

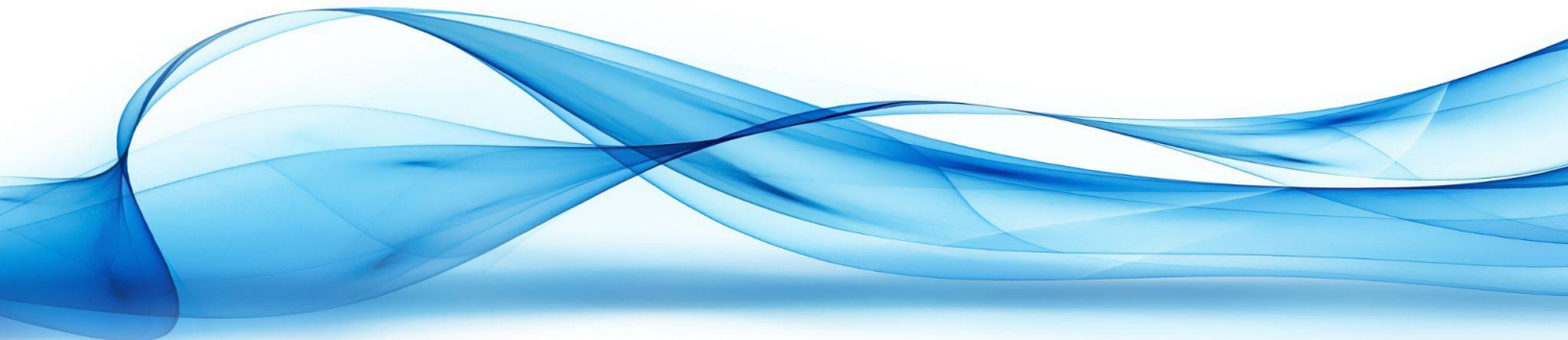
October 2023



# Best Practices Driving Economic Development in Cities Comparable to Ann Arbor

Compiled by Ann Arbor SPARK  
on behalf of the City of Ann Arbor

# Contents



<b>Purpose and Scope of Work.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Executive Summary.....</b>	<b>5</b>
Key Findings.....	5
Project Management and Internal Coordination.....	5
Stakeholder Engagement.....	6
Strategic Land Use.....	7
Sustainability and Environmental Initiatives.....	8
Tax Burden and Incentives.....	8
Recommendations.....	10
Project Management and Internal Coordination.....	10
Process Optimization.....	10
Regional Collaboration.....	11
Strategic Land Use.....	11
Sustainability and Environmental Innovation.....	12
<b>Community Summaries.....</b>	<b>13</b>
Austin, Texas.....	13
Boulder, Colorado.....	15
Durham, North Carolina.....	17
Eugene, Oregon.....	19
Grand Rapids, Michigan.....	21
Greenville, South Carolina.....	23
Madison, Wisconsin.....	25
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.....	27
Waterloo, Ontario, Canada.....	29
West Lafayette, Indiana.....	31
<b>Methodology.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Appendix.....</b>	<b>36</b>

Appendix A: Quantitative and Qualitative Findings by City.....	36
Austin, Texas.....	36
Boulder, Colorado.....	40
Durham, North Carolina.....	45
Eugene, Oregon.....	50
Grand Rapids, Michigan.....	55
Greenville, South Carolina.....	60
Madison, Wisconsin.....	65
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.....	70
Waterloo, Ontario, Canada.....	76
West Lafayette, Indiana.....	83
Appendix B: Economic Development Departments and Organizations by City.....	88
Local Economic Development Department by City.....	88
Regional Economic Development Organization by City.....	88
Appendix C: Community Contacts.....	89
Appendix D: Commercial Property Tax Rates.....	90



## Section 1

# Purpose & Scope of Work

Commissioned by the City of Ann Arbor, Ann Arbor SPARK executed a benchmarking study from March to October 2023, examining the economic development practices of ten North American cities selected with assistance from Ann Arbor City staff. This study, undertaken through a combination of desktop research and virtual interviews, aimed to gather diverse insights to guide Ann Arbor's economic strategies.

The selected cities for analysis are:

1. Austin, Texas
2. Boulder, Colorado
3. Durham, North Carolina
4. Eugene, Oregon
5. Grand Rapids, Michigan
6. Greenville, South Carolina
7. Madison, Wisconsin
8. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
9. Waterloo, Ontario
10. West Lafayette, Indiana

Guided by a comprehensive set of questions provided by Ann Arbor's City Manager's Office, the approach for this study is rooted in analyzing quantitative data such as population metrics, major employers, and tax structures, alongside qualitative aspects like development definitions and startup ecosystems. Notably, while eight cities participated in comprehensive online discussions, Eugene and Greenville declined, restricting their analysis to a desktop review.

SPARK wants to acknowledge the staff who devoted considerable time and effort to this project; Phil Santer, Melissa Sheldon and Nick Joblonski.

## Section 2

# Executive Summary

Ann Arbor SPARK is excited to present the findings of a comprehensive benchmarking study, commissioned by the City of Ann Arbor. Over a seven month period, the SPARK team delved into the economic strategies of ten North American cities, all selected by the City Manager's Office for their relevance and resonance with Ann Arbor's economic aspirations.

This report goes beyond a mere comparative analysis; it is a crucial guidepost for our community's strategic decision-making. Our investigation successfully integrates broad quantitative data with nuanced qualitative insights. The outcome is a robust set of lessons learned, reflecting both the triumphs and tribulations of cities akin to ours in ambition.

Contained within are key findings and recommendations, each a testament to the collective wisdom garnered from cities thriving through innovation and strategic foresight. This report is not just a mirror to the present but a lantern illuminating the possibilities ahead. It stands as an invitation for our whole community: to engage, deliberate, and collaborate in forging a uniquely Ann Arbor economic narrative. We look forward to utilizing this knowledge to inform regional economic development efforts in Ann Arbor as well.

Key findings and recommendations are organized in categories around project management, process optimization, strategic land use, and environmental initiatives, among others.

## Key Findings

### Project Management and Internal Coordination

- **Identification of an Internal Champion for Development Projects:** Nearly all of the communities interviewed as part of this research have an internal champion of development projects that is separate from the planning department. The internal champion typically reports directly to the city administrator to provide project management support for large investment opportunities, and would serve as a key contact for the project. This model ensures there is a dedicated advocate for significant investments, which reduces bottlenecks and provides more direct accountability. Having a champion who can navigate bureaucratic complexities and coordinate between

departments can significantly improve the speed and efficiency of decision-making for large projects.

- For example, Pittsburgh's Chief Economic Development Officer guides economic development endeavors within the City, communicating the organization's vision, and coordinating with key internal entities. A comprehensive approach should encompass collaboration with various departments, including planning, permitting, and other relevant stakeholders.
- In Grand Rapids, a project “champion” is required, coordinating with internal departments like planning to move projects forward. The department uses Salesforce, an online customer relationship management tool, to collaborate with other internal departments, including planning and permitting.
- **Streamlining the Development Review Process:** Some of the communities reviewed have invested time and resources into mapping and streamlining the development review process, including looking at the timeline it takes between project submission and final approval. See the recommendations outlined below regarding how communities like Durham have streamlined and clarified their development review process.
  - In addition, some cities ensured economic development engagement during the planning process. For example, In the City of Waterloo, the economic development department takes an active role in specific projects, especially those related to the City-owned industrial park. They monitor the process for fairness and advocate for economic development interests, adding another voice to the technical review process with a focus on the economic development impact of that potential investment.

### Stakeholder Engagement

- **Collaboration Between the Planning Department and External Stakeholders:** Periodic (e.g. bi-annual) meetings with the planning department and external stakeholders (e.g. the development community, interested non-profits or community groups) have been identified as a strategy to address planning process challenges and help other stakeholders better understand the constraints and current needs of the development process. Regular interactions ensure that all parties remain updated and can provide feedback in real-time. These meetings create a platform for transparent dialogue, reducing misunderstandings and streamlining project approvals. For example, Boulder’s “Fast-Track Approval Lane” for priority projects was born from a similar process.
  - In another example from Boulder, they have developed a transparent approach to its development pipeline and addressing project constraints. They partner with external entities like their regional economic development organization to hold regular bi-annual meetings that engage city officials, developers, architects, and other stakeholders to discuss projects and current constraints on going through the process.
  - These forums serve as valuable platforms for open communication, discussing the needs to move projects through the process, and addressing potential

constraints and can make external stakeholders, like developers, feel more a part of the process. It also opens up a dialogue and could brainstorm other ways to address constraints. Such a forum would be unique to the current development process and would require some trust to establish, but could provide long-term benefits.

- **Partnerships with Regional Economic Development Organizations:** All communities we reviewed partner with regional entities to address issues with the larger community. Collaborative approaches enable cities to pool resources, share expertise, and tackle challenges that extend beyond their boundaries. Regional cooperation can also provide consistent policies and strategies, ensuring a harmonized approach to development and investment attraction. Regional organizations can play an important advocacy role in interactions with the state economic development organization, Governor’s Office, and the legislature.
- **Investment in External Economic Development Entities:** All cities analyzed have invested in small business support initiatives and regional economic development organizations that are external to city operations, in some capacity. Cities influence these initiatives and organizations, but rely on the expertise of the external partners to facilitate traditional economic development activities and support the startup and growth of small businesses. By outsourcing some of the economic development activities, cities can leverage industry-specific knowledge and networks. This relationship allows cities to maintain oversight and set broad goals, while external partners handle specialized tasks, bringing agility and specificity to development initiatives. In most instances, the cities are also leveraging their financial contribution, getting a more comprehensive economic development program than they can fund on their own.
  - To note, the City of Greenville created a new non-profit economic development organization during the course of this project, based on this practice.
- **University Relationships and Economic Drivers:** The nature and extent of university relationships in these communities vary, but the local university in each community is a primary driver of economic activity. Universities are not just educational institutions; they are hubs for research, innovation, and talent. Their presence often leads to a cluster of industries, startups, and innovation labs. Collaborations with universities can open doors to cutting-edge research, skilled talent, and potentially lucrative public-private partnerships.
  - For example, Pittsburgh and Carnegie Mellon University appear to have a strong working relationship and have been able to leverage the robotics & AI expertise that CMU provides as an institution, which has now become part of Pittsburgh’s “brand” as a community.

## Strategic Land Use

- **Strategic Land Acquisition:** In our interviews with various cities, we found that many are involved in land acquisition, which spans from smaller-scale endeavors, such as utilizing a land bank to gather and dispose of smaller parcels, to more proactive acquisition for strategic purposes. Cities engaging in "strategic" land acquisition do so with a specific purpose in mind, such as:

- Madison has taken an active role in land acquisition, specifically for housing development. Over the years, the City of Madison has employed various approaches to land acquisition and development. Notably, they acquired a business park on the southeast side 20 years ago, gradually developing it. Another business park on the northeast side, initially developed through a partnership with a developer 25 years ago, was later reclaimed after the Great Recession and successfully developed. Madison also operates a land banking program, primarily focusing on residential development, especially affordable housing. While not the primary focus, they have engaged in economic development through land banking, including a partnership with American Family Insurance for an expansion. By controlling land, the city can direct its use in line with long-term development visions, ensuring housing affordability, sustainability, or other strategic priorities.
- Waterloo is actively focused on selling property that is owned by the City, especially that which is zoned industrial. In addition, they are effectively the owner and developer of a 100-acre industrial park on the western side of the city. The economic development department took on the role of the developer, collaborating with consultants and engineering experts. Throughout the planning application processes, they navigated the same steps as any external developer, maintaining an arms-length relationship with the planning department to ensure fairness.

### Sustainability and Environmental Initiatives

- **Carbon Reduction Goals and Incentives:** Most cities reviewed have carbon reduction goals, but none strictly mandate carbon neutrality. Most cities offered incentives to encourage developers to utilize carbon neutrality in their projects which were often tied to public support of relevant projects. Offering incentives for carbon neutrality strikes a balance, motivating developers to adopt green practices.
  - For example, in the ongoing strategic planning process in the City of Durham, various departments are aligning their efforts with sustainability and viability goals. Capital improvement projects are incorporating sustainability considerations. Those identified as “eco-friendly” receive bonus points in the city’s capital project review process.
  - In Grand Rapids, they have a matrix review process that aligns the project with City-goals like mobility, community & economic development, equity and sustainability. Projects that help meet the goals of the City receive additional “points” and consideration for their alignment with those goals. This is a way to welcome all projects to the City while especially encouraging those that meet the City’s goals in terms of sustainability, among other factors.

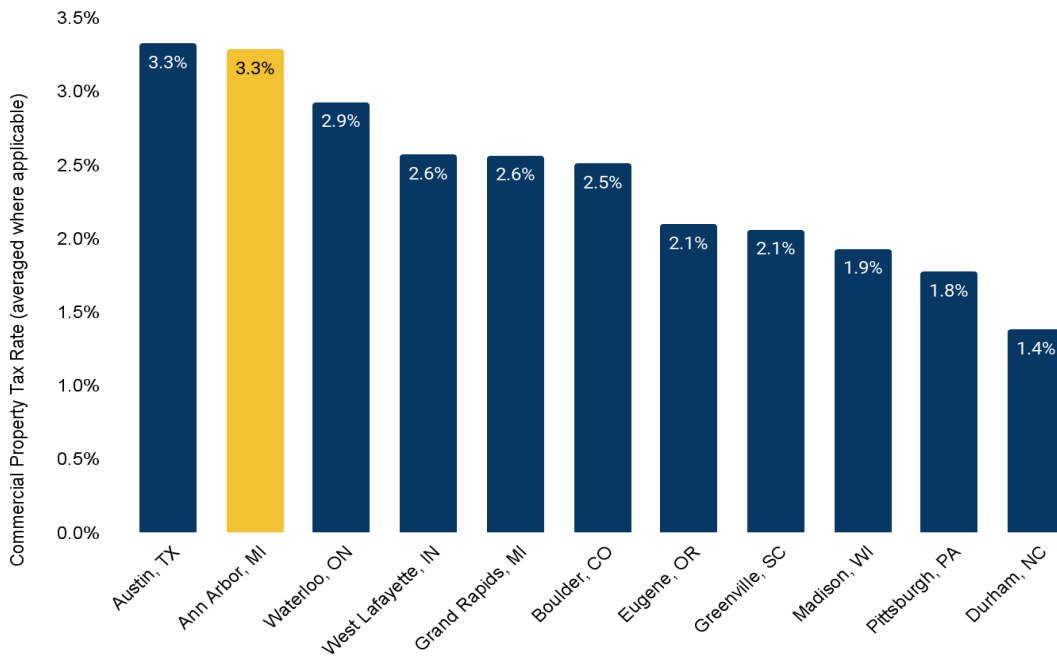
### Tax Burden and Incentives

- **Targeted Tax Structures for Economic Development:** Some cities analyzed possess tax structures that permit more targeted investments in economic development activities, like the Economic Development Income Tax (EDIT) in West Lafayette. A flexible tax structure can act as a tool for cities to attract specific industries or encourage certain



activities. It allows cities to offer competitive advantages to businesses, incentivizing them to set up operations, expand, or invest in specific areas.

- **Commercial Property Tax Burden:** The analysis of commercial real estate property tax rates across various communities reveals a range from 1.4 to 3.3 percent. Austin and Ann Arbor are at the upper-end, both levying 3.3 percent, whereas Durham offers the lowest rate at 1.4 percent. The majority of the cities, including Waterloo (2.9 percent), West Lafayette, and Grand Rapids (both at 2.6 percent), Boulder (2.5 percent), and Eugene and Greenville (both at 2.1 percent), set their rates in the mid-2 percent range. Madison and Pittsburgh maintain slightly lower positions, charging 1.9 and 1.8 percent respectively. Communities also augment these rates through the use of incentives for some development projects.



# Recommendations

## Project Management and Internal Coordination

- **Appoint a Development Champion:** Instead of just a figurehead, the role should have significant decision-making power and authority to rally various departments. The internal development champion should have a direct communication line between the project and the city's leadership, ensuring projects receive the necessary resources and timely attention.
  - Communities of Note: City of Austin, City of Grand Rapids
- **Leverage Digital Platforms:** Consider creating an online portal that serves as a one-stop hub for developers, businesses, and the community. This portal can streamline permit applications, offer real-time updates on development projects, and provide a platform for community feedback. This model has been successful in other cities.
  - For example, Boulder [offers a chatbot](#) specific to their planning process where users can ask questions. They also offer an [online application portal](#) to easily track and share the current status of each project under review.
  - The City of Durham offers an [online help desk](#) that is specific to the development review process.

## Process Optimization

- **Strengthen and Streamline the Development Review Process:** Continued focus on mapping and then streamlining the development process was identified as vital work in some of the communities we reviewed. In particular, cities like Durham have made strides to [define and streamline their development review process](#), starting at staff review, all the way to final approval through their planning process. Some key items of note that emerged on this topic include:
  - Publishing a road map of the development review process with associated timelines (example here: [2023 Development Review Timelines](#)); inclusion of economic development staff or the “champion” as part of the staff review process; and minimizing the number of approvals needed.
  - To note, a statewide “best practice” process has been developed in Michigan called “Redevelopment Ready Communities” and notes that final approval in certified communities lies in the administrative and Planning Commission. From their Best Practice document on the development review process (more [here](#)):

“Best Practice 3.5: The community streamlines the approval process by using administrative and Planning Commission approval authority.

*Why?*

Approving at least permitted uses at the Planning Commission or staff level allows faster approval and respects the administrative nature of development review. [...]

In addition to granting approval at the staff or planning commission level, certified communities do not require public hearings for permitted uses. While input on site plans can always be provided via public comment or other engagement opportunities, removing the formal public hearing reduces costs and time. It also sets accurate expectations about the administrative nature of site plan review which is intended by law to be an objective decision driven by data.”

- In particular, the City of Durham outlined the significant work they conducted as an organization to refine and streamline their development review process. They were kind enough to offer a follow-up conversation with their Director of the City-County Planning Department, whose contact information is shared in the appendix below.
- The City of West Lafayette boasts a defined permit review process, outlined in the community summary below.
- **Carefully Review Current Tax Structures and New Proposals:** As this study points out, there are significant differences between the levels of commercial property tax rates between this peer group of cities ([Appendix D](#)). This ongoing expense is a key factor in developers deciding to go forward or not. Finding alternative sources to fund community initiatives that do not place the sole burden on new commercial projects may be the difference between a site being developed or remaining vacant. A competitive tax rate may obviate the need for special taxing districts or abatements to spur development.
- **Promote Collaboration within the Development Community:** Consider organizing regular meetings to discuss the current status of the planning and development pipeline and processes. This approach can foster an involved development community, ultimately improving the quality and efficiency of development activities. Initiate routine meetings to collect feedback, tackle challenges, and fine-tune the city's planning processes. In addition to regular meetings, establish thematic workshops and forums to address specific challenges. Leverage these platforms not only for feedback but also for collaboratively creating policies with the development community.
  - Community of Note: Boulder

## Regional Collaboration

- **Deepen Regional Partnerships:** Prioritize building and deepening ties with regional entities, ensuring that the city does not just collaborate but also leads in forging regional strategies. This can harness collective strengths, share resources, and address issues with unified approaches. However, leadership is commensurate with the level of funding the city is providing to other governmental, private sector and academic institutions contributing to the partnership.

## Strategic Land Use

- **Consider Land Acquisition Strategy:** While land acquisition is a tool, it should be wielded with a clear vision. Evaluate the feasibility and potential benefits or pitfalls of a

proactive land acquisition approach. For some cities analyzed, a land acquisition strategy specific to acquiring land for future housing developments was useful while most communities do not engage in active land acquisition for economic development purposes. Review the strategy with an eye towards the revenue for the City that could be generated, while being strategic on the type of development that would assist with growth of the City. Consider the use of external partners, like brokers, that could assist with the strategic disposal or investment of the City's land portfolio.

- Community of Note: Madison

## Sustainability and Environmental Innovation

- **Innovate Carbon Neutrality Incentives:** Consider introducing incentives by way of a point structure or other mechanism to encourage developers to undertake carbon-neutral projects. Consider creating a comprehensive incentive program that not only rewards carbon-neutral projects but also provides training and resources for developers unfamiliar with green practices. Instead of just a point system, consider streamlined approvals, public recognition for those leading in this area, or other innovative features. Beyond encouraging developers to adopt carbon-neutral practices, the city could also incentivize green infrastructure. This could include urban parks, green roofs, rain gardens, permeable pavements, and others.



## Section 3

# Community Summaries



### Austin, Texas

Austin, Texas, known as the "Live Music Capital of the World," is an interesting benchmark for Ann Arbor. Austin's journey in economic development is shaped by several key factors, some mirroring and others diverging from Ann Arbor's experience.

