

## Regional Comparisons Reveal Strengths and Challenges for Central Indiana

*Central Indiana shows some advantages in patents received in the biosciences, but lags most of the eight comparison regions in growth in personal income and investment in built structures. Progress to improve quality of life in the region will involve building on our strengths and addressing our weaknesses. These analyses thus underscore the importance of the Central Indiana Life Science Initiative and demonstrate the need to strengthen local governments.*

Comparisons are critical to human understanding, goal setting, and judgments of success. Individuals may compare music preferences or approaches to child rearing. Organizations may compare success in meeting goals or in attracting desired resources. Regions may compare economic performance, environmental conditions, or approaches to making collective decisions.

This issue brief discusses how the Center for Urban Policy and the Environment (Center) is analyzing the Central Indiana region in comparison with eight regions around the nation. We report regional comparisons of changes in personal income, investments in built structures (such as roads, office buildings, and residences), patents received, nonprofit organizations, and governmental structures.

The eight comparison regions for the Central Indiana analyses were selected on criteria including population size, economic structure, geographic location, presence of a state capitol, and presence of a major research university. They include five regions from the Midwest and three from elsewhere in the nation and are centered on:

- (1) Cincinnati,
- (2) Cleveland, and
- (3) Columbus, Ohio,
- (4) Kansas City, Missouri,
- (5) Nashville, Tennessee,
- (6) Austin, Texas,
- (7) Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina, and
- (8) Sacramento, California.

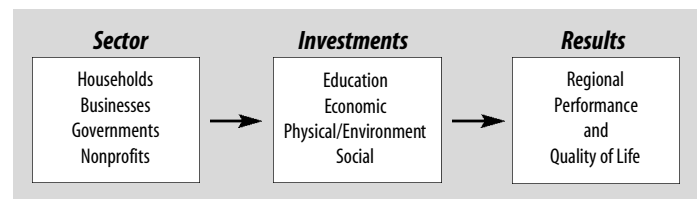
Figure 1 shows the factors that guide analysis by the Center. The four sectors on the left (households, businesses, governments, and

nonprofit organizations) make choices about different types of investments. These investments affect regional performance and quality of life.

To ensure that its research encompasses the relevant areas, the Center adopted a definition for regions that was developed by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) for much of its data collection and analyses. The BEA assigns each county in the nation to a single region on the basis of economic interdependence, commuting patterns, and other factors such as media markets. The largest region in Indiana identified by the BEA is the Indianapolis region, consisting of 44 counties. We call this the *Central Indiana region* as we have in other Center reports. The Central Indiana region includes the six Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) of Bloomington, Terre Haute, Lafayette/West Lafayette, Kokomo, Muncie, and Indianapolis.<sup>1</sup> Decision makers in business, government, and nonprofit organizations increasingly organize their activities across many counties, well beyond the MSA definitions, and many important public issues clearly have a regional character with boundaries that approximate those defined as the BEA regions.<sup>2</sup>

In many cases, however, it is not feasible or desirable to compare regions as defined by BEA. When original data must be collected, the costs to do so for all areas of all regions can be prohibitive. In other cases, the question posed is appropriately addressed on a more limited geographic scale. The most commonly used smaller geographical areas in Center comparisons are MSAs, the counties that are core to a region, or the central cities of a region. In the BEA Indianapolis (Central Indiana) region, these decisions would lead to a focus on the Indianapolis MSA, Marion County, or the city of Indianapolis, respectively.

**Figure 1: Four Sectors Make Similar Kinds of Investments That Affect Quality of Life in the Region**





**Table 1: Nine Bureau of Economic Activity Regions and Their Core MSAs, Core Counties, and Central Cities**

**Table 1a: Regional Statistics**

BEA Region	Square Miles	Population of region in 2000	% Change 1990–2000	Number of MSAs in Region
Central Indiana	17,787	2,991,057	8.3%	6
Cincinnati-Hamilton	7,340	2,141,319	6.6%	2
Cleveland-Akron	10,840	4,694,418	2.7%	5
Columbus	12,264	2,284,388	8.4%	1
Kansas City, MO	27,533	2,402,684	7.7%	3
Nashville	22,909	2,340,617	16.3%	2
Austin-San Marcos	8,513	1,203,666	29.7%	1
Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill	9,573	1,713,477	20.3%	2
Sacramento-Yolo	11,983	2,202,683	11.3%	4

