



Opportunity Hilliard

*A Five-Year Strategic
Economic Development Plan*
06.2022





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Introduction & Acknowledgements

Opportunity can be defined as a set of circumstances that makes it possible to do something. Hilliard, Ohio, understands opportunity and, as an integral part of the Central Ohio landscape, is positioned to advance its desires and success.

The City of Hilliard engaged Boyette Strategic Advisors (Boyette) to develop a five-year Recovery and Economic Development Strategy for the City. This process was funded by a grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration.

This Five-Year Strategic Economic Development Plan, appropriately named **Opportunity Hilliard**, will enable the City to sustain its past and diversify its economic base. Creating the right opportunities for its residents to achieve career success is the ultimate goal for any city's economic development efforts. **Opportunity Hilliard**, through in-depth qualitative and quantitative research and "a lot of thinking as to what can be," addresses many of the opportunities that can be achieved as part of a dynamic region.

Leading the process for the City of Hilliard were:

David Meadows
Economic Development Director
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Angela Zody
Economic Development Administrator
azody@hilliardohio.gov

Other City officials who participated as part of the Core Team are listed to the right.

Opportunity Hilliard Core Team

- Michelle Crandall, City Manager
- Dan Ralley, Assistant City Manager, Community Development
- David Meadows, Economic Development Director
- Angela Zody, Economic Development Administrator
- David Ball, Director of Community Relations
- Duane Powell, Chief Information Officer
- Kelly Clodfelder, Staff Attorney
- Andrea Litchfield, Community Relations Administrator

Introduction & Acknowledgements

The completion of this economic development strategy involved stakeholder engagement with City staff, representatives of Norwich Township, major employers, economic development partners, entrepreneurs, and educators. Additionally, an online survey of Hilliard residents provided additional insight. A summary of the findings from stakeholder engagement is found in the Exploration and Discoveries report that accompanies this strategy, with additional detail in the Appendices.

Boyette appreciates the community involvement in this process and the valuable support of the Hilliard Economic Development Department. Additionally, the City of Hilliard was in the process of developing a new Comprehensive Plan while this economic development planning process was under way. Boyette appreciates the opportunities to collaborate with PlanningNEXT to ensure efficiency of both processes.

Contact information for the Boyette team members who managed this project are below:

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Process Overview

A customized approach to the [Opportunity Hilliard](#) economic development strategy was designed to address four key objectives of the project, taken from the Request for Proposals issued by the City of Hilliard. Those objectives are:

- Improving the community's economic resiliency and recovery
- Expanding partnerships to improve the pipeline of talent and development of in-demand skills for our employers
- Attracting technology-based employment
- Sustainability

This project began with a baseline economic indicator analysis, as well as an assessment of the city's overall livability. After the project launch, Boyette began research into four benchmark communities that were chosen based on their commonalities with Hilliard and their economic development competitiveness. Additional research was also conducted to explore Hilliard's economic resiliency in the face of major disruption and to assess the area's workforce in terms of ability to meet employers' talent demands.

The process has informed a strategy that is designed to help cultivate business growth and sustain a prosperous community. Additionally, six target sectors have been identified based on Hilliard's strengths and assets to competitively recruit those sectors to the city.

It is important to note that the City of Hilliard is updating its Comprehensive Plan at the same time as the economic development strategy. That parallel track for the two required the planning process to sync up as appropriate to ensure the economic development portion of the Comprehensive Plan will support recommendations in the economic development strategy.

Process Overview



Exploration & Discovery



Market Analysis



Critical Mission



Project Delivery



Target Sectors



Target Sectors

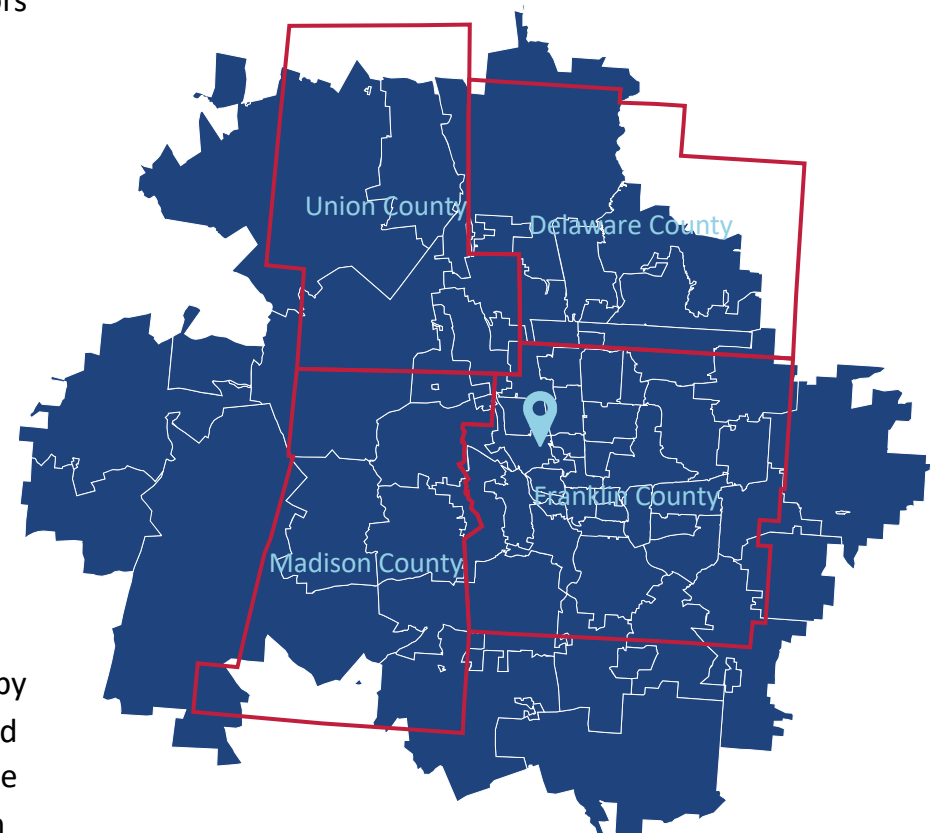
In addition to exploration of various data to generally frame the Hilliard economy and develop strategic goals for the **Opportunity Hilliard** plan, research included analytics to inform identification of six target sectors. These sectors are growing both nationally and regionally, pay high wages, have workforce requirements that Hilliard has a talent pipeline to support, and fit within Hilliard's overall community values.

Boyette has taken a comprehensive approach to considering the sectors for which Hilliard is likely to be in a strong competitive position to recruit. This includes looking at the current situation from multiple perspectives, including the following:

- Current Major Employers
- Current Regional Sectors and Employers
- Current Employment by Sector
- Cluster Identification
- Recent Projects for which Hilliard Has Competed
- Available Sites or Buildings Appropriate for Chosen Sectors

The six major target sectors are identified on the next page, followed by profiles for each sector and the associated subsectors that are included in the targets. Data associated with the targets is based on a 45-minute drive time geography from the Hilliard Municipal Building, as shown in the map to the right.

45-Minute Drive Time Geography



Hilliard Target Sectors



Automotive
Technologies



Business
Services &
Regional HQ



Entrepreneurs
& Startups



Information
Technology &
Associated
Manufacturing



Healthcare
Services &
Applied
Technologies



Film, Media &
Arts

SECTOR DEFINED

The [Automotive Technologies](#) sector deals with vehicle operation, specifically in terms of technological design and creation. Automotive Technologies systems include vehicle parts and mechanics, as well as computer technology.

LOCATION & TRANSPORTATION

- Labor market region: 45-minute commute radius from Hilliard
- City of Hilliard 12 miles (20 minutes) northwest of Columbus via I-270 and I-70

Highways

- Hilliard is serviced by Interstates 70, 71, 270, and 670, which connect it to Columbus, the John Glenn International Airport, and surrounding regions and metropolitan areas

Rail Service

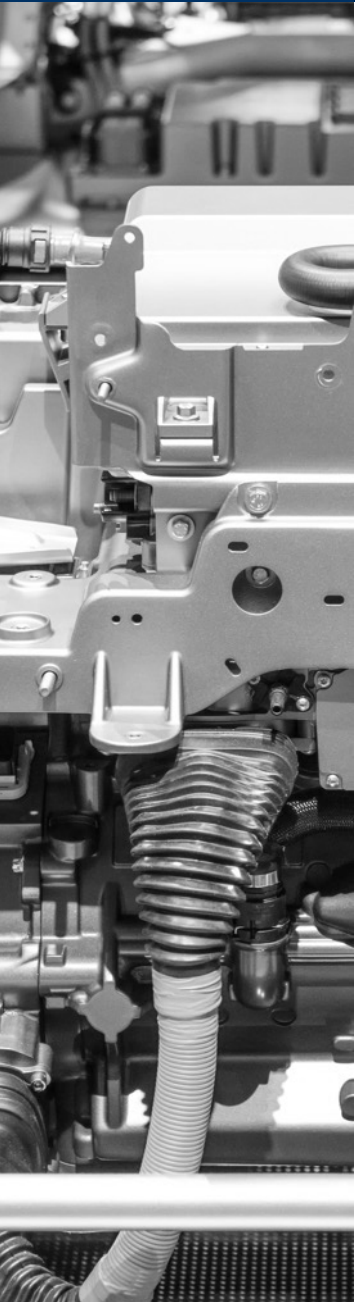
- Class I Railroads CSX and Norfolk Southern running through Hilliard, which are two of the seven major railroad systems in U.S.
- Access to comprehensive intermodal network in region

BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

- A variety of bonds, grants, loans, and tax credits available through Ohio Department of Development; state incentivizing businesses and job creation
- No tangible personal property tax in Ohio
- Incentives, regulations, funding opportunities, and other initiatives promoting sustainability within transportation sectors; support from Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA)
- Existing sites in Hilliard to meet industry needs for space
- City of Hilliard commitment to being a living laboratory through the City Labs program

Focuses

- **Automotive Parts Manufacturing**
- **Lithium Battery Manufacturing**
- **Electric Vehicle Component Parts Manufacturing**
- **Associated Services**
- **3D Printing**
- **Additive Manufacturing**



SECTOR HIGHLIGHTS

- Number of jobs in Automotive Technologies sector exceeds national average by **80 percent**
- Battery technology base **Forsee Power** to build headquarters in Hilliard; 138,000 square-foot site; opportunity for sustainable electromobility solutions
- Nearly 650K cars produced annually in larger Columbus Region
- Columbus is home to Honda automotive plants and Honda R&D headquarters
- Smart Columbus initiative leading to growth in Electric Vehicle (EV) technologies
- 33 Smart Mobility Corridor: site for connected vehicle technology testing; support from 70+ automotive companies
- DriveOhio: program with ODOT advancing smart mobility in the state

LIVABILITY

- Downtown Hilliard offers unique shopping and dining opportunities
- Hilliard City Schools earned an A- rating on Niche
- The city's median age is 37.5 years, which is well below the state and other cities in Central Ohio
- More than one quarter of Hilliard's total population is Millennials
- A new community center approved by the voters will open in 2025
- Platinum sustainability ranking from MORPC
- Heritage Rail Trail and other trails totaling 35 miles, which are part of a developed park system

WORKFORCE & EDUCATION

Undergraduate Degrees

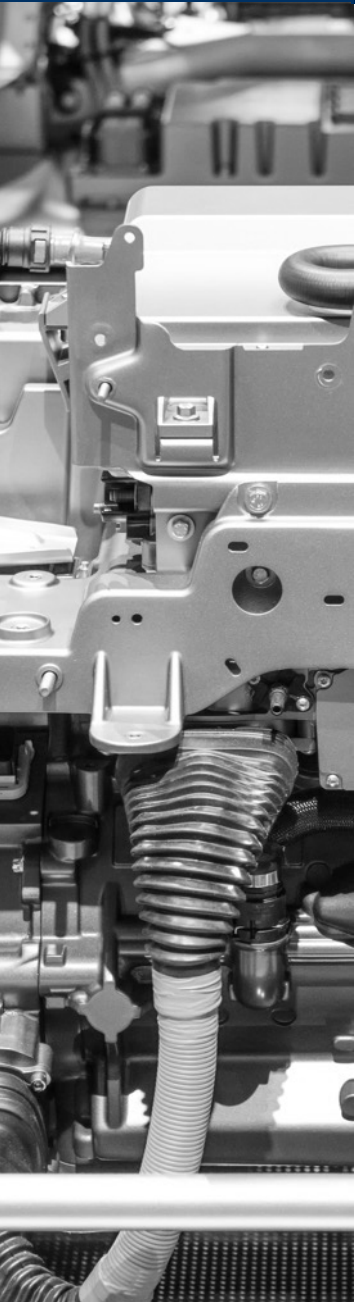
- Automotive Technology; Automotive Service Management; Ford Automotive Student Service Educational Training (ASSET) Program
- Advanced Propulsion; Customized Certificates; Graduate Specialization in Automotive Systems and Mobility (GS-ASM); Powertrain, Modeling and Control

Undergraduate Certificates

- Alternative Energy Automotive Technician; Automotive Management; Automotive Service Excellence (ASE); Ford Maintenance and Light Repair (FORD-MLR); Maintenance and Light Repair (MLR); Master Automotive Service Technician (MAST)

Additional Programs

- Center for Automotive Research at The Ohio State University (OSU) College of Engineering





SECTOR DEFINED

The **Business Services** sector provides services, including advertising, marketing, consultation, and logistics. Rather than offering a physical product, Business Services entities work to support business growth and operations.

Regional Headquarters (HQ) report to corporate headquarters. Regional HQs typically provide a specific support function, such as sales or customer service, for the region.

LIVABILITY

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- Heritage Rail Trail and other trails totaling 35 miles, which are part of a developed park system

BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

- A variety of bonds, grants, loans, and tax credits available through Ohio Department of Development; state incentivizing businesses and job creation
- No tangible personal property tax in Ohio
- Existing sites in Hilliard to meet industry needs for space
- City of Hilliard commitment to being a living laboratory through the City Labs program

Focuses

- **InsurTech**
- **Professional Services**
- **Logistics Consulting**
- **Regional Managing Offices**
- **Associated Services**



SECTOR HIGHLIGHTS

- Number of jobs in Business Services and Regional HQ sector exceeds national average by **47 percent**
- Sector projected to increase by **0.8 percent** between 2022 and 2027
- Strong business promotion through City of Hilliard's Economic Development team; **#ChooseHilliard** local business initiative

INFRASTRUCTURE

- The City of Hilliard invested more than \$4 million to construct HiFiO, a 30-mile fiber optic network, which is carrier-neutral.
- HiFiO is available to businesses, residents, and schools

LOCATION & TRANSPORTATION

- Labor market region: 45-minute commute radius from Hilliard
- City of Hilliard 12 miles (20 minutes) northwest of Columbus via I-270 and I-70

Highways

- Hilliard is serviced by Interstates 70, 71, 270, and 670, which connect it to Columbus, the John Glenn International Airport, and surrounding regions and metropolitan areas

Air Service

- 18 miles (30 minutes) from John Glenn Columbus International Airport
- More than 40 nonstop destinations from Columbus
- Daily nonstop flights, including Atlanta, Charlotte, Chicago, Dallas, Orlando, Washington, D.C., and other markets

WORKFORCE & EDUCATION

Undergraduate Degrees

- Accounting; Applied Management; Business; Business Administration; Business Intelligence and Analytics Management; Business Management; Finance; Business; Logistics Management; Project Management; Sales and Marketing; Supply Chain Management

Master's Degrees

- Accounting; Business Administration (MBA); Business Analytics; Business Operational Excellence; Finance; Human Resource Management; Project Management; Public Administration

Entrepreneurship & Startups

SECTOR DEFINED

Entrepreneurs are a community and economic development asset that encourages the development of innovative products and ideas.

LOCATION & TRANSPORTATION

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WORKFORCE & EDUCATION

- **The Innovation Campus** is an initiative created by Hilliard City Schools to enhance the skills of Hilliard students. The campus pulls from three high schools and three middle schools, and students spend 90 minutes there in addition to their regular schooling. The Innovation Campus offers mentorships, entrepreneurial skills training, college prep, and additional learning opportunities.

BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

- Existing coworking spaces in Hilliard include The Junction and Converge Technologies. These facilities can serve as the base for startups to network and grow.
- City of Hilliard commitment to being a living laboratory through the City Labs program

372

ENTREPRENEURSHIP
DEGREES AWARDED IN
REGION
(*LIGHTCAST, 2021*)

65%

ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE OR
HIGHER
(*LIGHTCAST, 2022*)

15th

Columbus Region rank in
2021 Venture Capital
Spending
(*columbusregion.com*)



SECTOR DEFINED

The **Film, Media, and Arts** sector includes companies that produce and distribute films, television series, commercials, and videos, arts, music, and other forms of digital media. Digital entertainment is a type of entertainment providing or being provided with amusement or enjoyment that is digitally displayed on electronic devices.

