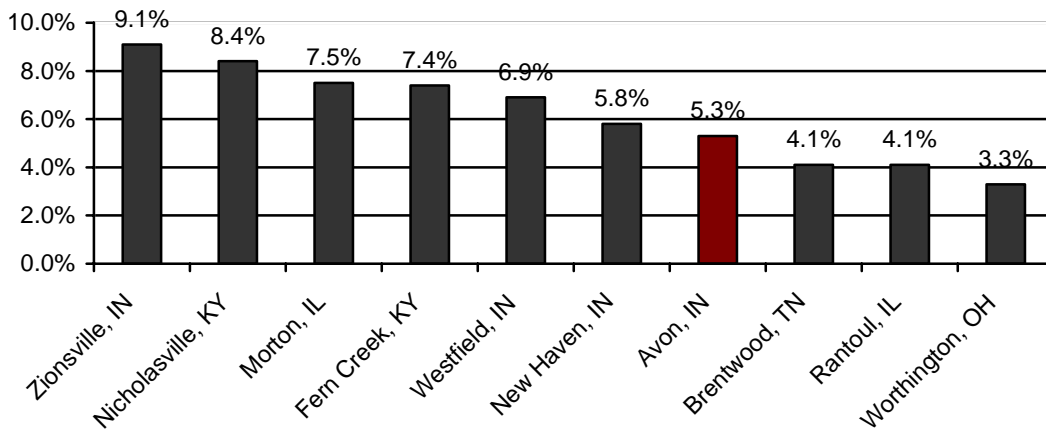


Construction employment and expenditures are recognized indicators of economic growth.

Construction as Percentage of Total Employment, 2000

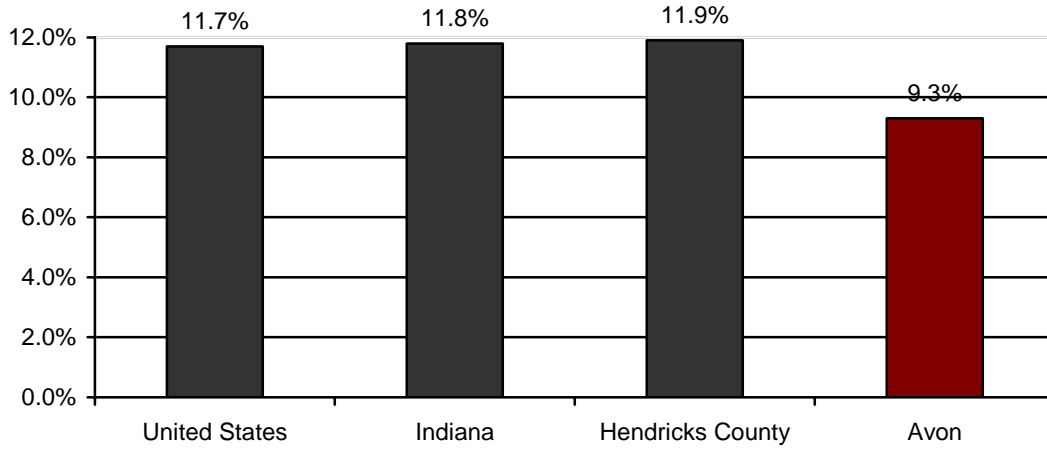


Construction as Percentage of Total Employment, 2000



Growth in the retail and service sectors suggest economic activity but are not an accurate measurement of growth.

Retail Trade as Percentage of Total Employment, 2000



Avon Peer Community Analysis Interview Summaries

This peer community analysis placed Avon within the context of some of the most economically successful communities in the Midwest. Each peer is similar in that they are part of a larger metropolitan area. Location has a dramatic influence on each community's population growth, cultural opportunities, and economy.

In order to evaluate each community's economic development programs, we conducted interviews with a local official such as an economic development director or town manager. Several clear and common approaches emerged.

Some highlights of the interviews include:

- Nearly all communities focused on business retention and expansion and small business development rather than industry recruitment
- Most communities offered an industrial, business, or technology park
- Nearly all communities had a TIF district
- All communities used tax abatement as a primary economic development tool
- All communities viewed their location adjacent to a metropolitan area as an asset
- Most communities placed a particular emphasis on education
- Most communities formed strong partnerships with county or regional economic development organizations

Summaries of each interview can be found on the following pages.

