



The Greater Louisville Area

The Region

Louisville, Kentucky is the 16th largest city in the United States with a population of nearly 700,000 residents. Louisville is home to a number of major corporations ranging from Humana to UPS. The region's economy is driven by its health-related companies and logistics industry. Recently, the Louisville metropolitan region has also developed a strong manufacturing base and is slowly developing an information-based industry and services sector. Despite all of this, the Greater Louisville area ranks low on the New Economy Index. The region ranked 47th in innovation capacity, 44th in digital economy, and 46th out of 50 overall. Moreover, the median household income of \$40,871 is nearly \$10,000 below the U.S. metropolitan average.

KENTUCKIANA HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE INITIATIVE

In 2002, Greater Louisville Inc. received a \$3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to train workers and ease shortages in the healthcare industry. The initiative, named the Kentukiana Healthcare Workforce Initiative, recruits, trains and employs unemployed mothers with grown children, displaced or underemployed workers, incumbent hospital workers in both healthcare-related and non-healthcare-related occupations, and legal immigrants and refugees enrolled in ESL classes.

Greater Louisville Inc. manages and administers the initiative while the local healthcare companies provide cash and in-kind contributions. They work together under the Greater Louisville Health Enterprises Network. The goal of the program is to recruit and place new workers in four critical shortage areas: nursing, diagnostic imaging, laboratory technology and respiratory therapy.

When it comes to arts and culture, Louisville is one of only nine U.S. cities with a professional opera, ballet, theatre, orchestra and children's theatre. Louisville hosts many festivals and events, the most popular being the Kentucky Derby Festival. Additionally, the city is in the middle of a \$700 million tourism infrastructure plan which will include The Frazier Historical Arms Museum opening in 2004, and the Muhammad Ali Center and The Kentucky Center for African-American Heritage opening in 2005.

The Business-Led Civic Organizations

Greater Louisville Inc. (GLI) is the only major business-led civic organization in the Louisville and Southern Indiana region. As the metropolitan chamber of commerce and economic development agency, GLI is the regional leader in promoting policies

and developing strategies that support business growth and economic development. GLI has released a visioning report and identified nine strategic priorities that will help the organization accomplish its mission. Some of these strategies include providing leadership and a vision for Greater Louisville's economic development efforts. For example, GLI is working with the City of Louisville and others to establish a downtown entertainment district. In addition, GLI is always focused on business attraction and retention and is heavily involved in the creation and growth of new ventures and industries.

The Regional Leadership Coalition (RLC) is a private-sector organization that consists of prominent civic and business leaders interested in regionalism and working across political and geographic boundaries. Created in March 2001, RLC's mission is to serve as a forum to promote awareness and raise solutions for issues confronting the 23-county area including Greater Louisville and southern Indiana.

The Regional Business-Civic Landscape

In September 1997, GLI was formed through the merger of the Greater Louisville Economic Development Partnership and the Louisville Area Chamber of Commerce. The following year, GLI also accepted responsibility for some of the economic development activities that had been carried out by the City and County. The merger of the Chamber and Economic Development Partnership made GLI the dominant business organization in the region. As a result, GLI has worked closely with the local and state governments on a number of initiatives and projects. For example, GLI led the the merger between the City of Louisville and Jefferson County governments. GLI was especially helpful in supporting this merger by raising money for the effort.

In addition to working with the City and County governments, GLI has partnered with the local school district. GLI initiated a campaign designed to help all school children to read at grade level within four years. GLI also has worked with UPS to help it with the expansion of its \$1.1 billion air hub facility at Louisville International Airport. Overall, GLI has played a major role within the region and has been able to develop partnerships with not only the business community, but also the government and nonprofit sectors.

Business Leadership

The level of attention given and time spent by business leaders on regional civic issues has increased a great deal over the last decade in the Greater Louisville area. One of the greatest catalysts for business involvement in the last few years was a report released by University of Louisville Economics Professor Paul Coomes. Coomes' study compared the strengths and weaknesses of the Greater Louisville area with competing cities. According to Steve Higdon, President and CEO of GLI, "Louisville did not fair so well in the study and this galvanized the business community and others to want to improve the economic and social situation in Louisville."

NEW CITY OF LOUISVILLE

In 2000, residents of Louisville and Jefferson County voted to join together the two governments. On January 6, 2003, the city government of Louisville and government of Jefferson County officially merged, helping Louisville move from being the 64th largest city to the 16th largest in the United States with a population close to 700,000.

Under the new government, Louisville has one metropolitan Mayor and a 26-member Legislative Council. Since the merger, Louisville has drawn interest from over a dozen cities interested in learning how they might also reorganize the governments in their regions.

Today, the business community within the region is heavily involved in promoting it and building upon Louisville's assets. There have been strong efforts to increase job growth, develop business start-ups, support arts and culture and encourage population growth. As a matter of fact, "Louisville has experienced a population growth for the first time in 30 years" said Higdon. The hope by many in the business community is that this is just the beginning of many positive changes to come for the Greater Louisville area.