**Table 1b: Core MSA Statistics**

BEA Region	Core MSA	Population of Core MSA in 2000	% Change 1990–2000	Median Household Income, 2000	% Change 1990–2000
Central Indiana	Indianapolis	1,607,486	15.9%	\$45,548	43.9%
Cincinnati-Hamilton	Cincinnati (CMSA)	1,979,202	29.4%	\$44,914	45.0%
Cleveland-Akron	Cleveland (CMSA)	2,945,831	33.6%	\$42,214	39.2%
Columbus	Columbus	1,540,157	14.0%	\$44,782	46.0%
Kansas City, MO	Kansas City, MO	1,776,062	11.9%	\$46,193	46.1%
Nashville	Nashville	1,231,311	24.4%	\$44,223	46.3%
Austin-San Marcos	Austin	1,249,763	46.7%	\$48,950	71.9%
Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill	Raleigh-Durham	1,187,941	37.3%	\$48,845	46.7%
Sacramento-Yolo	Sacramento (CMSA)	1,796,857	30.3%	\$46,106	40.9%

**Table 1c: Core County Statistics**

BEA Region	Core County	County Population in 2000	% Change 1990–2000	Median Household Income, 2000	% Change 1990–2000
Central Indiana	Marion	860,454	7.9%	\$37,686	29.3%
Cincinnati-Hamilton	Hamilton	845,303	-2.4%	\$38,763	31.4%
Cleveland-Akron	Cuyahoga	1,393,978	-1.3%	\$36,754	28.5%
Columbus	Franklin	1,068,978	11.2%	\$39,498	30.0%
Kansas City, MO	Jackson	654,880	3.4%	\$37,732	35.5%
Nashville	Davidson	569,891	11.6%	\$39,112	37.8%
Austin-San Marcos	Travis	812,280	40.9%	\$40,250	46.4%
Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill	Wake	627,846	48.3%	\$51,391	41.9%
Sacramento-Yolo	Sacramento	1,223,499	17.5%	\$39,461	22.2%

**Table 1d: Central City Statistics**

BEA Region	Core City	Population in 2000	% Change 1990–2000	Median Household Income, 2000	% Change 1990–2000
Central Indiana	Indianapolis	781,870	6.9%	\$40,051	38.1%
Cincinnati-Hamilton	Cincinnati	331,285	-9.0%	\$29,493	40.4%
Cleveland-Akron	Cleveland	478,403	-5.4%	\$25,928	45.5%
Columbus	Columbus	711,470	12.4%	\$37,897	42.2%
Kansas City, MO	Kansas City, MO	441,545	1.5%	\$37,198	39.3%
Nashville	Nashville	545,524	11.7%	\$39,232	41.0%
Austin-San Marcos	Austin	656,562	41.0%	\$42,689	68.0%
Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill	Raleigh	276,093	32.8%	\$46,612	43.6%
	Durham	187,035	36.9%	\$41,160	51.0%
Sacramento-Yolo	Sacramento	407,018	10.2%	\$37,049	31.4%

## Understanding Regions Is Critical for Effective Policy Choices

Regions are the “natural” expressions of human settlement and economic activity and often reflect features of topography and watersheds. The Central Indiana region is economically integrated, with firms making location decisions within the region and workers commuting across the region for employment. For example, over 160,000 workers commute into Marion County from the other 43 counties in the region, and there are also small numbers who commute “through” Marion County from homes on one side of the county to jobs on the other side. This region shares important transportation networks that facilitate movement of goods and people. Much of the topography of the region lies within the watershed of the White River and reflects historic glacial activity.

Over the next few months, the Center will release a series of reports analyzing important policy issues across the nine comparison regions. When appropriate data are available, comparisons with the nation also will be presented. In many areas, however, national data are not available, and focusing on a limited number of comparison regions allows collection of original data that would be impossible for all regions in the nation. Topics are being developed in conversations with policymakers and stakeholders in Central Indiana.

