

RESILIENT

A regional recovery and resiliency plan to help our communities **THRIVE**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Resilient is a regional economic resiliency plan developed by Thrive West Central through funding from the Economic Development Administration. Resilient focuses on the major challenges caused and/or exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic in West Central Indiana, with a specific focus on issues pertaining to a declining and aging population and lagging economic growth. Thrive West Central collected extensive primary and secondary data on all facets of life in West Central Indiana to gain a comprehensive understanding of our region's greatest challenges and to better understand opportunities for growth and resiliency. To build a regional economy that can withstand future crises, West Central Indiana must be capable of maintaining economic growth through retaining and attracting a diverse, productive population.

GOALS OF THE PLAN

GOAL #1



To identify the most pressing resiliency related challenges and opportunities in our region, and to spur formal acknowledgement of and action towards addressing these challenges.

GOAL #2



To identify public, private, and nonprofit resources that local/regional leaders can utilize in pursuit of addressing these challenges.

GOAL #3



To provide a unified framework for how communities in our region can pursue and build resiliency and prosperity.

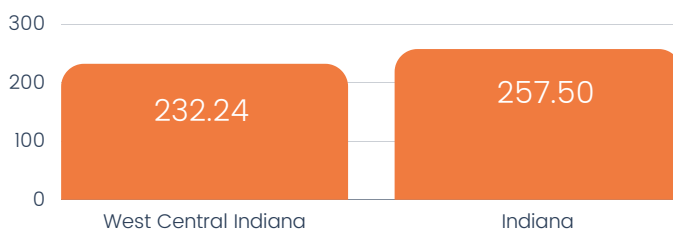
OVERARCHING THEMES

WORKFORCE AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

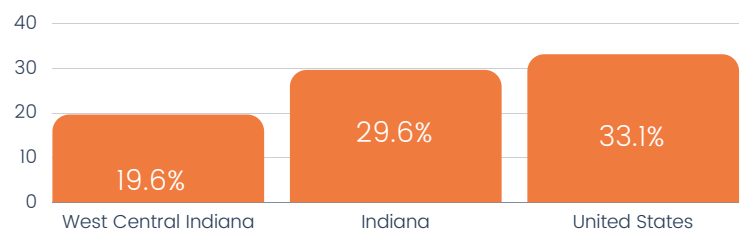
During the pandemic, counties saw record high unemployment rates, with some in excess of 16%. The state and federal governments launched many relief programs to help businesses and employees respond to the challenges brought on by COVID-19. While business advocacy/resource groups worked diligently to promote awareness of these programs, it appears our region under-utilized these resources compared to other areas, although questions remain about the reason(s) why.

SELECTED DATA POINTS

PAYCHECK PROTECTION LOANS APPROVED PER 10,000 PEOPLE



PERCENTAGE OF ADULTS WITH BACHELOR'S DEGREE



HEALTHCARE

Residents across the region identified increased access to healthcare resources as a major need before and during the pandemic. Challenges related to healthcare access have been compounded by the rural nature of much of the region and the lack of awareness of the resources offered by regional providers.

SELECTED DATA POINTS



Substance Abuse: In 2020, **295** out of **400** cases of children removed from their homes in West Central Indiana occurred due to parental drug/alcohol use.

SHARE OF THE POPULATION AGE 65+



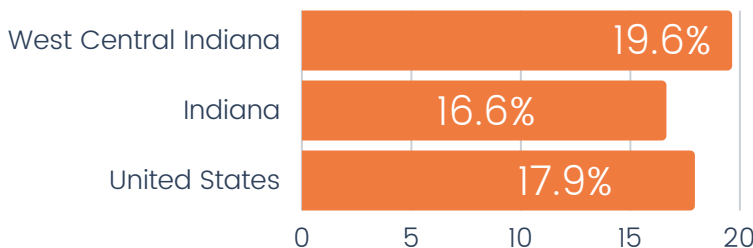
Demographics: The share of the region's population aged 65+ is projected to increase by **3.2%** by 2030.

QUALITY OF LIFE AND COMMUNITY NEEDS

During the pandemic, many individuals across our region found themselves in need of the essential services that contribute to the region's overall quality of life, such as access to healthy food, affordable housing, and outdoor recreation opportunities. West Central Indiana must continue to invest in developing resources to attract and retain a diverse, productive population.

SELECTED DATA POINTS

Food Insecurity: The percentage of food insecure individuals in West Central Indiana is **19.6%** compared to the national average of **17.9%**.



Housing: The median list price for a house in the region increased from **\$84,700** in January 2020 to **\$122,450** as of August 2, 2021.

EDUCATION

The COVID-19 pandemic brought unique challenges to our educational institutions and reinforced the importance of educational resources as an economic and community development tool. Accurate data on the current state of schools and educational facilities were somewhat difficult to obtain due to the ongoing effects of the pandemic. The existing data suggests that educational institutions are a major potential asset for our region, but quality-related obstacles remain in providing our region's students with a top-flight education.

SELECTED DATA POINTS



Education: **None** of West Central Indiana's school districts received an "A" rating from the 2020 Indiana Department of Education rankings.



Connectivity: % of students **without** access to internet and a computer.