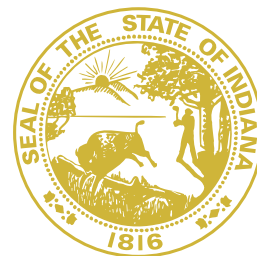


NORTHWEST INDIANA REGIONAL REPORT

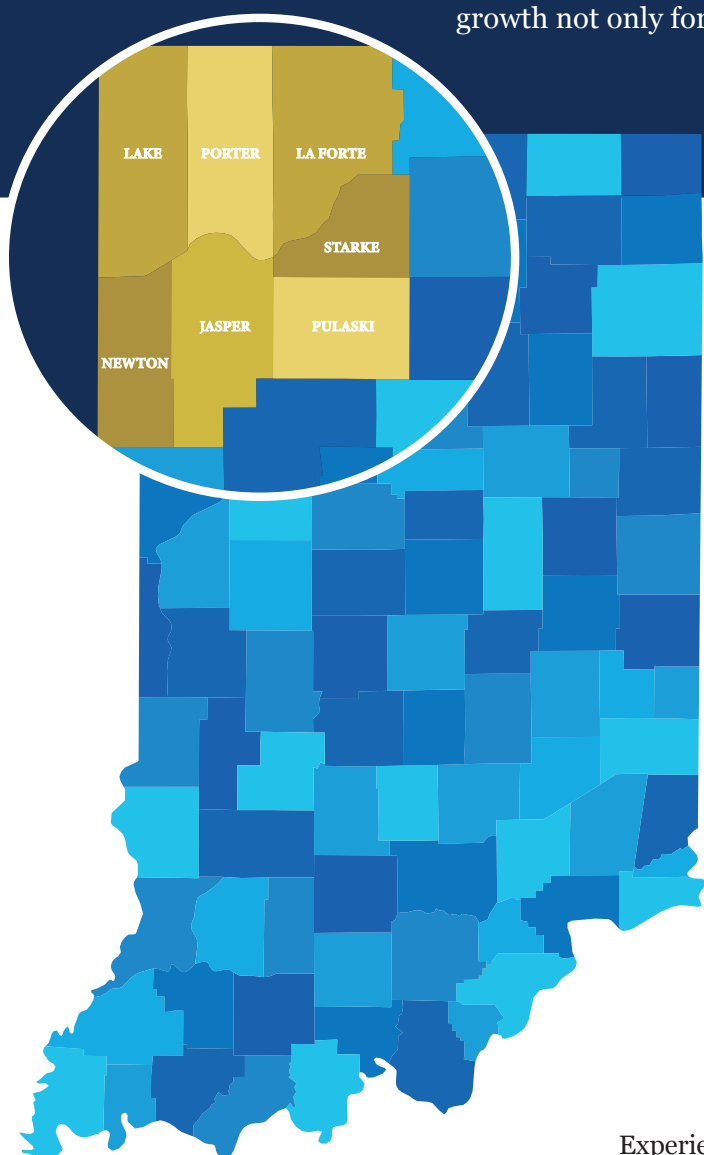


July 2026

“Indiana’s strength comes from its people – Hoosiers who work hard, solve problems and take pride in building something better for the next generation. Across our state, we’re seeing what’s possible when business, higher education and community leaders come together to solve problems with a shared purpose. Those partnerships are driving growth, creating jobs and opening new doors for Hoosiers.

Here in Northwest Indiana, that momentum is clear. This region is turning its location, workforce and infrastructure into a competitive advantage. Through the ‘Ignite’ regional strategy, major transportation investments and continued redevelopment efforts, Northwest Indiana is attracting new businesses and creating opportunities for Hoosiers. The fact that Indiana is actively competing for transformational projects - including ongoing discussions with the Chicago Bears - shows just how far this region has come and how much potential lies ahead. Northwest Indiana is helping drive growth not only for the region, but for our entire state.”

— Governor Mike Braun



REGIONAL IMPACT

NORTHWEST INDIANA

IN THE LAST YEAR...