LIVABILITY

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- A new community center approved by the voters will open in 2025
- Heritage Rail Trail and other trails totaling 35 miles, which are part of a developed park system
- Mixed-use developments and work/live/play areas in Downtown Hilliard

BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

- The City of Hilliard is willing to work with firms on expedited permitting processes
- The Ohio Motion Picture Tax Credit provides a refundable tax credit of 30 percent of product cast and crew wages and other eligible in-state spending for film, media, and arts projects that have a digital production component
- City of Hilliard commitment to being a living laboratory through the City Labs program
- City is aggressively pursuing sustainability initiatives and received platinum sustainability ranking from MORPC

Focuses

- **Film Studios**
- **Festivals**
- **Art Studios**
- **Visual & Performing Arts**
- **Sound/Audio Engineering**
- **Music Production**

836

ARTS AND RELATED
DEGREES AWARDED IN
REGION
(*LIGHTCAST, 2021*)

6

POST-SECONDARY
INSTITUTIONS WITH FILM,
MEDIA, & ARTS
(*LIGHTCAST, 2022*)

Information Technology & Associated Manufacturing

SECTOR DEFINED

The **Information Technology (IT)** sector applies to services, including software support, computer and software systems design, data processing facilities management, and data storage.

Smart manufacturing, a combined approach to IT and manufacturing industries, uses Internet-connected machinery as production technology. Examples include automation and robotics, predictive analysis, and artificial intelligence (AI).

SECTOR HIGHLIGHTS

- Sector projected to increase by **2.8 percent** between 2022 and 2027
- More than 50 data centers in Columbus Region, including Amazon Web Services, Google Cloud, and Facebook
- Vertiv headquarters in Columbus; global provider of data center equipment/services
- Nexient announcement for new product development center in Columbus; creation of 200 jobs for leading national provider of 100 percent U.S.-based Agile software development services

BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

- A variety of bonds, grants, loans, and tax credits available through Ohio Department of Development; state incentivizing businesses and job creation
- No tangible personal property tax in Ohio
- Data Center Sales Tax Exemption; qualifying data centers receive sales exemption and use tax for eligible equipment/construction materials
- Existing sites in Hilliard to meet industry needs for space
- City of Hilliard commitment to being a living laboratory through the City Labs program

INFRASTRUCTURE

- The City of Hilliard invested more than \$4 million to construct HiFiO, a 30-mile fiber optic network, which is carrier-neutral.
- HiFiO is available to businesses, residents, and schools

Focuses

- **Software Publishers**
- **Semiconductor Manufacturing**
- **Computer Equipment Manufacturing**
- **Electronic Component Manufacturing**
- **Associated Services**

Information Technology & Associated Manufacturing

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EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

Undergraduate Degrees

- Computer Information Systems; Computer Science; Cybersecurity; Engineering Technology; IT; Network and Communications Management; Networking Fundamentals; Software Development

Undergraduate Certificates

- Cloud Computing; Computer Literacy; Cyber Security; Data Mining and Analytics; Engineering Technology; IT Essentials; Internet of Things (IoT); Networking Essentials; Programming Essentials; Salesforce Administrator; Software Design and Solutions; Web Mobile Application Development

Master's Degrees

- Computer Science; Cybersecurity; Information Systems Management; IT; IT Management; Network and Communications Management

Graduate Certificates

- Information Security; IT Business Strategy

Healthcare Services & Applied Technologies

SECTOR DEFINED

The [Health Services](#) sector pertains to the use, costs, quality, delivery, organization, financing, and outcomes of healthcare services. [Digital Health](#) represents an intersection of technology and health, increasing the efficiency of Health Services.

SECTOR HIGHLIGHTS

- Abigail Wexner Research Center at Nationwide Children's Hospital (NCH)
- Forge Biologics manufactures gene therapy products in Columbus
- OSU ranking top 10 in U.S. for Biological and Biomedical Science PhD completions
- Battelle headquarters is world's largest contract research organization with R&D expertise in Advanced Materials, Biology, Chemistry, Data Science, Engineering, National Lab Management
- Home to Cardinal Health Fortune 16 healthcare services company
- Number jobs in Healthcare Services and Applied Technologies sector exceeds national average by [12 percent](#)
- Sector projected to increase by [5.7 percent](#) between 2022 and 2027
- Majority of Healthcare Services and Applied Technologies jobs found in [Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations](#) industry sector

BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

- A variety of bonds, grants, loans, and tax credits available through Ohio Department of Development; state incentivizing businesses and job creation
- No tangible personal property tax in Ohio
- Existing sites in Hilliard to meet industry needs for space
- City of Hilliard commitment to being a living laboratory through the City Labs program

Focuses

- **Medical Device Manufacturing**
- **Pharmaceutical Manufacturing**
- **Medical R&D**
- **Healthcare Services**
- **Associated Services/Technologies**



Healthcare Services & Applied Technologies

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WORKFORCE & EDUCATION

Undergraduate Degrees

- Allied Health; Biomedical Science; Dental; Health and Wellness; Health Information Technology; Health Services Management; Healthcare; Healthcare Administration; Medical Assisting (MA); Medical Billing and Coding; Neuroscience; Nursing (AAS/ADN/BSN/LPN/RN); Nutrition; Pharmacy Technology

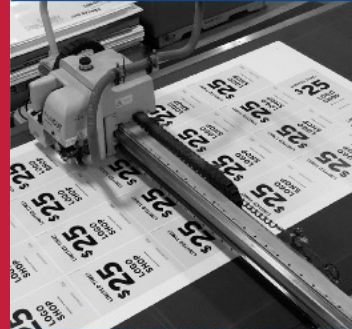
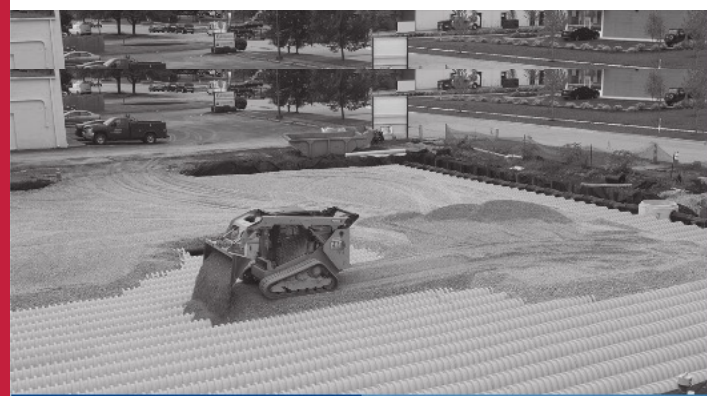
Master's Degrees

- Acupuncture (MAc); Allied Health; Anatomy; Dental; Genetic Counseling; Immunology and Microbial Pathogenesis; Nursing (MSN); Dental; Health Informatics; Physician's Assistant Studies; Public Health (MPH)





Strategic Goals



Strategic Goals Overview

The findings of the qualitative and quantitative research and analytics have led to development of strategic goals in five categories, all designed to maximize Hilliard's economic development assets and address any challenges that may be present during the next five years. In addition to the strategic goals, this plan also includes multiple strategies with associated action items.

These focus areas will give Hilliard an actionable guide to strengthen the city's economic base and focus resources in areas that will help improve economic competitiveness. While the recommendations are unique to Hilliard, they reflect the importance of business recruitment and retention, livability, workforce and talent, and marketing. Additionally, current topics like economic resiliency; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and sustainability impact both business recruitment and overall quality of place, making them essential to economic development success.

Opportunity Hilliard Strategic Goals

Developing and recruiting business and industry to enhance economic diversity	Proactively supporting and retaining Hilliard's business base	Optimizing livability and arts opportunities	Creating a pipeline of talented workers	Building the Hilliard brand
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify & Develop Properties to Meet Requirements of the Target Sectors Enhance Hilliard's Entrepreneurial Culture & Resources Strengthen Hilliard's Competitive Position & Economic Resiliency Continue to Engage in Opportunities for Regional Cooperation Actively Pursue Culture, Film, & Arts Activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand Services to Existing Businesses Provide Support to Hilliard's Small Businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance Livability for Hilliard Residents Support the Continued Development of Old Hilliard Continue Investment in the City-Wide Trail System Enhance Art & Cultural Opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a Tech Talent Attraction Strategy Maximize Education Partnerships that Align with Workforce Skill Needs Establish a Remote Worker Support System Support the Development of Workforce Housing for Residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a Hilliard Economic Development Social Media Strategy Expand External Communication Efforts Consider the Renaming of Cemetery Road
Business Development & Recruitment	Existing Business Support	Livability & Culture	Workforce/Talent	Marketing/Communications

Business Development & Recruitment



Developing and recruiting
business and industry to
enhance economic diversity

Business Development & Recruitment

STRATEGIC GOAL: Developing and recruiting business and industry to enhance economic diversity

Strategy: Identify and Develop Properties to Meet Requirements of the Target Sectors

Action Items

- **Inventory and assess all available greenfield sites**

Create an internal database of all existing and potential sites in Hilliard, with the goal of analyzing and categorizing them based on the marketability, use, and desired industry sector user. With key sites identified, consider pursuing options on sites that meet current prospect demand. This effort should include an aggressive acquisition of suitable property following an initial assessment and due diligence review.

As the City's Comprehensive Plan is completed, assess and analyze land use planning of potential industrial and commercial sites. This will be a key component of future development efforts and provide for easier planning and zoning approvals for economic development prospects.