Central to Austin's economic narrative is its evolution into a leading technology hub, a transformation driven by the presence of tech giants like Dell and IBM and further propelled by the city's commitment to sustainability. This technological and environmental focus has created a vibrant economic landscape, markedly different from Ann Arbor's smaller-scale, diversified economy. The University of Texas at Austin plays a pivotal role in this regard, significantly influencing the city's sectors in technology, healthcare, and education. This educational influence parallels Ann Arbor's own academic-driven economy, although the scale and impact in Austin are notably larger.

### **A "One City Approach"**

The collaborative spirit in Austin's economic development is epitomized in City government by its "One City Approach," ensuring a harmonious integration of activities across various departments and with external partners like Opportunity Austin. This model of collaboration, blending internal and external expertise, is a practice from which Ann Arbor could derive substantial benefits, especially in fostering regional growth and partnerships.

One area of concern in Austin is the coordination among diverse departments to meet community expectations, a task that presents logistical complexities in contrast to Ann Arbor's potentially more streamlined decision-making processes. Moreover, the lack of clarity on permit standards in Austin for crucial urban development aspects, such as flood mitigation and transportation systems, may impede efficient development, an area where Ann Arbor might hold an advantage due to its smaller governance structure.

The city grapples with a high commercial property tax burden, at 3.33 percent, potentially deterring business investments compared to Ann Arbor's environment. Additionally, balancing rapid urbanization with the preservation of its unique cultural heritage remains a complex endeavor for Austin, a challenge less pronounced in Ann Arbor due to its smaller size and different urban dynamics.

Despite these challenges, Austin's robust support systems for small and minority businesses, exemplified by its Small Business Division and the Small and Minority Business Resources Department, stand out as models worth emulating, which are focused on providing pathways for non-traditional business owners to serve as vendors for the City and Austin-Bergstrom International Airport. The city's innovative place-making activities, such as the Souly Austin program, and its dedication to workforce development, underscore a commitment to holistic economic growth. These initiatives offer valuable lessons for Ann Arbor in enhancing its own community spaces and supporting diverse business ownership.

Austin's approach to economic development, characterized by its strong technology sector, educational influence, collaborative strategies, and sustainability initiatives, presents a multifaceted case study for Ann Arbor. While Austin's challenges in maintaining cultural integrity amidst rapid growth and managing high tax burdens offer cautionary insights, its strengths in technology-driven economy, support for diverse businesses, and innovative place-making strategies provide valuable lessons. Ann Arbor, in its pursuit of economic development, stands to gain by adopting some of Austin's successful practices while remaining cognizant of its unique challenges and community dynamics.

### **Key Lessons for Ann Arbor**

- Austin has reshaped how external parties perceive its government. Instead of viewing it as a collection of departments, Austin presents a united front through its "One City" approach. This approach enhances internal collaboration and focuses on a shared goal of increased cooperation. Ann Arbor could benefit from adopting a similar strategy, creating a distinct label to emphasize collaboration and ensuring a consistent experience for external stakeholders.
- Austin's economic development leaders emphasize the importance of clarity at the project's outset regarding the City's support expectations. The team cited an experience where project expectations shifted during development, prompting efforts to establish upfront expectations for future projects. This lesson gains significance considering that project timelines may extend beyond public processes. Timely communication of policies and expectations to development partners is crucial for building and sustaining successful relationships.

## Boulder, Colorado

Boulder's blend of natural amenities, educational institutions, and a culture of innovation creates a dynamic economic landscape, shaped significantly by the University of Colorado Boulder and federal labs like NCAR and NOAA. This academic and research-driven environment parallels Ann Arbor's university-led economic ecosystem, albeit with a distinct focus on sectors like aerospace, bioscience, and cleantech.

One of Boulder's hallmark traits is its leadership in sustainability. The city's policies, aimed at reducing carbon emissions and promoting green building standards, mirror Ann Arbor's environmental commitments, albeit with Boulder's more aggressive sustainability targets, like its 2035 Carbon Neutral Roadmap. Both cities, however, grapple with the dual challenges of economic growth leading to higher real estate prices and a rising cost of living, impacting business viability in terms of workforce affordability.

### **"Economic and Community Vitality"**

Boulder's approach to economic development is encapsulated in its Economic Vitality Program, a part of the Community Vitality department. This program, focusing on innovation, entrepreneurship, and quality of life while preserving community character, contrasts with Ann Arbor's more traditional economic development strategies. Boulder's partnership with the Boulder Economic Council (BEC), the economic arm of the Boulder Chamber, signifies a collaborative model, integrating city and regional efforts, a practice from which Ann Arbor could benefit, especially in fostering key industry growth and advocacy.

However, Boulder faces its set of challenges. The city's emphasis on sustainability, while commendable, can be perceived as restrictive, impacting the types of businesses suitable for the area. Additionally, Boulder contends with permitting delays and local homelessness issues, complexities that Ann Arbor might relate to but possibly on a different scale. Boulder's efforts to address these challenges, such as the establishment of a "Fast-Track Approval Lane" for priority projects, might provide valuable lessons for Ann Arbor in streamlining its own development processes.

Moreover, Boulder's focus on placemaking, involving urban beautification and public art installations, underlines a broader definition of economic development that includes cultural and societal aspects. This approach, coupled with regular forums like the CPD Forum connecting city officials with stakeholders, is an area where Ann Arbor could draw inspiration, especially in enhancing community engagement and aesthetic improvement.

### **Regional Needs and In-Commuter Strategies**

In terms of workforce development, Boulder's strategy is broader, focusing on regional needs and in-commuter strategies, in contrast to Ann Arbor's more localized approach. Because housing and new developments can be challenging in Boulder, this approach recognizes that people commute into the City for work and school; which is indicative of Ann Arbor. This regional outlook, along with dedicated programs like the "Entrepreneurship Accelerator

Program" and the "Minority Business Growth Initiative," highlights Boulder's comprehensive efforts in supporting diverse economic facets.

Boulder's is marked by its commitment to sustainability, academic-driven economy, and collaborative city-regional partnerships, offering both parallels and distinct approaches compared to Ann Arbor. While Boulder's challenges in sustainability restrictions and permitting processes offer cautionary insights, its strengths in environmental leadership, innovative economic programs, and comprehensive workforce strategies provide valuable lessons. Ann Arbor, in charting its economic future, can learn from Boulder's successes in integrating environmental goals with economic growth, while also considering its unique local context and challenges.

### **Key Lessons for Ann Arbor**

- Boulder's quarterly forum is a unique idea. This forum serves as a platform to share insights into the current planning pipeline and its associated challenges. Boulder has effectively utilized this forum to engage developers, architects, and other stakeholders in a collaborative process. The forum acts as a space for brainstorming solutions, increasing visibility, and overcoming barriers collectively. In contrast to Ann Arbor's current practice of providing visibility into projects under review, Boulder's use of an online portal and an external forum appears to foster a more collaborative approach. Boulder's approach highlights a shift from isolating city staff's work to involving others in the planning process. While Ann Arbor maintains visibility into ongoing projects, the additional tools employed by Boulder contribute to a more dynamic and inclusive process.
- Boulder exhibits a lack of consensus regarding their approach to "development." This is evident in the minimal use of the term in their economic development work and the evolving nature of their partnerships with other stakeholders over time. Understanding and addressing this lack of consensus could provide valuable insights for Ann Arbor in refining its own economic development strategies and ensuring that the community is moving in the same direction to address our challenges.



## Durham, North Carolina

Anchored by Duke University and the renowned Research Triangle Park (RTP), Durham epitomizes the integration of education, technology, and healthcare in driving economic growth, similar to Ann Arbor's reliance on its educational institutions and tech industry.

Durham's economic landscape, fueled by the synergy between Duke University and RTP, has positioned the city as a hub for innovation and entrepreneurship. This focus on technology and biotech industries is a significant point of comparison with Ann Arbor, although Durham's scale and the presence of RTP offer a distinct edge in high-tech corporate and startup dynamics. Like Ann Arbor, Durham faces the typical growing city challenges of affordable housing, gentrification, and infrastructure needs, balancing economic prosperity with community well-being.

The Office of Economic and Workforce Development (OEWD) in Durham is at the forefront of economic initiatives, prioritizing commercial tax base increase, workforce readiness, and downtown revitalization, among others. This multifaceted approach to economic development, similar to Ann Arbor's strategies, highlights the importance of comprehensive urban planning in fostering economic growth while maintaining community character.

### **A Collaborative Approach in Durham**

Durham's collaborative approach to economic development, involving partnerships with local incubators, co-working spaces, and organizations such as Innovate Durham and Audacity Labs, mirrors Ann Arbor's ecosystem supporting startups and entrepreneurship. However, Durham's unique partnerships with entities like NC Biotech and the Chamber of Commerce, and its focus on life sciences, provide a differentiated model for fostering industry-specific growth.

Despite its strengths, Durham encounters limitations under North Carolina law, such as restrictions on Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and the Emoluments clause, which constrain some economic development strategies. This legal framework contrasts with the flexibility that cities like Ann Arbor might experience in other states. Durham's focus on sustainability, giving bonus points to eco-friendly projects, is a shared trait with Ann Arbor, reflecting a growing trend in urban planning prioritizing environmental responsibility.

The city's methods for managing development, including a pre-submittal process for developers and a streamlined process involving multiple city departments, suggest a commitment to efficient urban planning and development services. This systematic approach, while facing its challenges, offers insights into managing urban growth effectively, a concern relevant to Ann Arbor as it navigates its own developmental trajectory.

Durham's emphasis on collaborative partnerships, innovation in life sciences, and a commitment to sustainable, community-centric development present a blend of strategies and challenges that Ann Arbor can look to for inspiration and caution. The narrative of Durham's economic development, with its focus on leveraging educational and research institutions, fostering industry-specific growth, and addressing urban planning challenges, provides a multifaceted

perspective for cities like Ann Arbor as they shape their economic futures in an ever-evolving landscape.

### **Key Lessons for Ann Arbor**

- Durham's Development Services Center was implemented as a way to streamline communication with the broader development community to streamline and optimize the development process, including permitting, communication, documents, and more related to projects. They also published expected development review timeframes, which is updated on a regular basis. An online portal exists as a means for the development community to access the City's knowledge base and submit and track requests directly to the appropriate technical staff or department(s).
- Sarah Young, Durham's Planning Director, serves as the project coordinator and referee between the development community and internal staff representing various City departments. Sarah has 20+ years experience in City planning and is willing to provide additional insights during a meeting with Ann Arbor representatives, if requested.

## Eugene, Oregon

Known for its commitment to environmental sustainability and economic diversification, Eugene's approach to urban development, while distinct, provides a comparative lens to Ann Arbor's strategies.

The city's economy, significantly influenced by the University of Oregon, mirrors Ann Arbor's educational-driven economic landscape, although Eugene's focus leans more towards sustainability and arts, along with education. This academic influence fuels innovation and economic diversification in Eugene, similar to how the University of Michigan shapes Ann Arbor's economic and cultural life.

Eugene's commitment to environmental sustainability is evident in initiatives like the Community Climate Action Plan 2.0, positioning the city as a leader in eco-friendly urban planning. This dedication to sustainability is a shared trait with Ann Arbor, although Eugene's strategies and policies, such as their goal to reduce fossil fuel use by 50% by 2030, demonstrate a more aggressive environmental agenda.

Despite these strengths, Eugene faces significant challenges in urban development. Managing both urban and rural development dynamics, fostering inclusive economic growth, and tackling housing affordability are prominent issues. These challenges resonate with Ann Arbor's experiences, particularly in managing growth while maintaining community inclusivity and affordability.

### **Customer Service Concerns and Convoluted Policies**

Ann Arbor SPARK's experience with the City of Eugene, however, was not positive, highlighting a critical area of concern. The processes in Eugene were found to be overly complicated and not user-friendly, with unclear engagement mechanisms for economic development. This contrasts with Ann Arbor's more streamlined and accessible approach to economic development, emphasizing the importance of clarity and efficiency in urban planning and business engagement.

In terms of entrepreneurship and startup support, Eugene's focus on tech transfers and investor engagement, particularly through programs like the Entrepreneurship Accelerator Program, provides a model for fostering a vibrant startup ecosystem. However, the city's direct involvement in this area seems less pronounced compared to Ann Arbor's concerted efforts in supporting startups and tech innovation.

Eugene's approach to placemaking, focusing on enhancing public spaces and community engagement, aligns with Ann Arbor's initiatives in urban beautification and cultural development. However, the lack of detailed information on Eugene's specific placemaking strategies and the role of non-governmental civic and community leaders suggests a need for greater transparency and public involvement in these processes.

Eugene's narrative in economic development, with its strong emphasis on sustainability, education-driven economy, and regional collaboration, offers a contrasting yet insightful perspective to Ann Arbor. While Eugene's challenges in process complexity and stakeholder engagement provide cautionary lessons, its commitment to environmental sustainability and academic influence presents strategies that Ann Arbor might find valuable. As both cities navigate their unique economic landscapes, the importance of clear, efficient processes, and active community involvement remains a critical takeaway.

### **Key Lessons for Ann Arbor**

- Engaging with the government in Eugene posed challenges. Unlike our experiences with nearly every other community, inquiries about our work went unanswered. Although we managed to connect with a few experts on specific topics, such as understanding their commercial tax burden, getting timely responses through return calls and emails proved to be a hurdle. This experience underscores the importance of prioritizing customer service as a core value.



## Grand Rapids, Michigan

Grand Rapids has evolved from a furniture manufacturing hub into a modern city, the second largest in Michigan.

The presence of educational institutions like Grand Valley State University, Calvin University, and Aquinas College contributes significantly to Grand Rapids' economic fabric, paralleling Ann Arbor's reliance on the University of Michigan for research, innovation, and a skilled workforce. However, Grand Rapids has diversified its economy to include sectors like food processing, aviation, automotive, consumer goods manufacturing, and a burgeoning craft beer and technology scene. This diversification is reflective of Grand Rapids' strategic adaptability and contrasts with Ann Arbor's more education and technology-centric economy.

In sustainability efforts, Grand Rapids positions itself as a leader among U.S. cities, with substantial strides in green building practices, waste reduction, and energy efficiency. This commitment to environmental stewardship mirrors Ann Arbor's initiatives, though the specific programs and policies in Grand Rapids provide distinct models of sustainable urban development.

### **Regionalism, Software Tools, and Development Matrix**

Grand Rapids' approach to economic development, managed by the City's Economic Development Department in collaboration with The Right Place, Inc., showcases a comprehensive strategy focused on business retention, expansion, and attraction. This proactive approach, emphasizing equitable outcomes in city operations, aligns with modern urban economic principles and offers valuable insights for Ann Arbor, particularly in fostering diverse economic growth and regional collaboration.

The city's utilization of Salesforce for coordinating internal departments, including planning and permitting, demonstrates a commitment to efficiency and integrated processes. Similarly, the implementation of a "development matrix" to evaluate projects based on city goals reflects a strategic and methodical approach to urban development, ensuring alignment with broader objectives and community needs.

In terms of placemaking and community asset development, Grand Rapids supports strategic partnerships and initiatives, engaging non-governmental civic and community leaders in visioning and strategic planning. This collaborative approach resonates with the evolving trends in urban development, where stakeholder engagement and inclusive planning are key.

As Ann Arbor navigates its economic future, insights from Grand Rapids' strategies in fostering economic diversity, engaging in regional collaborations, and prioritizing sustainability and efficient processes, provide valuable lessons and models for sustainable and inclusive urban economic growth.

## **Key Lessons for Ann Arbor**

- The use of software tools for project management stood out in Grand Rapids. While Salesforce is a prevalent CRM tool, exploring alternative project management tools tailored to the specific needs of the City of Ann Arbor might be worthwhile.
- The City's innovative development of the matrix approach holds promise, serving as a potential model to implement the city's priorities. This matrix could articulate key focus areas such as the journey towards carbon neutrality, equity, sustainability, and affordable housing, establishing a framework for the City's support.

## Greenville, South Carolina

Greenville, South Carolina is now known for its scenic downtown, cultural vibrancy, and outdoor recreation. With a recent focus on diversifying its economy, Greenville has transformed from a traditional Southern city into a modern, multi-faceted urban area.

While Ann Arbor's economic development has been largely influenced by the presence of the University of Michigan, Greenville's growth has been fueled by a variety of sectors, including advanced manufacturing, technology, and healthcare. This diversified economic base sets Greenville apart from Ann Arbor's more education and research-centric economy.

Greenville's revitalized downtown, a hub for dining, shopping, and entertainment, mirrors Ann Arbor's own vibrant city center. Greenville's approach, particularly its development of the Falls Park on the Reedy, underscores the city's emphasis on integrating natural beauty and urban design, an aspect that Ann Arbor also values but may express differently.

Despite its many strengths, Greenville faces challenges, including managing urban and rural development dynamics, promoting inclusive economic growth, and addressing housing affordability. These are common challenges faced by growing cities, including Ann Arbor, indicating a shared struggle in balancing growth with community well-being.

### **A New Non-Profit Economic Development Organization in Greenville**

The local economic development organization, Greenville Area Development Corporation, similar to Ann Arbor's SPARK, plays a key role in supporting and resourcing local businesses. However, Ann Arbor SPARK's experience with Greenville was limited due to the city's declined participation in the study, reflecting a potential gap in engagement and communication in Greenville's economic development processes.

Greenville's commitment to sustainability, demonstrated through initiatives like its membership in the South Carolina Energy Office's Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant program, aligns with Ann Arbor's focus on environmental stewardship. Both cities exhibit a dedication to reducing carbon emissions and promoting sustainable practices, although the specific strategies and goals may differ.

Greenville's journey in economic development, characterized by its revitalized downtown, diverse economy, and commitment to sustainability, offers a unique perspective for comparison with Ann Arbor. While Greenville's diverse economic sectors and integration of natural beauty in urban planning provide interesting models for Ann Arbor, the challenges in inclusive growth and housing affordability remain common issues that both cities continue to address. As Ann Arbor looks to the future, lessons from Greenville's experience in downtown revitalization, economic diversification, and sustainability initiatives can be valuable in shaping its own economic development strategies.

## **Key Lessons for Ann Arbor**

- Greenville appears to be advancing along a developmental trajectory and is evolving in terms of its City-based economic development infrastructure. As part of this process, they adopted a best practice by establishing a non-profit organization separate from their economic development department. This new entity is designed to function regionally, collaborating with various stakeholders.

## Madison, Wisconsin

As the state capital and home to the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison shares several attributes with Ann Arbor, notably a strong emphasis on education and research.

Madison's economy, like Ann Arbor's, is largely driven by the University of Wisconsin-Madison playing a central role similar to the University of Michigan's influence in Ann Arbor. However, Madison is also home to their state government and has seen significant growth in its tech sector, diversifying its economic base beyond academia. This growing tech presence provides a dynamic aspect to Madison's economy, which Ann Arbor, with its own burgeoning tech scene, can relate to.

The city's commitment to sustainability, evident in its aim to reach 100% renewable energy and net zero carbon emissions, mirrors Ann Arbor's environmental initiatives. Both cities not only prioritize green practices in government operations but also encourage community-wide engagement in sustainability efforts.

Madison's economic development strategies, managed by entities like the Madison Development Corporation (MDC) and the Madison Region Economic Partnership (MadREP), highlight a collaborative approach to fostering business growth and innovation. This multifaceted approach resonates with Ann Arbor's strategies, although the specific methods and tools may vary.

### **Land Acquisition Work in Madison**

Madison has been actively involved in acquiring land, specifically for housing development. Over the years, the city has employed various approaches, including acquiring and gradually developing a business park on the southeast side 20 years ago. Another business park on the northeast side, initially developed through a partnership 25 years ago, was reclaimed after the Great Recession and successfully developed. Madison also operates a land banking program, primarily focusing on residential development, especially affordable housing. While not the primary focus, economic development has been pursued through land banking, including a successful partnership with American Family Insurance for expansion. This strategic approach allows the city to control land use in alignment with long-term development visions, ensuring housing affordability, sustainability, and other key priorities.

### **Creative Industries and Economic Development in Madison**

In terms of urban planning and development, Madison's emphasis on placemaking through programs like "Create Wisconsin" reflects a commitment to integrating arts, culture, and community engagement in urban development. This focus on creating vibrant, inclusive public spaces aligns with Ann Arbor's own placemaking efforts, albeit with unique regional flavors and initiatives.

Madison's challenge in fostering a manufacturing sector and addressing potential labor shortages due to an aging demographic are issues that Ann Arbor may also face, albeit in different contexts. Additionally, Madison's efforts in supporting minority-owned businesses and

encouraging diversity in entrepreneurship are initiatives that resonate with Ann Arbor's own economic inclusivity goals.

Madison's experience in balancing its educational foundation with a growing tech sector, its commitment to sustainability, and its collaborative approach to economic development offer valuable insights for Ann Arbor. While both cities share common strengths in education, research, and progressive values, the nuances in their economic development strategies and challenges provide opportunities for learning and adaptation as they continue to evolve and grow.

