



“Providing resources for communities and entrepreneurs to create and retain jobs in Antrim, Charlevoix, Cheboygan, and Emmet Counties.”

FIVE YEAR SNAPSHOT (2019-2023)

119 successful economic & community **development projects**

\$94,726,866 in **private investment**

\$3,575,965 in local unit of **government investment**

\$10,687,474 in **grant funding**

695 **new jobs**

3,885 **retained jobs**

2023 PROJECT IMPACTS INDICATORS

15 successful economic & community **development projects**

10 **business development** projects

5 **community development** projects

\$12,740,000 **total investment**

\$12,350,000 in **private investment**

\$390,000 in **grant** and **local unit of government investment**

44 **new** and **285** **retained jobs**

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

- Assisted with 28 economic development projects that will result in over \$200 million in investment and 145 anticipated retained and created jobs.
- Updated and maintained 19 shovel ready sites into state attraction database.

Payton Heins, NLEA President



It is an honor to serve as NLEA's newest president, beginning in January 2024. Despite a time of transition in 2023 for the NLEA staff as the Board of Directors moved through the executive search process, staff did not waiver in their commitment to the communities and businesses we serve across our region. They continued to lead by supporting the expansion of businesses; hosting another successful Northern Lakes

Economic Symposium and Showcase; and advancing critical community development projects that are adding much needed workforce housing, enhancing infrastructure, and supporting the vibrancy that retains and attracts talent and business to our region. I am excited to celebrate their many successes in 2023 within this report and thrilled to lead alongside them in economic development as we move forward to enhance our services and strategically focus our efforts to ensure economic vitality now and into the future for our region.

Carlin Smith, 2024 NLEA Board Chair



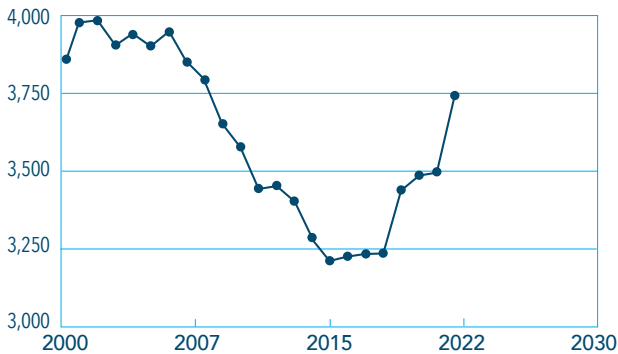
John F. Kennedy said, “Change is the law of life and those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.” We saw significant change at the NLEA in 2023 with the retirement of President David Emmel and the hiring of Payton Heins to step into that role. While change is difficult,

we can look beyond the past and present to a very bright future for the NLEA. We are very fortunate to have such a high-level team looking out for the economic future of our four-county region. It's a team with sophistication, expertise, experience, and tremendous resourcefulness. Because of them I carry a high level of optimism for our region. The NLEA is focused on workforce attraction and retention, assisting with development, and assuring businesses have the tools they need to grow right here in northern Michigan. For those who are contributors to the NLEA, thanks for investing in our area's economic success. For those not-yet investors, we look forward to having you join us in our 40th year of creating and retaining jobs here in northern Michigan.

As an economic development organization, we monitor numerous metrics—education, income, investment, employment, access to healthcare, and more—to gauge the wellbeing of our economy and communities. Below, we outline three metrics that reveal trends in Antrim, Charlevoix, Cheboygan, and Emmet Counties.