- **Develop a marketing strategy for available property**

Enhance the online inventory of available sites to include more detailed information about each site, including zoning classification, surrounding amenities, and infrastructure assets. Additionally, after analyzing the existing available sites, develop marketing messages for each focused on the needs of key target sectors. Market the sites' key assets in opportunities to communicate with sector prospects and decision makers.

- **Target key developers**

As target sector product needs are analyzed, identify key Central Ohio regional developers who may be partners in developing the office and lab space needed by current prospects and targets. These developments should consider not just the space needs of key sectors, but also the infrastructure needs, transportation and commuting patterns, and the amenities to support the workforce for the businesses located in the facilities.

Business Development & Recruitment

STRATEGIC GOAL: Developing and recruiting business and industry to enhance economic diversity

Strategy: Identify and Develop Properties to Meet Requirements of the Target Sectors

Action Items

- **Assess the redevelopment opportunities of existing available office space**

Hilliard has a significant number of aging office buildings, some of which are vacant and currently being marketed to potential new tenants. The City should assess older real estate to determine whether it can be effectively redeveloped for use for expansion of existing businesses or for location of new companies.

- **Encourage the development of amenities around office parks**

Employers that locate in office parks are often seeking a location with amenities for their workforce in close proximity to the building. Generally, these amenities include attainable housing, dining options, retail stores, and service providers like dry cleaners and childcare. The demand for these amenities should be considered as property is assessed for potential development or redevelopment and should be included in any approved development plans.

The City should also analyze and assess the zoning and land use of the areas surrounding economic development sites and implement a zoning classification that allows for flexible land use and encourages the development of amenities around the site.

- **Consider feasibility of health and wellness amenities for all office parks**

In addition to the amenities mentioned above, many employers desire health and wellness services near their offices. These may include workout facilities, walking and biking trails, and health clinics that can provide basic primary care, as well as services such as flu shot clinics and annual wellness assessments. The City should explore the feasibility of developing City services such as a workout facility and park space with trails and seek a partner to provide basic healthcare services in any high-density developments constructed over the next few years.

Business Development & Recruitment

STRATEGIC GOAL: Developing and recruiting business and industry to enhance economic diversity

Strategy: Enhance Hilliard's Entrepreneurial Culture & Resources

Action Items

- **Assess and inventory existing entrepreneurial resources**

Keep an up-to-date report on the existing coworking and innovation spaces in Hilliard, as well as any entrepreneurial programs, offerings, or networking groups.

- **Determine potential partner organizations for a comprehensive entrepreneurship program**

The City should convene all potential partner organizations to assess entrepreneurship resources and expertise that are currently available in Hilliard. One organization should manage development of entrepreneurial resources in Hilliard. The City should collaborate with other groups that are currently involved in entrepreneurship to designate a lead organization.

The Hilliard City Lab should be a key component of this program. It is a partnership between the City and private businesses that provides businesses with tools, benefits, and creative solutions, allowing Hilliard to serve as an ideal testing site for new technology.

- **Establish an entrepreneurial infrastructure to support startups**

Based on findings of the assessment of existing resources, Hilliard should address any existing gaps to create a comprehensive infrastructure to support entrepreneurs. This should include, if not already available, a group of successful entrepreneurs to mentor and support new startups that develop in Hilliard.

One strong potential partner is Converge Technologies, which might offer more in-depth entrepreneurial programming at its facility. The enhancement of existing programming might include expanding the capacity of Converge Technologies and its support for startups in various sectors. Such programming could include a 12-week accelerator, a small business incubator, mentorship programs, discounted office space, and/or networking events.

Business Development & Recruitment

STRATEGIC GOAL: Developing and recruiting business and industry to enhance economic diversity

Strategy: Enhance Hilliard's Entrepreneurial Culture & Resources

Action Items

- **Identify capital funding sources for Hilliard entrepreneurs**

Because funding, or lack thereof, is one of the critical factors that determines the success of a startup, the ecosystem should also include opportunities for exposure to angel investors and venture capital firms. This may include efforts to promote Hilliard startups to potential Central Ohio investors, as well as exploration of development of an angel fund that is committed to the success of entrepreneurs located in Hilliard.

- **Maximize Hilliard City Schools' Innovation Campus and Programs**

The Innovation Campus is an initiative created by Hilliard City Schools to enhance the skills of its students. The campus pulls from three high schools and three middle schools, with students spending 90 minutes per day at the Innovation Campus, in addition to their regular schooling. The Innovation Campus offers mentorships, entrepreneurial skills training, college preparation, and additional learning opportunities. With student demand exceeding capacity for these programs, further support should be provided to expand entrepreneurial programming and the capacity of the Innovation Campus and/or replicate the entrepreneurial components into curriculum at other city schools.

Business Development & Recruitment

STRATEGIC GOAL: Developing and recruiting business and industry to enhance economic diversity

Strategy: Enhance Hilliard's Entrepreneurial Culture & Resources

Action Items

- **Partner with regional post-secondary institutions**

Partner with regional post-secondary institutions to create unique educational programming to support the development of the Hilliard entrepreneurial ecosystem. Potential partners might include Columbus State University and The Ohio State University.

- **Create an accelerator or business incubator**

Converge Technologies serves as a great community asset by providing high-quality coworking space. However, the City can enhance this asset by partnering with Converge Technologies, regional post-secondary institutions, and workforce entities to create a small business accelerator and/or incubator program. This program would go beyond providing space for startups and should include programming and mentoring that allow entrepreneurs to get the support they need in early stages to succeed and, ultimately, graduate out of an incubator or accelerator environment (i.e., kitchen incubator).

- **Explore small business/entrepreneur incentives**

As mentioned earlier, one of the major challenges facing startups and companies in their early stages is capital. Hilliard ED should identify and catalog all available incentive or grant programs available to Central Ohio small businesses and startups and provide access to this information to companies that might benefit. In addition, the City should explore the possibility of creating and funding a small business assistance program that either delivers a direct grant that can be used on operations and/or rental costs or direct rental assistance.

Business Development & Recruitment

STRATEGIC GOAL: Developing and recruiting business and industry to enhance economic diversity

Strategy: Enhance Hilliard's Entrepreneurial Culture & Resources

Action Items

- **Track and report entrepreneurial success**

Using an online project management tool, track the entrepreneurial success of the firms that go through Converge Technologies, or any future entrepreneurial programs. Use the data collected to expand or adjust support programs based on the outcomes recorded.

- **Reduce barriers for underrepresented groups to engage in starting a new business**

All startups are challenged to find the capital, knowledge, and support they need, but these issues become even greater for minority and women-owned small businesses and entrepreneurs. Create a grant or loan program for these businesses to help reduce the barriers they face.

- **Create a women and minority-owned business accelerator program**

Work with existing entrepreneurial assets in the community to develop a six-week accelerator program for women- and minority-owned businesses. This program would include intensive educational offerings, a mentorship program, and opportunities to connect with successful startups and larger corporations.

At the end of the six weeks, participants would become part of an ongoing organization of successful women- and minority-owned businesses with access to additional training and education opportunities specific to their needs.

Business Development & Recruitment

STRATEGIC GOAL: Developing and recruiting business and industry to enhance economic diversity

Strategy: Strengthen Hilliard's Competitive Position and Economic Resiliency

The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted virtually every part of society, including economic effects that have been difficult to anticipate and address. One component of this strategy is to consider Hilliard's economic resiliency and how it might be strengthened in the event of another major disruption in the future. Additionally, there are other factors that affect a community's competitiveness, which are also addressed here.

Action Items

- **Actively pursue diverse businesses**

A key component to resiliency is having a diverse economic base that can endure different economic shocks. If an economy is too single-industry focused, it will be at greater risk to bear the burden of economic hardship during times of disruption. A diverse industry base will keep the economic vitality of a community alive during times of crisis and economic uncertainty.

Hilliard currently has significant diversity in the types of businesses in the city should remain focused on attracting and strengthening that diverse business base by offering unique products and incentives to help keep Hilliard resilient and competitive. This effort should center on sectors that are different from the current industry base and that are going to require in-person employment during a crisis or disruption.

In addition to diversity, sectors can also be analyzed based on whether or not they are essential during a crisis. While Hilliard's economy is diverse, its employer base does skew toward non-essential jobs that makes the city more likely to feel the impacts of a disruption that limits business activity for a period of time. As Hilliard pursues new employers and supports existing businesses, it should work toward a better balance of essential vs. non-essential jobs.

Business Development & Recruitment

STRATEGIC GOAL: Developing and recruiting business and industry to enhance economic diversity

Strategy: Strengthen Hilliard's Competitive Position and Economic Resiliency

Action Items

- **Demonstrate Hilliard's commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

The nation – and specifically corporate America – places tremendous value on a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). While employers are working to be more diverse and inclusive, the communities where those businesses are located must share that commitment and support the business community.

