

Hamilton County

Continuing To Build On Successes



The Regional Performing Arts Center located in Carmel is home to a concert hall, two theaters and an outdoor amphitheater.

Hamilton County is a top-10 county in the United States for quality of life, according to Forbes.com.

Other recent publications have identified the county as the best place to raise a family in the U.S. *Forbes* ranked Fishers the 11th best place to move in the nation, *BusinessWeek* ranked the town the best place to raise children in Indiana, and *Relocate America* had Fishers in the Top 100 Best Places to Live in America. Noblesville was named Indiana Community of the Year in 2008 and Carmel was recognized by the U.S. Conference of Mayors for its Climate Protection Award.

Hamilton ranks first in the state in per capita income — household income is double the state average. Half the county's adult residents have a bachelor's degree or higher. The county's public schools rank fifth in the state for sending high school grads to four-year colleges. Four high

schools have been identified as "gold" (among the nation's top 16 percent of high schools) by *Expansion Management Magazine*. Hamilton County has been the fastest-growing county in Indiana since the late 1980s and a top-25 growth county in the United States for nearly 20 years.

All of this may explain why business is good in Hamilton County. The county's unemployment rate currently stands at 6.4 percent. Recent data show the county with more than 112,000 jobs and a total workforce in excess of 138,000.

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The county is central to a labor shed of over 550,000 people. Leading county employers include Conseco (2,300), Sallie Mae (1,600), Liberty Mutual (1,200), RCI (1,000) and St. Vincent Health (800).

"We are particularly strong in information technology, insurance and finance sectors, and the life sciences and health care industries," said Jeff Burt, president of the Hamilton County Alliance, the local economic development organization. Growing sectors for the county include tourism, business

and retailing.

Hoping to accelerate the creation and growth of new companies, especially those related to technology, the Alliance created and has spun off a new group. The Entrepreneurship Advancement Center (EAC) became a free-standing entity in 2010. To date, entrepreneurship in the county has been especially active in the areas of life sciences and IT. Some prominent examples include Maaguzi (Carmel), Marcadia Biotech (Carmel), Netfor (Fishers) and Therametric Technologies (Noblesville). Locally, the town of Fishers has announced planning for the Fishers Medical Technology Corridor. The 900 acres of undeveloped land adjacent to I-69 and extending east from Exit 10 is targeted for medical firms, technology research and higher education institutions. The development would also offer a mixture of uses, including retail, office and residential.

One financial company continuing to garner attention for its growth is The Capital Group Co. In 2010, the company will fully occupy its new facilities in Carmel with more than 1,200 employees. The Capital Group will have invested nearly \$50 million in the development.

Despite the challenging national economy, Hamilton County also saw healthy growth among its existing business sector. A total of 22 businesses assisted by the Alliance had expansions in 2009. These businesses created 210 new jobs and invested more than \$19 million. New businesses included Wolf Technical Services and Keihin. Other announced new or expanding businesses includes

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Safeco Insurance (500 jobs), Dealer Services Inc. (55 new jobs) and ACES Power Marketing (40 new jobs).

Fishers also saw the delivery of the first of five new office buildings at Crosspoint in 2009. The initial building is a four-story, 110,000-square-foot structure. When completed, the development with full visibility in the I-69 corridor, will contain approximately 600,000 square feet of class A office space. The 26-acre, \$100 million real estate investment is a project of Indianapolis-based Edgeworth Laskey Properties LLC.

The Noblesville/Exit 10 market area had a solid year in 2009. A new hotel (Cambria Suites) was opened, approximately 75,000 square feet of spec flex/light industrial space was delivered, two new restaurants opened and plans were finalized for a second bridge (Olio Road) over I-69. Several other smaller outlot commercial projects were also completed. The area continues to offer significant acreage that is already zoned for commercial, office and light industrial use with infrastructure in-place.



Currently under construction, the Regional Performing Arts Center will open this year.

The biggest quality of life news in Carmel in 2009 was the continuation of efforts related to the City's new \$150 million Regional Performing Arts Center. Construction of the world-class facility is underway with completion slated by the end of 2010. The center contains a 1,600-seat concert hall, two theaters (500- and 200-seat), and an outdoor amphitheater. The facility is located in Carmel's City Center.

The heart of employment growth in western Hamilton County continues to be the Meridian Corporate Corridor. The Corridor is home to nearly 25,000 workers. Most of these positions are located in more than 5 million square feet of spec office

space plus corporate-owned facilities. The office corridor has been a highly desirable location for new and growing businesses such as ITT Educational Services, Zotec, Midwest ISO, Pharmakon, Firestone Diversified Products and Ingersoll Rand.

The city of Westfield saw important milestones in 2009 with the announced plan to create a major mixed-use development that will showcase an effort to become the Family Sports Capital of America. This initiative, combined with an expansive new vision for the city's downtown/historic area, Grand Junction, represents the city's effort to enhance the community's quality of life. In doing so, Westfield has created a vision to sustain the long-term health of the city and promote expanded economic development opportunities. The Grand Junction plan calls for a total investment of about \$725 million, with \$675 million derived from the private sector. The family sports initiative is pegged as a total public and private investment of nearly \$1.5 billion. The city and the Hamilton County Convention and Visitor's Bureau have created a Family Sports Advisory Commission to help coordinate the initiative. •

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