North Central Indiana
Regional Report

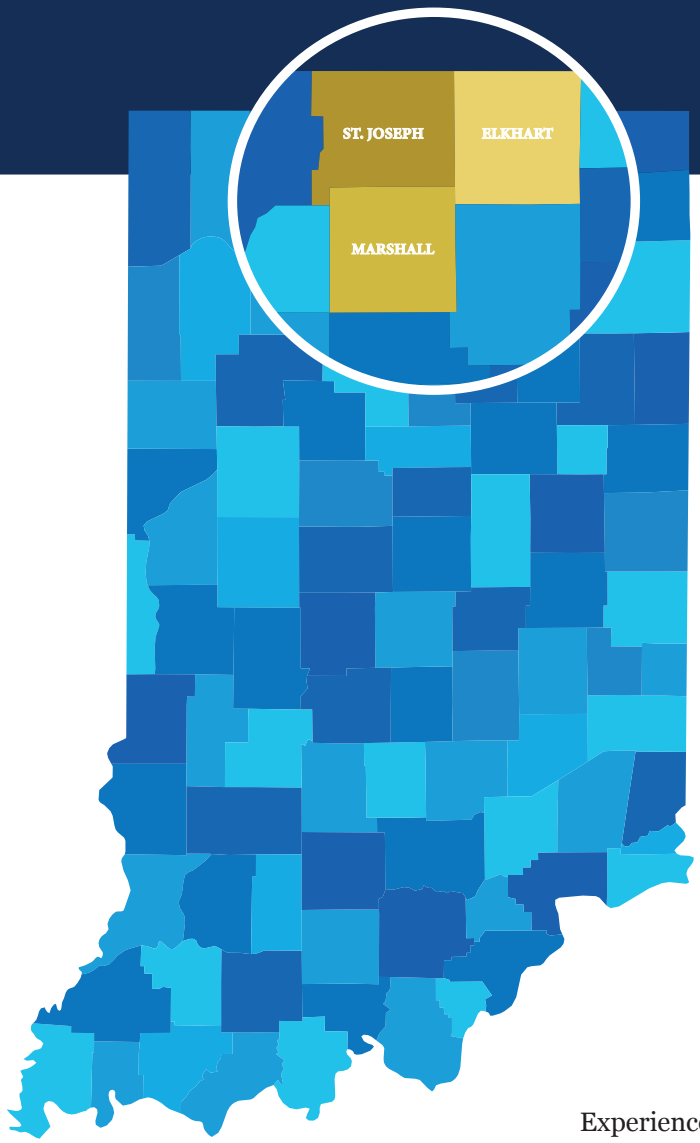
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"Indiana's strength comes from its people – Hoosiers who work hard, solve problems and take pride in building something better for the next generation.

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 North Central Indiana, that momentum is clear. This region is building on its manufacturing strength while competing for the industries and jobs of the future. Amazon's historic investment in New Carlisle, continued growth in advanced manufacturing across the South Bend-Elkhart region, and new investments from companies like V Tech Conversions and Alera Marine Group are creating opportunities for Hoosiers. At the same time, Notre Dame and other regional partners are helping develop talent, support innovation and strengthen communities. That combination of business, education and community leadership is positioning North Central Indiana to compete and grow for generations to come."

— Governor Mike Braun



Regional Impact
North Central Indiana

Since January of 2025...

- **13 businesses** committed to locating or growing in the South Bend-Elkhart region
- More than **$166 million in capital investment** committed (more than $16 billion in the last six years)
- More than **1,900 new jobs** committed with an average wage of $36.73/hour
- Almost **$140 million in new payroll** committed

SCAN TO WATCH

North Central Indiana Economic Highlight Video

Experience the region momentum in this two-minute video.

Stories from around the region

AMAZON'S $26 BILLION INVESTMENT IN REGION IS LARGEST IN STATE HISTORY

- New Carlisle data center campuses will support artificial intelligence and cloud-computing technologies
- Projects will create more than 1,100 new high-skilled jobs and support thousands more
- Investment will support thousands of local electricians, construction workers and fiber-optic technicians

"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," said **David Zapolsky**, Amazon's chief global affairs and legal officer. "We're excited to help power the next wave of technological advancement while delivering tangible benefits that will enhance the lives of Indiana residents for years to come."