Hilliard has many cultures and other countries represented in the city population. Diversity and equity efforts should include those with diverse interests and needs. Supporting all of Hilliard's population will make the city a community with a broader perspective for problem-solving and developing creative solutions, resulting in a competitive advantage in attracting new businesses and supporting those already located there.

Even though the City of Hilliard website has messaging demonstrating support for diversity and equity initiatives, this should be expanded to create a DEI statement that aligns with the City's brand. This statement should be featured on both the general City website and the economic development site, in addition to being showcased in key publications. In addition, the City should showcase other businesses and organizations that are committed to DEI, such as the Hilliard City School District, which has pledged to build "a culture of diversity and inclusion for all students, families, employees, and community."

Business Development & Recruitment

STRATEGIC GOAL: Developing and recruiting business and industry to enhance economic diversity

Strategy: Strengthen Hilliard's Competitive Position and Economic Resiliency

Action Items

- **Explore the possibility of including a preference for local minority-owned suppliers in City purchasing requirements**

An actionable way to demonstrate the City's commitment to inclusion would be the development of a specific purchasing preference for buying from local minority suppliers. To further encourage other public and private organizations in Hilliard to do the same, the City could create an online portal of minority and women-owned suppliers. This would allow businesses and organizations to access contact information for minority suppliers in Hilliard.

- **Enhance economic development project management process**

The Hilliard Economic Development Department is highly skilled and uses those skills to effectively manage location and expansion projects. To further enhance that process, the Department should select or develop a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software program to track all projects. This tool would also be beneficial to the Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) processes described in the next section of this plan.

Additionally, a CRM solution would also provide more comprehensive documentation and tracking for defined success metrics.

Business Development & Recruitment

STRATEGIC GOAL: Developing and recruiting business and industry to enhance economic diversity

Strategy: Continue to Engage in Opportunities for Regional Cooperation

Action Items

- **Participate in regional collaboration related to Intel location**

The Columbus region is known for its efforts of bringing its cities together to compete for economic development success. The Intel investment will change the dynamic of the region in many ways. To maximize the real opportunities for Hilliard, ensure that the Economic Development Department is always at the table for collaboration.

- **Explore 2021 CEDS opportunities for Hilliard**

The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission has become the regional entity responsible for the Economic Development Administration (EDA)-funded Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). An updated CEDS was completed and approved by EDA in late 2021. Hilliard should familiarize itself with that plan and determine specific opportunities in the strategy that may be beneficial to the city, keeping in mind that the CEDS is critical to approval of any federal grant funds related to economic development.

- **Continue involvement in Mid-Ohio Development Exchange**

Another regional organization that is important to Hilliard's economic development efforts is the Mid-Ohio Development Exchange (MODE). This organization provides a forum for local economic development organizations throughout Central Ohio to come together for networking, professional development, and collaboration on a variety of topics. Membership in the group includes both public- and private-sector entities and businesses engaged in some component of economic development. Hilliard's Economic Development team plays an active role in MODE, which should continue as this organization may also become a critical participant in the Intel build-out.

Business Development & Recruitment

STRATEGIC GOAL: Developing and recruiting business and industry to enhance economic diversity

Strategy: Actively Pursue Culture, Film, and Arts Activities

Hilliard has the opportunity to create destination events and cultural activities that draw tourism into the city. Film and digital media developers are seeking low-cost communities for developing content. As this sector spreads into Middle America from both coasts, communities are aggressively recruiting producers and others to film productions. Hilliard has many of the assets needed to pursue film production but would need to develop the infrastructure to support the sector in order to be successful.

Opportunities exist around concerts, visual and performing arts, film production, festivals, and other special events that attract both residents and visitors.

Action Items

- **Identify festivals or music performances without significant presence in Central Ohio**

The City of Hilliard should explore opportunities to create destination events that are in categories not currently available in the Central Ohio region or that expand existing offerings. This could include a variety of festivals, including but not limited to food and culture festivals, art festivals, and music festivals. If a certain kind of festival is offered in Columbus, there might be an opportunity to establish a presence in Hilliard. This could possibly be accomplished through a collaboration with the existing festivals, with Hilliard hosting several shows, workshops, and activities as part of a larger concert series.

Best Practice Newport Folk Festival Newport, RI

Annual folk music festival produced by the Newport Folk Festival Foundation in partnership with the City of Newport. A 2012 impact study found that the festival had approximately \$5.3 million in economic impact on Newport.

Business Development & Recruitment

STRATEGIC GOAL: Developing and recruiting business and industry to enhance economic diversity

Strategy: Actively Pursue Culture, Film, and Arts Activities

Action Items

The City should also explore the creation of a Hilliard International Festival in Downtown Hilliard to showcase and acknowledge the cultural diversity of Hilliard's population. The festival would be held annually and feature food, educational workshops, and games that highlight Hilliard's many different cultures and nationalities. The event could also serve as a stimulus to businesses in Downtown Hilliard.

- **Establish an Artist-in-Residence Program**

Explore potential buildings in and around Downtown Hilliard to establish an artist-in-residence studio. This would provide artists with low-cost space, while also giving the community the opportunity to interact with artists as they work.

- **Explore the pursuit of a film and media production sector in Hilliard**

The City should explore the possibility of actively recruiting film production to Hilliard. This exploration should include an inventory of any existing assets to be used, identification of potential film sets that would provide iconic environments in which to film, and determination of how the City might financially engage with film producers.

Best Practice
A.I.R. Studio Paducah
Paducah, KY
A.I.R. Studio Paducah is an artists-in-residence studio created as a result of an artist attraction program. The studio offers reduced cost space and has attracted artists of all disciplines from across the country.

Business Development & Recruitment

STRATEGIC GOAL: Developing and recruiting business and industry to enhance economic diversity

Strategy: Actively Pursue Culture, Film, and Arts Activities

Action Items

This may include animation, audio/video production, event production, advertising/marketing, equipment rentals, makeup, catering, transportation, and other services. Other supportive infrastructure that must be assessed may include: hotel accommodations for film crew (up to 150 rooms for some productions), restaurants with flexible hours, attainable housing for production crew, and spaces such as soundstages for filming or recording studios.

- **Designate a film coordinator**

One of the first steps in the creation of a successful film production environment is to ensure there is support and a point of contact for those wishing to film in the area. The City's Economic Development Department should designate a Film Coordinator to serve as the contact for film producers and scouts seeking a filming location. This would include assistance with obtaining any necessary City permits and approvals, as well as facilitating any needed contacts with City departments such as the fire and police.

- **Consider creation of a Film Production Forum**

Hilliard should identify partners for the film initiative and effectively leverage their expertise. This support group should form the Film Hilliard Forum, which would serve as an advisory group for the overall film production sector in Hilliard. The group might include educational institutions; talent agencies; technical companies that provide lighting, sound, and other infrastructure to the sector; and actors or entertainers with knowledge of the film industry. Create an Independent Film Grant to attract filmmakers to Hilliard.

Business Development & Recruitment

STRATEGIC GOAL: Developing and recruiting business and industry to enhance economic diversity

Strategy: Actively Pursue Culture, Film, and Arts Activities

Action Items

- **Partner with Hilliard City Schools on film activities**

In order to ensure a creative and productive film production environment in Hilliard for years to come, work with the Hilliard City Schools to determine opportunities to maximize the current Imagination Network programs for high school students. These currently include Academy VIBE, which has a film and video component, and Animation and Motion Graphics.

- **Explore the feasibility of establishing an annual Student Film Festival and Competition**

Hilliard should consider a Student Film Festival and Competition to curate a local environment that is engaged and committed to the success of the film production industry. This event might be done in partnership with Hilliard City Schools and the Ohio University School of Film, The Ohio State University, and/or Columbus College of Art & Design. Students could be given a topic for a short film that must be produced in two days, with each film judged by industry experts and/or college instructors. Winning films could also be showcased at the Athens International Film and Video Festival, the Columbus International Film and Animation Festival, and the Ohio Independent Film Festival.

- **Build a relationship with the Ohio Film Office**

As Hilliard increases efforts with the film production industry, a strong relationship should also be established with the Ohio Film Office. The Ohio Film Office can serve as a valuable resource for Hilliard and should be aware of Hilliard's plans to further embrace, attract, and support this sector.

Business Development & Recruitment

STRATEGIC GOAL: Developing and recruiting business and industry to enhance economic diversity

Strategy: Actively Pursue Culture, Film, and Arts Activities

Action Items

Additionally, The Ohio Department of Development via the Ohio Film Office administers the Ohio Motion Picture Tax Credit. The credit provides a refundable tax credit of 30 percent on production cast and crew wages, plus other eligible in-state spending. It is available for feature-length films, documentaries, interactive web series, sound recordings, videos, music videos, interactive television, interactive games, video games, commercials, and/or any form of digital media.

