

# State of the Hamilton County Economy

*A flow-first analytical synthesis covering five interlocking flow categories:*

*1. People 2. Employment 3. Goods 4. Capital 5. Connection*

PEOPLE

**379K**

*population*

EMPLOYMENT

**169K**

*jobs in county*

GOODS

**\$13.4B**

*retail (DOR)*

CAPITAL

**\$32B**

*county GDP*

CONNECTION

**40K**

*net commute-out*

# The state of Hamilton County in one paragraph

*Hamilton County's economy is a system of flows, not a stock of statistics. The flow that matters most — talent — is moving toward Hamilton County in numbers and at a wealth level that no other Indiana county matches. Employment is following the talent. Capital is following the employment. The connection back to the broader Indianapolis metro is dense (40,000 residents commute out daily) but increasingly bidirectional: more employers are setting up in Hamilton County than at any prior point. The story this report tells is structural, not directional — Hamilton County is the demographic core of the Indianapolis MSA's high-income, high-education, knowledge-economy resident base.*

## Headline indicators

**379,704**

POPULATION (ACS 5YR 2024)

**\$127,452**

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (FRED 2024)

**61.8%**

BACHELOR'S+ ATTAINMENT (ACS 5YR)

**\$31.6B**

COUNTY GDP (BEA 2024)

Sources: Census ACS 5-year 2024; FRED Indiana / Hamilton County series; BEA CAGDP9 Hamilton County 2024.

## What changed this year

Three signals dominate the 2026 reading. First, multifamily construction is overwhelmingly concentrated in Hamilton County (43% of all MSA units under construction at Q1 2025) — a forward indicator of household demand. Second, unemployment held at 2.1% in December 2025 against a tightening MSA labor market — a sign of supply-side resilience. Third, BEA county GDP crossed \$31.6B in 2024, up materially over the 2019 baseline, with the gap to other suburban Indiana counties widening rather than compressing.

FLOW 1 OF 5

# People

Who lives in Hamilton County, who is moving in, and how the population is composed and changing.

WHAT CHANGED THIS YEAR

## Population growth continued; in-migration mix is widening

Hamilton County's population reached 379,704 per ACS 5-year 2024 — sustained 4–5% annual compounded growth through the 2020s. The migration mix is widening: Marion County (Indianapolis) remains the largest single source of inbound migrants, but out-of-state inflow grew its share over 2022–2024 (per IRS SOI county-to-county migration). The widening reflects the post-2020 remote-work pattern: HC's quality-of-life advantages now reach a national-rather-than-MSA-only candidate pool.

**+15K/yr**

ANNUAL POPULATION GROWTH

**209,124**

EMPLOYED RESIDENTS (LAUS DEC 2025)

**2.1%**

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (LAUS DEC 2025)

Sources: Census ACS 5-year 2024; BLS LAUS Dec 2025; IRS SOI county-to-county migration.

### What's holding

Hamilton County is the highest-MHI county in Indiana (\$127,452, 77% above Indiana state median). Bachelor's+ attainment at 61.8% is in the top 5% of all U.S. counties. Poverty rate at 4.3% is among the lowest in the state. None of these moved materially this year — they are structural.

### What's worth watching

The 25–34 cohort (young professionals) and the 65+ cohort (retirees) are growing faster than the working-age core. The first reflects in-migration of remote-knowledge-economy workers; the second is aging-in-place. Both have policy implications — childcare demand, age-restricted housing, transit needs — that compound over the coming five years.

FLOW 2 OF 5

## Employment

Job creation, wages, occupational mix, and the labor-market dynamics inside Hamilton County and across its commute shed.

WHAT CHANGED THIS YEAR

## Tight market, residence-based outpacing establishment-based

BLS LAUS reports 209,124 Hamilton County residents employed in December 2025 — the residence-based labor force at near-historic highs. BLS QCEW reports 169,117 jobs LOCATED in Hamilton County for Q3 2025 — the establishment-based count. The 40,000 gap represents HC residents commuting OUT (mostly to Marion County). That gap is HC's structural commute-out pattern; it is not unhealthy. LIT (Local Income Tax) is residence-based, so commute-outs sustain HC's tax base regardless of where the work is performed.

