

Central Kentucky I-65 Corridor



The central Kentucky WIRED region lies contiguously along the Interstate 65 corridor of north-central Kentucky. The region is supported by a strong infrastructure hub of rail, roadways, runways, river and fiber optics. The growth of the region and the transformation from rural to urban are well under way.

The catalysts for transformation come from several critical sources, including the I-65 Corridor; an international logistics hub; leading research facilities in medicine and science, technology, engineering and mathematics technologies. Additionally, a major base realignment at Fort Knox will radically shift employer demand in the southern portion of the I-65 Corridor from blue collar to highly-skilled white collar.

Interstate 65 is one of the most heavily traveled north-to-south highways in the United States. Additionally, two-thirds of the nation's population is located within 600 miles of the I-65 Corridor. This includes roughly one million residents – a third of Kentucky's population – who face a fundamental shift in their way of life. The region extends outward for more than 50 miles, including Louisville as a hub for growth.

The I-65 Corridor is lined with both recently completed and planned construction projects, including commercial, residential, military, sports arenas and convention and tourism facilities. These include the Museum Plaza on the Louisville Waterfront, Churchill Downs, the Kentucky Fair and Exposition Center, the International Convention Center, an arts incubator district for entrepreneurs of skilled crafts and bourbon distilleries and distribution centers.

Land is available in the southern part of the I-65 Corridor for prime manufacturing and distribution growth to support a just-in-time delivery system. The \$1 billion United Parcel Service (UPS) hub expansion is slated for completion in 2010 and will provide I-65 Corridor companies with a link to the global market. This will allow central Kentucky's automotive support industries and major distribution centers to have instant access to the world's markets.

The I-65 Corridor is experiencing an expansion in education and research facilities, which will provide support to the region's intended changes to the dynamic life sciences sector. These changes will spur the attraction of a sophisticated population seeking an inviting environment in which to work, play and raise their families.

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While these features are helping to transform a once sleepy southern-style economy into a thriving, world-class region, there are five critical challenges that must be met in order to sustain rapid growth:

1. Fill critical workforce gaps. Current and projected growth is unprecedented and the mix has shifted dramatically toward higher skill requirements.
2. Generate a culture that supports educational advancement and economic entrepreneurship. Though improving, the I-65 Corridor's culture does not place high value on educational attainment or on entrepreneurial activity. Implementation strategies will include communication, networking, education and training programs.
3. Strengthen the corridor-wide analysis and planning. WIRED will support corridor-wide data collection and analysis to link sub-regional planning efforts for a collaborative process.
4. Increase innovation and entrepreneurship. Strategies will facilitate the I-65 Corridor's networking among innovators, entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, and service providers and focus on developing educational and training programs that improve the STEM entrepreneurial talent pool.
5. Link existing sub-regional partnerships and resources to support a comprehensive and sustainable foundation for regional collaboration. Leadership collaboration within the region is imperative.

To tackle these challenges, a core resource team has been established to guide the transformation process and target investments to encourage smart and collaborative growth.

Partners for the Corridor include state and local entities, workforce investment boards, education and training providers, businesses and industry representatives. Some key partners include: Kentucky Education Cabinet, KY Department of Commercialization and Innovation, Kentucky Community and Technical College system, University of Kentucky, UPS, University of Louisville, General Electric (GE) and others.