- **Develop an expedited film permitting process called Film Hilliard**

Ensuring that permitting for film projects is both timely and inexpensive is important to attracting productions. Film companies, especially those producing commercials and televisions series, often have very short lead times. Being able to offer a short timetable for issuance of a permit is one of the best incentives that can be offered. A rapid film permit procedure should be considered by the City, offering free or low-cost permitting fees and other assistance with required logistical issues.

Existing Business Support



Proactively supporting and retaining Hilliard's existing business base

Existing Business Support

STRATEGIC GOAL: Proactively supporting and retaining Hilliard's existing business base

Hilliard's existing business base is clearly essential to the city's success, given that income tax is the primary revenue source for cities in Ohio. All businesses in the city – both large and small – are important to the community and its economic resiliency. A strong program for business retention and expansion gives the City the opportunity to stay in contact with businesses across the city and be prepared to provide immediate assistance to any business that is facing a challenge that impacts their success or is considering expansion as their business grows.

Strategy: Expand Services to Existing Businesses

Action Items

- **Expand current business visitation program**

The Hilliard Economic Development Department has a business visitation program to stay in touch with employers. However, it is primarily focused on small businesses. The City should proactively structure visitations to connect with the city's largest employers and largest revenue-generator businesses each year, in addition to any employers that are believed to be at high risk of layoffs or closure. The conversations should be customized to the business but include discussion of general topics that are discussed during all visits. This will allow the Hilliard team to identify trends – both good and bad – that may surface in these conversations. Topics may include the following:

- Immediate Concerns
- Training and Technical Assistance Needed
- Future Plans
- Local Business Climate
- Workforce

Existing Business Support

STRATEGIC GOAL: Proactively supporting and retaining Hilliard's existing business base

Strategy: Expand Services to Existing Businesses

Action Items

- **Expand current business visitation program (cont.)**

Visits can be conducted in person or virtually, depending on the preference of the company. Any significant concerns that surface should be addressed immediately. Those that are common to multiple businesses may be considered as part of annual planning to create an appropriate process or service to address those concerns. If the business indicates the possibility of expansion, that must be addressed immediately.

Those businesses that do not receive a face-to-face or virtual visit should be invited to participate in an online survey that explores the same issues. This will give Hilliard more data to drive decisions and validate what is heard in conversations. Any short-term challenges or opportunities must be addressed immediately. Records of each visit must be maintained for future reference. This information should include the challenges and opportunities identified, any action that was taken related to those challenges and opportunities, any other topics that require future follow-up. It also should include the outcome of any services provided, including jobs retained, expansions announced, and investments made.

Use of an online survey instrument could also provide a mechanism for collecting and analyzing information gathered from conversations with companies. This would allow for development of data visualization tools related to Business Retention and Expansion (BRE), as well as having a repository of information for comparison with results in future years.

Existing Business Support

STRATEGIC GOAL: Proactively supporting and retaining Hilliard's existing business base

Strategy: Expand Services to Existing Businesses

Action Items

- **Develop corporate headquarters relationships**

While relationships with local business leadership is important, there are times when having a relationship at the corporate headquarters level can be helpful. Hilliard should proactively reach out to key contacts within the corporate headquarters of all businesses not based in Hilliard. Either in-person or virtual visits should be conducted with these contacts annually. While in-person is optimum, these visits can be effective when done virtually.

- **Establish a new business visit process**

To continue development of relationships that occur as the result of working with a prospect during its site search, the City should have a specific process for the initial meeting with a new business. In addition to continuing the relationship, these visits will provide an opportunity to introduce the new business to programs and services that may be of assistance to them, helping them identify non-government entities that will be important to their success in Hilliard, and ensuring that they have the support they need related to workforce.

Existing Business Support

STRATEGIC GOAL: Proactively supporting and retaining Hilliard's existing business base

Strategy: Expand Services to Existing Businesses

Action Items

- **Identify a Rapid Response Team**

Many of the challenges and opportunities that are discussed in BRE meetings require quick assistance and support, which often includes other City departments or non-government partners to address the issues. Hilliard should organize a Rapid Response Team that is prepared to mobilize should their services be needed. This team would include staff involved in City planning and zoning, health and safety, traffic/transportation, and permitting, in addition to utilities, educational institutions, cybersecurity, and others. This team should meet as needed to address identified issues.

- **Compile testimonials and successes**

Discussions with Hilliard employers will likely yield some success stories that could be used in an economic development marketing strategy. The Hilliard Economic Development team should ask employers about success stories and their willingness to share those stories with a broader audience. Some of these employers may also offer good testimonials to be shared with prospects that are considering Hilliard as a new business location.

Existing Business Support

STRATEGIC GOAL: Proactively supporting and retaining Hilliard's existing business base

Strategy: Provide Support to Hilliard's Small Businesses

Action Items

- **Develop a BRE approach specifically for small businesses and entrepreneurs**

While startups and small businesses have ongoing challenges and opportunities, their needs are generally different from larger businesses. Hilliard should create a BRE program component specifically designed to gather critical information from small businesses and startups. This program should focus on funding programs and opportunities, connections with other businesses that might result in a symbiotic relationship, navigating city and county government requirements, and finding employees to meet their needs.

- **Categorize employers based on risks and opportunities**

A database of small businesses and startups should be created to track all existing contacts and touchpoints that have occurred with those businesses. Additionally, within that database, the businesses should be categorized based on potential risks and opportunities. This information would provide direction on how frequently that business needs to be contacted and what resources might be needed to address its concerns or opportunities.

Additionally, this database could be used to increase companies and contacts listed in the women- and minority-owned database for purchasing opportunities.

Existing Business Support

STRATEGIC GOAL: Proactively supporting and retaining Hilliard's existing business base

Strategy: Provide Support to Hilliard's Small Businesses

Action Items

- **Identify space for companies exiting from incubators or accelerators**

As Hilliard begins to expand its entrepreneurial ecosystem, it will be important to have low-cost office/manufacturing space available to companies as they successfully exit incubator or accelerator programs. This is the point where Hilliard has the opportunity to keep these businesses in the city and support them as they continue their growth. If no space is available, those companies will find something in another Central Ohio community, and that business will be lost.

- **Establish a Small Business Grant Program**

During the Covid-19 pandemic, many communities used special funding to create grant programs to help small businesses survive the tremendous economic disruption. As part of Hilliard's overall resiliency initiative, there should be a small business grant program developed to provide funds to startups and traditional Main Street-type businesses. The grant funds might be used to fund growth plans, professional services, equipment purchases, expansions, and relocations to Downtown Hilliard.

Livability & Culture



Optimizing livability and arts opportunities

Livability & Culture

STRATEGIC GOAL: Optimizing Livability & Arts Opportunities

Strategy: Enhance Livability for Hilliard Residents

Action Items

- **Expand city sustainability practices**

Engage with the community on enhancing sustainability practices. This could include the creation of community gardens, rainwater gardens, planting more street trees, development of additional green space, and creating bike lanes.

The Hilliard City Lab could be used by businesses that have adopted sustainability best practices or that are testing additional sustainability initiatives. In partnership with the City, this would provide a living lab space for testing and refinement.

Explore opportunities to integrate Smart Cities Concepts in Hilliard city government

Smart Cities use technology to collect data and inform real-time decision making that improves the efficiency, livability, and accessibility of a city. Practices can be scaled and should be focused on mobility, quality of life, energy, and governance. Additionally, how Hilliard might collaborate with the Smart Columbus initiative will likely provide opportunities to expand Hilliard's Smart City concept.

Additionally, the Hilliard City Lab could be integrated into Smart City concepts. Hilliard should also explore partnerships with other communities as it explores expansion of Smart City concepts.

- **Engage residents in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives**

Demonstrate Hilliard's commitment to inclusion by embracing the "Hilliard Is For Everyone" tagline and supporting diverse programming that is attractive to all people in Hilliard. Additionally, City leaders should ensure that the City's commitment to DEI is addressed and defined as part of the branding process.

Livability & Culture

STRATEGIC GOAL: Optimizing Livability and Arts Opportunities

Strategy: Support the Continued Development of Downtown Hilliard

Action Items

- **Use Downtown Hilliard as a gathering place for Smart City and City Lab demonstrations**

The Hilliard City Lab and Smart City initiatives require involvement of Hilliard residents and visitors to be successful. With Downtown Hilliard as a gathering place, City Lab and Smart City demonstration activities should be conducted there as appropriate. This will provide the needed audience for testing and may be an attraction for some visitors eager to understand and participate in these innovative programs.

- **Pursue development of additional product in Downtown Hilliard**

Consider potential property acquisition to ensure real estate assets are available to provide space for expansion of retail, restaurant, and destination businesses in the Downtown Hilliard area.