### **Key Lessons for Ann Arbor**

- Madison stood out as one of the more proactive communities we interacted with, actively participating in land acquisition and development initiatives. Their approach has resulted in the implementation of development projects with a clear economic development focus, such as a real estate transaction involving offices for American Family Insurance. Notably, Madison has placed a significant emphasis on affordable housing development within their strategy.
- The integration of land acquisition as a strategic tool appears ingrained in the city's operations, demonstrating that the strategy has not only been developed but seamlessly incorporated into the broader municipal work. Madison serves as a compelling example of how communities can effectively leverage land when guided by a well-defined and engaged strategy.



## Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, often associated with its historic identity as the "Steel City", has undergone a remarkable transformation, evolving from its steel production legacy to a diversified and modern economic landscape.

Pittsburgh's history as a major steel production center, fueled by its strategic location at the confluence of three rivers, defined its economy and culture for much of its existence. However, the decline of the steel industry in the U.S. posed significant economic challenges for the city. In response, Pittsburgh embarked on a journey of economic reinvention, transitioning to a more diversified economy. This pivot away from a single industry dominance mirrors the economic shifts many cities, including Ann Arbor, have experienced, albeit in different contexts and scales. In the latter part of the 20th century and into the 21st century, Pittsburgh has successfully diversified its economic base. The city has become a hub for higher education, healthcare, and technology, pivoting its focus towards innovative and knowledge-based sectors. Institutions like the University of Pittsburgh, Carnegie Mellon University, and UPMC (University of Pittsburgh Medical Center) are significant employers, driving innovation and research, particularly in medicine and technology. This emphasis on education and healthcare parallels Ann Arbor's own economic drivers centered around the University of Michigan and its associated industries.

### **University Research Leveraged and Aligned with Pittsburgh's Economic Development**

Furthermore, Pittsburgh's emerging strengths in robotics and artificial intelligence, largely due to Carnegie Mellon's influence, position the city at the forefront of technological advancement. This focus on cutting-edge technology sectors provides a contrast to Ann Arbor's tech scene, which, while dynamic, has a broader focus encompassing a range of tech startups and IT companies. A notable aspect of Pittsburgh's transformation is its commitment to environmental sustainability. Once known for its smoggy skies due to steel production, the city has made significant strides in greening its urban landscape. Initiatives focusing on green building practices and renewable energy sources are testament to Pittsburgh's dedication to ecological responsibility. Ann Arbor, with its own sustainability goals and green initiatives, shares similar aspirations but can learn from Pittsburgh's large-scale efforts in transforming a historically industrial city into a leader in environmental stewardship.

### **Regionalism and Collaboration in Pittsburgh**

The economic development structure in Pittsburgh is multifaceted, with the Pittsburgh Regional Alliance playing a pivotal role in driving regional economic initiatives. The alliance works extensively in business attraction, expansion, and relocation, while partnering with the Governor's office to access incentives for projects. The role of the Chief Economic Development Officer in Pittsburgh, overseeing various development-related departments, exemplifies a centralized approach to managing economic growth. This model could offer insights for Ann Arbor in enhancing coordination among different economic development entities.

Like many urban centers, Pittsburgh faces challenges in ensuring that economic growth is inclusive and addresses infrastructure needs. Areas still affected by the decline of the steel

industry require focused attention for revitalization. These challenges are akin to those faced by Ann Arbor, particularly in ensuring equitable growth and managing urban development. Pittsburgh engages a variety of stakeholders at all levels in economic development and placemaking activities. The city's efforts in involving non-governmental civic and community leaders, corporate entities, and academic institutions in visioning and strategic planning processes are crucial for holistic urban development. This approach resonates with Ann Arbor's community-centric planning and development efforts.

Pittsburgh fosters a supportive environment for startups, particularly in technology and innovation sectors. The Advisory Board on Entrepreneurship and Start-ups and initiatives like InnovatePGH amplify the city's commitment to nurturing a vibrant business culture. Ann Arbor, with its own thriving startup ecosystem, can draw parallels and potentially adopt similar strategies to bolster its entrepreneurial environment.

### **Key Lessons for Ann Arbor**

- Pittsburgh demonstrates a robust framework of local institutions that are both established and reasonably well-coordinated. The City, the regional economic development organization, and academic institutions, including Carnegie Mellon University, exhibit notable alignment in their strategies, highlighting a best practice of identifying core areas of overlap.

## Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

Waterloo, Ontario, has developed a reputation as a prominent technology hub and home to a thriving economy.

The University of Waterloo stands as a central figure in the region's tech landscape, similar to the University of Michigan's role in Ann Arbor. The University of Waterloo's emphasis on STEM fields and its cooperative education model have been instrumental in fostering industry partnerships and nurturing entrepreneurship, creating a dynamic environment for innovation. This model has parallels to Ann Arbor, where the university's research initiatives and collaborations have significantly contributed to the local tech sector's growth.

Waterloo's economy, closely tied to the university's success, has seen significant growth in tech companies like BlackBerry and OpenText. This concentration in the tech sector provides a contrast to Ann Arbor, where the economic landscape is more diversified, encompassing not only tech but also healthcare, research, and other industries. However, both cities share the common trait of leveraging their academic institutions to drive economic growth and technological innovation.

Both Waterloo and Ann Arbor place a high emphasis on sustainability and environmentally conscious development. Waterloo's commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and sustainable energy initiatives aligns with Ann Arbor's environmental goals. The cities' efforts reflect a broader trend in urban areas towards adopting more eco-friendly policies and practices. Waterloo's approach to economic development is multifaceted, involving various agencies and organizations. The city's collaboration with the Waterloo Regional Economic Development Corporation (Waterloo EDC) and other partners mirrors Ann Arbor's strategy of partnering with regional entities like Ann Arbor SPARK for economic growth. The economic development team in Waterloo, although smaller in size, plays a crucial role in implementing strategies and fostering partnerships, much like Ann Arbor's dedicated teams for economic growth and innovation.

Waterloo has identified startup creation and support as a key element in its economic development plan. The city relies on external incubators and accelerators to nurture new businesses, a strategy that is also evident in Ann Arbor's thriving startup ecosystem. The support for entrepreneurship and innovation in both cities is central to their economic development models.

Waterloo faces challenges in housing diversity and aligning economic development with community objectives, issues that Ann Arbor also confronts. Addressing these challenges while maintaining economic growth and innovation remains a key focus for both cities. Staff indicated lack of outdoor recreation nearby as a challenge for talent attraction and retention, for example.

Both Waterloo and Ann Arbor excel in community engagement and ensuring a high quality of life for their residents. Waterloo's focus on placemaking and cultural vibrancy, and its efforts in

supporting minority populations and fostering inclusive communities, are initiatives that resonate with Ann Arbor's own community-centric approach.

### **Key Lessons for Ann Arbor**

- Waterloo city government demonstrates a clear understanding of prioritizing its strengths as a city and collaborating with partners for complementary efforts. Notably, they handle land acquisition and economic development within the city, while outsourcing business development to a larger regional economic organization. Additionally, they leverage the expertise of the University and private entities for incubation and technology transfer initiatives.

## West Lafayette, Indiana

West Lafayette, Indiana, with its significant academic influence from Purdue University, presents an interesting comparison to Ann Arbor, Michigan, a city similarly characterized by its university-driven growth. Both cities demonstrate the potential of leveraging academic excellence for broader economic development.

In West Lafayette, Purdue University stands at the forefront of the city's economy, mirroring the University of Michigan's role in Ann Arbor. The universities in both cities are not only major employers but also catalysts for technological and entrepreneurial growth. Purdue's collaborations with entities like Purdue Foundry and shared workspaces such as MatchBOX have spurred innovation, a dynamic mirrored in Ann Arbor's thriving startup ecosystem supported by university and community collaborations.

Both West Lafayette and Ann Arbor face challenges related to housing, particularly in accommodating a large student population alongside permanent residents. West Lafayette's approach to zoning regulations and incentivized housing projects to balance the housing ecosystem offers a perspective that Ann Arbor might find informative, given its own struggles with housing affordability and diversity.

West Lafayette's emphasis on public safety and investments in parks and recreational spaces highlights its commitment to community welfare. This focus aligns with Ann Arbor's own priorities in maintaining a high quality of life for its residents through robust public services and community-focused initiatives.

The introduction of the Local Economic Development Income Tax (EDIT) in West Lafayette is a notable strategy for ensuring financial sustainability in growth and development projects. This tax mechanism differs from Ann Arbor's approach but offers an alternative model for funding developmental initiatives.

Both cities have ambitious environmental goals, with West Lafayette aiming for significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and a reliance on renewable energy. These initiatives resonate with Ann Arbor's own environmental commitments, suggesting a shared focus on sustainability as a crucial aspect of urban development.

While West Lafayette benefits from the innovation and economic activities generated by Purdue University, it faces challenges like a higher than average poverty rate and the potential migration of its young population. These issues mirror Ann Arbor's challenges in ensuring inclusive growth and retaining talent post-graduation.

West Lafayette's Economic Development Commission and partnerships with organizations like Greater Lafayette Commerce play a pivotal role in the city's economic growth. This structured approach to economic development, with a focus on collaboration between various agencies, shares similarities with Ann Arbor's strategy involving entities like Ann Arbor SPARK.

## Key Lessons for Ann Arbor

- The 10-day permitting process in West Lafayette, as described in the interview, represents a streamlined approach to handling building permits. This process involves:
  - Quick Review and Issuance: Once a building permit application is submitted, the city conducts a full review of the application to ensure it meets all building codes. Provided everything is in order, the permit is typically issued within a ten-day timeframe.
  - Efficiency in Processing: This expedited process reflects an efficient system, where applications are processed quickly, ensuring developers and builders don't face unnecessary delays.

Notably, an exception to this process was identified for stormwater review in West Lafayette. While the general permit processing is quick, the review for stormwater-related aspects takes longer, typically around 30 days. This indicates a more in-depth examination for stormwater management aspects of the projects.

- West Lafayette's EDIT serves as an innovative model for municipal funding, offering an alternative to traditional property taxes, which are capped in Indiana. By levying this local income tax, West Lafayette ensures a dedicated and consistent source of funding for economic development, bypassing the limitations set by property tax caps. The flexibility in the utilization of EDIT funds allows the city to respond effectively to evolving economic needs and priorities, making it a key component in driving sustainable growth and development in the region.



# Section 4

# Methodology

Funded by the City of Ann Arbor and guided by a comprehensive set of questions provided by Ann Arbor's City Manager's Office, the approach for this study is rooted in analyzing quantitative data such as population metrics, major employers, and tax structures, alongside qualitative aspects like development definitions and startup ecosystems.

Desktop reviews were conducted by Ann Arbor SPARK staff for each community identified in the scope of work. The desktop review included the identification of appropriate contacts from each community related to economic development activities, online review of all quantitative and qualitative questions identified by the City of Ann Arbor, interviews with contacts from each community, and a full analysis and reporting of findings and recommendations. All interviews were conducted virtually using Zoom. Notably, eight cities participated in comprehensive Zoom discussions, while Eugene and Greenville declined, restricting their analysis to publicly available information.

#### **The analyzed communities are:**

1. Austin, Texas
2. Boulder, Colorado
3. Durham, North Carolina
4. Eugene, Oregon
5. Grand Rapids, Michigan
6. Greenville, South Carolina
7. Madison, Wisconsin
8. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
9. Waterloo, Ontario
10. West Lafayette, Indiana

#### **Quantitative information collected for each community:**

1. City Population
2. County Population
3. Form of City Government
4. Top 3 largest employers in the City
5. Municipal Economic Development Organization & Staff Size
6. Regional Economic Development Organization & Staff Size

7. Commercial Property Tax Burden (i.e., how does the City determine taxable value for real property? What is the millage rate for the City?)

**Qualitative questions for each community:**

1. How does the municipality define “economic development”? What activities or functions fall under this definition?
2. What agencies or organizations does the city employ, utilize, or partner with to conduct economic development? Has the city created an agency or organization to pursue economic development? What are their responsibilities?
3. How does the city work to coordinate economic development activity between itself and various related agencies?
4. Does the municipality have an entity specifically related to job development through business retention and expansion?
5. What activities are undertaken to promote startup activity, including tech transfer initiatives, and the direct courting of venture capital and angel investor activity?
6. Does the municipal government engage in site acquisition to aid in economic development activities? If so, what agencies are involved?
7. Does the municipal government have its own or work directly with a workforce development agency?
8. What place-making activities does the city engage with? How are its various economic development agencies involved in this activity? Does it have a definition for “placemaking”?
9. Do non-governmental civic and community leaders (i.e., corporate leaders, philanthropists, former elected officials, leaders of major civic organizations, universities, etc.) play a role in visioning for placemaking, community asset development, and economic development initiatives? Is this in a formal or informal fashion, or both?
10. How are the various economic development agencies capitalized? How are their budgets developed and approved?
11. Is there a small business support function within the municipality, and is that separate from business expansion and retention efforts?
12. What powers does the municipality have under state law to perform economic development activities?
  - a. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) powers
  - b. Tax abatement powers
  - c. Property acquisition and disposition powers
  - d. Dedicated municipal authorities
  - e. Grants
  - f. Expedited services for economic development projects
  - g. Others
13. What limitations exist under state or local law that prevent or accelerate commonly used economic development strategies?
14. What is the site plan development process like, and how are projects tracked in the municipality? Do they leverage any software tools to manage site development work?
15. What does the municipality view as its strengths relative to economic development? What do they view as their weaknesses?

16. Does the city consider its permit standards for flood mitigation, soil erosion, utility interconnection, and transportation systems to be industry-leading, a good reflection of prevailing industry standards, or relatively less stringent compared to other cities?
  - a. What have you done to speed up this part of the development review process?
  - b. Where are these review functions housed in your municipal organization? Are they part of an economic development agency, or are they housed in other city departments?
17. How do you ensure overall quality control over the development review process, ensuring the city's goals are met and developers can move the project forward promptly?
18. Are there any municipal programs or services to support the growth and/or remedy the displacement of minority-owned small businesses?
19. Does the City have any mandates or policies related to carbon neutrality or sustainable energy?

# Section 5

# Appendix



## Appendix A: Quantitative and Qualitative Findings by City

### Austin, Texas

Austin, the capital of the Lone Star State, is renowned for its vibrant culture and diverse economy. Termed the "Live Music Capital of the World" due to its pulsating music scene, Austin stands as a beacon of innovation and enterprise in Texas. The presence of educational powerhouses such as the University of Texas at Austin has significantly influenced the city's technological, healthcare, and educational sectors.

Austin's transformation into a tech hub is evident with giants like Dell, IBM, and myriad startups setting up shop in the city. This change is propelled not just by these tech behemoths, but also by the city's commitment to sustainability, as reflected in its eco-friendly initiatives.

Driven by its impressive educational infrastructure, such as the University of Texas and numerous technological firms, Austin's prowess in technology, healthcare, and education is unmatched. Like other cities in this study, Austin grapples with the challenge of maintaining a balance between rapid urbanization and the preservation of its unique cultural heritage.

In addition to the desktop review conducted by Ann Arbor SPARK staff, Sylnovia Holt-Raab, the Director of Economic Development for the City of Austin was interviewed.

### Qualitative Findings

**Population:** The capital city of Austin has a burgeoning population of 964,177, which is approximately 7.8 times the size of Ann Arbor.

**Governance:** Austin utilizes the Council-Manager form of governance.

**Largest Employers:** Dominating the employment landscape in Austin are the State of Texas, the University of Texas, and H-E-B.

**Commercial Property Tax Burden:** Commercial properties in Austin are taxed at an average rate of 3.33 percent, equating to \$33,300 for a property valued at \$1 million.

**City Economic Development:** With 11 dedicated personnel, the Economic Development Department is pivotal to Austin's growth and progression.

**Regional Economic Development Organization:** Operating under the aegis of the Austin Chamber is Opportunity Austin, which, with a team of 15, works relentlessly towards regional economic growth.

## **Qualitative Findings**

**Q1: How does the municipality define “economic development”? What activities or functions fall under this definition?**

Austin's "One City Approach" ensures all economic development activities are harmonized, and partners such as Opportunity Austin are seamlessly integrated. The city's robust [Guiding Principles](#) underline their commitment to job creation, community benefits, and sustainability.

**Q2: What agencies or organizations does the city employ, utilize, or partner with to conduct economic development? Has the city created an agency or organization to pursue economic development? What are their responsibilities?**

Austin leverages both its internal Economic Development Department and external entities such as Opportunity Austin to advance its growth. These combined forces focus on attracting businesses, workforce training, community development, and small business sustenance.

**Q3: How does the city work to coordinate economic development activity between itself and various related agencies?**

The overarching theme of collaboration is realized through entities like [Opportunity Austin](#), which work in tandem with Austin's governance structures to foster economic growth across sectors.

**Q4: Does the municipality have an entity specifically related to job development through business retention and expansion?**

Yes, the city houses the Economic Development Department, playing a pivotal role in job creation and retention in close partnership with Opportunity Austin.

**Q5: What activities are undertaken to promote startup activity, including tech transfer initiatives, and the direct courting of venture capital and angel investor activity?**

While the city itself is not directly involved in the startup ecosystem, entities like the University of Texas at Austin, Capital Factory, and Techstars Austin drive this space.

**Q6: Does the municipal government engage in site acquisition to aid in economic development activities?**

Through its Redevelopment Division, Austin engages in specific site development efforts, focusing on enhancing district redevelopment and leveraging Public Improvement Districts (PIDs).

**Q7: Does the municipal government have its own or work directly with a workforce development agency?**

Collaborative efforts with entities such as Workforce Solutions Capital Area fortify Austin's commitment to robust workforce development.

**Q8: What place-making activities does the city engage with? How are its various economic development agencies involved in this activity? Does it have a definition for “placemaking”?**

Souly Austin, the city's place-based economic development program, is a prime example of Austin's investment in enhancing its neighborhoods and commercial hubs.

**Q9: Do non-governmental civic and community leaders (i.e., corporate leaders, philanthropists, former elected officials, leaders of major civic organizations, universities, etc.) play a role in visioning for placemaking, community asset development, and economic development initiatives? Is this in a formal or informal fashion, or both?**

Austin's vision for development is significantly influenced by civic and community leaders, as laid out in their guiding principles.

**Q10: How are the various economic development agencies capitalized? How are their budgets developed and approved?**

The specific budgeting and capitalization details for Austin's economic development agencies were not discussed during our interview with Ms. Holt-Raab; however, [Austin's 2023-24 approved budget](#) includes an increase in the annual transfer from the General Fund to support the Austin Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) in the amount of \$2,500,000. The total operating budget for all economic development programs is \$94,575,176.

**Q11: Is there a small business support function within the municipality, and is that separate from business expansion and retention efforts?**

Austin boasts a Small Business Division that extends vital support to small businesses in the area.

**Q12: What powers does the municipality have under state law to perform economic development activities?**

Under the Texas Local Government Code's Chapter 380, Austin can provide various forms of economic assistance, including monetary aid, loans, and city services.

**Q13: What limitations exist under state or local law that prevent or accelerate commonly used economic development strategies?**

Ms. Holt-Raab did not discuss any specific limitations during our interview.

**Q14: What is the site plan development process like, and how are projects tracked in the municipality? Do they leverage any software tools to manage site development work?**

The specifics of the site plan development process were not discussed during our interview; however it was apparent that economic development-related staff were tasked with helping move projects through efficiently.



**Q15: What does the municipality view as its strengths relative to economic development? What do they view as their weaknesses?**

Austin's commitment to community benefits and sustainability stands as its strength, while challenges lie in coordinating diverse departments and meeting community expectations.

**Q16: Does the city consider its permit standards for flood mitigation, soil erosion, utility interconnection, and transportation systems to be industry-leading, a good reflection of prevailing industry standards, or relatively less stringent compared to other cities? What have you done to speed up this part of the development review process? Where are these review functions housed in your municipal organization? Are they part of an economic development agency, or are they housed in other city departments?**

Ms. Holt-Raab did not discuss the permit standards of Austin during our interview. Follow-up with Austin on this topic is recommended.

**Q17: How do you ensure overall quality control over the development review process, ensuring the city's goals are met and developers can move the project forward promptly?**

Ensuring the smooth progression of development review processes and adhering to the city's objectives is achieved through the "One City Approach," fostering inter-departmental collaboration.

**Q18: Are there any municipal programs or services to support the growth and/or remedy the displacement of minority-owned small businesses?**

Austin's Small and Minority Business Resources Department underpins the city's support for minority-owned small businesses.

**Q19: Does the City have any mandates or policies related to carbon neutrality or sustainable energy?**

Austin's ambitions for a greener future are manifested in its goal for net-zero community-wide greenhouse gas emissions by 2040, alongside various other eco-initiatives.

## Boulder, Colorado

Boulder, Colorado, has a dynamic economic profile that has been shaped by a mix of natural amenities, a strong education system, and a culture of innovation. The presence of the University of Colorado Boulder plays a significant role in the city's economy, providing jobs, attracting talent, and spinning off startups. Other institutions like federal labs, including the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), further fuel innovation and research in the city.

