



**NORWALK ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

*Strategic Plan  
2022-2024*



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## BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

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The Norwalk Economic Development Corporation (NEDC) was created in 2002 by a dedicated group of concerned private businesspeople and public officials and began operations in July 2003. As the organization has evolved with the economic and community landscape over almost twenty years, one thing has consistently remained the same, NEDC's mission:

**To identify and capitalize on opportunities to continuously improve the Norwalk area's business base.**

While NEDC's mission has remained unwavering, we have not been immune to the remarkable changes, opportunities, and threats that have emerged from the global COVID-19 pandemic. After playing a new role in supporting economic stabilization, growth, and diversification during the pandemic, helping to support business of all industries and sizes to pivot to meet new challenges, NEDC came out of the height of the pandemic needing to pivot itself. NEDC brought on its new Executive Director in 2021 just as our last strategic plan was expiring.

NEDC's Board of 19 Directors from 8 industries embarked upon a process to look from the outside in and develop a three-year plan that not only outlines clear action steps and accountability but lends itself to growth for the community as a whole and NEDC as an organization. Over the course of a quarter, the board completed surveys, reviewed research backed by the International Economic Development Council, analyzed community data from EMSI, and participated in a strategic retreat. The results of this process are found in the following pages.

This plan represents the why and the how behind a mission that has remained our clear focus for nearly 20 years.

## GOALS, STRATEGIES, AND OBJECTIVES

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After combining input from the local business community, an analysis of NEDC’s strengths and weaknesses, and an evaluation of opportunities and threats in the current climate, NEDC has prioritized the following Strategic Areas of Focus:



Workforce  
Development



Partnerships



Business Retention  
& Expansion



Small Business  
Development



Organizational  
Sustainability &  
Marketing



New Business

We endeavor to succeed in those areas of focus by pursuing the following goals.

- Champion people and enable their contribution to the local economy
- Generate wealth for our community through Business Development
- Steward inspired investments for sustainability, longevity, and amplification

# 1. CHAMPION PEOPLE AND ENABLE THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE LOCAL ECONOMY

## Addresses Strategic Area of Focus: Workforce Development

NEDC believes that building a deeper pool of qualified workers is key to fueling economic growth. Critical changes in our economic landscape have impacted our labor market including globalization, digitization and automation, shifting demographics, and generational trends. A patchwork of workforce-development efforts has struggled to respond to these issues and failed to adapt to the needs of employers and individual workers. As such, workforce development is a top priority for NEDC.

Our vision is that Norwalk is an ideal place to live and work. Business and community leaders have no hesitancy or fear of growth as our adaptive workforce can accommodate and grow alongside our businesses. Local businesses will have access to the talent they need.

### Objective 1.1 Build talent retention and re-attraction pipeline

### Objective 1.2 Coordinate efforts with Firelands Forward

OBJECTIVE 1.1 BUILD TALENT RETENTION & RE-ATTRACTION PIPELINE			
Tactics	Partners	Metrics	Timeline
Facilitate Huron County BAC	NPESC, area schools, business	Meeting attendance, individual touchpoints	2022
Centralize and promote High School internship programs	Huron county JFS, area schools, business, Huron Co BAC	# Interns placed Hours worked Credential received Credit received # Participating companies Job placement conversion	2022 -pilot 2023- growth in intern #s 2024- growth in participating biz #s
College internship pipelines	BGSU Firelands, alumni associations		
Partner with Huron County Chamber to support relocation efforts	Huron County Chamber, Firelands Forward, Norwalk Area Visitors Bureau	# individuals served Population	2022- planning 2023- development 2024- expand to digital

Objective 1.2 Coordinate efforts with Firelands Forward			
Tactics	Partners	Metrics	Timeline
Serve as collaborative partner through advisory board & work group participation - Share intel	FF board	# Workforce surveys # Workforce specific business assistance points	ongoing
Implement Firelands region ERN	Norwalk Area United Fund	(see full ERN dashboard)	2022- 3 businesses
Invite Firelands Forward to community table – fill gaps outside NEDC scope	Non-profit sector	Leveraged funds Social support metrics	ongoing
Leverage Firelands Forward staff	FF board		