## Consistent Comparisons Offer Important Advantages

Multiple comparisons of the Central Indiana region with the same eight regions in several policy areas has advantages. It makes analyses more efficient because similar information (e.g., migration patterns or changes in personal income) can be used in several analyses. More important, this strategy allows deepening of understanding of the driving differences in regions as understanding accumulates across analyses of several policy issues. Do regions develop particular ways to approach critical issues, whether involving education, investments in transportation infrastructure,



restructuring the regional economy as industries decline and grow, improving environmental quality, or sustaining arts institutions? What institutional factors support different approaches? What types of individuals exercise leadership? Questions such as these can be answered only by analyses across a number of issues in sufficient depth to support confident conclusions.

One disadvantage of focusing on a stable set of comparison regions is that the “ideal” comparison regions for some policy issues inevitably will not be included in this set of eight regions. Those interested in life sciences may want to understand the Minneapolis region; those interested in environmental protection may wish to understand the Portland region; and those interested in improving educational performance may wish to understand the Louisville region. Even in these cases, however, analyzing Central Indiana and a common set of eight comparison regions can provide a useful starting point for analyses that may incorporate other regions.

This consistent approach to analysis of comparison regions distinguishes the Center’s work. In contrast, most other comparative analyses select regions for comparison to address a specific question and rarely extend beyond a single issue. For example, in June 2003, *The Indianapolis Star* reported a comparison of high tech economic activity in the Indianapolis, Columbus, Minneapolis, and San Diego metropolitan areas.<sup>3</sup>

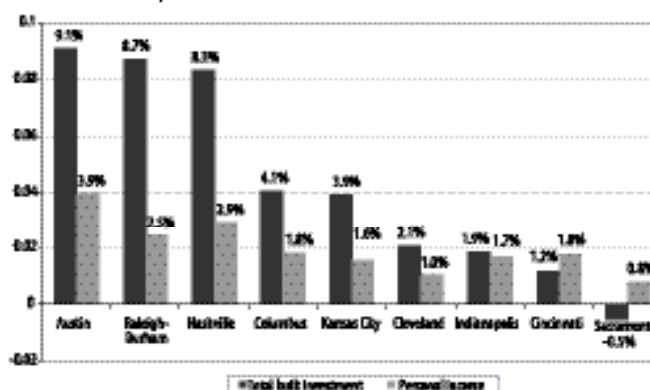
Analyses often generate questions along with understanding. For example, among these nine regions, the region centered on Austin had the most significant increase in personal incomes in the 1990s. Is this a result of the relatively larger investments in physical infrastructure that are documented in Center analyses? Is it because that region is home for both a state capitol and the largest public university in Texas? Or is it because of the Semantech program in which the U.S. government invested \$100 million annually between 1987 and 1996, roughly half of a research budget focused on strengthening the U.S. semiconductor manufacturing industry, with the balance contributed by more than a dozen firms who selected research areas and benefited from resulting improvements in manufacturing techniques (e.g., IBM, Hewlett-Packard, and Texas Instruments).<sup>4</sup> When possible, these questions will be addressed, but it is also valuable to recognize unanswered questions that deserve more attention in the future.

### The Central Indiana Region Lags Other Regions in Some Areas

Table 1 provides basic information about the nine regions, including size in square miles, population in the year 2000, and number of MSAs in the region. It also provides information about population and median family income for each region in its core MSA, core county, and core city. Percentage changes from 1990 to 2000 are shown with each comparison.

Drawing on the data in Table 1, Table 2 (see page 4) summarizes how the Central Indiana region ranks among the nine regions. These

Figure 2: Growth in Built Investment Affects Growth in Personal Income, 1990–99



comparisons suggest that Central Indiana is larger in square miles, population, and number of MSAs in the region. However, the region is losing ground in five areas where the percentage change over 1990–2000 is calculated: population in the core MSA, median household income in the MSA, population in the core county, population in the core city, and median household income in the core city. In the comparison of median household income at the core county level, the region ranks seventh, and the percentage change rank is also seventh.