Zionsville, IN

Introduction

Zionsville, Indiana is a community in Boone County that's just north of Avon. Zionsville share many of the same assets as Avon: it is also in the Indianapolis metro area and located near interstates and state roads.

A) What economic development goals do you have for your community?

We have an ED redevelopment commission in the southeast portion of community. Our goals are commercial and industrial development. Since we're a bedroom community of Indianapolis, we're always looking to increase the tax base. Downtown is also part of the redevelopment area. We're encouraging growth in those locations.

a) Do you want to grow more or remain about the same size?

We do not want to grow; we want to maintain sustainable growth "on our terms."

b) What types of programs do you have to encourage economic development?

Tax abatement is the main program in redevelopment areas. Zionsville has a ten-year comprehensive plan that was completed in 2003.

c) How successful have incentives been?

We've begun to see growth (tax increment finance) in infrastructure. There's a major road project of 106th street that will begin next year. One of tech parks is already benefiting.

d) Roughly how many companies have you assisted?

Three companies have taken advantage of tax abatement, but some have moved in and not requested tax abatement

e) Do you feel it give your community an advantage?

Our strategy is to develop that area, because it gives us additional tools to work with.

**B) On what economic development areas do you primarily focus your efforts?
Business recruitment, expansion, tourism, small business development,
industrial...**

It's a combination of all those. Tourism plays off the uniqueness of downtown Zionsville. While there's no incubator in town, small businesses comprise the majority of business in town. We hope to attract more technology related businesses.

C) How is the nearby MSA an advantage and a disadvantage to economic development in your community?

Most of our residents work in Indianapolis at Lilly or Dow. The advantages are the cultural and economic assets of Indy. It's a selling point. The disadvantages depend on location. Indianapolis has many more economic development tools to offer companies than Boone County does.

D) What partners, if any, do you work with on economic development? These could be regional or multi-community planning projects.

We partner with the Boone County EDC. We don't work on regional planning, but we work with Boone County on regional efforts.

Westfield, IN

Introduction

Westfield, Indiana is a growing small community in Hamilton County. The town is along Hwy 31 and close to Noblesville, Fishers, and Carmel. Westfield has enjoyed modest growth compared to other cities in the county. However, as those areas become increasingly congested, more people may want to move to Westfield.

A) What economic development goals do you have for your community?

The official vision for the community follows: The greater Westfield (Town) Economic Development Initiative's vision is to increase wealth within the community by identifying, packaging, and marketing the business opportunities in and around Westfield. The Town will accomplish this effort by developing strategies that will: create higher paying jobs, attract export businesses, assist existing businesses to expand operations, and promote the necessary social and physical infrastructure needed to support such development. The goal is to promote Westfield as an outstanding place to live and an outstanding place in which to conduct business.

Another goal is to grow the tax base to bring stability to tax rates.

The Competitive Communities Initiative looked at six different areas that foster healthy, successful economic growth. They were:

- A skilled and adaptive workforce
- Good basic and advanced infrastructure
- Access to capital
- Access to technology
- Pro-competitive policies
- Social infrastructure necessary for a high quality of life

Westfield does not have a written incentives policy. The *Westfield-Washington Township 2020 Comprehensive Land Use Plan* delineates areas along US 31 and SR 32 for future business growth. However, a majority of this land is not properly zoned for business development at this time. There are five existing general business parks in Westfield. Three of the parks are completely built-out and the remaining two parks have limited available space. There are numerous parcels that have been pre-zoned for commercial and industrial development, and most of these have available infrastructure. However, these are small parcels (10-15 acres) and are scattered. Currently there are no large contiguous parcels that have been pre-zoned or have available infrastructure.

a) Do you want to grow more or remain about the same size?

A majority of residents understand that growth is inevitable. We're getting pressure from Noblesville. Westfield is currently undergoing a comprehensive plan update. We've finished a corridor study and are updating the water/sewer master plan. We anticipate growth but want to grow with quality.

b) What types of programs do you have to encourage economic development?

Westfield established a TIF as one tool. There's also tax abatement and expansion within existing industries and new industries.

c) How successful have incentives been?