## 2. GENERATE WEALTH FOR OUR COMMUNITY THROUGH BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

**Addresses Strategic Areas of Focus: Business Retention & Expansion, Small Business Development, and New Business**

NEDC believes that the most important thing that we can do to support business development is to make sure we give outstanding customer service to existing business. Research shows that existing businesses create 60% to 80% of all new jobs. NEDC knows that our economy is organized around a unique mix of industry specializations and labor and housing market characteristics that shape our economic and social fortunes. NEDC will assume a local leadership position to effectively set goals, organize firms, and reach out to target populations in ways that result in new jobs for workers and skilled hires for employers.

NEDC will benchmark its efforts in wealth generation with traditional economic development measures—high-paying jobs, workforce development and strategic industry development – and take a more holistic approach to wealth generation which also includes, upward mobility and regional wealth - intellectual, individual, social, natural, built environment, political, financial, and cultural assets. These assets, when invested in, nurtured, and leveraged appropriately, can reflect the true level of a region’s economic (and social) well-being.

**Objective 2.1 Actively implement an on-going BRE program focusing on the retention and expansion of local businesses**

**Objective 2.2 Deliver targeted, localized, and customized small business and entrepreneurship support through RISE**

**Objective 2.3 Conduct ongoing asset mapping for new business attraction**

**Objective 2.4 Dutifully pursue new business attraction that complements our community and economy’s strengths and improves our weaknesses**

<b>Objective 2.1 Actively implement an on-going BRE program focusing on the retention and expansion of local businesses</b>			
<b>Tactics</b>	<b>Partners</b>	<b>Metrics</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
Facilitate Firelands Manufacturing Alliance	Business, LCMSP	# Participants	Ongoing
Proactive calling schedule	Board	# Visits Conversion to projects	Ongoing
TeamNEO & JobsOhio “fam” visits	TeamNEO, JobsOhio	# Visits Leveraged funding	Ongoing
Continuously refine toolbox of offerings through ongoing education	Ohio DOD, US EDA, IEDC, OEDA	# Points of business assistance Types of assistance Leveraged funding	Ongoing

## Objective 2.2 Deliver targeted, localized, and customized small business and entrepreneurship support through RISE

Tactics	Partners	Metrics	Timeline
1-on-1 advising/milestone mentoring	GLIDE	# Appointments New/returning clients Jobs retained & created # New biz startups	ongoing
Technical assistance workshops	Local service providers	# Events # Attendees # Follow along connections	Per quarter
Networking events		# Events # Attendees	Per quarter
Minority business development		% clientele	2022-collateral in Spanish & asset map 2023 – events in Spanish
Access to capital	City, County, banks, CDFI, investors	Applications Funding Awards	2023- new fund
Youth programs	Young entrepreneur institute, area schools	# Student participants \$ awarded to youth projects	2022- Norwalk pilot 2023- include funding opportunities

## Objective 2.3 Conduct ongoing asset mapping for new business attraction

Tactics	Partners	Metrics	Timeline
City-wide utility & land use plan	Ohio Edison, Columbia Gas, City, Engineer	Actionable outcomes from plan	2022- funding & partners 2022- completion
Explore strategic partnerships with surrounding communities	Milan Township, Bronson Township		2022- introductions & planning
Participate in housing conversation	City, County, Firelands Forward		
Supply chain & multi location mapping	Current biz		2023

## Objective 2.4 Dutifully pursue new business attraction that complements our community and economy's strengths and improves our weaknesses

Tactics	Partners	Metrics	Timeline
Maintain & improve site & building database	Realtor community	Views Site search conversions	ongoing
Spec building development	NCDC, private investors		2022
South Benedict revitalization project	Fisher Titus, City, County, Engineer	Leveraged funding	2022
Launch community development sectors initiative		# partners \$ invested	2022

### 3. STEWARD INSPIRED INVESTMENTS FOR SUSTAINABILITY, LONGEVITY, AND AMPLIFICATION

#### Addresses Strategic Areas of Focus: Partnerships and Organizational Sustainability & Marketing

NEDC believes that enduring, positive community growth is not accomplished alone. We know that alignment with partners not only enhances the coordination of economic development efforts, it increases capacity and improves credibility.

