

COMMUNITY OF EXCELLENCE 2026



TOLEDO REGION

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CONTRIBUTING ORGANIZATIONS:

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Toledo Regional Chamber of Commerce (TRCC)

The Regional Growth Partnership (RGP)

Bowling Green State University, Center for Regional Development

Toledo Port Authority

The United Way of Greater Toledo

LISC Toledo

YMCA of Greater Toledo

City of Toledo

Lucas County

Community Profile

P.1 Community Description: What are your community's key characteristics?

a. Community Environment

(1) Community Definition:

The Toledo Region COE Strategy covers the same geographic region as the Toledo Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) to ensure alignment across regional efforts and collaborations. This region is defined as three counties- Lucas, Ottawa, and Wood- located on the western basin of Lake Erie, bordering northwest Ohio and southeast Michigan. More than 600,000 people call the Toledo Region home, giving it all the attributes of a large cosmopolitan area while retaining the advantages of small-town atmosphere and charm. The Maumee River, the biggest tributary in the Great Lakes, with its distinct bend in the downtown core, is a defining feature of Toledo and the region.

Figure 1: The Toledo Region



Dubbed "Holy Toledo" due to the number of churches within the city limits, the phrase most commonly seen on signs as you enter into the city limits today is "You will do better in Toledo!"

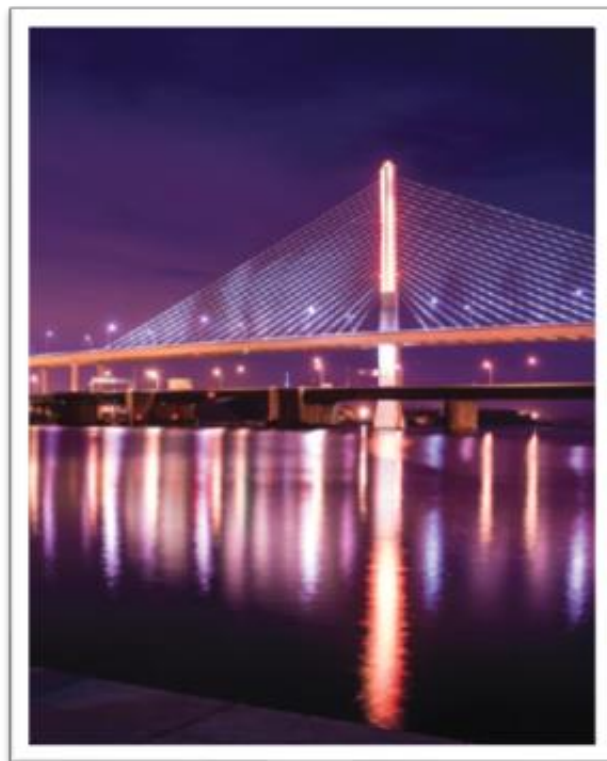


Photo 1: Veterans Glass City Skyway

The identity of Toledo is strongly rooted in the work ethic of its residents and the city's legacy as an early innovation hub. Toledo's close relationship to manufacturing and the automobile industry has meant it has had to endure the highs and lows of an economy tied to such a volatile industry including challenges related to outsourcing due to globalization and the increase of automation in production processes. These challenges have led to Toledoans developing a shared identity that is rooted in the ability of its people to adapt and build resiliency. Toledo's community identity is best summarized by the vision statement of the recently updated Toledo Region Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS):

The Toledo Region is shaped by its people making an impact in their communities & is home to a resilient, innovative economy that attracts & values diverse ideas, talent,

lifestyles, & careers by utilizing our natural, cultural, human, and infrastructure strengths.

Throughout its history, the Toledo Region has demonstrated an ability to collaborate and innovate to improve the quality of life of its people. From early settlers who saw opportunity in the region's abundant natural resources as part of the Great Black Swamp to the development of an early manufacturing cluster in the late 1800s, northwest Ohio's location at the western basin of Lake Erie and on major routes to larger urban centers such as Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh and proximity to Canada have made it an attractive place to live, work, and play.



Photo 2: Advanced Auto Manufacturing

The Toledo Region and its people have also shown their resiliency in the face of adversity. Following the economic downturn of the Great Depression, the region became an integral part of the nation's wartime effort during World War II and eventually the home of the Jeep, which was manufactured at the Willys-Overland plant. After the war, the region grew considerably as Toledo became

a hub for the manufacturing of automobiles and automotive glass and parts.

Because of the region's close ties to the automobile industry, the economic success of the Toledo Region has largely been driven by the demand and production of cars and trucks. The region saw a significant decrease in manufacturing jobs throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s, culminating with loss of significant auto-related jobs and companies following the 2008 Great Recession. From Q1 of 2001 to Q2 2009, the region lost over 22,000 manufacturing jobs (43%). However, since 2009, the region has added over 13,000 manufacturing jobs, demonstrating the resiliency of this critical sector in the region. At the same time, the region has taken advantage of its strategic location along several major interstates to become an emerging leader in the transportation and logistics industry and has built upon its historical roots as an automotive glass producer by becoming a hub for the production of solar panels.