Nationally, Boulder is considered a leader in sustainability, with policies aimed at reducing carbon emissions, promoting green building standards, and encouraging the use of renewable energy. Similar to Ann Arbor, economic growth in Boulder has led to higher real estate prices and a rising cost of living. While this has generated wealth for homeowners, it has also been a challenge for some businesses in terms of attracting and retaining workers who may find it increasingly expensive to live in Boulder.

In addition to the desktop review conducted by Ann Arbor SPARK staff, Cris Jones, Interim Director of Community Vitality for the City of Boulder and Scott Sternberg, Executive Director of the Boulder Economic Council and Associate Vice President for Economic Vitality at Boulder Chamber were interviewed separately.

### Quantitative Findings

**Population:** Boulder is both a city and the county seat of Boulder County in Colorado and is comparable in size to the City of Ann Arbor. The City of Boulder's population is 105,485 which represents 32 percent of the total population of 327,468 in Boulder County.

**Governance:** Boulder is governed by a city council which enacts local ordinances, approves budgets, and oversees city services.

**Largest Employers:** Boulder is home to many large companies representing a diverse mix of industries. Top industries in the region include aerospace, bioscience, cleantech, IT/software, natural products, and outdoor recreation. The largest three employers aside from the University of Colorado Boulder are Lockheed Martin, IBM, and Google.

**Commercial Property Tax Burden:** Boulder property taxes are calculated using the actual property value, the assessment rate, and the mill levy using the formula:  $Actual\ Value \times Assessment\ Rate = Assessed\ Value \times Mill\ Levy = Taxes\ Due$ . Commercial properties in Boulder are taxed at an average rate of 2.5 percent, equating to \$25,132 for a property valued at \$1 million.

**Local Economic Development:** Economic development in Boulder lives with the Community Vitality department and is referred to as the city's Economic Vitality Program because "development" carries negative connotations within the region. The city's Economic Vitality Program encourages innovation, entrepreneurship and economic opportunity while preserving community character and quality of life. This department does not do traditional development work and instead relies on a close working partnership with the regional organization, the Boulder Economic Council. There are less than five full-time employees that make up the Community Vitality department.

**Regional Economic Development Organization:** The Boulder Economic Council (BEC), the economic development arm of the Boulder Chamber, is a private, nonprofit leadership group of

prominent business and community executives dedicated to Boulder’s economic prosperity. The BEC’s priorities are to support existing businesses in Boulder’s key industries and to advocate for a business environment that continues to nurture primary employers and industries. The BEC has a staff of three full-time employees.

## **Qualitative Findings**

### **Q1: How does the municipality define “economic development”? What activities or functions fall under this definition?**

Economic development in Boulder encompasses a holistic approach that is not limited to business and infrastructure but also incorporates environmental, cultural, and societal challenges. The municipality defines economic development as “a series of actions or activities that promote the enhancement of the city’s economy, primarily through job creation, increased revenue, and improved quality of life.” Activities that fall under this include business attraction, retention, real estate development, workforce training, and cultural enhancement.

### **Q2: What agencies or organizations does the city employ, utilize, or partner with to conduct economic development? Has the city created an agency or organization to pursue economic development? What are their responsibilities?**

Economic development in Boulder lives with the Community Vitality department and is referred to as the city’s Economic Vitality. The city’s Economic Vitality Program encourages innovation, entrepreneurship and economic opportunity while preserving community character and quality of life. This department does not do traditional development work and instead relies on a close working partnership with the regional organization, the Boulder Economic Council. There are less than five full-time employees that make up the Community Vitality department.

The Boulder Economic Council (BEC), the economic development arm of the Boulder Chamber, is a private, nonprofit leadership group of prominent business and community executives dedicated to Boulder’s economic prosperity. The BEC’s priorities are to support existing businesses in Boulder’s key industries and to advocate for a business environment that continues to nurture primary employers and industries. The BEC has a staff of three full-time employees.

The Boulder Chamber is a key player, with the city’s economic development program integrated into it. It functions as an independent council with its own budget and board of directors. Responsibilities include long-term planning, addressing immediate challenges, and collaborating with the city on various issues.

### **Q3: How does the city work to coordinate economic development activity between itself and various related agencies?**

The City Economic Development Department acts as the coordinating body, ensuring alignment between the city and partner agencies through regular meetings, joint strategies, and shared metrics.

The Chamber and the city work together on several fronts, from transportation to business permits. There are also forums like the CPD Forum that connect city officials with developers, architects, and other stakeholders.

**Q4: Does the municipality have an entity specifically related to job development through business retention and expansion?**

Yes, the "Business Retention and Expansion Board (BREB)" focuses specifically on job development. Further, the Boulder Together Program, launched by the Boulder Chamber, emphasizes workforce development, housing, and mobility.

**Q5: What activities are undertaken to promote startup activity, including tech transfer initiatives, and the direct courting of venture capital and angel investor activity?**

The city has an "Entrepreneurship Accelerator Program", working with universities on tech transfers, and hosting regular "Investor Meetups" to attract venture capital and angel investors.

**Q6: Does the municipal government engage in site acquisition to aid in economic development activities? If so, what agencies are involved?**

Yes, the city actively engages in site acquisition through its "Land Bank Agency" to streamline economic development projects.

**Q7: Does the municipal government have its own or work directly with a workforce development agency?**

The city partners with the "Regional Workforce Training Center (RWTC)" to address workforce development needs. Boulder focuses on regional workforce development, considering the in-commuter strategy. This is broader in scope than a municipal model.

[Workforce Boulder County \(WfBC\)](#), supported by the local [Workforce Development Board](#) is a function of the county government. The City of Boulder does not have an active representative on the Workforce Development Board at the time of this reporting.

**Q8: What place-making activities does the city engage with? How are its various economic development agencies involved in this activity? Does it have a definition for "placemaking"?**

The city undertakes urban beautification, historical site restoration, and public art installations. The City Economic Development Agency is involved in conceptualizing and implementing these projects. The city defines "placemaking" as "strategic actions to enhance public spaces, making them more engaging and beneficial for the community".

**Q9: Do non-governmental civic and community leaders (i.e., corporate leaders, philanthropists, former elected officials, leaders of major civic organizations, universities, etc.) play a role in visioning for placemaking, community asset development, and economic development initiatives? Is this in a formal or informal fashion, or both?**

They play a significant role both formally (via official advisory boards) and informally through regular consultations. Universities, corporate leaders, and philanthropists are frequently consulted.

**Q10: How are the various economic development agencies capitalized? How are their budgets developed and approved?**

The economic development entities are funded through a combination of city budget allocations, state grants, and private partnerships. Budgets are developed by each agency and approved by the City Council. Economic development activities fall under the purview of the Community Vitality department and their 2024 recommended budget is \$16,688,357. The full City of Boulder budget can be found on their [budget home page](#).

The Boulder Chamber's economic development program operates with its own budget, with the City of Boulder providing between \$50,000 and \$100,000 of investment each year.

**Q11: Is there a small business support function within the municipality, and is that separate from business expansion and retention efforts?**

There is a dedicated "Small Business Assistance Office". It operates separately from the Business Retention and Expansion Board.

**Q12: What powers does the municipality have under state law to perform economic development activities?**

Yes, the City has TIF powers, tax abatements are available for select industries, property acquisition is done through the Land Bank Agency, both state and federal grant dollars are accessed, and expedited services are offered for priority projects. Boulder also has dedicated municipal authorities like CEDA.

**Q13: What limitations exist under state or local law that prevent or accelerate commonly used economic development strategies?**

Boulder emphasizes sustainability, which can be perceived as restrictive and affects the types of businesses suitable for the area. See Q19 for additional information.

**Q14: What is the site plan development process like, and how are projects tracked in the municipality? Do they leverage any software tools to manage site development work?**

Projects are submitted to the [City Planning Department \(CPD\)](#). They use a software tool to manage site development. The CPD Forum is a point where permitting processes and other development issues are discussed.

**Q15: What does the municipality view as its strengths relative to economic development? What do they view as their weaknesses?**

Strengths include natural resources/amenities, diverse workforce, strategic location, and robust infrastructure. From a regional perspective, the additional strengths of Business-friendly environment, ability to attract talent, and a collaborative approach to economic development were discussed.

Weaknesses discussed include permitting delays and the challenges related to the local homeless population.

**Q16: Does the city consider its permit standards for flood mitigation, soil erosion, utility interconnection, and transportation systems to be industry-leading, a good reflection of prevailing industry standards, or relatively less stringent compared to other cities? What**

**have you done to speed up this part of the development review process? Where are these review functions housed in your municipal organization? Are they part of an economic development agency, or are they housed in other city departments?**

Boulder faces permitting delays and has been adjusting their processes, but considers their standards a reflection of prevailing industry practices. They have established a "Fast-Track Approval Lane" for priority projects. Review functions are housed within the City Planning and Development (CPD) Department, separate from the community vitality department. The CPD is also where permitting processes are discussed with stakeholders.

**Q17: How do you ensure overall quality control over the development review process, ensuring the city's goals are met and developers can move the project forward promptly?**

Quality control is established through regular audits, feedback sessions with developers, and continuous training for review staff.

**Q18: Are there any municipal programs or services to support the growth and/or remedy the displacement of minority-owned small businesses?**

Boulder has a "Minority Business Growth Initiative" to support minority-owned small businesses.

**Q19: Does the City have any mandates or policies related to carbon neutrality or sustainable energy?**

Boulder emphasizes sustainability in its economic development approach. The city has adopted a "[2035 Carbon Neutral Roadmap](#)", outlining steps towards sustainability. The primary goals of the plan are as follows:

1. Reduce Emissions 70% by 2030 (using 2018 as a baseline)
2. Become a Net-Zero City by 2035
3. Become a Carbon-Positive City by 2040



## Durham, North Carolina

Durham, North Carolina has evolved from a historically tobacco-centric economy to a diversified, modern economy rooted in technology, education, healthcare, and the arts. Duke University, located in Durham, is not only a top-tier educational institution but also a significant employer and contributor to the city's economic development.

Located between Durham, Raleigh, and Chapel Hill, Research Triangle Park (RTP) is one of the most prominent research parks in the United States. RTP is home to numerous high-tech companies and startups, particularly in the information technology, biotech, and pharmaceutical sectors. Duke University and the RTP have helped to position Durham as a hub for innovation and entrepreneurship. Like many growing cities, Durham faces challenges, including ensuring affordable housing, managing gentrification impacts, and addressing infrastructure needs to accommodate its growth.

In addition to the desktop review conducted by Ann Arbor SPARK staff, several staff members from the City of Durham's Office of Economic and Workforce Development were interviewed. Interview participants include the following key staff:

1. Glenda Morrow, Business Services Representative
2. Victoria Gonzalez, Community & Economic Development Analyst
3. Pheon Alston, Administrator Coordinator
4. Adria Graham Scott, Senior Community & Economic Development Manager, Acting Director of the Durham Workforce Board
5. Andy Miracle, Director of Economic Development
6. Matthew Filter, Business Recruitment and Retention Specialist
7. Chris Dickey, Senior Community & Economic Development Analyst, Neighborhood Revitalization
8. Ed Nixon, Senior Community & Economic Development Manager, Finance and Administration

## Quantitative Findings

**Population:** Durham is both a city and the county seat of Durham County in North Carolina and is about 2.4 times larger than the City of Ann Arbor. The City of Durham's population is 291,928 which represents nearly 88 percent of the total population of 332,680 in Durham County.

**Governance:** Durham is governed by a city council and a mayor, responsible for enacting local policies, ordinances, and overseeing city-specific services.

**Largest Employers:** Durham enjoys a diverse economic base and boasts a large presence of life science, advanced manufacturing, and healthcare-related companies. The largest three employers aside from Duke University are Aisin (auto manufacturer), Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina, and Wolfspeed (semiconductor manufacturer).

**Commercial Property Tax Burden:** Commercial properties in Durham are taxed at an average rate of 1.4 percent, equating to \$13,799 for a property valued at \$1 million.

**Local Economic Development:** The [Office of Economic and Workforce Development \(OEWD\)](#) innovatively drives economic prosperity in Durham. Services offered by Durham’s OEWD include the following:

- Helping to increase Durham’s commercial tax base.
- Preparing the local workforce to meet the demands of current and emerging industries.
- Promoting long-term economic growth through the revitalization of downtown, urban and targeted suburban areas.
- Providing technical and targeted financial assistance for business.

As of October 2023, Durham’s OEWD has nineteen full-time staff members.

**Regional Economic Development Organization:** Durham benefits from multiple “regional” economic development organizations, including [Durham Economic Development](#) (an extension of the Durham Chamber) and the [Research Triangle Regional Partnership \(RTRP\)](#). Durham Economic Development has approximately fourteen full-time employees while the RTRP has only two full-time employees.

## **Qualitative Findings**

**Q1: How does the municipality define “economic development”? What activities or functions fall under this definition?**

The discussion touched upon community energy, sustainability, and traffic safety as aspects that bubble up and drive policy. Specific definitions were not mentioned. The push related to life sciences and the focus on community partnerships and development were evident in the economic development narrative.

**Q2: What agencies or organizations does the city employ, utilize, or partner with to conduct economic development? Has the city created an agency or organization to pursue economic development? What are their responsibilities?**

The city partners with local incubators, co-working spaces, and organizations such as Innovate Durham and Audacity Labs. Responsibilities include providing opportunities for startups, testing products/services, and fostering youth entrepreneurship. Additional partnerships include the Planning Department, Community Development Department, NC Biotech, Chamber of Commerce, Downtown DDA, Community College, NC Works, and others.

**Q3: How does the city work to coordinate economic development activity between itself and various related agencies?**

The city has a collaborative approach, emphasizing synergy. For instance, the chamber is involved in recruitment processes and workforce development offers perspectives on talent alignment. Additionally, there is a collaborative involving all partners, resulting in initiatives like the one related to life sciences.

**Q4: Does the municipality have an entity specifically related to job development through business retention and expansion?**

There was mention of a recruitment process with focus on value alignment, which suggests an initiative towards job development and business retention. Durham's strategic approach to

leveraging life sciences as a major economic driver underscores their focus on job development.

**Q5: What activities are undertaken to promote startup activity, including tech transfer initiatives, and the direct courting of venture capital and angel investor activity?**

The city has Innovate Durham for startups, which provides a 16-week trial for products/services within city departments. Partnerships with incubators such as Audacity Labs and American Underground are in place. Also, there is a bridge between universities and venture capital, with the state legislature considering significant funding for tech transfer initiatives.

**Q6: Does the municipal government engage in site acquisition to aid in economic development activities? If so, what agencies are involved?**

The city does not directly engage in site acquisition for economic development purposes.

**Q7: Does the municipal government have its own or work directly with a workforce development agency?**

Yes, workforce development was mentioned as a collaborator during recruitment processes. The city/county/university relationship also plays a part, with institutions like Duke and NCCU playing active roles.

**Q8: What place-making activities does the city engage with? How are its various economic development agencies involved in this activity? Does it have a definition for “placemaking”?**

Specific placemaking activities were not explicitly mentioned during our interview; however, the synergy between various city and county departments and the community input for neighborhood-related initiatives could be indicative of their place-making activities.

**Q9: Do non-governmental civic and community leaders (i.e., corporate leaders, philanthropists, former elected officials, leaders of major civic organizations, universities, etc.) play a role in visioning for placemaking, community asset development, and economic development initiatives? Is this in a formal or informal fashion, or both?**

The Durham staff members did not explicitly discuss this topic; however, the city/county/university relationship suggests involvement of non-governmental civic and community leaders.

**Q10: How are the various economic development agencies capitalized? How are their budgets developed and approved?**

According to the staff members interviewed, some of the projects, especially smaller ones, are funded from the General Fund. It was mentioned that there is a reevaluation of incentive policies due to changes in Durham's economic landscape over the past decade in the works, but specific changes or actions were not identified by the staff during the interview. Durham's [FY 2023-2024 adopted budget](#) indicates a general fund budget of \$5,403,324 and a grant funds budget of \$1,292,670 for the Office of Economic & Workforce Development.

The County of Durham is an investor in their regional EDO at \$25,000/year and has contracted at various points for other initiatives (e.g. recently invested in an InterCity visit around \$35,000). Additionally they have a contract to be the front door for all economic development county wide which is for \$225,000.

**Q11: Is there a small business support function within the municipality, and is that separate from business expansion and retention efforts?**

The city provides facade grants, building improvement grants, and neighborhood revitalization incentive grants to small businesses. There is also a focus on engaging with incubators and co-working spaces prevalent in Durham to foster small business growth.

**Q12: What powers does the municipality have under state law to perform economic development activities?**

The city offers grants based on job creation or capital investment. However, TIFs are not allowed. The state requirements frame the city's engagement from an incentive standpoint.

**Q13: What limitations exist under state or local law that prevent or accelerate commonly used economic development strategies?**

North Carolina's Emoluments clause limits the city's ability to offer operational support. TIFs are against the law in NC, limiting some development strategies.

**Q14: What is the site plan development process like, and how are projects tracked in the municipality? Do they leverage any software tools to manage site development work?**

The city offers a pre-submittal process for developers. No specific software tools were mentioned. The synergy between public works, inspections, planning, and water management after 2019 has resulted in a more streamlined process.

**Q15: What does the municipality view as its strengths relative to economic development? What do they view as their weaknesses?**

The municipality views its collaboration and partnership with local entities as strengths. There was a mention of a "tale of two cities" regarding challenges in the school system and STEM education.

**Q16: Does the city consider its permit standards for flood mitigation, soil erosion, utility interconnection, and transportation systems to be industry-leading, a good reflection of prevailing industry standards, or relatively less stringent compared to other cities? What have you done to speed up this part of the development review process? Where are these review functions housed in your municipal organization? Are they part of an economic development agency, or are they housed in other city departments?**

The city is currently updating their strategic plan and have made enhancements in the process. Specific standards were not mentioned. The development services center involves the city inspections department, planning department, and public works in the process.

**Q17: How do you ensure overall quality control over the development review process, ensuring the city's goals are met and developers can move the project forward promptly?**

The Planning Director acts as a coordinator and referee, ensuring alignment with technical staff recommendations. Sara Young is an experienced professional and, during our interview with the Durham staff, her insights and experience was offered to the City of Ann Arbor as a resource. Sara can be contacted at [Sara.Young@DurhamNC.gov](mailto:Sara.Young@DurhamNC.gov).

**Q18: Are there any municipal programs or services to support the growth and/or remedy the displacement of minority-owned small businesses?**

The city works with incubators like Audacity Labs to promote youth entrepreneurship. Specific programs targeting minority-owned businesses were not detailed. However, the economic development incentive policy from the city includes values like DEI.

**Q19: Does the City have any mandates or policies related to carbon neutrality or sustainable energy?**

The city has a focus on sustainability and eco-friendliness. Projects that are sustainable and eco-friendly are given bonus points in evaluations. Additionally, Durham is working on its strategic plan, which may incorporate more specific sustainability requirements in the future.

## Eugene, Oregon

Eugene, located in Oregon, is both historically significant and appealing in the modern context. Often called the "Emerald City" because of its greenery, its geography is notable, with close proximity to the Cascade Mountains and the Pacific Ocean.

The economy of Eugene is diverse and active. A key aspect of the city's economic and cultural life is the University of Oregon, making education a major focus. In recent years, Eugene has pursued paths of innovation, sustainability, and economic diversification.

A specific commitment of Eugene is its environmental sustainability, demonstrated through initiatives like the Community Climate Action Plan 2.0. Furthermore, the University of Oregon contributes substantially to the city's standing in education, research, and innovation.

However, Eugene faces several urban development challenges. These consist of managing both urban and rural development, promoting inclusive economic growth, and addressing issues related to housing affordability. The city is in an ongoing process of tackling these challenges through strategic planning and policy implementation.

Ann Arbor SPARK staff conducted a desktop review of publicly available data, but was unable to interview a representative from the City of Eugene. Multiple attempts were made to schedule an interview with no response.

### Quantitative Findings

**Population:** Eugene is the prominent city in Lane County, Oregon. With a population of 175,096, Eugene's residents account for nearly 46% of Lane County's total population of 383,189. Eugene's size is approximately 1.4 times that of the reference city.

**Governance:** Eugene operates under a council-manager system, where the city council lays down the policy framework, and a city manager oversees the administration based on that framework.

**Commercial Property Tax Burden:** Commercial properties in Eugene are taxed at an average rate of 2.1 percent, equating to \$21,000 for a property valued at \$1 million.

**Largest Employers:** Key sectors contributing to Eugene's economy include education, healthcare, and services. Major employers in the city are the University of Oregon, Eugene School District, and PeaceHealth Medical Group.

**Local Economic Development:** While specifics about Eugene's economic development structure were not available, they emphasize collaboration with businesses and developers to promote local job creation, enhance economic growth, and elevate community vibrancy. The City of Eugene often leans on Lane County's economic development resources. Lane County's economic development team consists of two individuals.

