

2025 END-OF-YEAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REVIEW



BUILDING — MOMENTUM



ADVANCING COLLABORATION

Building Through Partnership



U.S. Chamber BLFP Participants



Broadband Map



Steve Fritsch and Renee Ligon, Team NEO



Wishmaker Business After Hours



Starbucks Grand Opening

Expanding Broadband and Regional Connectivity

Mansfield and Richland County advanced strategic initiatives that strengthened regional competitiveness and positioned key sites for future investment. Through dedicated efforts and persistent vision, spearheaded by County, NCSC, and state leadership and partners, Richland County received **\$20 million in Ohio's 2025–2026 biennial budget to expand broadband infrastructure** along the U.S. 30 corridor. This investment will expand service reliability for institutions such as North Central State College, OSU, and the 179th Cyberspace Wing, as well as extend high-speed internet access to underserved areas across the county and region. The project reflects coordination among local, regional, and state partners, supporting education, innovation, national defense, and economic opportunity.

Enhanced Finance Tools and Development Opportunities

In June 2025, thanks to the support of Richland County Commissioners Darrell Banks, Cliff Mears, and Tony Vero, Mayor Jodie Perry, the **Richland County Port Authority (RCPA) was created** to further enhance business retention, expansion, and attraction opportunities in our area. The RCPA provides sales tax exemptions for large projects and will provide unique finance opportunities. Since its inception, three projects have been approved by the RCPA Board, and all three are slated to close by late winter 2026.

Additional catalytic public finance tools and development initiatives were introduced in the county this year, in addition to the RCPA, and are supporting a number of significant potential projects as well as the needs of local businesses. These tools are filling the gap needed for projects as well as making our area much more competitive with site selectors and developers for new attraction projects.

Brownfield Remediation & Site Control

We continued to work with projects in the area and partners like the Richland County Land Bank, our county, cities, villages, and townships, regarding **additional space to develop and brownfield remediation**.

Redevelopment of downtown buildings and our gateways are top priorities, as well as overall community development. Currently working with several developers for targeted projects and hope to share more in early 2026.

We are **extremely thankful for the support and leadership** of the Richland County Commissioners, City of Shelby, City of Mansfield, City of Ontario, and all of our public and private partners and community leaders! We are all working to build on past success and **ADVANCE MOMENTUM – TOGETHER! GO RICHLAND!**

Background Photo: Washington DC Visit - Cherry Trees



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In Richland County

Housing Efforts

- The **Housing Development Steering Committee** continues to convene stakeholders across the County to move strategic initiatives forward.
- Assisted with **Bellville and Butler housing projects**, with the intent to pair high-end developments with income-supportive new residents.
- Assistive efforts included the presentation of **Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) legislation**, identifying concerns/opportunities for the Villages, and working with local officials to ascertain residential interest.
- Participated in committee meetings, informational presentations, and developer/village liaisons.

Village Fortification

- Worked with local elected officials in Plymouth, Bellville, Butler, and Lexington to **identify and categorize building inventories**.
- Discussed ideas to best present, promote, and ultimately locate businesses in historic facilities and transportation opportunities.

Local Business Elevation

- Conducted Business Retention & Expansion (BRE) visits with companies in manufacturing, healthcare, retail, and service industries. Larger employers and small businesses were targeted to better **inform the entire state of our regional economy**, and better understand and support their needs.

Attraction Efforts

- **Received project leads** from economic development partners JobsOhio and Team NEO and matched local site inventory with national leads.
- Completed Requests For Information (RFI), demonstrating **Richland County's assets and ability to meet project needs** with workforce capabilities, site availability, economic incentives, and community attributes.

