

# NORTHEAST INDIANA FIVE-YEAR PLAN

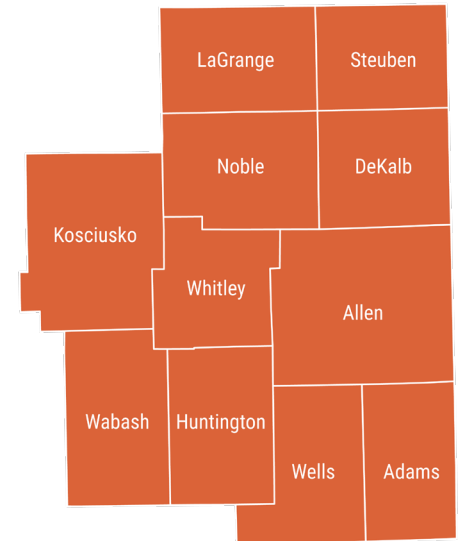
## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction

In April 2021, the Indiana Legislature House Enrolled Act No. 1238, Chapter 39, Section 4 was signed into law, creating a new regional body: the **Northeast Indiana Strategic Development Commission (NEISDC)**. The Commission is composed of nine appointed voting members and two non-voting members who together represent the interests of the region's 11 counties. The legislature initially charged this new body with creating a five-year strategic plan to guide the region's growth.

**Northeast Indiana has a long history of working together as a region.** Existing regional organizations will act as the primary entities responsible for implementing their respective portions of the Commission's strategic plan. These entities include the Northeast Indiana Regional Development Authority (RDA), the Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership, the Regional Chamber of Northeast Indiana, the Local Economic Development Organization (LEDO) Council, and the Mayors and Commissioners Caucus. The NEISDC will not duplicate or replace the efforts of these organizations but rather act as the conduit for at least **\$15 million in state funding to be deployed in the region annually, which will then serve as leverage for pursuing additional funding streams.** The NEISDC will also serve as a strong advocate and oversight body for the recommendations in the 2023–2028 strategic plan and will update the plan every five years.

Northeast Indiana 11-County Region



**The region faces significant challenges:** limited population growth outside of Allen County, postsecondary education and credential attainment levels that remain far lower than the US as a whole, and substantially lower income levels than the nation (and compared to the region's own history). The purpose of the Commission is to tackle these three barriers to economic growth, as required by the legislation. The NEISDC engaged TIP Strategies (TIP) to examine the economic context of Northeast Indiana, establish goals for the three mandates, and deliver the five-year strategic plan for the region. Setting realistic targets for improvement was an essential component of the creation of this regional strategy. The following table presents data on the status of each mandate, along with five-year targets that assume both a moderate (status quo) and an accelerated approach to the recommendations.

### Legislative Mandates

MANDATE 1: POPULATION			MANDATE 2: EDUCATION			MANDATE 3: INCOME		
<i>Increase the population in the development area.</i>			<i>Increase postsecondary education and credential attainment for area residents.</i>			<i>Increase per capita personal income relative to the national average.</i>		
POPULATION TARGETS			EDUCATION TARGETS <sup>1</sup>			INCOME TARGETS <sup>2</sup>		
NOW	IN 5 YEARS		NOW	IN 5 YEARS		NOW	IN 5 YEARS	
<b>800,551</b> 2021	<b>820,484</b> +2.5% Moderate	<b>840,914</b> +5.0% Accelerated	<b>42.2%</b> 2020	<b>44.4%</b> Moderate	<b>48.1%</b> Accelerated	<b>81.9%</b> 2020	<b>83.9%</b> Moderate	<b>85.9%</b> Accelerated

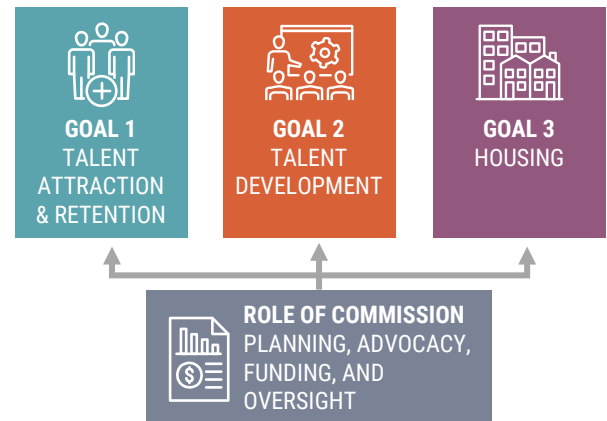
<sup>1</sup> Estimated share (%) of Northeast Indiana residents aged 25 to 64 with a labor market-valued degree or credential.

<sup>2</sup> Northeast Indiana per capita personal income (PCPI) as a percentage of US.

## Plan Overview

The *Northeast Indiana Five-Year Plan* provides targeted recommendations designed to maximize the Commission’s impact on the Northeast Indiana economy. The graphic to the right displays the structure of the plan: three overarching goals of Talent Attraction and Retention, Talent Development, and Housing that are facilitated by the NEISDC’s foundational role of Planning, Advocacy, Funding, and Oversight. Together, these goals represent the most pressing strategic priorities for the region to pursue over the next five years, supported by the fiscal resources distributed by the state legislature.

### NEISDC Plan Framework



### NEISDC Plan Goals

#### GOAL 1

*Expand the regional labor pool by positioning Northeast Indiana as a premier location to live in the Midwest.*

#### STRATEGIES

- Incentives.** Establish a funding pool for creative relocation benefits/incentives for workers.
- Marketing.** Dedicate funding to launch new regional and collaborative marketing campaigns.
- Regional talent concierge.** Allocate funding to enhance organizational capacity to focus on talent attraction initiatives.
- Amenities.** Fund the cultivation and expansion of amenities in town centers, especially family-friendly options.
- Business succession planning.** Provide additional support to business owners experiencing leadership transitions to create greater economic opportunities.

#### GOAL 2

*Strengthen the existing quantity and quality of the regional labor force.*

#### STRATEGIES

- Industry and higher education alignment.** Optimize alignment of educational/training program curricula with industry needs.
- K-12 engagement.** Enhance collaboration between industry and K-12 school systems.
- High-need occupations.** Encourage the flow of labor into the highest-need occupations.
- Up-skilling.** Improve up-skilling/re-skilling initiatives.

#### GOAL 3

*Meet growing residential demand by optimizing land use, building out infrastructure, and increasing density.*

#### STRATEGIES

- Infrastructure.** Expand funding models for residential infrastructure to reduce barriers to building for developers.
- Financing.** Use innovative financing mechanisms to assist first-time homebuyers.
- Pro-growth policies.** Foster a pro-growth culture across the region, particularly in rural areas.
- Employer engagement.** Engage major local employers in cultivating solutions to housing issues.