NEW MANUFACTURER V TECH CONVERSIONS LAUNCHES IN PLYMOUTH

- Builder of vans, trucks and trailers purpose-made for underground inspection and fiber-splicing crews
- 25 new positions with average wages at 165% of the Marshall County average
- Specialty manufacturer drawn by state's support for companies of all sizes

"We chose Plymouth because this is home. We believe in building our future right here, surrounded by the people and community that helped shape who we are," said the V Tech Conversions leadership team: President **Wayne Nifong** and Managing Partner **Derek Nick**.

ALERA MARINE GROUP BUILDING FLAGSHIP MANUFACTURING CENTER IN ELKHART

- 200,000-square-foot facility will house all stages of boat production under one roof
- Project brings approximately 400 new jobs to the region
- 46-acre site allows for future expansion, including a second production building in 2027 and a private, on-site lake for boat testing

"Our goal at Alera is to raise the standard in the marine industry," said **Coley Brady**, CEO and founder of Alera Marine Group. "This new facility allows us to scale with purpose while maintaining tight control over quality, craftsmanship and delivery."



Top story

NOTRE DAME PUTS ITS CONSIDERABLE WEIGHT BEHIND REGION'S FUTURE

THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME WAS ONCE AN ISLAND IN SOUTH BEND AND THE LARGER REGION, BUT IN RECENT YEARS THE PRESTIGIOUS NATIONAL INSTITUTION HAS BECOME A PARTNER IN PUSHING THE SOUTH BEND-ELKHART REGION FORWARD.

Among its regional initiatives is Colfax Corner, which the university and its partners broke ground on in August. The $130 million mixed-use project is the first major investment in downtown South Bend's Tech and Talent District and is expected to bring more than 400 high-skilled tech jobs downtown. Colfax Corner is a combination of new construction and a revitalized South Bend Tribune building that will bring university faculty, staff and students closer to the region's companies and entrepreneurs.

GRANTS BOOST REGION

READI GRANTS BRING REGION'S HISTORY OF COLLABORATION TO LIFE

FROM TRANSFORMATIVE DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH BEND TO A COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY CENTER IN ELKHART AND ARTS PROJECTS THROUGHOUT THE REGION, almost $150 million in Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Initiative and other grants from the state are having a big impact in the region. The funds, known as READI grants, have leveraged millions more to capitalize on long-time collaborations that put South Bend-Elkhart in a position to thrive.

- **Madison Lifestyle District.** Scheduled for completion in 2028 and aided by an almost $12 million READI grant, this transformative development connecting the Beacon Memorial medical campus to downtown South Bend focuses on housing and amenities that enhance the region's ability to attract and retain talent. The almost $138 million development will feature over 240 housing units, a first-class hotel, commercial space and structured parking.
- **Tolson Center for Community Excellence.** Boosted by a $2.6 million READI grant, the Tolson Center for Community Excellence in south central Elkhart is expected to serve up to 500 neighbors of all ages through onsite programs around inclusive learning, cultural exchange and recreation.
- **Michigan & Monroe Arts District**. This project, a partnership of Herstoric Development, Chateaux 14 Development and Penny Hill, includes the redevelopment of several historic buildings and new housing near the intersection of Monroe and Michigan streets in South Bend. Boosted by a $3.7 million READI grant, the arts district will introduce live-work loft apartments to the South Bend market.
- **Freight Street District Initiative**. This initiative combines mixed-use redevelopment along historic Freight Street in south Elkhart with two signature public investments: Love Plaza, a gathering space anchored by a three-dimensional recreation of a historic mural, and an improved National New York Central Railroad Museum. The $63.7 million project includes a $1.5 million READI grant.
- **Howard Park Bandshell**. A READI grant pays for half of this South Bend bandshell, featuring a 2,000-square-foot stage, supporting infrastructure, and a state-of-the-art AV control system.
- **Historic State Theater Transformation**. This $27.8 million endeavor, boosted by a $4 million READI grant, will transform a persistently blighted theater in downtown South Bend into a multi-screen, multi-purpose performing arts venue.
- **Music Town**. READI grant funding of $350,000 went toward this $1.47 million initiative to bring more live music to Elkhart, South Bend and Goshen. Music Town supports the live music ecosystem in the region, connecting artists, venues and residents and sponsoring novel musical performances.