Community Collaboration

- **Comprehensive Land Use Planning:** A collaboration between RCRCP, the County, the City's of Shelby and Mansfield hired consultant American Structure Point to lead efforts to plan for future development across the county.
- **Represented Richland County** at special events and media opportunities like IdeaStream's Sound of Ideas PBS program, focusing on agriculture.
- Fostered growth by **aligning strategic partnerships** among manufacturers, suppliers, and small businesses.
- The Chamber interacted with many local, state, regional, and federal agencies and leaders throughout the year. From hosting the Small Business Administration in December to celebrating businesses and legislative after hours, we are **thankful for taking engagement and stakeholder support to a new level**.



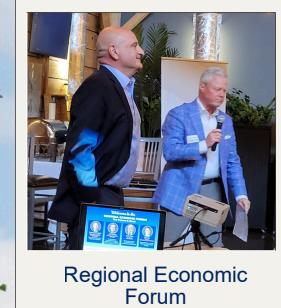
ED Now Event



NODE Meeting at Ohio State Reformatory



Team NEO Visit



Regional Economic Forum



Regional Economic Forum



Economic Forecast Breakfast



Silver Birch of Mansfield Groundbreaking



Mansfield Speedway



Downtown Mansfield Main Street Construction

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mansfield

Establishing a Repeatable Investment Framework

Mansfield's economic development efforts focused on strengthening tools, partnerships, and long-term readiness. A key milestone was the implementation of the City's **first Tax Increment Financing (TIF)**, established as a repeatable framework for supporting future investment. The process emphasized clarity, accountability, and early partner alignment, creating a practical model for structuring public-private projects. This approach supports long-term plans for the **I-71 / Ohio 13 gateway corridor**, improving investment readiness while maintaining transparency and consistency through continued modernization of Community Reinvestment Area (CRA) administration.

Developing Enhanced Infrastructure and Expanded Opportunities

- The **City of Mansfield's transformational downtown construction project is well underway**. From improved waterlines and roads to beautifully designed new lighting and streetscapes, the project is slated to be completed at the end of 2026.
- Working collaboratively with regional, state and local partners and industry specialists, we are evaluating the current site availability and infrastructure needed to support and accelerate **future industrial and business development growth** and identifying potential appropriate funding sources.
- **Mansfield Speedway** is being rebuilt and reinvigorated with plans to host a variety of events beginning in spring of 2026.
- Silver Birch of Mansfield, a **new \$38 million senior living development**, broke ground in Mansfield in 2025, representing a significant private investment that will expand housing options and contribute to the community's long-term growth.

Strengthening Site Readiness and Zoning Flexibility

Locally, Mansfield continued to strengthen its development framework through targeted infrastructure and land-use improvements. In partnership with the Richland Area Chamber & Economic Development, the City completed the **rezoning of the Airport West Industrial Park from I-1 to I-2**, expanding the range of industrial uses permitted at the site. This change removed a key barrier for site selectors and demonstrated Mansfield's responsiveness to evolving industry needs.

Background Photo: Airplane Engine at Modern Avionics and Maintenance, Inc.



Anthony Cocca,
Cocca Development

FROM A DEVELOPER'S PERSPECTIVE

"While the public may see it as simply filling out a form, I know how much work it takes to put something like the TIF on our project together. I am impressed with your hard work."

~Anthony Cocca, Chief Executive Officer
Cocca Development

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mansfield (Continued)



Aviation Career Day



Manufacturing Day



Mansfield Water Main Groundbreaking



Tamara, Japan - Sister City Visit



NISS Aviation - Mansfield Lahm Airport

Supporting Business Expansion and Reinvestment

- Private-sector investment also advanced during the year. **Ohio Valley Stamping** continued its growth trajectory with the purchase of a **100,000-square-foot facility** on Newman Street to support expanding operations tied to domestic automotive manufacturing.
- In addition, Cline Fire announced plans for a new headquarters on Illinois Avenue while maintaining its existing site, increasing capacity to serve regional clients in fire protection and life safety services.

Coordinating Support for Local Manufacturers

Support for local manufacturing remained a priority. Mansfield worked closely with **Weiss Industries**, a long-standing local manufacturer, to support expansion and long-term sustainability. Serving as a coordinating partner, the City and its collaborators connected the company to Team NEO and JobsOhio, supported the incentive process, and aligned workforce and training resources. The effort resulted in a **\$50,000 JobsOhio Small Business Grant**, helping advance the project while protecting existing jobs and supporting future growth.