### Investment in Built Structures Correlates with Growth in Personal Income

The comparisons in Figure 2, shown as changes in annual rates, are for total investments in built structures, such as buildings, roads, or water systems in the regions over 1990–1999 and for personal income.<sup>5</sup> In this comparison, the Central Indiana region is seventh in changes in built investment over the decade and sixth in growth in personal income. (A fuller discussion of built investment data is available in *Built Investment in Central Indiana and the United States, 1990—Some Troubles Ahead?* This report is available on the Center Web site at [www.urbancenter.iupui.edu/container.htm](http://www.urbancenter.iupui.edu/container.htm))

The three regions centered on Austin, Raleigh-Durham, and Nashville dramatically increased built investment in this period, with increases four or more times greater than in Central Indiana. The regions centered on Columbus and Kansas City increased built investment at rates roughly double those in Central Indiana. The regions centered on Cleveland and Cincinnati increased built investment at roughly similar rates, and the rate of built investment fell in the region centered on Sacramento. The three regions with the highest growth rates in built investment also had the highest growth rates in personal income, 1.5 times to more than double the growth rate in Central Indiana. However, personal income in Central Indiana grew at roughly the same rates as in Columbus and Kansas City, which had higher growth rates in built investment, and as Cincinnati, which had a lower rate.



**Built Investment in Core Counties Increases Growth in Personal Income and Jobs in the Whole MSA**

Figures 3 and 4 show how investment in built structures—the physical environment—are correlated with growth in personal income and jobs, indicators of regional performance.

Figure 3 shows the positive relationship between increased core county investment in built infrastructure and personal income in the MSA. Figure 4 shows the relationship between built investment in

core counties and job growth rate in the MSA. These figures suggest that investment in built structures in core counties has a positive effect on the economic performance of the MSA. In other analyses, we sought to determine the effects of levels of investment in core counties as opposed to elsewhere in the MSA (see Figures 5 and 6). We observed that investments in built infrastructure are typically highest in core counties, even when population growth in other counties of a MSA surpasses that of the core county.

**Table 2: Central Indiana Region in Comparison with Eight Regions (highest to lowest, rank of 9)**

Comparison measure	Central Indiana Region Rank
Square miles	3
Population, 2000	2
Population change (percentage), 1990–2000	5
Number of MSAs in region	1
Population, core MSA	5
Population change (percentage) core MSA, 1990–2000	7
Median household income, MSA, 2000	5
Median household income change (percentage), MSA, 1990–2000	7
Population, core county, 2000	4
Population change (percentage), core county, 1990–2000	6
Median household income, core county, 2000	7
Median household income change (percentage), core county, 1990–2000	7
Population, core city, 2000 (10 cities)	1
Population change (percentage), core city, 1990–2000 (10 cities)	7
Median household income, core city, 2000 (10 cities)	4
Median household income change (percentage), core city, 1990–2000 (10 cities)	9

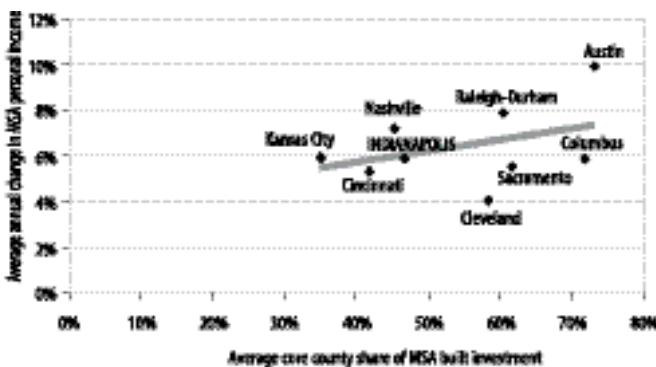
Figures 5 and 6 show trends in built investment in core counties as a percentage of the MSA over 1990–1999, distinguishing between private nonresidential (this includes most business structures such as manufacturing plants or retail outlets—see Figure 5) and public (that is, federal, state, and local government categories—see Figure 6). As illustrated in Figure 5, the share of total built investment in the MSA that occurs in the core county almost always exceeds 50 percent. The figures also show that the share of built investment occurring in the core county declined during 1990–1999. However, the core county’s share of public built investment appears to be declining less rapidly than their share of non-residential private investment. Overall, these analyses underscore the importance of investments in Indianapolis/Marion County in relation to regional performance.

**The Indianapolis MSA Has More Drug Patents and a Higher Average Number of Total Patents**

Table 3 (see page 6) analyzes patents issued in the nine regions during 1995–1999. This analysis refers to utility patents, a type that may be granted to anyone who invents or discovers a new or useful process, machine, article of manufacture, composition of matters, or similar useful improvement.