- ♦ **Five businesses** committed to locating or growing in Northwest Indiana
- ♦ **More than \$7.1 billion** in capital investment committed
- ♦ **306 new jobs** committed with an average wage of \$44.78/hour
- ♦ **More than \$25 million** in new payroll committed

SCAN TO WATCH
NORTHWEST INDIANA
ECONOMIC HIGHLIGHT VIDEO

Experience the region momentum in this two-minute video.



STORIES FROM AROUND THE REGION

AMAZON WEB SERVICES' \$15 BILLION INVESTMENT POISED TO BENEFIT REGION

- ◇ Construction of data center campuses, creating 1,100 high-skilled jobs and supporting thousands more
- ◇ Approximately \$1 billion in energy cost savings to the region's residents and businesses thanks to an agreement between Amazon and NIPSCO
- ◇ Enhanced technology related education and training programs for local communities

"Indiana has long been an important partner for Amazon, and ... we are proud to reaffirm our commitment to long-term investment and growth, underscoring our dedication to fueling AI innovation," said **David Zapolsky**, Amazon's chief global affairs officer. "By expanding our advanced cloud infrastructure in Indiana, we are investing in Indiana's technological future through job creation, skills training initiatives, and community engagement programs."

JOHN DEERE TO INVEST \$125 MILLION IN LAKE COUNTY

- ◇ 1.2-million square foot, state-of-the-art distribution center in Lowell/Hebron area
- ◇ 150 new permanent jobs committed, along with 1,200 construction jobs
- ◇ Reinforces Northwest Indiana's reputation as a distribution hub

"This new facility is an investment in customer expectations around world-class product support through parts availability for our U.S.-based ag, turf, construction, forestry, and mining customers," said **Denver Caldwell**, vice president, Aftermarket and Customer Support, at John Deere. "Indiana's strong workforce and central location make it an ideal choice for expansion."

PITTSBURGH-BASED **U.S. STEEL** TO RESTART GARY TIN MILL

- ◇ 225 jobs
- ◇ \$20 million investment
- ◇ Production to begin in early 2027

"Customers are increasingly focused on securing dependable domestic supply they can count on over the long term," U.S. Steel CEO **David Burritt** said. "Restarting the Gary Tin Mill positions us to serve that demand, support domestic manufacturing, and strengthen critical U.S. supply chains—including those that help support American farmers and food producers—provided trade is fair and enforced."



TOP STORY

RAIL PROJECTS SPUR DEVELOPMENT, POSITION REGION FOR POPULATION GROWTH

NORTHWEST INDIANA IS RIDING A WAVE OF OPTIMISM AND MOMENTUM fueled by completion of the long-awaited West Lake Corridor Rail project, the South Shore Rail Line double track project, and population gains attributed to the region's relatively low cost of living and proximity to Chicago. Almost every city in the region is leaning into the idea that Chicago-area residents who reside in Illinois can be drawn across the state line by quicker commutes and lower costs.

GRANTS BOOST REGION

READI GRANTS, LILLY ENDOWMENT AWARDS LIFT NORTHWEST INDIANA CITIES AND TOWNS

FROM BOUTIQUE HOTELS IN VALPARAISO TO THE TRANSFORMATION OF AN ENTIRE NEIGHBORHOOD IN GARY, \$95 million in Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Initiative grants from the state are putting a shine on cities and towns in Northwest Indiana. The funds, known as READI grants, have leveraged millions more to improve quality of place for Hoosiers. Among the projects underway or in planning:

- ◇ **Tolleston Opportunity Campus.** The Boys & Girls Club of Greater Northwest Indiana partnered with the Crossroads YMCA, the City of Gary, the Dean & Barbara White Foundation, and Methodist Hospital to renovate the Boys & Girls Club site in the Tolleston neighborhood in west-central Gary. The newly renovated club, along with a new YMCA and new Methodist Hospital satellite center will deliver education, social services, childcare, health/wellness, physical activity, talent development, entrepreneurship and economic advancement opportunities with the potential to transform the neighborhood.
- ◇ **Grand Gardner Hotel.** The Grand Gardner Hotel is the redevelopment and reuse of the Gardner School building built in 1899 near downtown Valparaiso. The historic building will be augmented by new construction, resulting in a boutique hotel that showcases the region.
- ◇ **Gary/Chicago International Airport Cargo Logistics Area.** This dramatic expansion of the airport's cargo capacity will add jobs and result in increased access to goods.
- ◇ **Duneland Family YMCA Healthy Living Campus – Phase 1.** This revitalization of a former school building in Chesterton will bring new fitness opportunities and services to residents across seven counties in northwest Indiana.
- ◇ **Elston Opportunity Hub.** The hub, powered by a web of community partnerships, will enhance employment readiness, job placement and promote economic growth in underserved areas of Michigan City.
- ◇ **La Porte Housing.** The project, guided by strategies identified by the University of Notre Dame School of Architecture, will result in 45 housing units in downtown LaPorte through a combination of new construction, rehabilitation and the creation of 25 upper-story rental rehabs in existing downtown buildings. The majority of units will be designated as affordable housing.
- ◇ **The City of La Porte Advantix Lake Pointe Project.** This project addresses a significant unmet need for low-income housing in the city, delivering 42 rental units across three sites.