Advancing Aerospace and Workforce Opportunities

- Momentum also continued at **Mansfield Lahm Airport**, where collaboration drove workforce and aerospace-related initiatives. **Aviation Career Day** brought together employers, educators, and partners to create a repeatable workforce development model for aviation careers.
- Building on that collaboration, Mansfield advanced a national-level recruitment effort involving **a flight operations group**, packaging multiple site options into a coordinated pitch. While federal timing disruptions paused the process, the effort strengthened Mansfield's readiness for future aerospace opportunities and reinforced the airport's role in long-term workforce and industry development.

Background Photo: Ohio House of Representatives



RICHLAND
**COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT
GROUP**





Mickey Mart / Dunkin Donuts Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony



Broadway and Main Demolition



Christmas Tree Lighting



Buckeye Superstore

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Shelby

Downtown Reinvestment

Significant economic development activity in Shelby focused on downtown reinvestment, business growth, and preparing sites for future development. Investment by the [Shelby Foundation](#), including acquisition of a fourth Main Street building, reinforced long-term commitment to downtown revitalization. Private reinvestment advanced with the Milliron family's purchase of a former bank building, with plans to redevelop it into a boutique hotel and Italian restaurant. Downtown activity continued with the Penwells' investment in [The Hatchery on Main](#), creating event space and short-term lodging that will contribute to downtown vibrancy. Shelby CIC secured a JobsOhio Vibrant Communities Planning Grant, in coordination with Team NEO, to support architectural renderings and construction cost analysis for the historic Shaw Building.

Site Preparation and Corridor Readiness

Strategic demolition projects [improved site readiness and corridor visibility](#). Demolition at the Broadway and Main Street site created a greenfield property ready for redevelopment, while work continued at the former L & K Motel and Diner on Mansfield Avenue to prepare the site for a future Mechanics Bank location. Shelby welcomed Mickey's and Dunkin Donuts, followed by an expansion at Buckeye Superstore adding destinations to the commercial corridor.

Business and Industrial Growth

Business growth remained steady throughout the year. [Six ribbon cuttings](#) recognized new businesses, expansions, and relocations across retail, service, and food sectors. Industrial investment also advanced, led by [Hanline's \\$45M capital investment](#), which added [30 new jobs](#), launched a new business line, acquired an additional facility, and constructed a rail spur at the industrial park. Work continued with the City to connect finance tools and incentives to spur continued growth and reinvestment.

Community Spaces and Events

Community spaces continued to play an important role in Shelby's momentum. [Black Fork Commons Plaza](#) hosted events including the Shel-Bee Festival, Bicycle Days, a car show, a Halloween event, and the lighting of a new 24-foot Christmas tree, supporting community connection and downtown vitality.

Background Photo: Hanging Baskets, Shelby, OH



Troy Baker,
Edward Jones

FROM A PARTNER'S PERSPECTIVE

Jessica has been an invaluable asset to the City of Shelby. As Richland counties second largest city, Shelby needs and deserves an advocate. Jessica has always been a great partner to further any initiatives to highlight and promote my business at Edward Jones in Shelby. Most importantly, we have a shared vision of what downtown main street in Shelby can become and have always worked hand in hand to play a part of the solution.

~Troy Baker, Edward Jones



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ontario

Building Organizational Capacity

Economic development efforts in Ontario centered on building the capacity needed to support sustained growth while advancing major investment projects. Foundational work was completed to **formally establish the Community Improvement Corporation (CIC)**, including filings, board formation, and officer elections. This work created a clearer framework for coordinating development activity and supporting future investment.