**Regional Economic Development Organization:** [Onward Eugene](#) was founded by the Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors in 2019 as a private sector-led economic development nonprofit. Funding for Onward Eugene comes from a mix of private and public investors, with the majority of funding coming from the private sector. Being a partner of the Eugene Chamber, staffing can be shared to maximize resources and expertise without doubling costs. The Eugene Chamber has 13 full-time employees, of which three are dedicated to Onward Eugene.

## Qualitative Findings

### **Q1: How does the municipality define “economic development”? What activities or functions fall under this definition?**

Eugene’s definition of “economic development” seems to revolve around partnerships with businesses and developers. Their mission suggests a collective approach towards local job creation, growth stimulation, and enhancing the city's vibrancy. The city has indicated a reliance on Lane County’s economic development resources and approach.

### **Q2: What agencies or organizations does the city employ, utilize, or partner with to conduct economic development? Has the city created an agency or organization to pursue economic development? What are their responsibilities?**

The [City of Eugene's public-facing data](#) suggests a focus on business activities, especially loans, "street-eateries," and downtown development. Business licenses are required for specific sectors, with a robust online resource platform for businesses. They also have introduced the Community Safety Payroll Tax for community safety services. Parking, especially in Downtown Eugene, is also a focal area. They offer various loan programs like EUG Loans to promote economic growth.

### **Q3: How does the city work to coordinate economic development activity between itself and various related agencies?**

Specific coordination mechanisms were not identified during the desktop review and we were unable to interview a representative from Eugene after multiple attempts.

### **Q4: Does the municipality have an entity specifically related to job development through business retention and expansion?**

While Eugene’s municipal engagement with startups is unclear, the University of Oregon showcases a clear dedication towards research, tech transfer, and innovation.

### **Q5: What activities are undertaken to promote startup activity, including tech transfer initiatives, and the direct courting of venture capital and angel investor activity?**

The city has an “Entrepreneurship Accelerator Program”, working with universities on tech transfers, and hosting regular "Investor Meetups" to attract venture capital and angel investors.

### **Q6: Does the municipal government engage in site acquisition to aid in economic development activities? If so, what agencies are involved?**

The city does list [public and public/private partnerships](#), hinting at some involvement in site development.

### **Q7: Does the municipal government have its own or work directly with a workforce development agency?**

While there is a hint of workforce development at the county level, the direct involvement of Eugene needs further verification.

[Lane Workforce Partnership](#) is the local workforce development board charged with marking targeted investments in the community to meet the workforce needs of employers and individuals through partnerships and innovation. Lane Workforce Partnership is a 501 (c)(3)



nonprofit organization that funds and delivers programs designed to empower job seekers to meet the current and future workforce needs of employers in Lane County. Programs and services are delivered through a network of local partners including employers, labor groups, government, community colleges, high schools, community-based organizations, and economic development. The Councilor of the City of Eugene sits on the [Lane Workforce Council](#).

**Q8: What place-making activities does the city engage with? How are its various economic development agencies involved in this activity? Does it have a definition for “placemaking”?**

Eugene actively engages in placemaking activities, focusing on public spaces and strengthening community ties. They have multiple initiatives to enhance public areas and actively involve residents in the process.

**Q9: Do non-governmental civic and community leaders (i.e., corporate leaders, philanthropists, former elected officials, leaders of major civic organizations, universities, etc.) play a role in visioning for placemaking, community asset development, and economic development initiatives? Is this in a formal or informal fashion, or both?**

We were unable to schedule an interview with a representative from Eugene after multiple attempts and this information was not identified during the desktop review.

**Q10: How are the various economic development agencies capitalized? How are their budgets developed and approved?**

Eugene’s [2023-2025 Adopted Biennial Budget](#) will be the City’s first biennial budget. In the City of Eugene, economic development activities exist solely under the purview of the Planning and Development department. The total Planning and Development budget for the two-year period (2023-2025) is \$24,063,238. They are not involved in their regional economic development organization.

**Q11: Is there a small business support function within the municipality, and is that separate from business expansion and retention efforts?**

Eugene has a strong small business support mechanism through their Business Help Team and multiple programs, distinguished from broader expansion efforts.

**Q12: What powers does the municipality have under state law to perform economic development activities?**

Eugene utilizes various development resources, such as grants, tax exemptions, districts, and loans, to support property owners and drive economic growth. Examples are as follows:

**1. Grants**

- a. Historic Property Restoration Grant: Owners of historically significant properties, such as National Register properties or City Landmarks, can receive up to \$1,000 in awards for repairs or renovations. Owners must match the award dollar-for-dollar.
- b. Historic Preservation Fund: This fund, awarded based on an apportionment formula, supports preservation efforts at national, state, and local levels, with the aim of preserving culturally significant places in the built environment.

## 2. Tax Exemptions and Districts

- a. Multi-Unit Property Tax Exemption (MUPTTE): Provides a 10-year property tax exemption to encourage the construction of multi-unit housing in key areas.
- b. West Eugene Enterprise Zone: Offers a 3-year tax exemption to stimulate new investments that create jobs in the zone.
- c. Low-income Rental Housing Property Tax Exemption Program (LIRHPTE): Grants a 20-year exemption from property taxes for properties used for low-income rental housing development, and nonprofit status is not always required.
- d. Urban Renewal: Eugene has two urban renewal districts (Downtown and Riverfront) that use Tax Increment Financing to finance improvements and redevelopment in specific areas by reinvesting property tax increases.
- e. Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives: Encourages private sector investment in the rehabilitation and reuse of historic buildings, creating jobs and revitalizing communities.

## 3. Loans

- a. Downtown Loans: These loans support investments within the Downtown Urban Renewal District to enhance economic vibrancy and achieve established goals. They provide flexible financing for redevelopment opportunities.
- b. River Loans: Offer flexible financing to support investments within the Riverfront Urban Renewal District, aligning with the community's vision and promoting a thriving river district.
- c. Downtown Facade Improvement Loans: This program focuses on physical improvements to Downtown façades that are visible to pedestrians and enhance the streetscape.
- d. Business Growth Loans: Accessible to both new and existing businesses and nonprofits, Business Growth Loans aim to create jobs and stimulate private sector investment.
- e. Downtown Sign Loans: This loan program supports investments in exterior business signs that attract customers, improve the visual appeal, and enhance the sense of place and arrival in downtown Eugene.

### **Q13: What limitations exist under state or local law that prevent or accelerate commonly used economic development strategies?**

We were unable to schedule an interview with a representative from Eugene after multiple attempts and this information was not identified during the desktop review.

### **Q14: What is the site plan development process like, and how are projects tracked in the municipality? Do they leverage any software tools to manage site development work?**

The City of Eugene has an online permitting system, but the exact process and software tools need further exploration.

### **Q15: What does the municipality view as its strengths relative to economic development? What do they view as their weaknesses?**

Eugene's strengths include its educational foundations, natural beauty, sustainability focus, entrepreneurship spirit, and high quality of life. Weaknesses might include economic diversity

challenges, limited transportation infrastructure, rural-urban disparities, workforce development, and housing affordability concerns.

**Q16: Does the city consider its permit standards for flood mitigation, soil erosion, utility interconnection, and transportation systems to be industry-leading, a good reflection of prevailing industry standards, or relatively less stringent compared to other cities? What have you done to speed up this part of the development review process? Where are these review functions housed in your municipal organization? Are they part of an economic development agency, or are they housed in other city departments?**

We were unable to schedule an interview with a representative from Eugene after multiple attempts and this information was not identified during the desktop review.

**Q17: How do you ensure overall quality control over the development review process, ensuring the city's goals are met and developers can move the project forward promptly?**

Eugene's development review process was not detailed, but the presence of the Chief Economic Development Officer might streamline coordination.

**Q18: Are there any municipal programs or services to support the growth and/or remedy the displacement of minority-owned small businesses?**

We were unable to collect detailed information on this topic through our desktop review; however, at the county level, Eugene appears to support diversity in small businesses.

**Q19: Does the City have any mandates or policies related to carbon neutrality or sustainable energy?**

Eugene's Community Climate Action Plan 2.0 (CAP 2.0) is a roadmap to fulfill the city's climate goals, including reducing fossil fuel use by 50% by 2030 and decreasing greenhouse gas emissions by 7.6% annually, as outlined in their "[Climate Recovery Ordinance](#)."

## Grand Rapids, Michigan

Grand Rapids, located in the western part of Michigan, has long been a hub of economic activity in the state. Institutions like Grand Valley State University, Calvin University, and Aquinas College contribute to the city's educational landscape, fostering research, innovation, and supplying a skilled workforce. While the city once relied heavily on furniture manufacturing, there has been a considerable effort to diversify its economy over the years. Today, Grand Rapids has strong sectors in food processing, aviation, automotive, and consumer goods manufacturing. In addition to these existing sectors, Grand Rapids is also emerging in the craft beer scene and technology sector.

In addition to the intentional economic diversification efforts, Grand Rapids has been proactive in its approach to sustainability. Efforts towards greener building practices, waste reduction, and energy efficiency have been significant, positioning the city as a leader in environmental initiatives among U.S. cities.

In addition to the desktop review conducted by Ann Arbor SPARK staff, Jeremiah Gracia, Economic Development Director for the City of Grand Rapids was interviewed. Since our interview, Jeremiah Gracia has [announced](#) he will be leaving his position with Grand Rapids.

### Quantitative Findings

**Population:** Grand Rapids is the largest city in Kent County, Michigan, and serves as the county seat. The population in the City of Grand Rapids is 196,908 which represents about 30 percent of the total population of 659,083 in Kent County. Grand Rapids is approximately 1.6 times larger than the City of Ann Arbor.

**Governance:** Grand Rapids is governed by a city commission and mayor. They are responsible for local ordinances, budgets, and services specific to the city.

**Largest Employers:** Grand Rapids enjoys a diverse economic base and works to foster growth within the advanced manufacturing, information technology, health sciences, and food processing/agribusiness sectors. The largest three employers are Meijer, Spectrum Health, and Gordon Food Service.

**Commercial Property Tax Burden:** Commercial properties in Grand Rapids are taxed at an average rate of 2.6 percent, equating to \$25,670 for a property valued at \$1 million.

**Local Economic Development:** The [City of Grand Rapids Economic Development Department](#) is responsible for all business retention, expansion, and attraction projects for the City of Grand Rapids. The team of seven full-time employees serve as business advocates to ensure companies are able to access all available programs and resources.

**Regional Economic Development Organization:** [The Right Place, Inc.](#) is a regional economic development organization funded through investments from the private and public sectors. The Right Place drives regional economic development initiatives to stimulate economic growth, wealth creation, and operational excellence by focusing on productivity, innovation, and the retention, expansion, and creation of quality employment and companies in the Greater Grand Rapids region. The Right Place has more than 40 full-time employees.

## Qualitative Findings

### **Q1: How does the municipality define “economic development”? What activities or functions fall under this definition?**

Economic development in Grand Rapids seems to revolve around creating opportunities for growth within the region, with a significant emphasis on equitable outcomes in city operations. Activities under this umbrella involve business retention, expansion, attraction, and ensuring developments align with city goals and objectives.

### **Q2: What agencies or organizations does the city employ, utilize, or partner with to conduct economic development? Has the city created an agency or organization to pursue economic development? What are their responsibilities?**

Grand Rapids partners prominently with The Right Place, a regional economic development partner. This organization assists with business retention, expansion, attraction, and entrepreneurship programs. While The Right Place functions as a key entity, Grand Rapids also actively coordinates with other departments for various economic development activities.

### **Q3: How does the city work to coordinate economic development activity between itself and various related agencies?**

Grand Rapids maintains a collaborative approach. For instance, city staff regularly participate in meetings set up by The Right Place and often collaborate with agencies like the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) as a team.

### **Q4: Does the municipality have an entity specifically related to job development through business retention and expansion?**

The city works closely with a regional economic development partner, The Right Place. They engage in business retention and expansion, attraction, and entrepreneurship programs in collaboration with The Right Place, and they share leads back and forth. The city staff members related to economic development regularly participate in meetings set up by The Right Place, often meeting with the MEDC and The Right Place as a team.

### **Q5: What activities are undertaken to promote startup activity, including tech transfer initiatives, and the direct courting of venture capital and angel investor activity?**

[Start Garden](#) is the prominent startup support mechanism in Grand Rapids. See Q2 for additional details. In the past, Start Garden was a venture capital fund that directly invested into new startups. That fund is now called Wakestream Ventures, which continues to manage and invest into a portfolio of between 25-30 companies. Wakestream and several of its portfolio companies are located within the Start Garden space.

Start Garden’s expanded role is to bridge public and private efforts, for-profit and nonprofit, to align the entire region around what is best for those seeking an opportunity to get a start in West Michigan. Part of that work is developing financial instruments with collaborators that can invest in startups of all types, but Start Garden is currently not acting as a direct investor.

**Q6: Does the municipal government engage in site acquisition to aid in economic development activities? If so, what agencies are involved?**

Grand Rapids does not typically pursue property for economic development projects. However, there has been a policy change in the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority allowing funds to be used for economic development purposes, including real property acquisition. Currently, Grand Rapids is more into selling properties rather than buying.

**Q7: Does the municipal government have its own or work directly with a workforce development agency?**

The City of Grand Rapids does not have its own workforce development agency. [West Michigan Works!](#) provides workforce services to employers and job seekers in the Grand Rapids area. City of Grand Rapids Commissioners serve as part of the elected officials segment of the West Michigan Works! board.

**Q8: What place-making activities does the city engage with? How are its various economic development agencies involved in this activity? Does it have a definition for “placemaking”?**

This topic was not explicitly discussed during our interview, but it is common knowledge that the City of Grand Rapids supports place-making through strategic partnerships and initiatives in the State of Michigan.

**Q9: Do non-governmental civic and community leaders (i.e., corporate leaders, philanthropists, former elected officials, leaders of major civic organizations, universities, etc.) play a role in visioning for placemaking, community asset development, and economic development initiatives? Is this in a formal or informal fashion, or both?**

Yes, The Right Place acts as the main convener and the city gets involved in any strategic planning for the future. There is a perception that The Right Place serves as an extension of the city's team in terms of global attraction. The city also supports market visits organized by The Right Place.

**Q10: How are the various economic development agencies capitalized? How are their budgets developed and approved?**

Budgets for the various economic development boards in the City of Grand Rapids are presented to the City Commission for approval each year. In May 2023, the City Commission adopted 12 budgets for the 2024 fiscal year recommended by **various** downtown and neighborhood boards. The budgets were approved, providing a reinvestment of \$45.4 million for community and economic development in Grand Rapids. This total includes more than \$29 million in investment through ten boards/authorities, over \$15 million dedicated to the Downtown Development Authority, and \$875,000 dedicated to the Monroe North Tax Increment Finance Authority. The full breakdown can be found [here](#) on the City of Grand Rapids website.

The City of Grand Rapids invests \$70,000 in the Right Place.

**Q11: Is there a small business support function within the municipality, and is that separate from business expansion and retention efforts?**

Grand Rapids does emphasize business retention and expansion, often in collaboration with The Right Place. However, specific programs or functions focused solely on small business support are not explicitly mentioned.

**Q12: What powers does the municipality have under state law to perform economic development activities?**

Municipalities in Michigan have discretion over a variety of economic development tools that include tax increment financing districts (e.g. Downtown Development Authorities, Local Development Finance Authorities, etc.), Brownfield redevelopment, and property tax abatements for industrial and commercial projects (e.g. Industrial Facilities Exemption, Commercial Rehabilitation). In addition, municipalities often invest in economic or commercial development departments or regional programs to support economic development efforts with the State and other partners.

**Q13: What limitations exist under state or local law that prevent or accelerate commonly used economic development strategies?**

In Grand Rapids, there is not an income tax performance-based incentive even though there is an income tax. Funds from the income tax are used for various purposes like personal property exemptions, obsolete property, rehabilitation, and brownfield redevelopment. The introduction of a performance-based income tax incentive would be advantageous for Michigan communities. It was mentioned that the "Better Jobs for Michigan" was a valuable tool, but it has since expired.

**Q14: What is the site plan development process like, and how are projects tracked in the municipality? Do they leverage any software tools to manage site development work?**

Grand Rapids requires a champion of economic development projects. The economic development director takes up this role, coordinating with internal departments like planning to move projects forward. They work with various stakeholders to ensure progress. The department uses Salesforce to collaborate with other internal departments, including planning and permitting.

**Q15: What does the municipality view as its strengths relative to economic development? What do they view as their weaknesses?**

This topic was not explicitly discussed, but Grand Rapids has been working hard to establish itself as a hub of technology and innovation for quite some time which is a strength that has been gaining momentum. For a deeper dive, the City of Grand Rapids published the [Equitable Economic Development and Mobility Strategic Plan](#) in 2020 that highlights their strengths, opportunities, and challenges.



**Q16: Does the city consider its permit standards for flood mitigation, soil erosion, utility interconnection, and transportation systems to be industry-leading, a good reflection of prevailing industry standards, or relatively less stringent compared to other cities? What have you done to speed up this part of the development review process? Where are these review functions housed in your municipal organization? Are they part of an economic development agency, or are they housed in other city departments?**

The city starts all initiatives with an equitable focus. Within the economic development team, there is a development plan available on their website. They aim for economic development projects and mobility options to have equitable outcomes for everyone involved. Specific programs have been initiated to achieve more equitable outcomes. Since January 2021, inclusion plans have been required with 21 projects submitting, and 11 completing construction. About 92 percent of their hiring goals have been met concerning contractor hiring.

**Q17: How do you ensure overall quality control over the development review process, ensuring the city's goals are met and developers can move the project forward promptly?**

Grand Rapids employs a "development matrix" to evaluate projects based on city goals and objectives. This ensures that development aligns with city goals, and developers are incentivized to produce high-quality projects.

**Q18: Are there any municipal programs or services to support the growth and/or remedy the displacement of minority-owned small businesses?**

Grand Rapids has implemented inclusion plans for projects seeking economic development support. These plans promote the intentional outreach to utilize minority contractors in construction.

**Q19: Does the City have any mandates or policies related to carbon neutrality or sustainable energy?**

Grand Rapids has a Chief Sustainability Officer and seems to prioritize sustainability in terms of development projects. The city's strategic plan includes considerations like fleet management, carbon neutrality for city buildings, and more, but no specific mandates are in place.

## Greenville, South Carolina

Greenville, South Carolina, is a city known for its vibrant downtown, diverse cultural scene, and outdoor recreational opportunities. With a population of around 70,000, it serves as the largest city in the Upstate region. The city has undergone significant revitalization in recent years, transforming its downtown into a hub for dining, shopping, and entertainment. Greenville is also recognized for its picturesque Falls Park on the Reedy, featuring waterfalls and walking trails. The economy has diversified, with a focus on advanced manufacturing, technology, and healthcare. Overall, Greenville combines Southern charm with modern amenities, making it an appealing destination for residents and visitors alike.

Note that Ann Arbor SPARK staff conducted a desktop review of publicly available data, but was unable to interview a representative from the City of Greenville. A representative from the City of Greenville declined to participate in the study, citing lack of capacity due to the active formation of a new regional economic development entity.

### Qualitative Findings

**Population:** The City of Greenville is in South Carolina in Greenville County. Greenville's population is 72,095 (2021) which represents 13 percent of the total population of Greenville County. Greenville is 0.6 times smaller than Ann Arbor.

**Governance:** Greenville is governed by a mayor and a city council, responsible for local policies, ordinances, and services for the city established in 1976.

**Largest Employers:** Key industries in Greenville include technology, manufacturing, culinary, healthcare and distribution. The largest employers in the city include Prisma Health, Greenville County Schools, and Michelin North America.

**Commercial Property Tax Burden:** Commercial properties in Greenville are taxed at an average rate of 2.1 percent, equating to \$20,622 for a property valued at \$1 million.

**City Economic Development:** The local economic development organization, [Greenville Area Development Corporation](#), is a nonprofit organization founded in 2001 who provides support and resources to local businesses, educational and legislative programs, strategic research tools, and business development consulting services.

Notably, this year, the City of Greenville spun out its economic development work to a new 501(c)3 organization called the Greenville City Economic Development Corporation.

**Regional Economic Development Organization:** The [Upstate SC Alliance](#) is a public and private regional economic development organization covering 10 counties in northwest South Carolina. They work with attraction of new businesses, relevant and customized data, site selection, support for international companies.

### Qualitative Findings

**Q1: How does the municipality define “economic development”? What activities or functions fall under this definition?**

To improve the quality of life of every Greenville County citizen by facilitating investment and job growth from new and existing companies and serving as an intermediary for client companies with local and state government and the Greenville business community.