The Indianapolis MSA ranks fifth on this measure, one associated with the development of intellectual capital and production of knowledge believed important to long-term regional success. When adjusted for population, the Indianapolis MSA ranks fourth among the nine

**Figure 3: Growth in Core County Built Investment and Average Annual Changes in Personal Income in the MSAs of Nine Comparative Regions, 1990–1999**



**Figure 4: Growth in Core County Built Investment and Average Annual Job Growth in the MSAs of Nine Comparative Regions, 1990–1999**

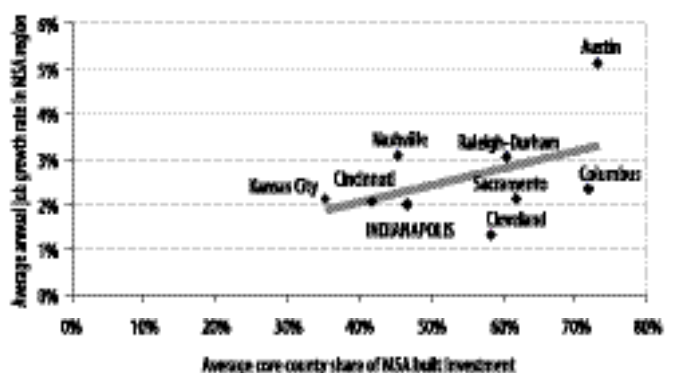




Figure 5: Annual Share of Total MSA Private Nonresidential Built Investments in the Core Counties of Nine Comparative Regions, 1990–1999

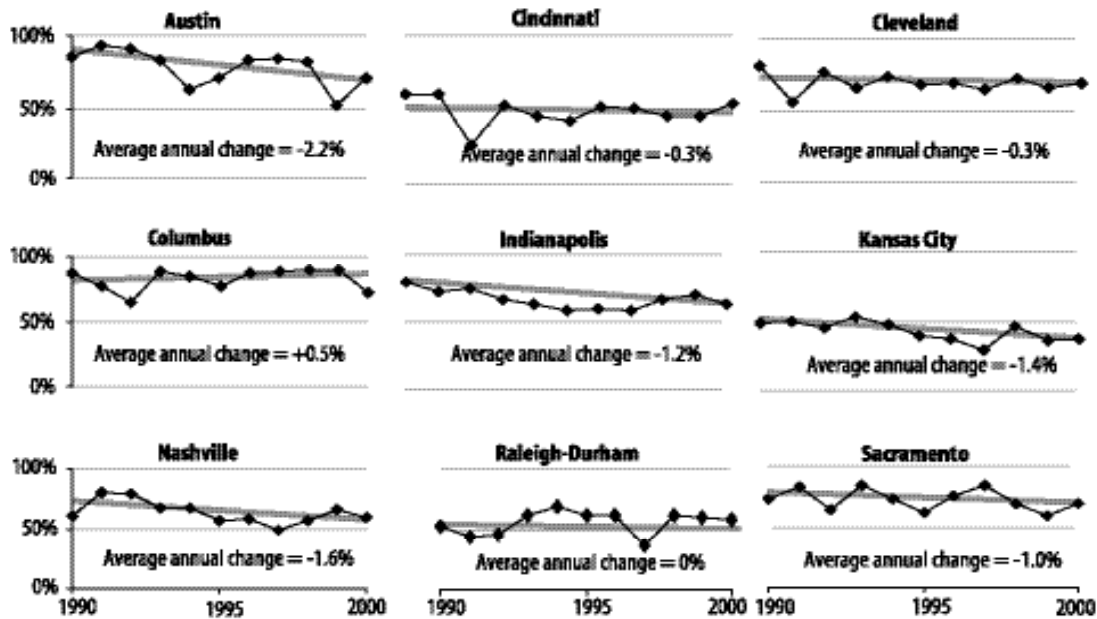
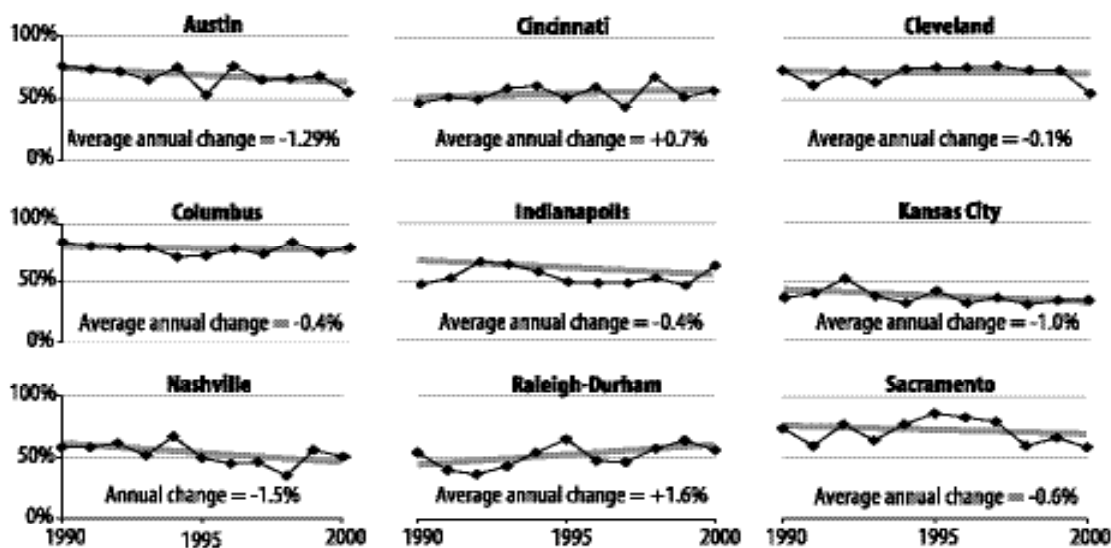