Advancing Major Investments

Several high-impact projects moved forward during the year. A **\$20M expansion of the CNG Warehouse in Ontario**, totaling 462,000 square feet, advanced through the Richland County Port Authority and Industrial Commercial Properties. The project included finalizing terms for a **\$16M capital lease**, supporting continued industrial growth and with the total project adding 135 jobs across the Ontario and Lexington campuses. In addition, **Avita Health System** announced a **\$15M investment** to construct a new 20,000-square-foot cancer center, creating 21 new jobs and expanding healthcare access in Ontario.

Development Activity and Market Interest

Development activity also included land acquisition and disposition discussions, planning for new wayfinding and branded signage, and coordination through an administrative transition to maintain continuity. Conversations with national brands continued throughout the year, reflecting **ongoing interest in Ontario's commercial corridors**.

Celebrating Business Growth

Business growth and reinvestment were celebrated through **16 ribbon cuttings**, recognizing new businesses, expansions, and remodels across the city. Together, these efforts reinforced Ontario's role as a growing commercial center and strengthened readiness for future development.



Raising Cane's Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony



Avita Cancer Center Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony



Starbucks Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony



Nonprofit Fair at Ontario Center

Background Photo: Marshall Park (Photo Credit: Destination Mansfield - Richland County)



RICHLAND
**COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT
GROUP**



Apple of My Eye Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Building a Competitive Workforce



EmployMePalooza



EmployMePalooza



Aviation Career Day



Aviation Career Day

Artificial Intelligence & Advanced Manufacturing Training

The Mansfield-Richland Area (MRA) Educational Foundation, in collaboration with the Richland Area Chamber & Economic Development and supported by a Microsoft TechSpark Grant, led a targeted initiative to support artificial intelligence and how it's integrated into the regional industrial workforce. This partnership focused on **upskilling employees across five manufacturers**, equipping them with competencies to apply AI-driven solutions for operational efficiency and predictive maintenance.

By bridging traditional production methods with emerging technology, the initiative **strengthened manufacturer competitiveness** while **preparing the workforce for evolving industry demands**. The program was also supported through Ohio's TechCred funding, reinforcing a coordinated approach to workforce training that aligns technology adoption with real-world manufacturing needs.

Youth Career Exploration & Talent Pipelines

In 2025, the Richland Area Chamber & Economic Development and the Area 10 Workforce Development Board advanced regional talent pipelines by supporting two career exploration events for local youth. The **fourth annual EmployMePalooza** featured **35 students** in a **reverse job fair**, presenting their skills directly to more than 40 employers. This model remains a strong approach to preparing high school students for employment and career planning.

Aviation Career Day returned, providing **84 students** from seven area high schools with hands-on exposure to the aerospace industry through drone demonstrations, aircraft tours, and conversations with industry professionals. Together, these initiatives strengthened connections between classroom learning and the local labor market while building confidence and career awareness.

We continue to **foster a strong relationship** with the MRA Educational Foundation. The alignment of their programming and the data-driven efforts of workforce development continues to be an effective partnership.

21
EMPLOYEES
UPSKILLED
THROUGH AI
INITIATIVE

35
STUDENTS
PARTICIPATED
IN REVERSE
JOB FAIR

84
STUDENTS
CONNECTED
WITH
AEROSPACE
INDUSTRY

Background Photo: C-130 Cockpit

FROM A PARTNER'S PERSPECTIVE

"Our leadership team of eight completed an eight-week training at North Central State College through the Incumbent Worker Training Program. With support from the local Chamber and the Area 10 Workforce Development

Board, we participated in a focused experience centered on Emotional Intelligence. The training strengthened skills in coaching, conflict resolution, and applied AI solutions, helping us grow together. Enrollment and reimbursement were straightforward, making participation easy."

~Jessie Palmer, Partner, Pinnacle Building Services



Jessie Palmer,
Pinnacle Building Services



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Building a Competitive Workforce

~\$607K

TECHCRED FUNDS UTILIZED TO UPSKILL REGIONAL TALENT

67

EMPLOYEES UPSKILLED THROUGH INCUMBENT WORKER TRAINING (IWT) FUNDS

~\$60K

IWT FUNDS REIMBURSED TO EMPLOYERS

14

EMPLOYERS SERVED THROUGH INCUMBENT WORKING TRAINING PROGRAM

Workforce Strategy & Regional Planning

In 2024, we secured \$250,000 for the Area 10 Workforce Development Board, and those dollars flowed into training for individuals and employee groups in 2025.