The TIF has generated a lot of dollars for us. Abatements are done on a request basis only.

d) Roughly how many companies have you assisted?

This is a rough guess but fewer than 10 in past six years.

e) Do you feel it give your community an advantage?

The incentives probably helped Westfield keep pace with competitors. We all have the same bag of tricks to pull from in Indiana.

**B) On what economic development areas do you primarily focus your efforts?
Business recruitment, expansion, tourism, small business development,
industrial...**

Small business development is a primary focus for the community. We seem to have a "garage fostered industry," but Westfield also has small industrial parks.

C) How is the nearby MSA an advantage and a disadvantage to economic development in your community?

I think for economic development, if we were closer to I-465 it would be more of a big deal. Our industrial base is independent from Indianapolis. But it's better than if we were farther away. We have the ability to draw on the quality of life amenities of Indianapolis.

D) What partners, if any, do you work with on economic development? These could be regional or multi-community planning projects.

Our regional partners include the Chamber of Commerce, Hamilton County Alliance, and the Indianapolis Partnership. The town manager sits on the Alliance Board.

New Haven, IN

Introduction

The Town of New Haven is just southeast of Fort Wayne, Indiana. It is in the I-469 loop and along Hwy 34.

A) What economic development goals do you have for your community?

New Haven's economic development efforts are cooperative with city of Fort Wayne and Allen County and are usually led through them. We focus on industries with employment between 100 and 500 people. We want to attract manufacturers that will make use of our skilled labor force.

a) Do you want to grow more or remain about the same size?

New Haven tries for sustainable growth of 100 to 200 homes a year.

b) What types of programs do you have to encourage economic development?

We make use of tax abatements, and an incentive fund established to offset training and infrastructure. There's also a tax increment finance district.

c) How successful have incentives been?

The incentives have been successful. They encourage the type of industry that we want to focus on. We want to keep their attention and keep them here.

d) Roughly how many companies have you assisted?

We've assisted approximately four companies through direct incentives.

e) Do you feel it give your community an advantage?

It is hard to say because a lot of prospects don't tell where they are looking.

B) On what economic development areas do you primarily focus your efforts? Business recruitment, expansion, tourism, small business development, industrial...

We're aggressive on local expansion. The bulk will come through expansion and new business development. We have to work harder with smaller businesses, and

cultivate a longer relationship. We also focused on investment and recruitment, but we work more on giving attention to existing businesses and new ventures.

C) How is the nearby MSA an advantage and a disadvantage to economic development in your community?

One advantage is a diversified workforce to market to firms. We have amenities from Indianapolis. Don't know if it detracts, if they don't land here, they may land in the vicinity that still benefits us in the long run. Our location near Indy has stimulated housing in this area. There's no sense in getting really aggressive and competing locally.

D) What partners, if any, do you work with on economic development? These could be regional or multi-community planning projects.

State of Indiana Economic Development Corporation and we partner with city of Fort Wayne and Allen County.

Worthington, OH

Introduction

Worthington, Ohio is nestled just north of Columbus along Hwy 23 and within the I-270 loop. The town is located in the Columbus metro area.

A) What economic development goals do you have for your community?

We want to have enough income tax to pay for city services.

a) Do you want to grow more or remain about the same size?

We're fully developed. We want to provide same level of service.

b) What types of programs do you have to encourage economic development?

The main tool used is the Venture Grant Program. We give grants repaid through income tax to companies in the city who need money for improvement.

c) How successful have incentives been?

We've had quite a few companies that have come into the community and taken advantage of the grant.

d) Roughly how many companies have you assisted?

Don't have that number.

e) Do you feel it give your community an advantage?

It puts us on an even playing field with other cities in central Ohio. We're not able to offer abated property. We don't have new buildings. We can't abate on existing structures.

B) On what economic development areas do you primarily focus your efforts? Business recruitment, expansion, tourism, small business development, industrial...

Retention and expansion on existing businesses are the main focus.

C) How is the nearby MSA an advantage and a disadvantage to economic development in your community?

We're really part of the greater metro-area and part of a much larger central Ohio community. It's being part of a big city rather than a small city on its own.

D) What partners, if any, do you work with on economic development? These could be regional or multi-community planning projects.

There are a couple of organizations that we work with: the Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce, Mid-Ohio Development Exchange, and the Regional Planning Commission.