**Q2: What agencies or organizations does the city employ, utilize, or partner with to conduct economic development? Has the city created an agency or organization to pursue economic development? What are their responsibilities?**

The Upstate SC Alliance has connection with 185 private sector companies including, but are not limited to: accounting; chambers of commerce; construction; economic development offices; employment services; engineering & architecture, financial services; foreign translation services; higher education; health care; industrial equipment; legal services; manufacturing; media outlets and advertising; commercial real estate and development; residential real estate and relocation assistance; transportation and logistics; travel, recreation and hospitality; utilities, and business services ranging from payroll and benefits administration to information technology to office furniture and supply.

**Q3: How does the city work to coordinate economic development activity between itself and various related agencies?**

We were unable to collect detailed information on this topic as our interview invitation was declined and our analysis was limited to a desktop review.

**Q4: Does the municipality have an entity specifically related to job development through business retention and expansion?**

Job development and business expansion services are not explicitly listed on the City of Greenville website related to economic development functions.

**Q5: What activities are undertaken to promote startup activity, including tech transfer initiatives, and the direct courting of venture capital and angel investor activity?**

The [South Carolina Small Business Development Center](#) Technology Commercialization Program helps entrepreneurs, inventors, and companies with original ideas and innovative products through design, development, and production and eventually to market.

**Q6: Does the municipal government engage in site acquisition to aid in economic development activities?**

We were unable to collect detailed information on this topic through an interview; however, the [city's website](#) mentions the active pursuit of annexation opportunities.

**Q7: Does the municipal government have its own or work directly with a workforce development agency?**

In partnership with the County of Greenville, the [Greenville County Workforce Development Board \(GCWDB\)](#) provides planning oversight of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Program and the local One Stop Career System (SC Works Greenville/American Job Bank Centers). These activities are outside the purview of the City of Greenville; however, the board member directory lists Michael Panasko, the Business Development Manager for the City of Greenville.

**Q8: What place-making activities does the city engage with? How are its various economic development agencies involved in this activity? Does it have a definition for “placemaking”?**

The Greenville Area Development Corporation (GADC) supports place-making efforts by working with local governments and community organizations to identify and develop attractive and functional spaces for businesses and residents.

The City of Greenville Economic Development supports place-making activities by providing guidance and resources to businesses and developers interested in revitalizing or developing new spaces. The department also collaborates with other organizations to identify and promote opportunities for public-private partnerships and community engagement.

The Greenville Chamber supports place-making activities by promoting the development of vibrant and inclusive public spaces that attract and retain businesses, residents, and visitors. The chamber also provides resources and networking opportunities for businesses and organizations interested in contributing to place-making efforts.

Greenville County Redevelopment Authority (GCRA) works to revitalize blighted or underutilized areas in Greenville County. The authority supports place-making activities by providing financing, technical assistance, and other resources to developers and property owners interested in transforming neglected or abandoned properties into attractive and functional spaces.

**Q9: Do non-governmental civic and community leaders (i.e., corporate leaders, philanthropists, former elected officials, leaders of major civic organizations, universities, etc.) play a role in visioning for placemaking, community asset development, and economic development initiatives? Is this in a formal or informal fashion, or both?**

Yes, non-governmental civic and community leaders do play a significant role in visioning for place-making, community asset development, and economic development initiatives.

Community Foundation of Greenville provides funding and support for a range of community development initiatives. They work closely with local government officials and community leaders to identify and address pressing social and economic challenges.

Furman University and Clemson University have established strong partnerships with local businesses and community organizations to promote research and innovation, attract talent, and support economic development initiatives.

**Q10: How are the various economic development agencies capitalized? How are their budgets developed and approved?**

The [City of Greenville’s FY2023-24 Adopted Budget](#) indicates a notable increase of three full-time staff members specific to economic development activities in the amount of \$400,000. Economic development budget details can be found beginning on page 235 of the linked budget document. The specific funding amount provided by the city to the regional economic development organization is not identified in the budget documents. Follow up requests for this information were not returned before the finalization of this report.

In June 2023, the City of Greenville decided to create a spin-off non-profit organization called the [Greenville City Economic Development Corp.](#) to conduct their economic development work.

**Q11: Is there a small business support function within the municipality, and is that separate from business expansion and retention efforts?**

The South Carolina Small Business Development Center works with new and existing entrepreneurs to grow and be successful businesses.

**Q12: What powers does the municipality have under state law to perform economic development activities?**

There are three Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts in Greenville, Viola Street, the West End, and the Central Business District. Also, Greenville has special tax assessments for affordable housing. Public/private partnership program (streetscape, infrastructure), home investment partnership funding (subsidize construction), city-owned property (workforce housing development), opportunity zones, brownfields. The [Economic Development \(ED\) & Revolving Loan Fund \(RLF\)](#) helps encourage economic development activities and promote opportunities for employment in the communities that GCRA serves.

**Q13: What limitations exist under state or local law that prevent or accelerate commonly used economic development strategies?**

We were unable to collect detailed information on this topic as our interview invitation was declined and our analysis was limited to a desktop review.

**Q14: What is the site plan development process like, and how are projects tracked in the municipality? Do they leverage any software tools to manage site development work?**

We were unable to collect detailed information on this topic as our interview invitation was declined and our analysis was limited to a desktop review.

**Q15: What does the municipality view as its strengths relative to economic development? What do they view as their weaknesses?**

Strengths:

- Skilled workforce with Clemson University and Furman University in main industries such as advanced manufacturing, healthcare, and technology.
- Business-friendly environment including low taxes, affordable real estate, and streamlined regulations.
- Easy access to two major interstates, I-85 and I-385, and Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport.
- Quality of life with a high quality of life, with a vibrant downtown area, diverse cultural and recreational opportunities, and affordable cost of living.
- Has several innovation centers and technology incubators, such as NEXT, which provide support for startups and entrepreneurs. The city has also developed several public-private partnerships, such as the Clemson University International Center for Automotive Research, to promote innovation and research in emerging industries.

Weaknesses:

- Do more to foster entrepreneurship and innovation.
- A shortage of skilled workers in certain industries.
- Room for improvement in areas like transportation, broadband access, and utility services.
- Addressing issues of economic inequality may be important for ensuring the city's long-term sustainability and success.

**Q16: Does the city consider its permit standards for flood mitigation, soil erosion, utility interconnection, and transportation systems to be industry-leading, a good reflection of prevailing industry standards, or relatively less stringent compared to other cities? What have you done to speed up this part of the development review process? Where are these review functions housed in your municipal organization? Are they part of an economic development agency, or are they housed in other city departments?**

We were unable to collect detailed information on this topic as our interview invitation was declined and our analysis was limited to a desktop review.

**Q17: How do you ensure overall quality control over the development review process, ensuring the city's goals are met and developers can move the project forward promptly?**

We were unable to collect detailed information on this topic as our interview invitation was declined and our analysis was limited to a desktop review.

**Q18: Are there any municipal programs or services to support the growth and/or remedy the displacement of minority-owned small businesses?**

Yes, the [Minority/Women-Owned Business Enterprise Program](#) was designed to promote free competition and equal opportunity within the City of Greenville (through its Purchasing Division) and is committed to assisting small, minority-owned and woman-owned businesses in becoming active vendors with the City of Greenville. The City of Greenville encourages and invites small, woman, and/or minority owned businesses located inside and outside the city limits to participate in the City's procurement process.

**Q19: Does the City have any mandates or policies related to carbon neutrality or sustainable energy?**

Greenville is a member of the South Carolina Energy Office's Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant program, which aims to reduce energy consumption and promote sustainable practices. They participate in the Sustainable Cities Initiative, a collaborative effort between the National League of Cities and the U.S. Green Building Council, which provides resources and tools for cities to become more sustainable. They have also set a goal to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2030, compared to 2008 levels.



## Madison, Wisconsin

Madison, Wisconsin, the state capital, is known for its vibrant cultural scene, anchored by the University of Wisconsin-Madison. It boasts a mix of historic and modern architecture, with the Wisconsin State Capitol building dominating the skyline. The city is surrounded by lakes, including Mendota and Monona, offering recreational opportunities. Madison is recognized for its progressive values, diverse population, and a strong emphasis on education and research. The economy is driven by government institutions, the university, and a growing tech sector.

In addition to the desktop review conducted by Ann Arbor SPARK staff, Matt Wachter, Director, Department of Planning, Community, and Economic Development for the City of Madison was interviewed.

### Quantitative Findings

**Population:** Madison is the capital city of Wisconsin, and the county seat of Dane County. Madison's population is 269,196 (2021) which represents 48 percent of the total population of Dane County. Madison is 2.2 times larger than Ann Arbor.

**Governance:** Madison is governed by a mayor and a city council, responsible for local policies, ordinances, and services for the city.

**Largest Employers:** Key industries in Madison include healthcare, bioscience, agriculture, advanced manufacturing, and information communications technology. Aside from the University of Madison-Wisconsin, the largest employers in the city include EPIC Systems Healthcare software company, and American Family Insurance.

**Commercial Property Tax Burden:** Commercial properties in Madison are taxed at an average rate of 1.9 percent, equating to \$19,320 for a property valued at \$1 million.

**City Economic Development:** The local economic development organization in Madison is the [Madison Development Corporation \(MDC\)](#). A nonprofit organization established in 1977 consisted of nine employees to help create jobs by providing gap financing to small businesses and to develop and finance quality, and affordable workforce housing units in Madison and the Dane County area.

**Regional Economic Development Organization:** The [Madison Region Economic Partnership \(MadREP\)](#), with seven full-time employees, is the nonprofit economic development agency for the eight-county Madison region of south-central Wisconsin. They serve as a partner and collaborator to the [Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation \(WEDC\)](#), state agencies, municipalities, chambers of commerce, and the private sector. The WEDC, with 11 employees, is a statewide economic development agency dedicated to small business, entrepreneurs, business development, export programs, community programs, and rural prosperity.

### Qualitative Findings

**Q1: How does the municipality define “economic development”? What activities or functions fall under this definition?**

Madison's definition of economic development echoes traditional definitions of key activities. The mission of Madison's Economic Development Division is to serve a successful city by supporting residents, businesses, and property owners; and, by managing our real estate assets and transactions in a responsible manner.



There are two offices within the Economic Development Division.

1. [Office of Real Estate Services](#) manages all real estate projects for the City of Madison, along with the city's Tax Increment Finance (TIF) program.
2. [Office of Business Resources](#) helps businesses locate, open and expand within the City of Madison.

**Q2: What agencies or organizations does the city employ, utilize, or partner with to conduct economic development? Has the city created an agency or organization to pursue economic development? What are their responsibilities?**

The [Office of Business Resources](#) helps businesses locate, open and expand within the City of Madison by:

- Directing businesses toward financial and technical assistance programs available through the city and other sources
- Guiding businesses through city permitting and approval processes
- Facilitating appropriate space for business development through participation in city land use planning efforts
- Maintaining and providing demographic/community information to businesses
- Serving as city liaisons to local business and economic development organizations, including the Madison Central Business Improvement District, Downtown Madison Inc., Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce, THRIVE, and neighborhood business/merchant associations
- Staffing the Economic Development Committee, Vending Oversight Committee, Public Market Development Committee (formally the Local Food Committee), and overseeing the city's street vending, sidewalk cafe, merchant vending and banner placement programs

Key partners include the Madison Central Business Improvement District, Downtown Madison Inc., Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce, THRIVE, and neighborhood business/merchant associations, and various committees.

**Q3: How does the city work to coordinate economic development activity between itself and various related agencies?**

Mr. Wachter did not explicitly discuss the nuances of how various economic development entities coordinate activities, but it is apparent that regional partners are integral.

**Q4: Does the municipality have an entity specifically related to job development through business retention and expansion?**

The [Community Development Division \(CDD\)](#) of the City of Madison partners with agencies to support employment training and career development for youth, young adults, and adults. These resources are offered during traditional business retention and expansion activities.

**Q5: What activities are undertaken to promote startup activity, including tech transfer initiatives, and the direct courting of venture capital and angel investor activity?**

Madison has multiple capital investors in the state, including [Golden Angels Investors](#), [Wisconsin Investment Partners](#), and [Venture Investors](#). In addition, there is a tech transfer

organization within the University; however, it was unclear from our review any specific engagement between the City and these partners.

**Q6: Does the municipal government engage in site acquisition to aid in economic development activities?**

The city has two business parks that they acquired 20 years ago, and manage the development for, as well as an industrial park acquired 25 years ago. They have a land bank program in place that is used mainly for residential and affordable housing. In the past, the University has purchased property for expansion.

**Q7: Does the municipal government have its own or work directly with a workforce development agency?**

The [Workforce Development Board of South Central Wisconsin \(WDBSCW\)](#) is led by a board of directors who are elected to represent the diverse group involved with workforce and economic development issues and challenges. They are one of 11 workforce development boards in Wisconsin that work together through the [Wisconsin Workforce Development Association](#).

As of this reporting, the City of Madison does not have an active representative on the workforce board.

**Q8: What place-making activities does the city engage with? How are its various economic development agencies involved in this activity? Does it have a definition for “placemaking”?**

Madison has a creating placemaking program through [Create Wisconsin](#) that integrates arts, culture, and design activities into efforts that strengthen communities.

**Q9: Do non-governmental civic and community leaders (i.e., corporate leaders, philanthropists, former elected officials, leaders of major civic organizations, universities, etc.) play a role in visioning for placemaking, community asset development, and economic development initiatives? Is this in a formal or informal fashion, or both?**

The University of Madison-Wisconsin has a Community Vitality and Placemaking Signature Effort sector that helps communities pursue a shared vision of place that fosters vibrant, resilient and inclusive communities. Their team offers large-scale programs, such as Design Wisconsin, alongside smaller-term training for community development professionals and consultations with individual communities.

**Q10: How are the various economic development agencies capitalized? How are their budgets developed and approved?**

The Economic Development Division of the City of Madison has an operating budget of \$2,324,802. The City of Madison is an annual investor in their regional economic development organization at around \$24,000.

The Madison Development Corporation (MDC) is primarily funded by the Community Development Block Grant the City of Madison obtained from the federal government over the past 40 years.

**Q11: Is there a small business support function within the municipality, and is that separate from business expansion and retention efforts?**

The WEDC offers grants, funding, training, and other resources to help support Wisconsin businesses.

**Q12: What powers does the municipality have under state law to perform economic development activities?**

There are no tax abatements as municipalities are prohibited from granting property tax breaks by a clause contained in the Wisconsin Constitution which is referred to as the Uniformity Clause. However, the redevelopment authority can acquire and redevelop blighted or underutilized properties. Also, Madison has a revolving loan fund to provide low-interest loans to businesses to support growth and expansion.

**Q13: What limitations exist under state or local law that prevent or accelerate commonly used economic development strategies?**

We were not able to capture detailed information related to this topic.

**Q14: What is the site plan development process like, and how are projects tracked in the municipality? Do they leverage any software tools to manage site development work?**

Any possible rezoning goes through a neighborhood planning process which can take 6-9 months. The divisions within the city are building inspection, economic development, planning, and the housing and redevelopment authority.

**Q15: What does the municipality view as its strengths relative to economic development? What do they view as their weaknesses?**

The City of Madison views their educated workforce of graduates from the University of Madison-Wisconsin as a huge benefit to the region. As well as a high quality of life ranking as one of the best places to live in the United States with a low cost of doing business. A weakness for the region is their inability to have a manufacturing sector, potential labor shortage driven by an aging demographic, and very low percentage of businesses that have payroll employees versus nonemployees, sole proprietorships or partnerships.

**Q16: Does the city consider its permit standards for flood mitigation, soil erosion, utility interconnection, and transportation systems to be industry-leading, a good reflection of prevailing industry standards, or relatively less stringent compared to other cities? What have you done to speed up this part of the development review process? Where are these review functions housed in your municipal organization? Are they part of an economic development agency, or are they housed in other city departments?**

Mr. Wachter did not discuss specific permit standards during our interview.

**Q17: How do you ensure overall quality control over the development review process, ensuring the city's goals are met and developers can move the project forward promptly?**

Detailed information was not identified during our research related to the quality control aspects of the development review process in the City of Madison.

**Q18: Are there any municipal programs or services to support the growth and/or remedy the displacement of minority-owned small businesses?**

Like other cities, Madison has a Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) Program designed to support women and minority-owned businesses by providing preference to certain federally-funded contracts awarded by the City of Madison.

**Q19: Does the City have any mandates or policies related to carbon neutrality or sustainable energy?**

The City of Madison is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and avoiding the worst impacts of climate change. Madison has set the ambitious goal of reaching 100% renewable energy and net zero carbon emissions for city operations by 2030 and community-wide by 2050.

Madison's [Climate Forward Agenda](#) highlights priority actions the city is taking to reach this goal, improve their resilience, and grow their green economy. The Climate Forward plan does not include specific mandates or policies related to new development.

## Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Pittsburgh, located in the state of Pennsylvania, has a rich history and a dynamic economic landscape. Pittsburgh is historically known as the "Steel City" due to its prominence in the steel production industry. The presence of three rivers (the Allegheny, Monongahela, and Ohio) made it an ideal location for transporting raw materials and finished products.

As the steel industry declined in the U.S., Pittsburgh faced significant economic challenges. However, in the latter part of the 20th century and into the 21st century, the city successfully transitioned to a more diversified economy. Once known for its smoggy skies due to steel production, Pittsburgh has made significant strides in environmental sustainability, with numerous green building initiatives and a focus on renewable energy sources.

Pittsburgh has become a hub for higher education, healthcare, and technology. Institutions like the University of Pittsburgh, Carnegie Mellon University, and UPMC (University of Pittsburgh Medical Center) have become significant employers and have spurred innovation and research, especially in the fields of medicine and technology. Pittsburgh is increasingly known for its strengths in robotics and artificial intelligence, largely due to research and innovations coming out of Carnegie Mellon and supported by tech incubators in the region.

Like other communities included in this study, Pittsburgh faces challenges such as ensuring that economic growth is inclusive, addressing infrastructure needs, and managing areas still affected by the decline of the steel industry.

In addition to the desktop review conducted by Ann Arbor SPARK staff, Kyle Chintalapalli, Chief Economic Development Officer for the City of Pittsburgh was interviewed.

### Qualitative Findings

**Population:** Pittsburgh is the largest city in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, and also serves as the county seat. Pittsburgh's population is 302,989 which represents only 25 percent of the total population of 1,233,253 in Allegheny County. Pittsburgh is 2.5 times larger than Ann Arbor.

**Governance:** Pittsburgh is governed by a mayor and a city council, responsible for local policies, ordinances, and services for the city (strong mayor structure).

**Largest Employers:** Key industries in Pittsburgh include artificial intelligence, climate tech and decarbonization, cybersecurity, energy, life sciences and health, manufacturing and distribution, and robotics. Aside from the University of Pittsburgh, the largest employers in the city include Highmark Health, PNC Financial Services Group, and Giant Eagle.

**Commercial Property Tax Burden:** Commercial properties in Pittsburgh are taxed at an average rate of 1.8 percent, equating to \$17,739 for a property valued at \$1 million.

**City Economic Development:** The City of Pittsburgh economic development-related functions exist under a variety of departments, including community development, permitting, licenses, and inspections, the department of city planning, the urban redevelopment authority, the housing authority, the sports and exhibition authority, and parking. The Chief Economic Development Officer is appointed by the mayor to oversee all of these functions. Traditional economic development work is not done by the City.

**Regional Economic Development Organization:** The [Pittsburgh Regional Alliance](#), a non-profit organization, works with site selectors, business decision-makers, companies and

people from around the world to help them establish their presence in the Pittsburgh area. The Pittsburgh Regional Alliance is an affiliate of the [Allegheny Conference on Community Development](#). Both are economic development organizations working internally and externally to cultivate the economic growth of the Pittsburgh region. Their initiatives include improving the quality of life in the region as well as driving job growth, small business success and business development in both the public and private sectors. The Allegheny Conference on Community Development has 58 full-time employees which includes 15 full-time staff members dedicated to the Pittsburgh Regional Alliance.

## **Qualitative Findings**

### **Q1: How does the municipality define “economic development”? What activities or functions fall under this definition?**

Traditional economic development activities are conducted by partners in the City of Pittsburgh. Within the city construct, the Chief Economic Development Officer (appointed by the mayor) oversees all departments that are related to development. The Chief Economic Development Officer is tasked with guiding the city's economic development efforts, communicating the City's economic development vision, coordinating key City and City-affiliated entities, and providing an integral point of contact between the Mayor and agency leadership. Permitting, licenses, and inspections, the department of city planning, the urban redevelopment authority, the housing authority, the sports and exhibition authority, and parking all fall under the purview of this role.

### **Q2: What agencies or organizations does the city employ, utilize, or partner with to conduct economic development? Has the city created an agency or organization to pursue economic development? What are their responsibilities?**

Pittsburgh's [economic development network](#) is extensive and the City relies heavily on the regional economic development partner, the Pittsburgh Regional Alliance to conduct traditional economic development activities. Partners include both economic and community development organizations with ranging areas of specialization from downtown revitalization to new business attraction. The Pittsburgh Regional Alliance does business attraction, expansion, and relocation work and also partners with the Governor's office to access incentives for projects. The Chief Economic Development Officer oversees the coordination of efforts between the City and all City-affiliated entities and is able to triage issues with the various development-related departments when necessary.