As the contracted Director of the Area 10 Workforce Development Board, we also played a central role in assembling a **comprehensive five-year Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) plan** to guide workforce investments across the region. This strategic roadmap provides a data-driven framework to ensure federal and state resources are aligned with initiatives offering the greatest potential for local economic impact.

By leveraging current labor market information and regional employment trends, the **plan prioritizes high-demand sectors** such as manufacturing and healthcare. This approach allows the board to focus investments strategically, strengthen accountability, and guide workforce initiatives with long-term sustainability in mind, supporting both employer needs and regional economic growth.

Healthcare & Behavioral Health Workforce Development

To address critical gaps in healthcare services, the Area 10 Workforce Development Board partnered with the District 5 Area Agency on Aging (AAA5) to secure an **\$85,000 grant dedicated to specialized workforce training**. This funding supports the development of a local workforce equipped to deliver behavioral and mental health services directly in patients' homes.

The initiative has helped cultivate a specialized skill set within the regional labor market, enabling care providers to deliver services in a setting that is both accessible and patient-centered. By strengthening this in-home care workforce, the partnership is expanding access to essential services while **positioning the region as a leader in innovative, community-based mental health support**.

Background Photo: Richland Works Photography



RICHLAND
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DEVELOPMENT
GROUP**



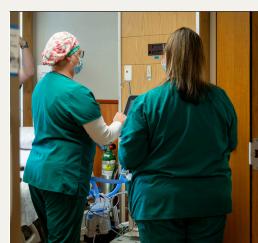
Richland Works
Photography - Warren Rupp



Richland Works
Photography - Jay Industries



Clint Knight Received AAA5 Community Partner Award



Richland Works
Photography - OhioHealth



Richland Works
Photography - DRM Productions

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Building Awareness, Access, and Value



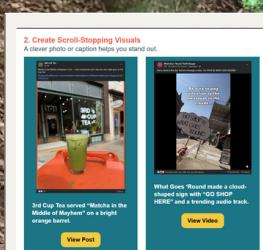
October
BrandRichland Ad



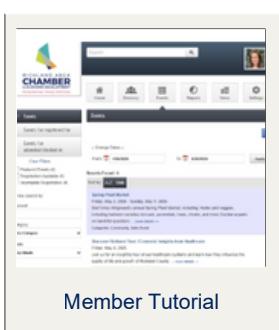
November
BrandRichland Ad



Stand Out Downtown
Marketing Workshop



5 Ways to Stay More
Visible Email



Member Tutorial

BrandRichland: Coordinated Countywide Storytelling

BrandRichland launched its **first large-scale community brand awareness campaign**, Play Here, targeting visitors in the Columbus region launched in Q4. Co-led by the Chamber and Destination Mansfield - Richland County, the initiative supported testing of digital media channels and the development of **high-quality, reusable video assets** and campaign landing pages with measurable analytics. Performance data and audience feedback informed refinements throughout the year, strengthening the foundation for future Live Here, Work Here, and Build Here storytelling and supporting the launch of BrandRichland's social media presence.

Downtown Mansfield Marketing Support

The Chamber supported Downtown Mansfield and Main Street businesses through a **focused marketing workshop and practical guidance on staying visible**. The 5 Ways to Stay More Visible email and Stand Out Downtown workshop introduced time-saving tools such as Canva, ChatGPT, and editorial calendars.

We were a sponsoring partner of **Richland Source's Neighbors Helping Neighbors program** which expanded local advertising opportunities. Together, these efforts helped businesses remain visible during challenging periods.