Our vision is to drive the previously outlined goals and objectives by engaging in effective, open communication; building lasting partnerships and acknowledging the contributions of partners; and upholding high standards of integrity, trust, and honesty.

To ensure lasting contributions to our community’s growth, NEDC aims to be efficient with funding and resources. We will prioritize a diversified funding stream, use our staff wisely and focus resources where they will have the most impact.

#### Objective 3.1 Lead alignment efforts with City of Norwalk and private sector

#### Objective 3.2 Define roles & relationships between all local leading economic development agencies – Huron County Chamber of Commerce & Huron County Development Council

#### Objective 3.3 Develop educated and engaged Board of Directors

#### Objective 3.4 Publish and distribute modern, relevant materials that highlight NEDC and NEDC’s role and drive progress of strategic goals

Objective 3.1 Lead alignment efforts with City of Norwalk and private sector			
Tactics	Partners	Metrics	Timeline
Regular, data-based reporting	City Admin	Frequency of touchpoint	ongoing
Involvement on City Committees			
MOU - Detailed agreement for funding expectations			2022 – sign 2023- update & renew 2024- update & renew
Confirmation of Council representation on board	City Council		yearly



### Objective 3.2 Define roles & relationships between all local leading economic development agencies – Huron County Chamber of Commerce & Huron County Development Council

Tactics	Partners	Metrics	Timeline
Coordinate & promote community-level goal setting	City, County, Chamber, HCDC		2022- initiate conversation 2023- Develop Plan
Collaboration on events	Chamber, HCDC	# events attended	Ongoing
Participate through membership & committee work	Chamber		Ongoing
Explore formal relationship definition with HCDC	HCDC board, NEDC board		2022- short term agreement 2023- revisit

### Objective 3.3 Develop educated and engaged Board of Directors

Tactics	Partners	Metrics	Timeline
Board report to reflect strategic plan			
Committee development	Non-board member investors		
Educational series/informative presentations at board meetings	TeamNEO, OEDA, past clients, FF		Per quarter

### Objective 3.4 Publish and distribute modern, relevant materials that highlight NEDC and NEDC's role and drive progress of strategic goals

Tactics	Partners	Metrics	Timeline
Who we are 1-page		Distribution	2022
Media relations	Reflector, Norwalk Ohio News	Distribution	
Facebook		Page Reach Page Visits New Page Likes	
LinkedIn		Post Reach New Page Likes	
www.norwalknedc.com		# Visitors	
Email marketing	Constant Contact	Open rate Click rate List size	

## CONCLUSION

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This plan will serve as NEDC's daily guidepost for the next three years. As we look to prioritize development efforts with limited resources, the first question we will ask before working on a project will be which strategic area of focus does this align with:



Workforce Development



Partnerships



Business Retention & Expansion



Small Business Development



Organizational Sustainability & Marketing



New Business

While our tactics and tasks may change, we are confident that our 3 goals and 10 objectives will move this organization into its third decade positioned as a community leader and having improved the Norwalk area's business base

## APPENDIX

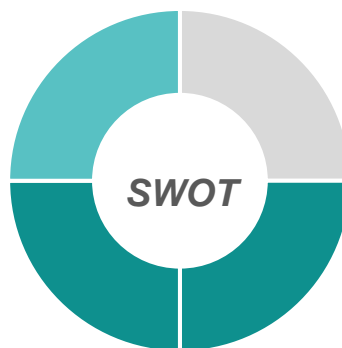
# Results from 2021 Survey of Board of Directors

### STRENGTHS

- Board of Directors
- Reputation & community support
- The Development Center
- Staff
- Small Business Support
- Organizational Sustainability
- SiteOhio Authenticated Site
- NCDC

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Site & Infrastructure Development
- City Partnership
- Engagement of new, committed board members
- Generational workforce opportunity
- Work From Home adaptation/opportunities
- Regional Collaboration (including Huron County)
- Better communication of Small Business Support options
- Execution on NEDC Mission
- Pursuit of funding for businesses & community, capture our share
- Build relationships w our “fresh start”
- Promotion of Norwalk
- Relocation/soft landings/welcoming/talent attraction