**169,117**

JOBS IN HC (QCEW Q3 2025)

**13,756**

ESTABLISHMENTS (QCEW Q3 2025)

**~40K**

NET COMMUTE-OUT (RESIDENCE VS JOBS)

Sources: BLS QCEW Hamilton County Q3 2025; BLS LAUS December 2025.

### Industry composition signal

Hamilton County over-indexes on professional services (NAICS 54), finance/insurance (52), and healthcare (62) — the office-using categories that have returned to in-person work most consistently post-2020. Under-indexing on call

centers, back-office processing, and warehousing means HC's labor market is exposed to remote-work headwinds at materially lower magnitude than the MSA average.

### What's worth watching

The HC unemployment rate has held at or below 2.5% for four consecutive years. That is a structural-not-cyclical floor — it implies labor-supply constraints, not labor-demand softness. The constraint is increasingly visible in healthcare and trades; both categories have higher posting-to-fill ratios than the MSA average per Lightcast.

FLOW 3 OF 5

## Goods and services

What Hamilton County makes, sells, buys, and trades. The hardest flow category to instrument at county level — most federal stats are MSA or state.

### WHAT WE CAN SHOW

#### Retail consumption is well-instrumented; production output is partial

Indiana DOR's destination-allocated retail tax data places \$13.37B of retail consumption in Hamilton County for 2024. This is what HC residents and visitors actually purchased through registered retailers across the calendar year. Lightcast Input-Output data shows HC's retail-trade gross output (production by HC merchants, in-county or exported) at \$3.42B for 2025 — meaning approximately 87% of HC retail consumption is satisfied by retailers NOT physically located in HC (online, big-box chains, cross-county Marion shopping).

**\$13.37B**

HC RETAIL CONSUMPTION (DOR 2024)

**\$3.42B**

HC MERCHANT RETAIL OUTPUT (LIGHTCAST 2025)

**~7.9×**

HC RETAIL IMPORT MULTIPLIER

Sources: Indiana DOR ST-103 destination-allocated retail tax 2024; Lightcast I-O retail-trade gross output 2025 vintage.

### What this means strategically

HC merchants serve approximately 12–13% of total HC retail demand. The remaining demand flows to non-HC retailers — primarily online and Marion-County destinations. This is not a deficiency; it is the normal pattern of a knowledge-economy suburban county whose residents earn high incomes and spend across a regional retail catchment. The strategic implication is that HC's retail capture rate has substantial upside if specific categories can be repositioned for in-county capture.

### CAVEAT: WEAKEST-COVERAGE FLOW

This is the flow category with the weakest federal data coverage at county level. Services exports, commodity flows, and B2B trade are largely opaque. The figures shown above are the strongest defensible statements; a more detailed view requires partner data or premium subscriptions not currently in scope.

FLOW 4 OF 5

# Capital

Real estate investment, business investment, lending, and the financial layer of the economy.

## WHAT CHANGED THIS YEAR

### Multifamily UC concentration + Q1 2026 office/industrial/retail confirmation

Per Colliers Q1 2025, 43% of all multifamily units under construction in the Indianapolis MSA are concentrated in Hamilton County. With HC representing roughly 14% of MSA population, this is a 3x over-index and the strongest forward indicator of demand-side capital flow. The Q1 2026 Cushman MarketBeat data (released April 2026) confirms the prediction across all three CRE asset classes:

**43%**

MSA MULTIFAMILY UC IN HC

**12.9%**

FISHERS OFFICE VACANCY  
(LOWEST IN MSA)

**1.9%**

NORTH INDUSTRIAL VACANCY  
(LOWEST IN MSA)

**Sources:** Hamilton County GeoHub parcel statistics April 2026; Colliers Indianapolis Multifamily Q1 2025; Cushman MarketBeat Office + Industrial + Retail Q1 2026 (released 2026-04-21).

### HC commands premium retail rents

The Cushman Q1 2026 retail data shows three of the MSA's top 5 retail rents are HC trade areas — Fishers \$39.48 NNN (highest in entire MSA), Westfield \$30.00, Carmel \$21.06. HC retail trade areas total 8.1M sf with blended 3.0% vacancy — well below MSA's 4.8%. Q1 2026 alone saw \$55.3M in HC retail trades (Stony Creek Marketplace + Village Park Plaza), signaling continued investor confidence.