BUSINESS BOOM

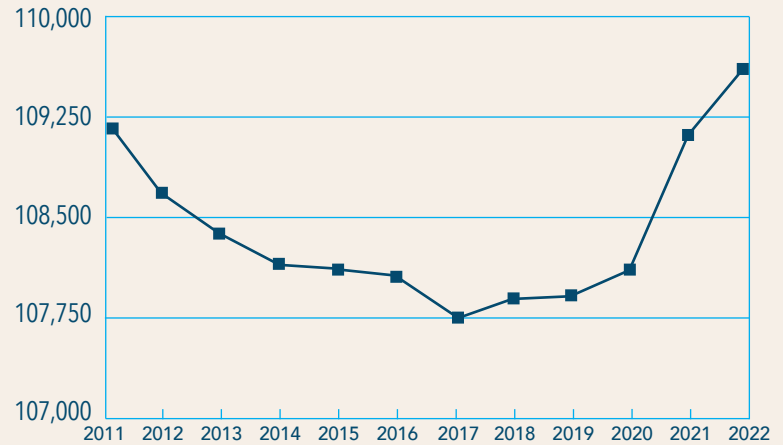
Data is from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics' Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages



From its 2015 low, the region has been rapidly adding businesses in recent years with the pandemic only serving as a short stall in that growth. All four of the NLEA's counties added more than 30 businesses from 2022 to 2023. This trend likely has several drivers: entrepreneurs taking advantage of low interest rates available through the pandemic (the effective federal funds rate was below 1.5% from March 2020 to June 2022), individuals starting side businesses, recent retirees launching consulting businesses, or sole proprietors updating the address of their businesses when they move to the area.

GROWING COMMUNITIES

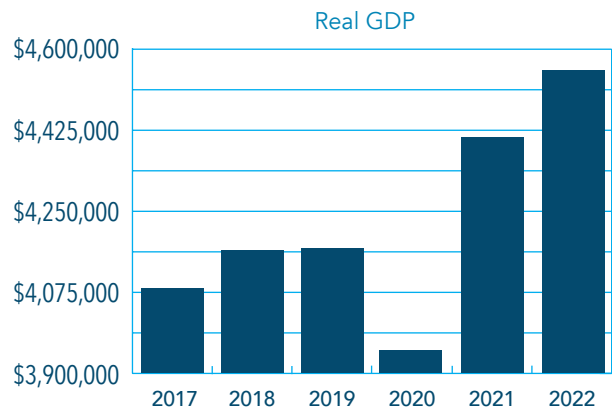
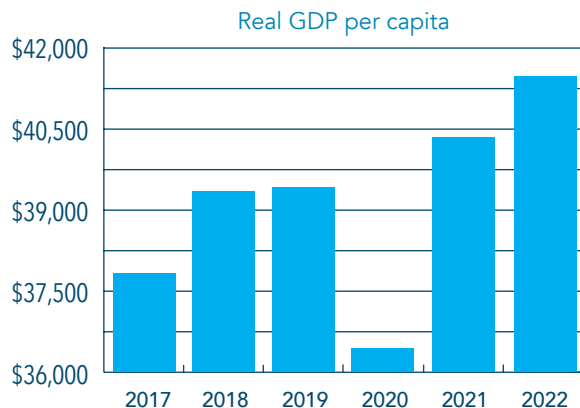
Data is from the US Census Bureau's American Communities Survey



The region's population continues to recover from its 2017 low. With a population of 109,617 in 2022, the region is just shy of its 2010 population of 109,708. Between 2020 to 2021, the regional population saw its largest increase in the past decade, 1,028 people. Much of that growth has been concentrated in Emmet County which added 771 people. Population growth can be good for businesses (more potential employees and consumers), schools (more potential employees and per-pupil funding), and local units of government (more tax dollars). However, the region's older population is growing significantly faster than the working age population, posing a challenge to the local labor force.

Positive Trends in GDP

Data is from the US Bureau of Economic Analysis



Increasing real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in recent years is a positive indicator for the region. As a measure of the value of final goods and services generated in the region, increasing GDP bodes well for local communities and residents. Positive trends in GDP reflect increased consumer spending and investment in private inventory which results in more dollars for the local economy. Regional GDP took a dip during the pandemic as businesses were shut down. In 2021 and 2022, GDP has more than rebounded due to low unemployment and thriving businesses.