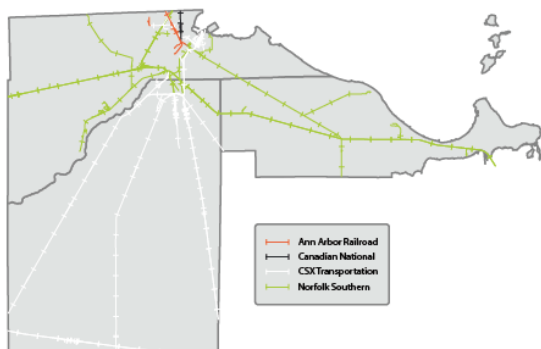
Located just north of the intersection of Interstates 75 and 80/90 Toledo is strategically positioned on major highways connecting larger metro areas such as Detroit, Chicago, Pittsburgh, and New York. The city's location near the crossroads of these major interstates as well as several critical rail-lines and shipping lanes on Lake Erie has led to the continued development of manufacturing and supply chain related businesses as well as the recent emergence of a transportation and logistics cluster in the region with the arrival of an Amazon distribution center in the city and Prime Air at Toledo Express Airport. Today, Toledo is home to five Fortune 500 Company Headquarters including Owens Corning, O-I Glass, Dana, Welltower, and the Andersons

Figure 2: The Toledo Region Critical Transportation Infrastructure

INTERSTATES & U.S. HIGHWAYS



RAIL LINES



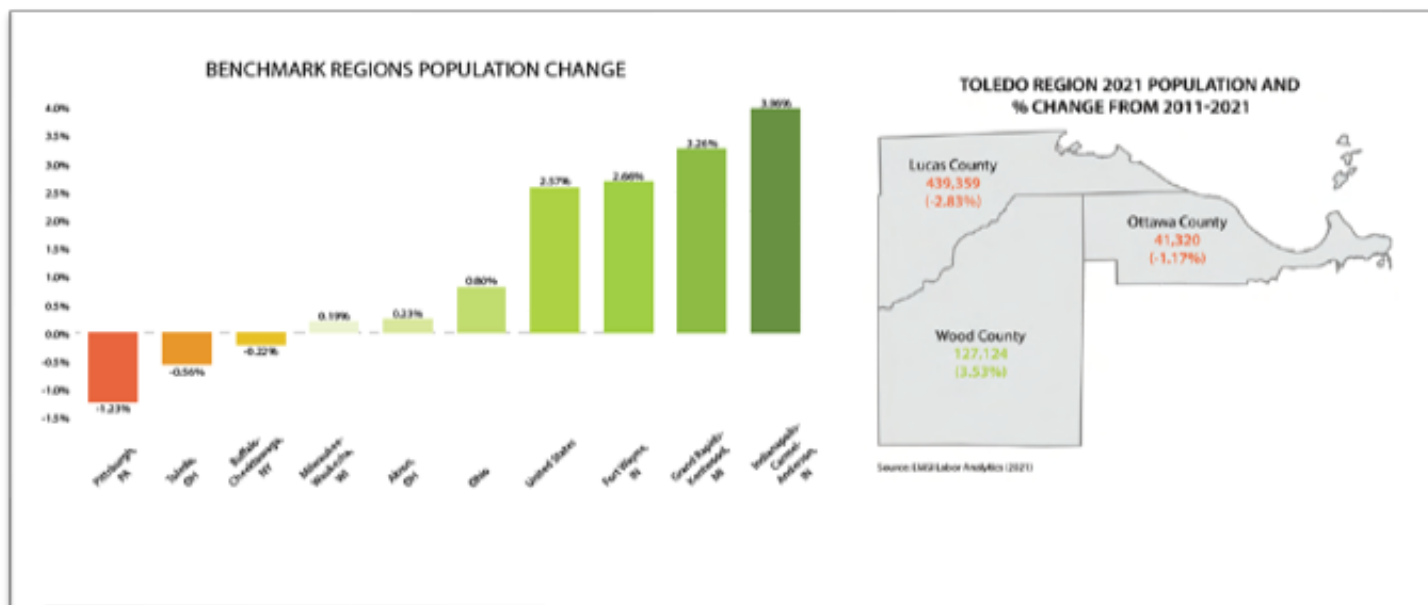
and remains the home of several automotive and glass manufacturing related businesses including Stellantis' (FCA) Jeep assembly plant.