- **Promote Downtown Hilliard as destination**

As additional amenities and attractions are developed, Hilliard should promote Downtown Hilliard as a destination for visitors from Central Ohio and beyond. Restaurants and unique retail opportunities are the beginning of this strategy, which will be strengthened by new special events, festivals, arts events and displays, and musical entertainment. City of Hilliard social media should be used to promote events, with efforts to tag surrounding communities and organizations that will provide increased exposure of the social media messaging.

Livability & Culture

STRATEGIC GOAL: Optimizing Livability and Arts Opportunities

Strategy: Support the Continued Development of Old Hilliard

Action Items

- **Complete analyses of potential infrastructure improvements in Downtown Hilliard**

As part of the Comprehensive Plan process, complete analyses of any potential improvements or expansion of utility and parking needs. The Comprehensive Plan should identify ways to expand public utilities and ensure adequate parking for businesses and visitors in Downtown Hilliard.

- **Support the development of a maker's space in Downtown Hilliard**

To encourage retail growth in Downtown Hilliard, the City should take an active role in the creation of a maker's space. The maker's space would feature equipment, workshop space, retail space, and a meeting room where small businesses renting space can conduct meetings or give presentations.

- **Encourage more retail and restaurant development in Downtown Hilliard**

Explore the zoning requirements in Downtown Hilliard and encourage mixed-use developments to achieve expansion of retail and restaurants in the area. Also, consider any other potential zoning revisions to encourage additional development and discourage small professional services users from taking limited real estate. Consider the creation of a special arts district in Downtown Hilliard.

Best Practice Made Mercantile Woodstock, GA

Operated by the Woodstock Downtown Development Authority, it is a collaborative workspace, with equipment provided by the city, where small businesses and artisans create products and display them in a shared retail/workspace.

Livability & Culture

STRATEGIC GOAL: Optimizing Livability and Arts Opportunities

Strategy: Continue Investment in the City-wide Trail System

Action Items

- **Continue City investments in the existing trail system**
Extend Heritage Rail Trail system to make connections to downtown Columbus.
- **Explore partnerships with other public entities to grow trail connections across the region**
Create extensions from multi-use trails in Hilliard to connect to the Columbus trails network.
- **Pursue state and federal funding**
The Recreational Trails Program is an Ohio program that provides funding to cities, towns, villages, and nonprofits to develop trail networks. The State of Ohio will match 80 percent of the costs, with a maximum project award of \$150,000. Pay careful attention to outside funding sources and monitor ongoing COTA expansion plans, additional stimulus dollars, and state and federal funding sources.

Best Practice Cultural Trail Indianapolis, IN

Eight miles of bike trails that connect six different cultural areas of Indianapolis. The Cultural Trail also connects Indianapolis to surrounding greenways, providing access to its cultural assets for surrounding communities. The trail is lined with retail, restaurant, and entertainment amenities, as well as bike-share depots.

Livability & Culture

STRATEGIC GOAL: Optimizing Livability and Arts Opportunities

Strategy: Enhance Art and Cultural Opportunities

Action Items

- **Inventory existing arts and culture offerings**

Create a directory of all the existing arts and cultural offerings in Hilliard. Continue to support existing offerings such as the Old Hilliard Fest, Fall Festival, and Celebration at the Station.

- **Create public art installments and musical performances throughout the city to enhance placemaking and identity**

Work with local artists to create public art installations throughout the city. Additionally, continue the existing program with the City engaging local musicians to play outdoors around Hilliard to showcase local talent.

- **Consider lighting of the Downtown Hilliard water tower**

The Gilbert, Arizona, water tower is a public lighting installation. The City has the ability to light it in different colors based on events, such as pink for Breast Cancer awareness or red, white, and blue for Memorial Day. Residents and businesses can also request colors for special events and observances.

Best Practice Gilbert Water Tower Gilbert, AZ



Livability & Culture

STRATEGIC GOAL: Optimizing Livability and Arts Opportunities

Strategy: Enhance Art and Cultural Opportunities

Action Items

- **Begin Annual “Best Practices” Visitation Program**

Woodstock, GA, is one of the fastest-growing cities in Georgia, and they have had incredible success attracting restaurants, retail, hotels, and entertainment amenities, while keeping the historic downtown intact. A visit to Woodstock would give Hilliard officials the opportunity to see successful programs similar to those that are recommended for Hilliard. In subsequent years, a visit to Chandler and Gilbert, AZ, may also be helpful.

4

Workforce & Talent



Creating a pipeline of
skilled workers

Workforce & Talent

STRATEGIC GOAL: Creating a pipeline of talented workers

Strategy: Implement a Tech Talent Attraction Strategy

There has been a global shortage of tech talent for many years, and that shortage is reaching critical levels when combining the effects of overall tech growth and the “great attrition” of workers leaving the workforce after the Covid-19 pandemic. Hilliard is eager to expand its tech employment, but that can only happen if employers can find the talent they need. According to a recent McKinsey survey, globally three million cybersecurity jobs went unfilled in 2020.

Action Items

- **Leverage Hilliard City Schools’ programs to create a future tech talent pipeline**

Hilliard City Schools has significant course offerings related to information technology skills. The City should partner with them in a variety of ways to leverage that local talent resource. An example is providing funding through the Hilliard Development Corporation (HDC) for student internships with local employers as part of a talent retention effort. Explore credentialing opportunities for technical skills that may be incorporated into technology curriculums in Hilliard high schools and consider additional opportunities to facilitate connections between employers and students. Hilliard City Schools might also participate in the Economic Development Department’s annual best practices trips to explore unique educational programs.

- **Understand skills needed by current and targeted future employers**

Conversations with existing employers in Hilliard will help the City begin to understand the types of tech talent that are needed. In these conversations, encourage employers to define the skills they need, rather than the occupations they are trying to fill. This will likely expand the pool of talent by identifying potential employees who possess the skills but may not have a specific credential or degree that is typically tied to the occupation. Also, ask prospective new employers the same questions to allow the City to better demonstrate its tech talent pipeline.

Workforce & Talent

STRATEGIC GOAL: Creating a pipeline of talented workers

Strategy: Implement a Tech Talent Attraction Strategy

Action Items

After defining the cities and institutions, develop talent attraction messaging for social media channels and consider paid, targeted social media placements in those geographic areas. Messaging should focus on Hilliard's livability amenities and the culture of both the community and the companies in Hilliard that are seeking tech talent.

- **Develop a relocation incentive package for highly skilled tech workers**

Consider offering a relocation incentive for workers that possess highly sought-after skills. The incentive could be a specific amount of money that could be used to cover relocation expenses, with a requirement for how long they must remain in Hilliard. If they do not stay the required time, the money would have to be repaid to the City.

- **Assist employers in understanding skills, not degrees**

Many tech employers list specific minimum educational requirements in their job postings. Yet, many times, there are job candidates who possess the skills being sought, but do not have a degree. The City should work with employers seeking a tech workforce to encourage their consideration of workers who have the experience and skills required, whether or not they meet the posted educational requirements. This allows them to then consider applicants from community colleges, boot camps, and alternative education programs to fill their open positions. Additionally, these candidates may also have a lower salary requirement.

Workforce & Talent

STRATEGIC GOAL: Creating a pipeline of talented workers

Strategy: Maximize Education Partnerships that Align with Workforce Skill Needs

Action Items

- **Collaborate with Hilliard City Schools on career pathways**

Hilliard City Schools currently has 16 defined career clusters and pathways. The City should work with the school district to understand how each of those pathways aligns with Hilliard's target sectors and/or occupations at risk of automation. This information would help the school district enhance curriculum and prepare students for the skills that are in high demand in the area. Additionally, the City could convene key employers for a particular program with educators to discuss areas where the businesses might support the programs through in-classroom presentations, field trips to employer facilities, and advice on better alignment of curriculum with employer needs.

- **Inventory specific programs at post-secondary institutions**

Ensure the Hilliard Economic Development team is aware of the training and educational programs available in Central Ohio that tie directly to the skills needs of Hilliard employers and the identified target sectors. This information will assist in responding to RFPs from prospective new employers, as well as working with existing companies that are facing workforce challenges. As a next step, developing relationships with instructors and administrators at these institutions can be helpful in connecting employers with students.

Workforce & Talent

STRATEGIC GOAL: Creating a pipeline of talented workers

Strategy: Maximize Education Partnerships that Align with Workforce Skill Needs

Action Items

- **Identify and pursue skills transferability offerings**

The economic resiliency assessment that was completed for this project considered the likelihood of automation impacting some jobs in Hilliard. The City should work with regional education providers to determine those occupations that will be impacted by automation in the next three to five years. Using skills transferability information, ensure educational institutions are developing and offering education and training programs to give those employees whose jobs are at risk of automation the opportunity to re-train for another position that will use some of their existing skills.