2023 PROJECT SPOTLIGHTS

Supporting Community Vitality to Retain and Attract Talent and Business

The NLEA continued helping communities create vibrant places to retain and attract the workforce needed for a strong and resilient economy. Our local partners had this to say about their experience:

"The Antrim County Economic Development Corporation (EDC) is grateful for the ongoing support of the Northern Lakes Economic Alliance (NLEA). Their expertise and collaboration were instrumental in the development of our strategic plan. The NLEA's strong regional network also facilitated valuable community connections, further empowering the EDC to deliver impactful business support initiatives within Antrim County." Rachel Krino, President, Antrim County EDC

"The staff at NLEA always feel available, accessible, and passionate about helping us better serve our stakeholders. The NLEA's support and guidance has been critical in shaping Mackinaw City to be a business-friendly municipality." Dean Martin, Community Development Director, Village of Mackinaw City

"We are grateful to have NLEA... for technical assistance on projects and public financing opportunities. In the last year, they have made a huge impact on a number of projects and our Community." Dan Sabolsky, City Manager, City of Cheboygan

Delivering Technical Assistance to Drive Business Success and Growth

The innovative spirit is strong at Manthei Wood Products, a new state-of-the-art plywood press line housed in a 26,000 square foot expansion will allow for production to increase by over 3 times. Using grant opportunities and tax abatement support this new plywood system will only strengthen it, allowing for continued innovation, growth, and benefit to the community.



"NLEA has been a tremendous asset to Manthei Wood Products. Without its support and guidance, it is not a stretch to say that Manthei Wood Products would not nearly be in the same position to succeed as it is today." Joe Zielinski, CFO, Manthei Wood Products



NLEA provided land use/zoning guidance to the City of Cheboygan for the Walstrom Marine expansion

project on the Cheboygan River. The approved expansion of the facility resulted in a \$5 million investment and the creation of six jobs.

Providing Community Economic Development Education to Foster an Environment of Collaboration

The NLEA prides itself in providing community education on best practices in economic development as well as local economic trends. Productive discussions about the future of our communities require informed participants. In 2023, the second annual Northern Lakes Economic Symposium and Showcase was a resounding success with over 250 attendees coming together for crucial conversations around the theme of talent attraction and retention. Throughout the year, NLEA delivered economic development trainings to Chamber of Commerce leadership development programs, the Mancelona Regional Chamber, Petoskey Sunrise Rotary, and the Elk Rapids DDA. We also hosted energy efficiency roundtables for businesses and supported strategic planning.

"NLEA is a valuable partner in Leadership Charlevoix County's Economic Development... NLEA specialists help emerging business, nonprofit and government leaders better understand local economic development trends and challenges. Their efforts over the past eleven years have reached over 200 program graduates, many of whom go on to assume important leadership roles in their organizations and our communities." Dean Solomon, Board of Directors Chair, Leadership Charlevoix County



Spotlighting Regional Opportunity to Attract and Retain Talent

In the NLEA's interactions with business and community leaders, talent is a ubiquitous challenge across all sectors and businesses. Organizations are struggling to find enough qualified workers to fill their open positions. In 2023, the NLEA took several steps to address this. The NLEA participates in the group, Back to Michigan, to share and advance talent attraction solutions statewide. In June, the NLEA launched the Choose the North campaign with the support of the DTE Energy Foundation.

Learn more about this talent initiative on the next page.



NLEA hosted Back to Michigan partners in Boyne City in July 2023

The economic development projects we report every year reflect multiple years of work to reach the finish line. It is the assured investments and collaborative support of communities, companies, NLEA investors, and partner organizations that truly help these projects and our region succeed; we commend your resolute support.

NLEA Staff

Payton Heins, *CEcD President*

Jessica Lovay, *Community Development & Grants*

Sam Bailey, *Strategic Initiatives Manager*

Chris Bauer, *AICP Community and Economic Development Manager*



Our team of interns developed a regional talent attraction and retention campaign aimed at 18- to 30-year-olds. Between June and December, the campaign had an impressive reach:

- 1,575+ views on YouTube
- 102,200+ views on TikTok
- 11,700+ impressions on Facebook
- 20,100+ views on Instagram



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