Like many midwestern cities, Toledo has seen a decrease in its population over the past several decades. The City of Toledo hit its peak population in 1970 with 383,818 residents. As of 2021 the city of Toledo had a population of 270,024 and the 3-county region had a population of 589,854. Wood county saw modest population gains over the preceding decade while the other two counties and the region as a whole saw marginal population decline. (See Figure 3)

(2) Community Offerings

The community offers a diverse set of anchor institutions, and quality of life enhancing assets including a robust health care industry, diverse educational institutions, and a variety of cultural institutions. In alignment with the community's declining population and high poverty rate, the community also offers an

Figure 3: Toledo Region Population Change 2011-2021



expanding and strengthening set of economic and workforce development organizations and programs. These programs and their work intersect with the many health and wellbeing assets as well as educational assets in the community. Through increased strategic alignment community assets from across categories have worked to increase community collaboration around identified challenges and shared priorities. The “relative importance” of the community’s offerings provides some detail on the roles and contributions of each sector to the COE pillars and strategic priorities.

In Toledo and the surrounding region, place-based institutions like ProMedica, The University of Toledo, Bowling Green State University, Mercy Health, Toledo Public Schools, Toledo Museum of Art, The Toledo Lucas County Public Library, and others are recognizing the need for, and benefits of, investing in their communities to achieve enhanced economic and social outcomes. As a result, there has been significantly increased focus on the societal, and environmental factors that influence growth and community-level health and social outcomes. Toledo has emerged a national example of how the social services sector is connecting with community organizations and economic development to build capacity and provide additional services. A full listing of Community Offerings and People Resources is included in Appendix B.

(3) Residents

Given the size, demographic variance, and rural to urban mix of the Toledo Region there are many different resident groups. However, key constituencies can be categorized by county and population centers.



Photo 3: Kayaking with Toledo Metroparks

Lucas County is the most urban of the three that compose the Toledo CEDS and COE Region. It is the home of the City of Toledo which is the commerce center and home to many of the regions business headquarters and regional organizations. Toledo- Lucas County is more economically and racially diverse than the surrounding counties and as an urban center is more densely populated. Resident groups in Lucas County are largely represented through the county commissioners and city council districts. Resident groups are connected to these bodies and to the COE through neighborhood organizations and community champions at the neighborhood level- such as pastors and school board members.

Ottawa and Wood County are economically and socially linked to Lucas County and the City of Toledo in a myriad of ways. Many Toledo organizations hold chapters or extensions in both counties and many residents in the region may live in one of these



Photo 5: Levis Commons Perrysburg

counties but work in Toledo/Lucas County or vice versa. Resident groups in these counties are represented by county commissioners and county level organizations such as the Wood and Ottawa County Economic Development Associations. The resident groups in these counties are divided as urban, suburban, and rural. Wood County's largest urban center is Bowling Green which has a population of 31,000 and serves as the county seat and home to Bowling Green State University. Wood County is also home to Perrysburg Ohio, which is a city of 25,000 that is identified as a suburb of Toledo.



Photo 4: Howard Marsh Metro-Park

Ottawa County's largest urban center is Port Clinton which has a population of 40,000 and is home to a substantial lake-side tourism industry which includes a distinct sub-population of seasonal workers and residents.

(5) Regulatory Environment

The regulatory environment in the Toledo Region varies widely by industry, and county with many regulations subject to review by the state. Categories such as healthcare, building/construction, zoning, transportation, environment, safety, and others are regulated with the goal to strike a balance between economic growth and safety. Municipalities and Counties within the region have robust regulatory infrastructure to support this balance and provide for effective growth and development. This infrastructure includes the Toledo Lucas County Port Authority, Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments (TMACOG), local development corporations, local zoning offices, the Ohio EPA, agricultural extension, County Health Departments, and more.

Ohio and the Toledo region are praised as having a business and development friendly environment and a regulatory and development infrastructure aimed at accommodating growth and expansion-while also maintaining a high quality of life and abundant natural beauty. The rural - urban mix of the region provides a variety of locations to accommodate a variety of business, housing, and recreational land uses without much conflict.

The region has been given the following accolades & rankings in recent years:

- #1 Mid-sized cities for new business investment - Site Selection Magazine, 2021*
- #1 Best U.S. city for remote workers – Acorns + CNBC, 2020*
- #2 Best manufacturing region in the US -, 2020*
- #10 Cities with the lowest cost of living in America – Niche.com, 2020*

P.2 Community Situation: What is your community's strategic situation?



Photo 7: Main Street Mural

The Toledo Region is seeing a mix of new development, and revitalization in some areas while simultaneously seeing population decline and business loss in others. Like many similar regions, Toledo is experiencing the effects of shifting living and working preferences. A strong indicator of future growth and prosperity in the region is revitalization of Downtown Toledo and adjacent neighborhoods. As the business and population center of the region, the health of the downtown and central city strongly effects the economic and social vitality of the region. For several decades Toledo saw marked decline and population exodus. In recent years this trend has reversed and today Downtown Toledo is on the cusp of a renaissance.