### **Q3: How does the city work to coordinate economic development activity between itself and various related agencies?**

Pittsburgh's Chief Economic Development Officer is responsible for coordinating key City and City-affiliated entities (see Q1 and Q2).

### **Q4: Does the municipality have an entity specifically related to job development through business retention and expansion?**

Eligible businesses that choose to locate in Pittsburgh are able to take advantage of the Job Creation Tax Credits (JCTC) Program. This government-funded program seeks to further Pittsburgh's economic development and revitalization opportunities and create jobs for Pennsylvania residents across multiple industries.



**Q5: What activities are undertaken to promote startup activity, including tech transfer initiatives, and the direct courting of venture capital and angel investor activity?**

The [Advisory Board on Entrepreneurship and Start-ups](#) is committed to support the creation and growth of all businesses in the City of Pittsburgh. It exists to advise City government on the market landscape, how to provide appropriate resources, and how to foster a vibrant, innovative, and inclusive business culture. The City is not actively engaged in tech transfer initiatives, the direct courting of venture capital, or angel investment activities, but does provide a [list of funding resources](#) on their website. The City does provide funding opportunities to eligible entrepreneurs via grants through the Urban Redevelopment Authority's (URA's) [Minority & Women-Owned Business Enterprise \(MWBE\) Program](#).

[InnovatePGH](#)'s project, Expanded Opportunities for Entrepreneurship, invests funding in local organizations and institutions to both increase the number of underrepresented founders, and create more financial and technical support for new small businesses to tap into the technology economy.

In partnership with the [Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development](#), the [Ben Franklin Technology Partner \(BFTP\)](#) network provides critical funding, business and technical expertise, and access to a network of valuable resources that early-stage and established companies need to grow and succeed in the highly competitive worldwide marketplace. As a statewide initiative, BFTP also leverages Pennsylvania's colleges and universities and promotes greater collaboration among companies, academia, private investors, and government to build and support technology-based industries. The local BFTP affiliate in Pittsburgh is [Innovation Works](#).

In Summer 2022, the [Southwestern Pennsylvania New Economy Collaborative](#) announced the receipt of a \$62.7 million federal Build Back Better Regional Challenge grant awarded by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (U.S. EDA). Pittsburgh's Build Back Better is aimed at seizing a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build the region's robotics and autonomy technology sector through investments in five separate but intertwined projects.

**Q6: Does the municipal government engage in site acquisition to aid in economic development activities?**

Yes, the City of Pittsburgh has and will engage in site acquisition when necessary, but it does not actively pursue the acquisition of new sites at this time. Rather than focusing on new site acquisition, the focus in Pittsburgh has been on how to strategically dispose of properties already in their sizable portfolio. The City of Pittsburgh will take on new sites if they are critical for a neighborhood-related effort or a strategic project, but most of the activity in this realm is related to issuing RFPs to identify development partners or through providing financing tools to support deals/projects for existing sites already owned by the City of Pittsburgh.

**Q7: Does the municipal government have its own or work directly with a workforce development agency?**

[Partner4Work](#) is the workforce development organization that connects funding, expertise and opportunities for employers, job seekers, agencies, and policy makers to develop a thriving workforce in the Pittsburgh area. Partner4Work is a 501c3 nonprofit guided by the knowledge, expertise, and leadership of its diverse board of directors, which is jointly appointed by the



Allegheny County Executive and the Mayor of Pittsburgh. The board represents leadership among employers, educators, labor unions, policy makers, and community-based organizations.

**Q8: What place-making activities does the city engage with? How are its various economic development agencies involved in this activity? Does it have a definition for “placemaking”?**

While not specifically discussed, the City of Pittsburgh engages in placemaking activities through strategic partnerships and initiatives.

**Q9: Do non-governmental civic and community leaders (i.e., corporate leaders, philanthropists, former elected officials, leaders of major civic organizations, universities, etc.) play a role in visioning for placemaking, community asset development, and economic development initiatives? Is this in a formal or informal fashion, or both?**

The city engages a variety of stakeholders at all levels on various topics through strategic partnerships, committees, and other avenues.

**Q10: How are the various economic development agencies capitalized? How are their budgets developed and approved?**

The [preliminary 2024 operating budget](#) for the City of Pittsburgh shows a \$10,148,239 total budget for 2024 and an increase to \$11,147,683 over a five-year period (2024-2028). The specific funding amount provided by the city to the regional economic development organization is not identified in their budget documents and was not discussed during our interview. Follow up requests for this information were not returned before the finalization of this report.

The Allegheny Conference on Community Development is financially supported by more than 250 members of the [Regional Investors Council](#) that includes both public and private partners. The Conference is the parent of three affiliate organizations: 1) Pennsylvania Economy League of Greater Pittsburgh (provides research and analysis services to the region), 2) Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce, and 3) Pittsburgh Regional Alliance.

**Q11: Is there a small business support function within the municipality, and is that separate from business expansion and retention efforts?**

The [Advisory Board on Entrepreneurship and Start-ups](#) is committed to support the creation and growth of all businesses in the City of Pittsburgh (see Q5).

**Q12: What powers does the municipality have under state law to perform economic development activities?**

Tax abatements, tax increment financing (TIF), tax exempt financing, and job creation tax credits (JCTC) are all available to the City of Pittsburgh to utilize when performing economic development activities.

**Q13: What limitations exist under state or local law that prevent or accelerate commonly used economic development strategies?**

Limitations were not identified by Pittsburgh’s Chief Economic Development Officer during our interview.

**Q14: What is the site plan development process like, and how are projects tracked in the municipality? Do they leverage any software tools to manage site development work?**

We were unable to collect detailed information on this topic since the Chief Economic Development Officer operates at a high-level; however, all development-related departments are under his purview which helps to streamline operations. The Chief Economic Development Office is also able to act as or appoint an internal champion for special projects, as needed.

**Q15: What does the municipality view as its strengths relative to economic development? What do they view as their weaknesses?**

We were not able to collect detailed information from the City of Pittsburgh related to their perceived strengths and weaknesses; however, we touched on many of their strengths during our interview and the responses are captured in this community summary.

**Q16: Does the city consider its permit standards for flood mitigation, soil erosion, utility interconnection, and transportation systems to be industry-leading, a good reflection of prevailing industry standards, or relatively less stringent compared to other cities? What have you done to speed up this part of the development review process? Where are these review functions housed in your municipal organization? Are they part of an economic development agency, or are they housed in other city departments?**

We were not able to identify whether Pittsburgh considers their permitting standards to be industry-leading during our research; however, [OneStop PGH](#) was an online portal for applications, permitting, and licenses that enhances the efficiency and transparency for all stakeholders.

**Q17: How do you ensure overall quality control over the development review process, ensuring the city's goals are met and developers can move the project forward promptly?**

The Chief Economic Development Officer oversees the coordination of efforts between the City and all city-affiliated entities and is able to triage issues with the various development-related departments when necessary (see Q1 and Q2).

**Q18: Are there any municipal programs or services to support the growth and/or remedy the displacement of minority-owned small businesses?**

Yes, the City of Pittsburgh supports the growth and development of minority-owned and women-owned firms through the Urban Redevelopment Authority's (URA's) [Minority & Women-Owned Business Enterprise \(MWBE\) Program](#). The URA seeks to advance equitable development by working with developers and other stakeholders to connect minority and women-owned firms to the kind of capacity-building opportunities that will increase their sustainability and success in the region.

**Q19: Does the City have any mandates or policies related to carbon neutrality or sustainable energy?**

Pittsburgh has determined that coordinated, concentrated and comprehensive carbon mitigation action is needed to reduce the severity of regional impacts and prepare for a low carbon economy. To address these challenges, Pittsburgh created their [Climate Action Plan](#). In terms of buildings and end use efficiency, Pittsburgh's goal is to reduce energy and water consumption by 50% by 2030. Pittsburgh believes this goal can be achieved through improving the quality of

energy and water use data, ensuring all new buildings are carbon neutral, mitigating high energy burdens in vulnerable communities, reducing sewer volume by 50% from 2013 levels, and improving efficiency of public street lights and traffic signals.

Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) is an initiative to provide funding for projects that improve energy efficiency, utilize renewable electricity, or promote water conservation. In Pennsylvania, two senators have introduced legislation to establish a PACE program with the support from business, labor, and environmental communities. If this legislation passes, Pittsburgh will be able to implement PACE programs locally. These mandates are not yet in place.

## Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

Waterloo, Ontario, boasts a thriving economy and hosts a multitude of tech companies, including BlackBerry and OpenText, making it a technology hub. The University of Waterloo is a renowned institution with a strong emphasis on STEM fields and a cooperative education model. This university is a key player in the region's tech ecosystem, facilitating industry partnerships and fostering entrepreneurship. Waterloo's economy is closely linked to the university's success, creating a dynamic environment for innovation and growth.

In addition to the desktop review conducted by Ann Arbor SPARK staff, Justin McFadden, Executive Director of Economic Development for the City of Waterloo was interviewed.

### Quantitative Findings

**Population:** Waterloo boasts a population of 147,520, which includes students and temporary residents. This makes it roughly 1.2 times the size of Ann Arbor.

**Governance:** Waterloo, Ontario, has a council-manager form of city government.

**Largest Employers:** The largest employers in Waterloo include Sun Life, the University of Waterloo and the Manulife Financial Corporation. BlackBerry is also located in Waterloo.

**Commercial Property Tax Burden:** Property taxes in Waterloo are calculated by multiplying the value of the property by the tax rate. The current rate for commercial property is 2.929 percent, so a building valued at \$1 million would have a property tax burden of around \$29,290 for the year.

**City Economic Development:** Waterloo's economic development team is about 1.5 staffers.

**Regional Economic Development Organization:** The regional group is called the Waterloo Regional EDC and has a staff of 14 people.

### Qualitative Findings

**Q1: How does the municipality define "economic development"? What activities or functions fall under this definition?**

The City of Waterloo defines "economic development" as a strategic approach to fostering economic growth and sustainability while promoting the community as an attractive place to live and work. Their definition of economic development includes various activities and functions, which are outlined in the provided information:

1. **Creating an Environment for Core Employment:** The primary focus of economic development in Waterloo is to create an environment where core employment can flourish. This involves supporting economic investment and growth in competitive industries.
2. **Employment Land Development:** The municipality is involved in employment land development, including collaborating with the Region of Waterloo on the review of employment lands. This is essential for facilitating job creation and economic growth.
3. **Competitiveness Enhancement:** Economic development activities include implementing community improvement plans, enhancing processes and policies to improve competitiveness, and strategic investments that enhance core employment.

4. **Local Retention and Expansion:** The city works on retaining and expanding local companies. They provide expertise on city-specific considerations to support the growth of businesses within the community.
5. **Placemaking, Including Arts and Culture:** Economic development also involves placemaking efforts, which include a dedicated focus on arts and culture. Introduced about 10 years ago, these initiatives aim to create an attractive and vibrant environment within the city, contributing to its cultural vibrancy and attractiveness.
6. **Talent Attraction and Retention:** Attracting and retaining talent is a key aspect of economic development. The municipality aims to attract a talented workforce from around the world and ensure newcomers feel welcomed and secure.
7. **Small Business Support:** The city supports small businesses through various initiatives and programs, contributing to economic growth and diversity.
8. **Management of the Parking Enterprise:** Economic development activities also include managing the parking enterprise, which can impact the overall business environment.

Waterloo's [five-year economic development strategy](#) can be found on their website.

**Q2: What agencies or organizations does the city employ, utilize, or partner with to conduct economic development? Has the city created an agency or organization to pursue economic development? What are their responsibilities?**

The City of Waterloo collaborates with various agencies and organizations to conduct economic development activities. These partnerships and agencies play a crucial role in advancing the city's economic development goals. Here are some of the key agencies and organizations:

1. **Waterloo Regional Economic Development Corporation (Waterloo EDC):** The Waterloo EDC is a critical partner for the City of Waterloo in economic development. The city is a founding partner and ongoing funder of Waterloo EDC, a separate economic development organization. This organization often serves as the first point of contact for companies looking to locate, relocate, or expand in Waterloo. Waterloo EDC works on attracting and retaining businesses in the region, contributing to job creation and economic growth.
2. **Educational Institutions:** The city collaborates with educational institutions, including the University of Waterloo, to leverage the knowledge and talent pool within the community. These institutions contribute to research, innovation, and workforce development.
3. **City's Economic Development Team:** The City of Waterloo has its economic development team responsible for implementing economic development strategies, fostering partnerships, and supporting various economic growth initiatives.

**Q3: How does the city work to coordinate economic development activity between itself and various related agencies?**

1. **Economic Development Department:** The city has a dedicated department for economic development.
2. **Interdepartmental Collaboration:** Various city departments work together to ensure a coordinated approach.
3. **Waterloo Economic Development Corporation (Waterloo EDC):** The city partners with Waterloo EDC, providing funding and support.

4. **City Manager's Office:** This office offers strategic oversight.

**Q4: Does the municipality have an entity specifically related to job development through business retention and expansion?**

Yes, Waterloo has an economic development arm, and also coordinates activities with external parties, including the Waterloo EDC.

**Q5: What activities are undertaken to promote startup activity, including tech transfer initiatives, and the direct courting of venture capital and angel investor activity?**

Waterloo identified startup creation and encouragement as part of its strategic economic development plan, with external partners like the Waterloo EDC and others, identified as those that can help support their work. In addition, the City relies on external incubators and accelerators to support the creation of new businesses.

**Q6: Does the municipal government engage in site acquisition to aid in economic development activities?**

The City of Waterloo is actively involved in the development and support of a 100-acre industrial park located on the western side of the city. This industrial park represents a significant economic development initiative for the municipality, and the city has taken on a key role in its development. Here are some details about this industrial park:

1. **Strategic Land Development:** The industrial park is a strategic land development project aimed at fostering economic growth and job creation within the city. It serves as an example of the city's commitment to providing spaces for core employment to flourish.
2. **City-Led Development:** The unique aspect of this industrial park is that the City of Waterloo has acted as the developer itself. The city has collaborated with consultants and engineering experts to oversee the development process. This involvement includes navigating the various planning application processes required for such projects.
3. **Planning Engagement and Monitoring:** Economic development staff from the city engage in planning applications related to industrial projects. They actively participate in initial reviews and assessments, ensuring that the planning process aligns with the city's economic development goals. In addition, the city sees itself as a monitoring entity in the planning process, ensuring that planning decisions align with economic development objectives and do not hinder potential development opportunities.

**Q7: Does the municipal government have its own or work directly with a workforce development agency?**

Since 1997, the [Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin \(WPB\)](#) has led local workforce development activities in the City of Waterloo. WPB is one of 26 local boards across the province of Ontario and is funded by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. Although this was not discussed during our interview, it is likely that the City of Waterloo is involved with WPB as a board member or community partner.

**Q8: What place-making activities does the city engage with? How are its various economic development agencies involved in this activity? Does it have a definition for “placemaking”?**

The City of Waterloo engages in placemaking activities through strategic partnerships and initiatives. They collaborate with the Integrated Planning and Public Works (IPPW) department to ensure that infrastructure supports diverse uses of public spaces. Additionally, they work with private sector developers to develop investment-ready opportunities to enhance public spaces. The city also focuses on facilitating developer-led art projects through the development of a process and toolkit.

These efforts involve coordination between the city's economic development division, IPPW, and private sector developers to improve public spaces. The indicators for success in these placemaking initiatives include tracking the number of public realm investments, with the expected outcomes being better-managed public spaces and increased utilization of these spaces.

**Q9: Do non-governmental civic and community leaders (i.e., corporate leaders, philanthropists, former elected officials, leaders of major civic organizations, universities, etc.) play a role in visioning for placemaking, community asset development, and economic development initiatives? Is this in a formal or informal fashion, or both?**

While details were not explicitly discussed, it is apparent based on our interview with Justin McFadden that partners are convened regularly and likely discuss placemaking in both a formal and informal fashion.

**Q10: How are the various economic development agencies capitalized? How are their budgets developed and approved?**

Waterloo's budget for economic development is around \$2 million. They make an annual contribution to the regional economic development organization of \$400,000.

**Q11: Is there a small business support function within the municipality, and is that separate from business expansion and retention efforts?**

Yes, within the municipality, there is a small business support function that focuses on assisting mom-and-pop shops, new immigrants looking to start small businesses, retail establishments, and restaurants. This function is carried out externally from the city by the Waterloo Region Small Business Center, which has satellite offices in various cities, including Waterloo, Kitchener, and Cambridge.

Additionally, the municipality has a comprehensive external incubation engine that supports startups and small businesses. This incubation ecosystem consists of several organizations, some of which receive funding and support from the municipality. These organizations include:

1. **The Accelerator Center:** Affiliated with the university, it primarily supports tech startups by providing space and mentoring, often with mentors on staff.
2. **Velocity:** Also tied to the university, Velocity focuses on hardware manufacturing and development for startups.



3. **Communitech:** Established by local tech founders, Communitech is a significant organization that supports businesses with mentors and government funding. It accommodates both startups and more established companies.

**Q12: What powers does the municipality have under state law to perform economic development activities?**

In Waterloo, property tax abatements at the municipal level are not provided in the same way as they are in some U.S. municipalities. Instead, the municipality follows a process called a "community improvement plan" (CIP) in accordance with provincial guidance. This process includes public engagement and the establishment of criteria for incentives that anyone can apply for.

Under this system, the municipality cannot intentionally zero in on a specific entity for a tax abatement. Instead, they create incentives with predefined criteria that are open for application by any eligible party. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, they created a COVID relief CIP that supported capital investments, such as air purifiers or plexiglass for protection. However, these incentives are not targeted to specific businesses in a direct manner.

**Q13: What limitations exist under state or local law that prevent or accelerate commonly used economic development strategies?**

The ability to offer targeted financial incentives, such as writing a check to a specific company like Amazon, is limited at the municipal level. In such cases, municipal authorities often rely on the provincial government (i.e. Ontario) to provide such incentives. This difference in approach can sometimes be a point of frustration for site selectors and businesses comparing the Canadian and U.S. economic development landscape.

**Q14: What is the site plan development process like, and how are projects tracked in the municipality? Do they leverage any software tools to manage site development work?**

The site development process in Waterloo is primarily handled by the planning department of the municipality. Here is a general overview of the process:

1. **Pre-Application Meetings:** Developers or project initiators typically start with pre-application meetings. During these meetings, they provide a high-level overview of what they intend to do with the site. The municipality provides initial feedback and guidance during this stage.
2. **Project Concept Development:** At this stage, developers often have a well-defined project concept and may have hired consultants to work on detailed plans. They work on refining their proposals based on the feedback received during pre-application meetings.
3. **Zoning Considerations:** If the proposed project involves uses that are not currently permitted by the existing zoning regulations, there may be a need to pursue a zoning change. This process can involve additional steps and approvals.
4. **Building Permit:** The ultimate goal of the site development process is to obtain a building permit. This permit allows the developer to proceed with the construction phase of the project.

It's important to note that the planning department typically engages with developers who have a clear and well-defined project concept. For developers who are at a very early stage and are

contemplating site acquisition, they may not directly engage with the planning department until they have a more concrete proposal.

No use of software tools of relevance were discussed or identified in our work.

**Q15: What does the municipality view as its strengths relative to economic development? What do they view as their weaknesses?**

Waterloo boasts a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem, nurturing startups through collaborations with educational institutions and investors. Incubators and accelerators are on the rise, attracting investment and fostering innovation. The city's vibrant arts and culture sector offers both growth potential and a cultural advantage. Initiatives like the Uptown Community Improvement Plan and Light Rail Transit development drive revitalization and growth.

Creative industries are competitive, while manufacturing remains a significant contributor to the local economy. Waterloo attracts a diverse population, enhancing its talent pool. Over 60% of the workforce is skilled, with 40% holding advanced degrees.

Challenges include addressing housing diversity, and aligning economic development with community objectives. Lack of access to natural features is also a limitation as it relates to talent attraction to the region.

**Q16: Does the city consider its permit standards for flood mitigation, soil erosion, utility interconnection, and transportation systems to be industry-leading, a good reflection of prevailing industry standards, or relatively less stringent compared to other cities? What have you done to speed up this part of the development review process? Where are these review functions housed in your municipal organization? Are they part of an economic development agency, or are they housed in other city departments?**

The economic development department in the City of Waterloo does not act as a referee but rather takes an active role in specific projects. For instance, they acted as the developer for a 100-acre industrial park, going through standard planning processes. They work closely with the planning department to ensure fairness.

**Q17: How do you ensure overall quality control over the development review process, ensuring the city's goals are met and developers can move the project forward promptly?**

The economic development team also participates in planning applications related to industrial projects, monitoring the process for fairness and representing economic development interests. In addition, they collaborate with other city departments on an as-needed basis, with a dedicated finance resource. Planning is the department where their economic development team has the most direct involvement.