Employers may also be seeking additional training for their workforce as new technologies come online. The City should serve as the convener to ensure educators and employers are communicating about those future skills needs and offering the training needed for a smooth transition.

- **Encourage employers to approach workforce development differently**

Create a program to incentivize employers to create training programs for unskilled, unemployable, and those with low skills to develop a more skilled workforce prepared for high-wage jobs. These employer training programs might also address the impacts of automation while preparing workers for new technologies.

Workforce & Talent

STRATEGIC GOAL: Creating a pipeline of talented workers

Strategy: Establish a Remote Worker Support System

Many companies discovered during the pandemic that some employees are able to successfully complete their work responsibilities from their homes. Some of those companies have now transitioned to a significant at-home workforce and/or a hybrid approach where employees are in the office one to two days a week and work from home the remainder of the time. In fact, a recent study projected that 25 percent of professional jobs in North America will be remote by the end of this year, with that number continuing to increase. This approach results in companies needing less office space, thus reducing overhead costs. Hilliard already has a significant number of residents who work from home. As that pool is likely to increase during the next few years, the City should ensure it is prepared to support remote workers and keep them in the city.

Action Items

- **Expand the HiFiO network to residential customers**

Many residents who responded to an online survey for this project indicated concerns with their existing Wi-Fi providers. They indicated they would be interested in the expansion of the HiFiO network to include residential customers. This expansion would be particularly beneficial to people working from home because it would likely be more reliable and a stronger signal than is currently available through private providers. Additionally, many companies are requiring some level of cybersecurity for their work-from-home employees. This option should also be explored if HiFiO is made available to residents.

- **Identify and promote available co-working spaces**

While the concept is to work from home, many workers look for opportunities to work in a different environment occasionally. The City should identify available co-working spaces that would allow individuals to come into their space to work or to host a meeting. These locations should then be promoted to those working from home.

Workforce & Talent

STRATEGIC GOAL: Creating a pipeline of talented workers

Strategy: Establish a Remote Worker Support System

Action Items

- **Create a remote worker networking group**

For some remote workers, particularly those who do not go into an office at all, the opportunity to network with others is important. Hilliard should create a networking group that gives remote workers the option to join with others to discuss work challenges, use new tools, and socialize. This group could also be the vehicle for sharing information like available co-working space with the city's remote workforce.

Workforce & Talent

STRATEGIC GOAL: Creating a Pipeline of Talented Workers

Strategy: Support the Development of Workforce Housing for Residents

Action Items

- **Identify needed housing stock**

Ensuring adequate housing is available requires an assessment of the types of housing that are in short supply. The Comprehensive Plan that is currently in development will provide this information to the City of Hilliard. That data should be combined with information from employers and others to determine specific areas of need as they relate to attracting talent to the city. That being said, special attention on the “missing middle” housing is critical to a strong workforce.

- **Consider incentives to workforce housing developers**

Workforce housing may be defined as housing that is attainable for moderate-to-middle-income, critical workers. It includes homeownership, as well as rental housing, and is ideally located in acceptable proximity to workforce centers and amenities. It is crucial that Hilliard continue to attract workforce housing.

Marketing & Communications



Leveraging the Hilliard Brand

Marketing & Communications

STRATEGIC GOAL: Leveraging the Hilliard Brand

Strategy: Develop a Hilliard Economic Development Social Media Strategy

Action Items

- **Establish a presence on Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn**

While the City of Hilliard has social media accounts, the content of those is designed for Hilliard residents. A social media strategy should be collaboratively deployed for the economic development program. New social media handles should be secured for economic development news, with links to each included on the Hilliard Economic Development website.

- **Create a content calendar for economic development social media pages**

An annual content calendar should be created to ensure topics are identified to allow multiple posts per week. The content should be business oriented and could include topics related to Hilliard's target sectors, economic development successes, news from an existing Hilliard business, and pertinent observances like National Manufacturing Week. In addition to content, the calendar should include ideas for photographs and other graphics, which make a social media post much more likely to be opened and read.

The content calendar should feature specific messaging related to Hilliard's target sectors at least once a week. While this content should focus primarily on Hilliard's assets for the sectors, it might also include more general content about industry trends, etc.

- **Develop infographics to create visual appeal on social media**

When sharing something data oriented, consider developing an infographic or other type of data visualization to accompany the post.

Marketing & Communications

STRATEGIC GOAL: Leveraging the Hilliard Brand

Strategy: Develop a Hilliard Economic Development Social Media Strategy

Action Items

- **Monitor social media channels for Hilliard's target sectors**

Routine monitoring of social media accounts for trade associations and major global employers in the target sectors provides an opportunity to engage with decision makers. Hilliard should share pertinent sector posts on its social media platforms, in addition to commenting on posts to share information about Hilliard's assets and opportunities related to the sector.

Additionally, on LinkedIn, there are affinity groups for a wide variety of topics. Hilliard should identify the groups that might provide access to sector leaders and decision makers. Joining conversations through these LinkedIn posts helps increase awareness of Hilliard and its assets for the sector, while also beginning to position Hilliard Economic Development as a subject matter expert in certain key areas.

- **Use social media messaging to appeal to a young demographic**

To further support the tech talent attraction program outlined earlier, social media messaging should include items that appeal to a young demographic, particularly Millennials and members of GenZ. These messages should focus on Hilliard's and Central Ohio's cultural amenities, its diversity and commitment to DEI, and its outdoor amenities and sustainable environment.

Marketing & Communications

STRATEGIC GOAL: Leveraging the Hilliard Brand

Strategy: Expand External Communications Efforts

Action Items

- **Create an awareness marketing campaign to Hilliard residents about economic development**

Based on the results of the community survey fielded for this plan, it was clear residents are not fully aware of the positive impact economic development has on their community. Illustrating the benefits that come from economic development in Hilliard could increase community awareness and support for future projects.

- **Use business intelligence research to identify potential-growth companies**

To expand opportunities to market to the six identified target sectors, use business intelligence to identify growth companies in those sectors for one-on-one targeting. This research should be monitored on an on-going basis to prevent the risk of making contact after a company's expansion process is too far along for Hilliard to be considered as an option.

- **Create branding for available sites and buildings**

As additional commercial and industrial property is developed and marketed, the properties should have a common branding that is used to promote economic development product. This branding should be utilized on signage at each of the properties, in addition to being included in online databases featuring these properties. Consider referring to available buildings and sites as [Opportunity Hilliard](#).

Marketing & Communications

STRATEGIC GOAL: Leveraging the Hilliard Brand

Strategy: Expand External Communications Efforts

Action Items

- **Develop relationships with key commercial real estate developers**

Target key commercial real estate developers to build and strengthen relationships. Keep them apprised of Hilliard successes and any product development activities, while also understanding any connections they have within Hilliard's target sectors.

- **Identify opportunities to spread the word about existing businesses and their successes**

During discussions with Hilliard employers as part of the BRE program, capture success stories to be used in Hilliard's overall economic development marketing strategy. The Hilliard economic development team should also consider whether an employer would be a good testimonial for the City, particularly one that could be shared with a prospect that is currently considering Hilliard. In addition, these testimonials could be used as part of a digital media strategy.

- **Use City of Hilliard social media platforms to promote economic development**

To keep Hilliard residents informed of economic development successes and the businesses located in the city, economic development news should be strategically shared on the City's social media platforms. While this plan recommends development of economic development-specific social media handles, sharing news on the City social media is the most effective way to reach residents with this kind of information.

Marketing & Communications

STRATEGIC GOAL: Leveraging the Hilliard Brand

Strategy: Expand External Communications Efforts

Action Items

- **Host Existing Business events**

These existing business events should be tailored to the different audiences – manufacturers, office sector, retail and restaurant – and should be simple but consistent branding for each event. Frequency of the events, as well as the time of day and format, should be determined by what best serves the individual audiences.

- **Upload target sector profiles to the Hilliard Economic Development website**

Target profiles have been developed for each industry sector identified as providing strong opportunities for Hilliard. These profiles should be added to the Hilliard Economic Development website to provide information about the city's assets for particular sectors.

- **Feature community successes on social media**

Both the City and the Economic Development social media platforms should be used to promote community successes in Hilliard. These might include recognition of an employer's safety record or an award won by Hilliard City School District. The City's marketing team should monitor the social media feeds of all Hilliard assets that impact economic development and include appropriate messaging in the City's marketing efforts.

Marketing & Communications

STRATEGIC GOAL: Leveraging the Hilliard Brand

Strategy: Consider the Renaming of Cemetery Road

Action Item

- Hilliard is a lively, vibrant community. The main Hilliard exit off Interstate 270 should not be a road designated “cemetery.” In fact, as this plan indicates, Hilliard is a place of opportunity for all. Therefore, consider a name change to Opportunity Road, which better reflects the character of the community.

Endnotes

Target Sectors

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Endnotes

Target Sectors

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Strategic Goals

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Little Rock ■ Atlanta

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