ENTREPRENEUR SUCCESS STORIES

ENTREPRENEURSHIP & INNOVATION

SMALL BUSINESSES MAKE UP THE HEART OF THE INDIANA ECONOMY and employ more than 1.2 million Hoosiers. The state, including the Indiana Small Business Development Center, supported more than 10,000 entrepreneurs and small businesses in 2025, an effort that helped launch more than 450 businesses statewide. The Northwest Indiana SBDC has served 1,046 clients (aspiring founders, entrepreneurs and small businesses) since January 2025, assisting 62 business starts. Among the success stories:

- ◆ **The Harvest Hangout Play Cafe in Newton County.** Awarded the 2026 Main Street Small Business Award in May of this year, The Harvest Hangout Play Café was founded and is led by twin sisters Zahira Montoya and Mirahida Kindig. It provides a welcoming, safe and enriching play cafe designed to bring families together in Goodland. The sisters say the space is more than a business, it's a way for them to give back, nurture connection and invest in the next generation.
- ◆ **Collier Row Cottage Flower Farm in Jasper County.** Tori and Anthony Van Gorp know that flowers speak a language of kindness and purity. The Van Gorphs have been selling flowers in and around DeMotte since 2021, providing local flowers in an industry where 80 percent of all cut flowers come from Columbia, Ecuador, Holland, and Kenya. They moved to a new shop in downtown DeMotte in 2025. Sales spiked 30 percent in one of the first months in the new shop, and Collier Row has gone from servicing 10 events in the early years to more than 50 in 2025.
- ◆ **Patriot Aerial Solutions in Porter County.** Founded by Nick Grott in Kouts, Indiana, Patriot Aerial Solutions demonstrates how Indiana entrepreneurs are leveraging innovation to solve real-world challenges. Through precision drone technology, the company helps farmers increase efficiency, reduce costs and chemical usage, minimizing soil compaction, and enables them to make more informed decisions with real-time crop data. "From the skies to the soil, our drones bring precision, efficiency and respect to every acre we touch," said Grott.

HELP FOR STARTUPS

Founders in Northwest Indiana have a new tool at their disposal thanks to NWI Launch Pad, a collaborative effort led by Vidette Makes and the Indiana Economic Development Corporation. Thanks to a \$20,000 Community Collaboration Fund state grant, founders now have access to affordable, high-quality prototyping and small-batch production services. This highly accessible program helps participants from product validation all the way to launch support.

KEEPING VENTURES LOCAL

The Lower Lincoln business succession accelerator focuses on educational workshops and outreach efforts to introduce succession planning to existing business owners in northwest Indiana. Up to three four-week cohorts are providing expert-led training and mentorship to develop an actionable business transition plan. The program is made possible by an almost \$39,000 Community Collaboration Fund grant from Indiana's Commerce Office.

HEADLINES FROM AROUND THE REGION



- [National Scenic Byway Designation sought in northwest Indiana](#) (March 17, 2026)
- [Purdue Northwest earns Carnegie Research University designation](#) (April 30, 2026)
- [Hammond to break ground on new downtown train station](#) (April 15, 2026)
- [Google identified as operator of Michigan City data center](#) (April 16, 2026)
- [Indiana American Water acquires northwest Indiana water systems](#) (June 2, 2026)
- [Hammond mayor: Summer groundbreaking on Chicago Bears stadium 'realistic'](#) (June 15, 2026)