**Q18: Are there any municipal programs or services to support the growth and/or remedy the displacement of minority-owned small businesses?**

While there is not much information specific to minority-owned small business support, the City is focused on other areas of support, including through their commitment to equity and inclusion by tackling systemic barriers.

They are taking steps internally, including training and policy development to ensure accessibility for minority populations and exploring a restorative justice approach. Collaboration

with local action groups, Indigenous communities, and equity-deserving groups is a priority. They actively communicate their goals and engage the community through resource sharing and building relationships with disabled individuals and organizations.

**Q19: Does the City have any mandates or policies related to carbon neutrality or sustainable energy?**

The region of Waterloo is dedicated to addressing climate change by pledging to decrease greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 50% below 2010 levels by 2030.

## West Lafayette, Indiana

West Lafayette, with Purdue University at its heart, exemplifies the potential of university-driven economic growth. The city has successfully integrated academia, innovation, and community welfare, making it a model for other university towns.

The presence of Purdue University has transformed West Lafayette into an innovation hub. With over 41,000 students and 10,000 faculty, the University is the largest employer in the city. Collaborations with Purdue Foundry and shared workspaces like MatchBOX have spurred entrepreneurial growth and innovation.

The annual influx of students creates a demand for affordable, short-term housing. To help this challenge, West Lafayette has adopted zoning regulations and incentivized housing projects to ensure a balanced housing ecosystem for both students and permanent residents. West Lafayette's commitment to its 44,000 plus residents is evident in its investments in parks, recreational spaces, and infrastructure. The city prioritizes public safety, constantly updating and enhancing safety measures.

With the introduction of the Local Economic Development Income Tax (EDIT), the city's growth is financially sustainable. Efficient distribution of revenue across local jurisdictions ensures that developmental projects are adequately funded. They aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050 and achieve 100% renewable energy reliance by 2030.

Despite its strengths, West Lafayette faces challenges like a 35% poverty rate, higher than the state average and potential migration of its young population seeking better opportunities. West Lafayette's journey showcases the potential of city-university symbiosis. With strategic planning and continued focus on its residents' well-being, West Lafayette can further solidify its position as a leading university city.

In addition to the desktop review conducted by Ann Arbor SPARK staff, Erin Easter, Director of Development for the City of West Lafayette was interviewed.

### Quantitative Findings

**Population:** West Lafayette located in Tippecanoe County, Indiana, has a population of 44,672 (2021) which represents only 24 percent of the total population of 187,076 in Tippecanoe County. West Lafayette is 0.4 times the size of Ann Arbor.

**Governance:** West Lafayette's government is divided between Mayor and the city council. The city council holds legislative authority and makes laws through ordinances, resolutions and motions, and final authority over the city's property, finances, and appropriation of money.

**Largest Employers:** Key industries in West Lafayette include biotechnology, manufacturing, aerospace. Aside from the University of Purdue, the largest employers in the city include Wabash National Corporation, Subaru of Indiana Automotive, and Caterpillar Inc.

**Commercial Property Tax Burden:** Commercial properties in West Lafayette are taxed at an average rate of 2.6 percent, equating to \$25,707 for a property valued at \$1 million.

**City Economic Development:** The City of West Lafayette Economic Development Commission (EDC) is established to investigate, study, and survey the need for additional job opportunities, industrial diversification, water services, and pollution control facilities.

**Regional Economic Development Organization:** The [Greater Lafayette Commerce](#) focuses on community, economic development, and talent development. In addition, the [Indiana Economic Development Corporation \(IEDC\)](#), a non-profit organization, is charged with growing the state's economy by driving economic development, helping businesses launch, grow and locate in the state. This public private partnership helps manage performance-based tax credits, workforce training grants, innovation and entrepreneurship resources, public infrastructure assistance, and talent attraction and retention efforts.

## Qualitative Findings

**Q1: How does the municipality define “economic development”? What activities or functions fall under this definition?**

Traditional economic development activities to advance economic and community prosperity, and a hub for sustainable collaboration, growth, and regional success.

**Q2: What agencies or organizations does the city employ, utilize, or partner with to conduct economic development? Has the city created an agency or organization to pursue economic development? What are their responsibilities?**

The City of West Lafayette relies heavily on the [Economic Development Commission](#) that promotes the creation and retention of employment and business opportunities, as well as programs supporting abatements and pollution. The city also utilizes the Greater Lafayette Commerce and Indiana Economic Development Corporation for traditional economic development activities to improve the well-being and quality of life for the community through sustainability within the workforce and businesses.

**Q3: How does the city work to coordinate economic development activity between itself and various related agencies?**

Detailed information related to this topic was not discussed during the interview; however it was mentioned that the city relies heavily on the Economic Development Commission (see Q2).

**Q4: Does the municipality have an entity specifically related to job development through business retention and expansion?**

The Greater Lafayette Commerce sets an example for working together with various agencies and setting clear examples for job training initiatives through collection of tax dollars.

**Q5: What activities are undertaken to promote startup activity, including tech transfer initiatives, and the direct courting of venture capital and angel investor activity?**

The [Purdue Foundry](#) is a startup accelerator that provides mentoring, funding, and workspace to entrepreneurs and innovators affiliated with Purdue University. Also, through the University, the [Purdue Research Foundation](#), a nonprofit organization, helps provide patent protection, licensing agreements, and business development support to startups bringing Purdue's innovations to market.

Outside the University, the [MatchBOX Coworking Studio](#) provides a shared workspace for entrepreneurs and startups and provides workshops and events for collaboration. A statewide venture capital group, [Elevate Ventures](#), helps build sustainable entrepreneurship cultures in Indiana by development in high-potential, high-growth businesses investments.

**Q6: Does the municipal government engage in site acquisition to aid in economic development activities?**

The city has and will engage in site acquisition through the help of its local economic development partners when needed. The city's land is owned by either Purdue or PRF, which was annexed in 2015 and is taxable unless occupied by a non-profit. West Lafayette is currently landlocked with the potential for expansion. They utilize incentives such as a tax abatement over a traditional 10 year period, or a non-traditional period up to 20 years.

**Q7: Does the municipal government have its own or work directly with a workforce development agency?**

[WorkOne West Central Indiana](#) is a workforce development organization that connects job seekers and employers alike. They offer opportunities for specific skills training, specialized disability employment services, veteran one-on-one job placement services, young adult programs, and business solutions including recruitment, pre-employment screening, and market analysis.

**Q8: What place-making activities does the city engage with? How are its various economic development agencies involved in this activity? Does it have a definition for “placemaking”?**

West Lafayette’s Director of Development did not mention any specific placemaking activities during our interview.

**Q9: Do non-governmental civic and community leaders (i.e., corporate leaders, philanthropists, former elected officials, leaders of major civic organizations, universities, etc.) play a role in visioning for placemaking, community asset development, and economic development initiatives? Is this in a formal or informal fashion, or both?**

The Greater Lafayette Commerce has an unprecedented coordination within the city and county and sets expectations for how all local partners work together. They manage compliance related to initiatives such as population growth, housing, and targeting.

**Q10: How are the various economic development agencies capitalized? How are their budgets developed and approved?**

The Economic Development Department total 2023 budget is \$596,890; however, the City of West Lafayette is unique in that it has an Economic Development Income Tax (EDIT) and the funds are used as an incentive mechanism. EDIT funds available through the city and county are designed to assist with relocation costs, personal property purchases, and buy down land/lease. Awards are based on capital investment, number and quality of new jobs, wages and economic impact of the project. The total 2023 budget for the EDIT is \$10,278,983.

The Greater Lafayette Commerce (GLC) has been contracted to do economic development work for Lafayette, West Lafayette, and the County.

The Economic Development Commission is funded through public and private funds, membership fees, and economic development incentives.

**Q11: Is there a small business support function within the municipality, and is that separate from business expansion and retention efforts?**

The [Hoosier Heartland Indiana](#) Small Business Development Center helps small businesses start, grow, finance, innovate, and transition through no-cost, confidential business advising and training.

**Q12: What powers does the municipality have under state law to perform economic development activities?**

The City of West Lafayette has five Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts. The funding captured is used on redevelopment and investment projects through the West Lafayette Redevelopment Commission. Tax abatements are only considered for proposed investments of at least \$250,000 or more and the development has not begun, or equipment has been ordered for the site. The abatement phases are gradual over a period of one to ten years; 6-10 years for manufacturing or high technology buildings, 3-6 years for warehousing, distribution, retail or office buildings, and 1-3 years for housing projects.

West Lafayette also uses EDIT funds as an incentive mechanism. See Q10 for additional details.

**Q13: What limitations exist under state or local law that prevent or accelerate commonly used economic development strategies?**

None at this time as many projects have been lost to other locations. The discussion of a Revolving Loan Fund to help finance company projects going through new construction processes has been acknowledged, but nothing finalized. Also, a proposed Innovation Development District for multi-million-dollar projects has also been discussed.

**Q14: What is the site plan development process like, and how are projects tracked in the municipality? Do they leverage any software tools to manage site development work?**

Even as a small city, West Lafayette is the most densely populated city in Indiana. They work to consistently research, and rezone available land based on the most viable use for the space to help expedite economic development projects which have been approved by city council. These zoning decisions are made internally by the planning commission; however, most hang-ups occur on planned unit development sites. They pride themselves on a fast review process such as site plan approval which is completed within 10 days.

**Q15: What does the municipality view as its strengths relative to economic development? What do they view as their weaknesses?**

Without question, West Lafayette's strength is the innovation that comes out of Purdue University and bringing technology to market. The quality of investments through parks and recreation (new parks, trails, open green spaces) contribute to their safe community. Their greatest weakness is managing their student population growth in relation to housing. The student population skews the local income and impacts Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) investments for housing expansion.

**Q16: Does the city consider its permit standards for flood mitigation, soil erosion, utility interconnection, and transportation systems to be industry-leading, a good reflection of prevailing industry standards, or relatively less stringent compared to other cities? What**



**have you done to speed up this part of the development review process? Where are these review functions housed in your municipal organization? Are they part of an economic development agency, or are they housed in other city departments?**

Currently there is nothing in place for these kinds of standards. There has been discussion on what the role of the government may assist in these types of initiatives. However, the [Go Greener Commission](#) promotes environmental health and sustainability through public policies. Currently there are no affordable housing requirements due to lack of housing in the community which is a highlighted concern.

**Q17: How do you ensure overall quality control over the development review process, ensuring the city's goals are met and developers can move the project forward promptly?**

West Lafayette's Development Director, Erin Easter, serves as the internal champion of development projects which aids in ensuring overall quality control over the development review process.

**Q18: Are there any municipal programs or services to support the growth and/or remedy the displacement of minority-owned small businesses?**

Erin Easter did not specifically mention any municipal programs or services to support the growth and/or remedy the displacement of minority-owned small businesses; however, the existence of entrepreneurial support services in West Lafayette is plentiful. See Q5.

**Q19: Does the City have any mandates or policies related to carbon neutrality or sustainable energy?**

In October 2017, the Lafayette City Council [passed a resolution](#) establishing community-wide goals to achieve 80% reductions in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, and 100% renewable energy for electricity by 2030. Lafayette's carbon footprint includes three main sectors: stationary energy, transportation, and waste.

## Appendix B: Economic Development Departments and Organizations by City

### Local Economic Development Department by City

Community	Local Economic Development Department Website
Austin, TX	<a href="https://www.austintexas.gov/department/economic-development">https://www.austintexas.gov/department/economic-development</a>
Boulder, CO	<a href="https://bouldercolorado.gov/services/economic-vitality-program">https://bouldercolorado.gov/services/economic-vitality-program</a>
Durham, NC	<a href="https://www.durhamnc.gov/446/Office-of-Economic-Workforce-Development">https://www.durhamnc.gov/446/Office-of-Economic-Workforce-Development</a>
Eugene, OR	<a href="https://www.eugene-or.gov/812/Economic-Development">https://www.eugene-or.gov/812/Economic-Development</a>
Grand Rapids, MI	<a href="https://growgr.grandrapidsmi.gov/Home">https://growgr.grandrapidsmi.gov/Home</a>
Greenville, SC	<a href="https://www.greenvillesc.gov/312/Economic-Development">https://www.greenvillesc.gov/312/Economic-Development</a>
Madison, WI	<a href="https://www.cityofmadison.com/dpced/economicdevelopment/">https://www.cityofmadison.com/dpced/economicdevelopment/</a>
Pittsburgh, PA	<a href="https://pittsburghpa.gov/omb/cd">https://pittsburghpa.gov/omb/cd</a>
Waterloo, ON	<a href="https://www.waterloo.ca/en/government/economic-development.aspx">https://www.waterloo.ca/en/government/economic-development.aspx</a>
West Lafayette, IN	<a href="https://www.westlafayette.in.gov/government/development">https://www.westlafayette.in.gov/government/development</a>

### Regional Economic Development Organization by City

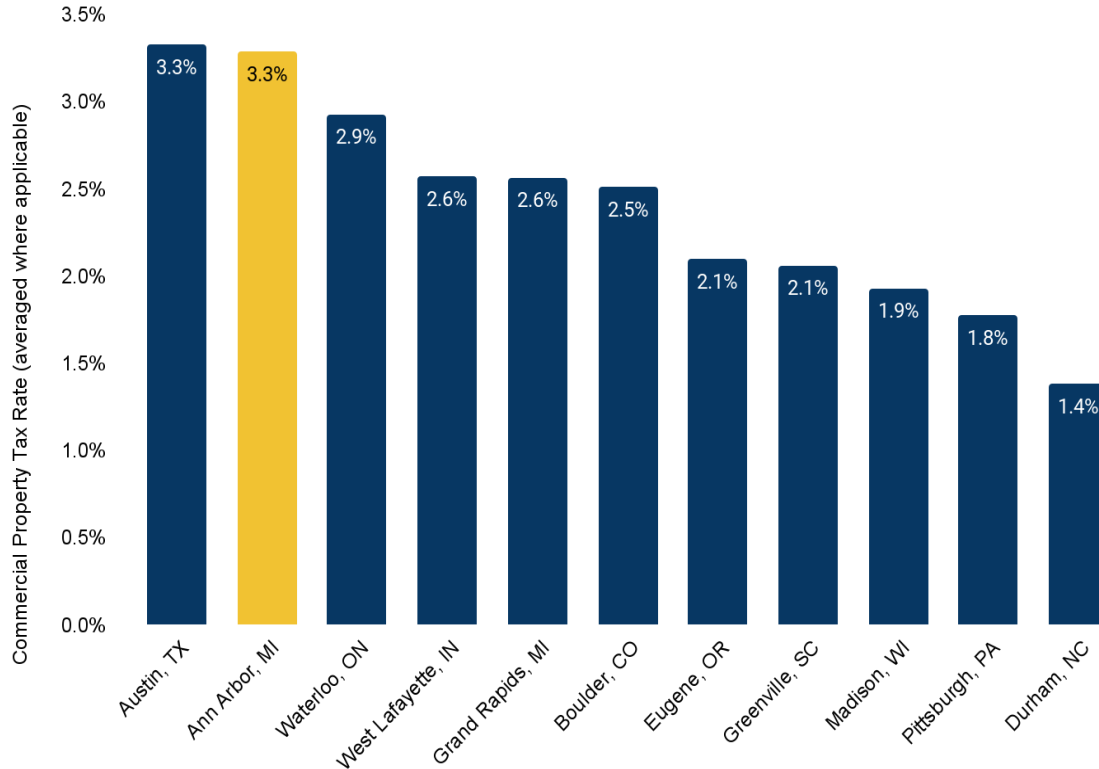
Community	Regional Economic Development Organization (EDO)	Regional EDO Website
Austin, TX	Austin Economic Development Corporation	<a href="https://www.austinedc.org/">https://www.austinedc.org/</a>
Boulder, CO	Boulder Economic Council	<a href="https://bouldereconomiccouncil.org/about-the-bec/">https://bouldereconomiccouncil.org/about-the-bec/</a>
Durham, NC	Research Triangle Regional Partnership	<a href="https://www.researchtriangle.org/counties/durham/">https://www.researchtriangle.org/counties/durham/</a>
Eugene, OR	Eugene Chamber of Commerce	<a href="https://www.eugenechamber.com/economic-development.html">https://www.eugenechamber.com/economic-development.html</a>
Grand Rapids, MI	The Right Place	<a href="https://www.rightplace.org/">https://www.rightplace.org/</a>
Greenville, SC	Greenville Area Development Corporation	<a href="https://www.greenvilleeconomicdevelopment.com/">https://www.greenvilleeconomicdevelopment.com/</a>
Madison, WI	Madison Region Economic Partnership	<a href="https://madisonregion.org/">https://madisonregion.org/</a>
Pittsburgh, PA	Pittsburgh Region	<a href="https://pittsburghregion.org/">https://pittsburghregion.org/</a>
Waterloo, ON	Region of Waterloo	<a href="https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/economic-development.aspx">https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/economic-development.aspx</a>
West Lafayette, IN	Greater Lafayette Commerce	<a href="https://www.greaterlafayettecommerce.com/economic-development/">https://www.greaterlafayettecommerce.com/economic-development/</a>

## Appendix C: Community Contacts

Community	Contact Name and Title	Contact Email Address
Austin, TX	<b>Sylnovia Holt Raab</b> Director, City of Austin Economic Development	<a href="mailto:sylnovia.holt-rabb@austintexas.gov">sylnovia.holt-rabb@austintexas.gov</a>
Boulder, CO	<b>Cris Jones</b> Interim Director of Community Vitality	<a href="mailto:JonesC@bouldercolorado.gov">JonesC@bouldercolorado.gov</a>
Boulder, CO	<b>Scott Sternberg</b> Executive Director, Boulder Economic Council/ Associate Vice President for Economic Vitality at Boulder Chamber	<a href="mailto:scott.sternberg@boulderchamber.com">scott.sternberg@boulderchamber.com</a>
Durham, NC	<b>Andre Pettigrew</b> Director of Economic and Workforce Development <b>Grace Dzidzienyo</b> Assistant Director of Economic and Workforce Development <b>Pheon Alston</b> Administrative Coordinator	<a href="mailto:Andre.Pettigrew@durhamnc.gov">Andre.Pettigrew@durhamnc.gov</a> <a href="mailto:grace.dzidzienyo@durhamnc.gov">grace.dzidzienyo@durhamnc.gov</a> <a href="mailto:pheon.alston@durhamnc.gov">pheon.alston@durhamnc.gov</a>
Eugene, OR	<b>Anne Fifield</b> Economic Strategies Manager <b>Ed Russo</b> Business Outreach Specialist	<a href="mailto:AFifield@eugene-or.gov">AFifield@eugene-or.gov</a> <a href="mailto:erusso@eugene-or.gov">erusso@eugene-or.gov</a>
Grand Rapids, MI	<b>Jeremiah Gracia</b> Economic Development Director	<a href="mailto:jgracia@grcity.us">jgracia@grcity.us</a>
Greenville, SC	<b>Mike Panasko</b> Business Development Manager	<a href="mailto:mpanasko@greenvillesc.gov">mpanasko@greenvillesc.gov</a>
Madison, WI	<b>Matt Wachter</b> Director, Department of Planning, Community, and Economic Development	<a href="mailto:mwachter@cityofmadison.com">mwachter@cityofmadison.com</a>
Pittsburgh, PA	<b>Kyle Chintalapalli</b> Chief Economic Development Officer	<a href="mailto:kyle.chintalapalli@pittsburghpa.gov">kyle.chintalapalli@pittsburghpa.gov</a>
Waterloo, ON	<b>Justin McFadden</b> Executive Director, Economic Development	<a href="mailto:justin.mcfadden@waterloo.ca">justin.mcfadden@waterloo.ca</a>
West Lafayette, IN	<b>Erin Easter</b> Director of Development	<a href="mailto:development@westlafayette.in.gov">development@westlafayette.in.gov</a> <a href="mailto:eeaster@westlafayette.in.gov">eeaster@westlafayette.in.gov</a>

## Appendix D: Commercial Property Tax Rates

Community	Estimated Property Tax <small>(on Building Assessed at \$1,000,000)</small>	Effective Commercial Property Tax Rate <small>(Average rate where applicable)</small>
Austin, TX	\$33,300	3.3%
Ann Arbor, MI	\$32,858	3.3%
Waterloo, ON	\$29,298	2.9%
West Lafayette, IN	\$25,707	2.6%
Grand Rapids, MI	\$25,670	2.6%
Boulder, CO	\$25,132	2.5%
Eugene, OR	\$21,000	2.1%
Greenville, SC	\$20,622	2.1%
Madison, WI	\$19,320	1.9%
Pittsburgh, PA	\$17,739	1.8%
Durham, NC	\$13,799	1.4%





October 2023

**Info@annarborusa.org**

330 E. Liberty

Ann Arbor, MI 48104

734-761-9317



## Best Practices Driving Economic Development in Cities Comparable to Ann Arbor

Compiled by Ann Arbor SPARK  
on behalf of the City of Ann Arbor