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 North Central Indiana Small Business Development Center has assisted 580 entrepreneurs and small businesses since early 2025, helping launch 65 new businesses, supporting more than 1,800 Hoosier jobs and helping clients secure $7 million in capital investments. These are examples of some of the SBDC's recent success stories:

- **Gene's Camera (St. Joseph County):** Gene's Camera has been the area's premier retailer of cameras since 1939. It was purchased in 2025 by longtime employee Jon Gilchrist and his partner Melaney Miller, who kept the store alive and see themselves as stewards of its legacy. Gene's Camera was recognized by the Indiana Small Business Development Center as one of eight 2026 small businesses of the year.
- **Adapta Education (St. Joseph County):** Founded by former math teacher Chris Merrill using a platform created by two Notre Dame professors, Adapta helps high school math teachers create assessment tests tailored for each student. The tailored assessments address proficiency gaps between top students and other students.
- **All Things Snacks (Elkhart County):** All Things Snacks' signature Corn Puffs are a healthy alternative to popcorn. "[They] don't have any kernels and are all gluten free," says Mary Jess, who, in founding the company, combined her retail experience with her interest in health. There are dairy-free and sugar-free options among the brand's 40-plus flavors.
- **Blue Adaptation (Marshall County):** Founder Jamie Dietrich, a diving enthusiast with a background in merchandising, is making a splash with marine-inspired activewear for female scuba divers. The company she founded in her hometown has caught the attention of national media, and Dietrich is exploring wholesale opportunities with dive retailers.
- **Kruis Studios (St. Joseph County):** Kruis Studios offers everything from wedding videography to documentary filmmaking to sound design. Most of its customers are small business startups, nonprofits and ministries. What used to be a side hustle for founder Ben Kruis became a full-time job in 2022. "[My wife and I] realized we wanted to be able to co-parent and co-work, so I needed a job that allowed more flexibility."
- **Botany & Co. (St. Joseph County):** Botany & Co., founded by Ben Futa in 2021, offers a curated collection of house plants, tools, houseplant "house calls" and plant-related classes. Vacant lots around Futa's store have been repurposed as flower farms, and he's working to beautify and activate other adjacent lots.
- **Pure Green Farms (St. Joseph County):** Pure Green Farms' massive greenhouse grows 2.5 million pounds of lettuce a year and sells to retailers within 300 miles of South Bend. CEO Joe McGuire says the company is in expansion mode.
- **Janus Motorcycles (Elkhart County):** Goshen-based Janus Motorcycles designs and makes distinctive, handcrafted motorcycles with bespoke charm. The base prices for its three model families range from $7,000 to $13,000. The company has consistently enjoyed year-over-year sales growth even as the broader industry has seen declines.

UPSKILLING TALENT FOR THE RECREATIONAL VEHICLE INDUSTRY

Lippert, a leading manufacturer of components for RVs, boats, and manufactured housing, has rapidly scaled its workforce development efforts over the past two and a half years, transforming how team members access technical education and career advancement opportunities.

From chassis and axles for recreational vehicles to furniture, windows, and marine accessories, Lippert's diverse product portfolio demands a highly skilled workforce. Recognizing this need, the company launched its first upskilling initiative in partnership with Ivy Tech Community College in Elkhart County. The pilot program, focused on smart automation, enrolled twelve pioneering team members and laid the foundation for what would become a company-wide model.

Lippert covers all tuition, books, and exam fees, removing financial barriers for participants. While hourly team members aren't paid during class time, the company works with them to adjust schedules, allowing extra hours on other days to maintain full-time compensation.

Headlines from around the region

INSIDE INDIANA BUSINESS

Mobile workspace manufacturer V Tech Conversions launches in Plymouth (Aug. 19, 2026)

South Bend-Elkhart Regional Partnership opens Elkhart office at Inova (Sept. 27, 2026)

IFS Coatings expands U.S. manufacturing with Elkhart facility (Sept. 15, 2026)

Samsung SDI acquires GM's stake in New Carlisle battery plant (Aug. 11, 2026)

South Bend outlines standards for future data center projects (Oct. 6, 2026)

Notre Dame gets $10 million to scale AI weather forecasts for farmers (Sept. 16, 2026)

South Bend airport pushes for nonstop flights to New York, Denver (Sept. 2, 2026)