Figure 6: Annual Share of Total MSA Public Investment in the Core Counties of Nine Comparative Regions, 1990–1999







**Table 3: Patents in Nine Comparison MSAs, 1995–1999**

MSA	Total Patents, 1995–1999	Patents, per 100,000 Population, 2000
Austin	5,403	432
Cincinnati	3,292	166
Cleveland	3,221	109
Raleigh-Durham	3,183	268
Indianapolis	2,607	162
Columbus	1,499	97
Sacramento	1,255	70
Kansas City, MO	1,061	60
Nashville	607	49

Source: U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. (2000, June 1). *Patenting in metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas of the United States: Breakout by technology class 1995–1999. Utility patent grants.* Available online from [www.uspto.gov/web/offices/ac/ido/oeip/taf/mclsstc/mregions.htm](http://www.uspto.gov/web/offices/ac/ido/oeip/taf/mclsstc/mregions.htm)

regions. The Austin MSA excels by this measure, with 432 patents per 100,000 population, followed by the Raleigh-Durham MSA. The Cincinnati MSA leads the Indianapolis MSA slightly, but the other Midwestern MSAs and the Sacramento MSA fall substantially behind these two.

When we examine the areas in which patents are issued, the focus of the Indianapolis MSA on the pharmaceutical industry is clear. As shown in Table 4, the two top areas for patents in this MSA, 29 percent of all patents issued in the MSA, are *Drug, bio-affecting and body treating compositions* (584 patents), and *Chemistry: molecular biology and microbiology* (143 patents). In comparison, the top two areas of patent activity in the Austin MSA equal 15 percent of all patents in that MSA, while the comparable percentages in Cincinnati are 16 percent and in Raleigh-Durham, 13 percent.

In comparison with these regions, the Indianapolis MSA is well positioned for growth in the biosciences. Its closest rival is Raleigh-Durham, with 418 patents issued in the same two categories in which 727 patents were issued in the Indianapolis MSA. The success of the Austin MSA in semiconductors and computer-related areas also is apparent. That MSA had 801 patents issued in the two areas of *semiconductor device manufacturing processes* and *electrical computers and digital data processing systems*. This pattern suggests that the Semantech investments by the federal government and semiconductor firms had measurable impacts in the Austin MSA.

**The Indianapolis MSA Has More Nonprofit Organizations**

Because nonprofit organizations also invest substantially in the four factors that influence quality of life, the Center also analyzed the size and roles of nonprofit organizations. These data are analyzed at the level of the core MSA in the region, which would be the Indianapolis MSA for Central Indiana. One dimension of those comparisons is seen in Table 5. The Indianapolis MSA has the second highest total number of nonprofit organizations per 10,000 population, second to Kansas City, but the difference is substantial only in comparison with Cincinnati, Nashville, and Sacramento. When attention is directed to larger nonprofit organizations, those required to file a Form 990 (the threshold for these is still a modest \$25,000 annual budget), much less variation is seen among regions, and the Indianapolis MSA shares the modal value of the number of nonprofit organizations filing IRS Form 990 per 10,000 population with three other MSAs.