Current and planned developments, along with world-class institutions, have re-energized the core and have the potential to have a transformative effect on downtown and the Toledo region. Downtown Toledo benefits from high-quality assets, such as the Toledo Main Library, Fifth Third Field, the Huntington Center, Farmer's Market, and the Valentine Theater. Within a short distance from

downtown, the Toledo Museum of Art and the Toledo Zoo are nationally recognized institutions that attract millions of visitors to the region. Also, nearby is The University of Toledo, which has an enrollment of over 20,000 students.



Photo 6: Fifth-third Field Toledo Mud Hens



Photo 8: Toledo Museum of Art

Several downtown neighborhoods are currently experiencing an influx of young entrepreneurs, residents, and visitors. The Warehouse District and Uptown have emerging retail corridors in St. Clair Street and Adams Street, respectively. Uptown is undergoing its own local arts-centered revitalization with the opening of Uptown Green and ProMedica's Market on the Green. In addition to Hensville, planned, under construction and recently opened investments downtown include the continued development of the Warehouse District, a

new ProMedica headquarters that has brought 1,000 jobs downtown, Middle grounds Metropark, the Anthony Wayne Trail Gateway, and the Renaissance Hotel along the waterfront. These are all potentially transformative projects that a fundamentally reshaping the quality of life and attractiveness of the city and the region.

a. Competitive Environment

The Toledo region is home to an abundance of natural, human, economic, recreational, health, and educational assets that have led several organizations to rank Toledo as a top market in all the categories listed above in page 5 as well as the following among others:

#3 Best places for birdwatching in the United States – Lonely Planet, 2020

#4 Best city for first-time homebuyers – Money Geek, 2020

#3 Best city for average monthly cost of living – Move.org, 2019

#4 Most LGBT-friendly city to retire in – Senior Living, 2019

#8 Most popular city in the nation for millennial migration – National Association of Realtors, 2019

#1 Best minor league sports city – Livability, 2018

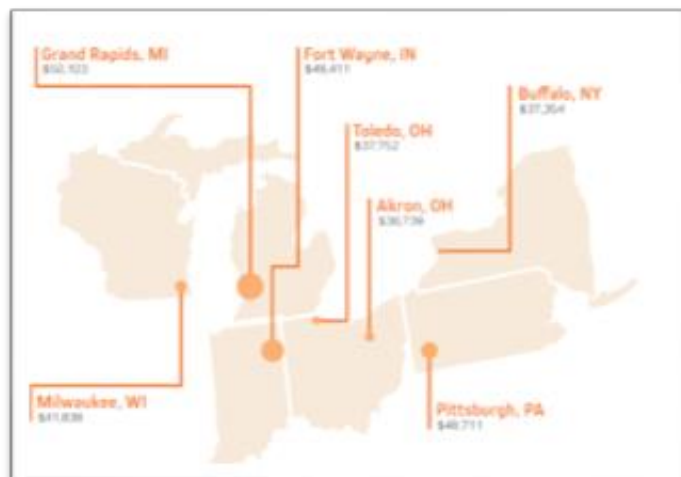
#2 Best city for work-life balance – SmartAsset, 2018

However, we have obstacles including infrastructure (roads, bridges, water), lack of educational attainment, population loss and outward migration, workforce development and talent retention, and redundancy in our non-profit sector.

The region has identified several key competitors for talent and workforce attraction including several similarly positioned Midwestern metro areas such as Buffalo, Akron, Grand Rapids, Fort Wayne, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, and Pittsburgh.

Comparative data on population (as exhibited in Figure 3) and income data as exhibited in Figure 4 show how the Toledo Region is fairing in comparison to these peers and competitors. Currently, as a region, only Pittsburgh is doing worse than Toledo in terms of population loss and only Buffalo is doing worse than Toledo in terms of median household income.

Figure 4: Peer Market Median Household Income (2019)



b. Strategic Context

(1) Core Competencies

The Toledo Region has several “core competencies” or things that we do very well and continue to work to improve and do better. These include:

1. Leveraging community resources and natural assets to support growth.
2. Pivoting to meet changing market demand for goods and services.

- Identifying areas for growth and improvement.
- Developing and supporting non-profit, community, neighborhood, and business solutions to address community needs and issues.

- Low cost of living and doing business

(2) Challenges And Advantages

An economic analysis based on community data indicated key strengths and challenges for Toledo:

Challenges

- Toledo economy underperforming both Ohio and the United States
- Auto manufacturing job growth short-term, but at risk long-term, due to automation
- Lower educational attainment caps number of high paying jobs and curbs income growth
- Population loss and out-migration

Strengths

- Healthcare sector growth is strong
- Corporate headquarters to several national / international companies

Figure 5: Toledo Region CEDS Data Summary