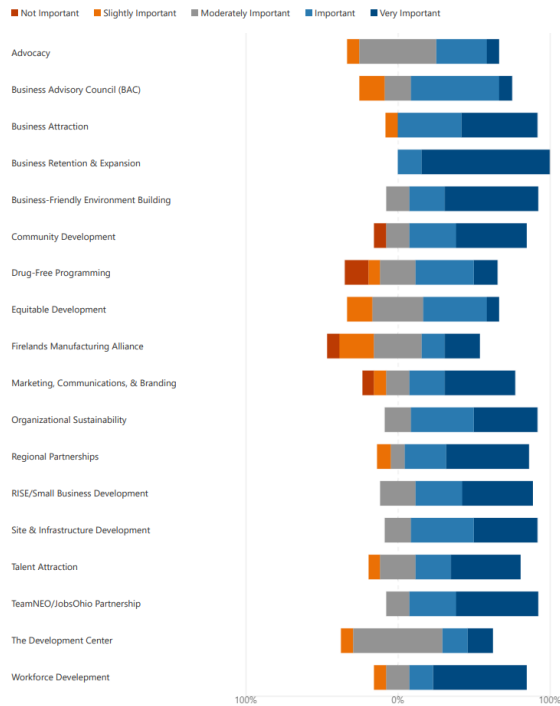
### WEAKNESSES

- Clarity of role/ Identity
- What does NEDC do? What's the “ROI”
- Messaging & Branding
- Perceived independence/ too competitive
- Regional relationships (including County)
- Business Retention & Expansion (proactive outreach)
- Partner engagement in & communication of programs & services
- Aligning what City & Business Community want to see from NEDC
- Long term & short term planning (accountability)

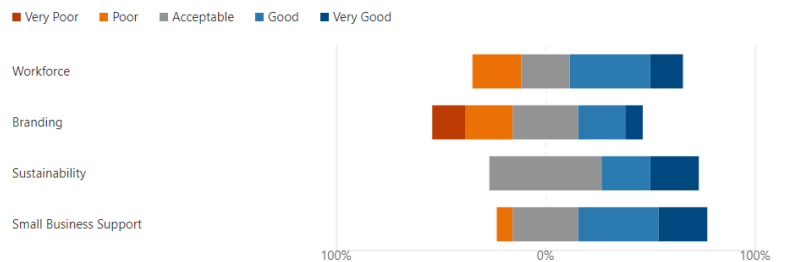
### THREATS

- Declining Population
- Generational workforce challenge
- Immediate threats of unfilled jobs/availability of employees
- Government intervention w/ business
- Community perception of economic development
- Funding/business model
- Supply chain uncertainty
- Housing

Rate the importance of each of the following activities.



Rate NEDC's performance on current strategic priorities.



## EMSI Economy Overview for 44857

### Economy Overview

**23,215**  
Population (2020)  
Population decreased by 170 over the last 5 years but is projected to grow by 14 over the next 5 years.

**9,604**  
Total Regional Employment  
Jobs grew by 310 over the last 5 years and are projected to grow by 473 over the next 5 years.

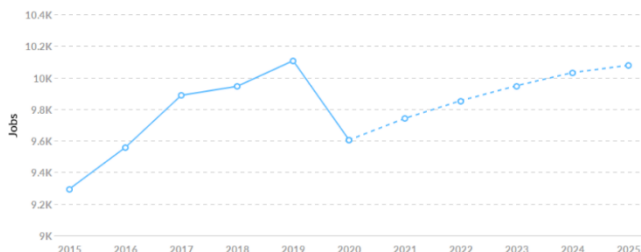
**\$55.7K**  
Avg. Earnings Per Job (2020)  
Regional average earnings per job are **\$18.5K** below the national average earnings of \$74.2K per job.