Rantoul, IL

Introduction

The town of Rantoul, Illinois is north of the Bloomington-Normal metro area. In the early 1990s the town's population was closer to 24,000, but a 1993 military base closing prompted a large drop in population. Now Rantoul has around 13,000 citizens. The town survived the base closing because of the developments in an industrial park that was created in the 1970s. Rantoul recently completed a new comprehensive plan in February 2006; this represents the first new strategic plan for the community since 1967.

A) What economic development goals do you have for your community?

Rantoul hopes to take advantage of its strengths such as its location near both Chicago and St. Louis. Representatives of the Rantoul ED technology center consider the town's location a key strategic asset with global commerce to the heartland. A recent transportation study from Northern Illinois University indicated that affordability rests between Chicago, St. Louis, and Indianapolis. Accordingly, Rantoul is focusing on intermobile logistics and distribution.

Long-term goals for the community include cleanup efforts of the closed air force base and efforts toward the Interstate. Currently there is very little development around the Interstate. Rantoul is also looking at integrating the airport into a more viable transportation enterprise.

a) Do you want to grow more or remain about the same size?

Unlike many other Illinois communities, Rantoul owns and manages its utilities, which are currently underutilized. The town has a great capacity to grow back to its size in the early 1990s. Since the base closing, the town has grown between 1-2% per year, which is the second fastest growth rate in the area (behind only Bloomington-Normal). Growth is relative, however. Rantoul is positioning itself to be a regional player in terms of industrial employers.

b) What types of programs do you have to encourage economic development?

Rantoul offers tax increment financing and has an enterprise zone, which includes an industrial park and the air base. The town can offer state programs in Illinois such as employment training programs and EDGE, which allows it to identify funds when competing with a border state.

c) How successful have incentives been?

They have not been utilized to their maximum benefit yet, but they haven't marketed them extensively. These programs allow us to compete, when we're in a position to compete.

d) Roughly how many companies have you assisted?

We offer up a few every year. For the most part, we focus on expansion of existing companies because that's where the growth is. The small business incubator opened a few years ago.

e) Do you feel it give your community an advantage?

It has given us the ability to not be at a disadvantage. One advantage we have is that we own our own utilities. We can set the rates and have increased responsiveness.

**B) On what economic development areas do you primarily focus your efforts?
Business recruitment, expansion, tourism, small business development,
industrial...**

Our primary focus is retention and expansion and small business development. Our secondary focus is on how we provide a better environment for logistics and foreign trade.

C) How is the nearby MSA an advantage and a disadvantage to economic development in your community?

It should always have a very positive impact. We're 15 minutes from University of Illinois. We have people who commute 50 -60 miles to work in Rantoul area. The question is: Can we capitalize on huge stable workforce and attract more individuals to be residents? We're flatlined in terms of new housing developments. We're always filling in base housing and catching up. We've experienced significant growth, and our demographics have changed. Rantoul looks more like a bigger community than a smaller one.

D) What partners, if any, do you work with on economic development? These could be regional or multi-community planning projects.

We work with the Champaign County ED Corporation and Opportunity Returns, a five county area. There's also an I-57 corridor group that works together on regional development.

Nicholasville, KY

Introduction

Nicholasville, Kentucky is located in the Lexington-Fayette metro area. The town now touches Fayette County after a recent annexation along the US 27 corridor. The annexation was driven by a need to increase the town's tax base.

The Nicholasville economic development programs run through the Jessamine County Economic Development Authority composed of six people (3 appointed by the city and 3 appointed by the county). Approximately one and a half staff members work at the authority.

Jessamine County provides a huge outflow of workforce to nearby counties. According to a representative at the ED authority, 55% of the county's workforce commutes outside of the community. Due to state payroll taxes, this outflow of workers creates financial challenges for towns in terms of providing services.

A) What economic development goals do you have for your community?

Nicholasville would like to reverse the outflow of the workforce. Another goal is to create jobs in the community that will enable the rapidly expanding population to work in town. Residential development is exploding, and they want jobs in the community to accommodate residents.

a) Do you want to grow more or remain about the same size?