Member Tutorials: Improving Access to Chamber Resources

In 2025, the Chamber **expanded access to member tools and benefits** through the launch of the Member Tutorials landing page. This centralized resource provides step-by-step guidance on using the member portal, managing business listings, registering and promoting events, and utilizing marketing opportunities. By shifting common how-to requests into an on-demand format, **members were able to find answers quickly, keep information accurate**, and make better use of Chamber marketing and communication tools.

~1M
BRAND-RICHLAND
PLAY HERE
AD IMPRESSIONS

807
CLICKS THRU
TO BRAND-RICHLAND
WEBSITE

14
TUTORIALS
CREATED

100%
WORKSHOP
NET
PROMOTER
SCORE

Background Photo: Fleming Falls Nature Preserve



RICHLAND
**COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT
GROUP**



MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Continued

70%
ECONOMIC
EDGE OPEN
RATE

8K
DISTRIBUTED
COMMUNITY
GUIDES

3,126
CHAMBER
MEMBER
EMPLOYEES
RECEIVE
MEMBER
MESSAGES

37%
MEMBER EMAIL
BLASTS OPEN
RATE

14K+
SOCIAL MEDIA
AUDIENCE

Economic Development Newsletter: The Economic Edge

In 2025, the Chamber launched The Economic Edge, a quarterly economic development newsletter designed for site selectors, business leaders, and regional partners. **Each issue highlights project activity, market-ready properties, workforce initiatives, and key indicators of economic momentum**, using data and collaboration to provide area updates. Distributed through email and supported by digital promotion, the newsletter strengthens transparency, reinforces pride of place, and keeps Richland County visible to decision-makers.



The Economic Edge Newsletter

Yodel: A Centralized Community Events Platform

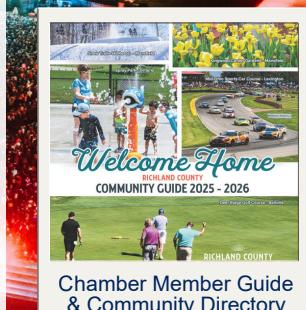
A shared **community events and promotions platform** was implemented, creating a **centralized calendar** that makes it easier for residents, visitors, and organizations to discover what's happening across Richland County. With support from Destination Mansfield - Richland County, the platform helps improve regional visibility, reduce duplication, and strengthen coordination among community partners, providing a more consistent and accessible way to promote events and activities countywide.



Yodel Community Calendar

Publications: Telling the Story in Print

The Chamber continued investing in publications that serve multiple audiences. The **Community Guide and Member Directory** highlighted local businesses and community assets while providing a useful resource for residents and visitors. The **Annual Report** offered a clear, public-facing summary of organizational impact across Chamber, economic development, workforce, and foundation efforts.



Chamber Member Guide & Community Directory

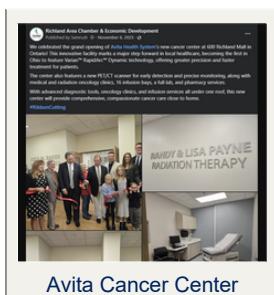
ChamberLink, Member Messages, and Social Media

Through the **ChamberLink Newsletter**, members received timely updates on events, programs, and opportunities. **Member Message email blasts** remained a paid benefit, allowing businesses to promote jobs, events, and announcements across the Chamber network. **Social media** supported these efforts by sharing community information, promoting programs, and recognizing members using engagement data.



ChamberLink Email Blast

Background Photo: Inkcarceration - OSR - Tower (Photo Credit: Sam Shapiro Media)



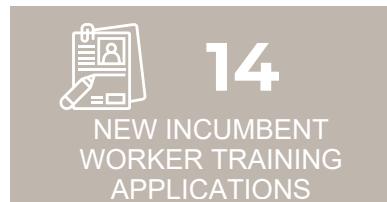
Avita Cancer Center Ribbon Cutting

YEAR IN REVIEW

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (COUNTY)



WORKFORCE (COUNTY)



EDUCATION



MARKETING