### Population Characteristics



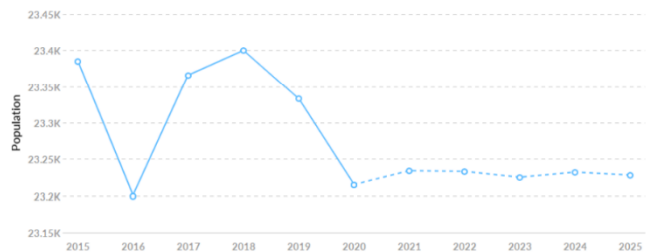
### Job Trends

From 2015 to 2020, jobs increased by 3.3% in Norwalk, OH (in Huron county) (ZIP 44857) from 9,294 to 9,604. This change outpaced the national growth rate of 0.0% by 3.3%.



### Population Trends

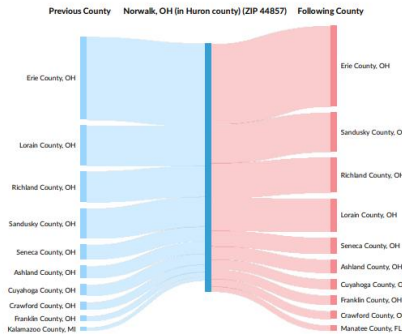
As of 2020 the region's population declined by 0.7% since 2015, falling by 170. Population is expected to increase by 0.1% between 2020 and 2025, adding 14.



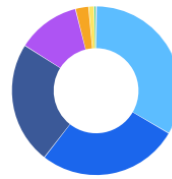
## Inbound and Outbound Migration

The table below analyzes past and current residents of Norwalk, OH (in Huron county) (ZIP 44857). The left column shows residents of other counties migrating to Norwalk, OH (in Huron county) (ZIP 44857). The right column shows residents migrating from Norwalk, OH (in Huron county) (ZIP 44857) to other counties.

As of 2019, 492 people have migrated from Erie County, OH to Norwalk, OH (in Huron county) (ZIP 44857). In the same year, 482 people left Norwalk, OH (in Huron county) (ZIP 44857) migrating to Erie County, OH. The total Net Migration for Norwalk, OH (in Huron county) (ZIP 44857) in 2018 was -172.



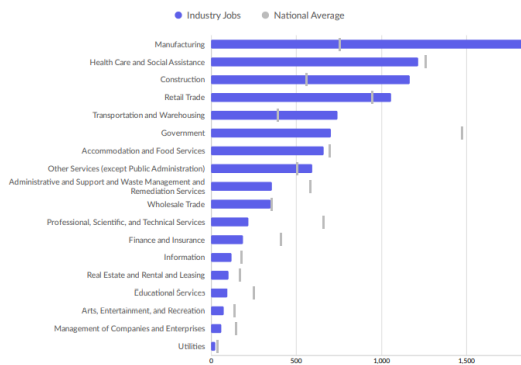
## Business Size



Business Size	Percentage	Business Count
1 to 4 employees	33.3%	290
5 to 9 employees	27.1%	236
10 to 19 employees	23.4%	204
20 to 49 employees	12.1%	105
50 to 99 employees	2.5%	22
100 to 249 employees	1.0%	9
250 to 499 employees	0.3%	3
500+ employees	0.1%	1

\*Business Data by DatabaseUSA.com is third-party data provided by Emsi to its customers as a convenience, and Emsi does not endorse or warrant its accuracy or consistency with other published Emsi data. In most cases, the Business Count will not match total companies with profiles on the summary tab.

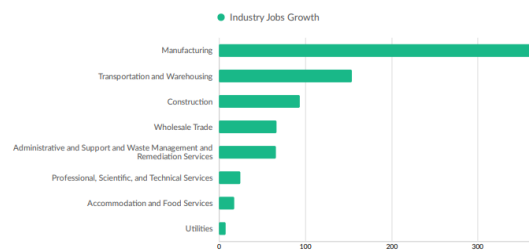
## Largest Industries



## Top Industry Location Quotient



## Top Growing Industries



# Additional Sources Referenced

[Mckinsey & Co](#)

[Ohio State University Extension](#)

[The Brookings Institution](#)

[The University of Utah Policy Institute](#)

[IEDC's EDRP High Performing EDOs](#)