### Property tax + TIF

Approximately 54.5% of HC commercial assessed value sits in TIF districts — a sign of how aggressively local governments have used tax-increment financing to underwrite commercial development. The tax base is structurally bifurcated: high-AV-per-acre districts (Carmel City Center, Fishers Geist) carry heavy TIF capture; the unincorporated rural areas operate at conventional tax rates.

### What's worth watching

The Indiana property tax reform (which redistributes ~\$744M statewide loss to school corporations) is the largest single fiscal-flow change affecting HC's underlying tax base since the 2008 levy controls. Reform effects compound through 2027 budget cycles; the school corporations' adaptive responses will shape HC's economic infrastructure.

FLOW 5 OF 5

# Connection

Hamilton County's relationship to the Indianapolis MSA, broader trade corridors, federal/state funding, and the infrastructure that connects the county to the rest of the world.

WHAT CHANGED THIS YEAR

## Commute-out remains structural; federal funding mosaic is sustained

Census LEHD LODES data continues to show roughly 40,000 HC residents working in Marion County daily — the dominant commute corridor. Smaller flows go to Boone, Hendricks, and Madison counties; a meaningful but modest share works fully remote. The pattern is structural: HC is the residential anchor for high-skill workers serving the broader MSA economy.

**~40,000**

HC RESIDENTS COMMUTING TO MARION DAILY

**~\$11.79B**

IMPLIED HC RETAIL IMPORT INFLOW (DOR - LIGHTCAST IN-REGION)

**~9th**

NATIONAL RANK, MENTAL DISTRESS (LOWEST, CDC PLACES)

Sources: Census LEHD LODES; Indiana DOR + Lightcast I-O reconciliation; CDC PLACES county-level health indicators.

### Federal funding flows

USA Spending.gov tracks federal contracts and grants landing in HC. The federal funding mosaic for HC includes HUD pass-through, USDA Rural Development, Department of Education Title funding, and a continuing flow of NIH-related healthcare grants. Indiana state-comptroller pass-through tracking is partial; the comprehensive view requires synthesis.

### What's worth watching

The Federal Local Income Tax (LIT) reform proposals being debated at the Indiana statehouse, plus the property tax reform already enacted, together represent the largest fiscal-flow re-architecture HC has faced in 30 years. The connection-flow story will look materially different in the 2027 annual.

## METHODOLOGY

# Three things to watch in the year ahead

### WATCH 1 · THE SCHOOL-FINANCE RESET

Indiana's property tax reform redistributes \$744M statewide. Hamilton County's six school corporations (HSE, Carmel Clay, Noblesville, Westfield Washington, Hamilton Heights, Sheridan) absorb a significant share of that loss. Adaptive responses — referenda, programmatic cuts, partnerships — shape HC's economic infrastructure.

### WATCH 2 · OFFICE-REAL-ESTATE QUARTERLY CYCLE

Q1 2026 brokerage releases (expected late April 2026) will quantify the suburban-resilience hypothesis directly. The 43% multifamily UC concentration is a strong forward indicator that the next year's office absorption picture in HC will diverge meaningfully from CBD.

### WATCH 3 · THE BROADENING MIGRATION MIX

HC's in-migration has historically been Marion-dominated. The post-2020 widening to out-of-state — particularly to high-MHI knowledge-economy households — is reshaping the demographic mix in ways that compound over five-year ACS cycles. The 2026 ACS 5-year release will be the first vintage to capture the post-pandemic pattern at full strength.

## How this report works

This is the 10-page public summary tier of the State of the Hamilton County Economy annual report. The full annual report (40–60 pp) walks through each of the five flow categories at depth, includes the microsegment cohort view, and provides cross-flow synthesis. The dashboard tier is hosted at [investhamiltoncounty.com](https://investhamiltoncounty.com) under Alex Site Intelligence.

## Methodology and data sources

Twenty-three federal data sources, three state sources, and four licensed sources (Lightcast). Every quoted statistic carries a freshness timestamp; every cross-tier publication agrees on the same source extract for the same statistic. Methodology v1 documentation lives in the underlying Alex repository.

## About Alex / Invest Hamilton County

Alex is Invest Hamilton County's data intelligence platform — a 11,000+ file curated data repository combined with five years of institutional research and modern AI to deliver evidence-based answers about Hamilton County's economy, workforce, and communities.

This public summary is a 10-page condensation of the full State of the Hamilton County Economy 2026 annual report. Both versions ship from the same underlying analysis.

*Where Insight Becomes Action*