There are no goals set from a strategic standpoint. Every community has those that resist and those that encourage growth. Our comp plan provides for growth to the extent that we are able to meet the infrastructure needs. Infrastructure is the primary constraint. The school system has quite a challenge, because they've added 100 new students per year. We have had a problem with what kind of residential growth we've had. Residential developments are sometimes less expensive homes that attract starter families and young families with children. The county developments are more expensive.

b) What types of programs do you have to encourage economic development?

It's primarily available land. We have a 114 acre industrial park at a subsidized rate of \$25,000 an acre. This rate is substantially cheaper than Fayette County. The industrial park was created in 2000.

c) How successful have incentives been?

The industrial park now only has about 50 available acres for development. We're attracting expansion of existing industry. There is a private industrial park, too. These industrial parks are jammed full of small industry, and serve as an incubator of sorts for small businesses.

d) Roughly how many companies have you assisted?

There are 13 new companies in the industrial park. We've helped far more companies outside the Industrial park. We have an \$800,000 dollar debt still outstanding on the park, but it's down from 2 million. We're in the investment and job creation business. We don't care where we create jobs. We're going to help them wherever. We're beginning to get a little activity in the medical field. There are a couple of hospitals that have gone through a certificate of need process and are approved for construction. These are ambulatory hospitals that provide service up to 24 hours but don't have beds for longer stays.

e) Do you feel it give your community an advantage?

Most of the counties in Kentucky are not in a position to offer dollar incentives that will make much of a difference. We're all pretty similar and largely rely on state and federal programs. The difference is the level of professionalism that communities offer to package state and federal applications. We could offer land deals. It's a trade off; we would assume the payroll taxes would at least offset the cost of the land.

**B) On what economic development areas do you primarily focus your efforts?
Business recruitment, expansion, tourism, small business development,
industrial...**

We're a small staff. We leverage our resources with existing companies and organizations such as SBDCs and the Certified 504 program. The Community Ventures Corporation in Lexington provides small business development.

C) How is the nearby MSA an advantage and a disadvantage to economic development in your community?

Jessamine County has attracted companies out of Lexington. We are a cooperative region. The Bluegrass Alliance meets once a month to talk about projects. We market the region.

D) What partners, if any, do you work with on economic development? These could be regional or multi-community planning projects.

The Bluegrass Alliance is an informal association that's been around since the early 1980s. We look for excuses to get together. Mid 1990s, GTE helped us put together some marketing materials. The Lexington Chamber of Commerce provides some administrative support. The group is primarily one of resource sharing. We've done regional studies together such as labor studies and wage rate surveys.

Brentwood, TN

Brentwood, Tennessee is located just south of Nashville. The community is 92% residential, and economic development within the town is minimal. Town officials work on economic development projects in committee within the larger sphere of Williamson Works, the county-wide development council. The Williamson County Economic Development Council is responsible for business recruitment and incentives for the entire county. Brentwood is close to I-65 and Hwy 31, making it a quick commute to Nashville.

A representative from Williamson Works, the Williamson County Economic Development Council said that in the late 1980s, the Williamson County Commissioners put an emphasis on education. They focused on infrastructure and have built a school and half per year. They currently have approximately 27,000 students enrolled, 16,000 of which are new. Williamson County's main attraction is education. Their community essentially serves as a residential area for executive managers who work in nearby Nashville, Tennessee.

The county's business base has grown in the last 15 years. A Nissan plant recently relocated to the county. However, most of the county's industry is service oriented. They have many upscale retail options for residents who value convenience and choice.

Fern Creek, KY

The history of Fern Creek, Kentucky adds an interesting element to the peer comparison. Until 2003, Fern Creek was a census-designated place. According to the 2000 census, the population was 17,870. In 2003, Fern Creek was annexed to the city of Louisville due to a merger between the city and Jefferson County's unincorporated communities. Now Fern Creek is a neighborhood within the city limits of Louisville. The area was agricultural for much of its history, but has been developed as a suburb of Louisville since the 1960s.

About 10 miles southeast of downtown, Fern Creek is currently home to more than 22,000 residents. Located near I-265, the Gene Snyder Freeway, the area is convenient and affordable. There is still a lingering country feel to some parts of Fern Creek, and certain stretches are reminiscent of the Smoky Mountains (though at lower altitudes). The area offers modern subdivisions and apartment complexes.