**Central Indiana Has More Units of Local Government and Fewer Council-Manager Governments**

Table 6a shows local government structures in the nine regions as reported in the latest (1997) Census of Governments. As seen in Table 6b, Central Indiana has the second highest number of governments per 100,000 people and the next to the fewest employees per local government. More important for management decisions, a much lower portion (3 percent) of the largest cities in Central Indiana (those in which the county seats are located) use a council-manager form of government than in comparison regions (see Table 6c).

**Table 4: Top Two Patent Classifications, 1995–1999**

MSA	Class, Description	Total
Indianapolis	514, Drug, bio-affecting and body treating compositions	584
	435, Chemistry: molecular biology and microbiology	143
Austin	438, Semiconductor device manufacturing: process	416
	710, Electrical computers and digital data processing systems: I/O	385
Cincinnati	424, Drug, bio-affecting and body treating compositions	281
	510, Cleaning compositions for solid surfaces	258
Raleigh-Durham	435, Chemistry: molecular biology and microbiology	245
	514, Drug, bio-affecting and body treating compositions	173
Columbus	428, Stock material or miscellaneous articles	107
	604, Surgery	53
Sacramento	711, Electrical computers and digital processing systems: memory	95
	365, Static information storage and retrieval	73
Cleveland	428, Stock material or miscellaneous articles	88
	508, Solid anti-friction devices, materials	87
Kansas City, MO	128, Surgery	29
	379, Telephonic communications	23
Nashville	435, Chemistry: molecular biology and microbiology	22
	424, Drug, bio-affecting and body treating compositions	17

Source: U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. (2000, June 1). *Patenting in metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas of the United States: Breakout by technology class 1995–1999. Utility patent grants.* Available online from [www.uspto.gov/web/offices/ac/ido/oeip/taf/mclsstc/mregions.htm](http://www.uspto.gov/web/offices/ac/ido/oeip/taf/mclsstc/mregions.htm)



**Table 5: Total Nonprofits and Subset of Form 990 filers, per 10,000 people**

MSA	Total Nonprofits	Number of Nonprofits Filing IRS Form 990
Austin	55	9
Cincinnati	46	10
Cleveland	52	10
Columbus	53	11
Indianapolis	56	10
Kansas City, MO	57	10
Nashville	42	9
Raleigh-Durham	53	12
Sacramento	45	9
Mode	53	10

Conversely, a much higher portion of these Central Indiana cities use a mayor-council government. These differences in structure are known to affect a number of city behaviors, including use of debt and tax abatements.<sup>6</sup>

### Conclusions

Business, government, and civic leaders all recognize the need to improve the competitiveness of Central Indiana and the state of Indiana. Comparisons with other regions show how our region is performing, and more important, they show that success is possible and suggest strategies for action.

When compared with one basic measure of economic performance, growth in median household income, the Indianapolis MSA performs poorly, ranking seventh among nine regions. The Austin region performs exceptionally well on this measure, with a 72 percent increase from 1990 to 2000 (See Table 1b, page 2). Austin is a well-recognized success story where public leadership and investment worked with private sector investment to great effect. Most of the other MSAs, including Indianapolis, had gains of around 40 percent on this measure.

These analyses suggest that investments made by all four sectors do affect regional performance and quality of life. The Central Indiana Life Science Initiative is an example of a coordinated strategy by business, government, and nonprofits that has the potential to strengthen the region. Regional improvements also hinge on building coordinated activities and the capacity of local governments to respond to the needs of the people and firms they serve.

### End Notes

<sup>1</sup> In June 2003, the U.S. Office of Management and Budget revised the definition for Metropolitan Statistical Areas. This revision affects the boundaries of many MSAs, including those in Central Indiana.

<sup>2</sup> Sapp, D., Payton, S., Lindsey, G., & Kirlin, J. (2000). *Visions of a Region*. Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis, School of Public and Environmental Affairs, Center for Urban Policy and the Environment. Available online from [www.urbancenter.iupui.edu/container.htm](http://www.urbancenter.iupui.edu/container.htm)

<sup>3</sup> Evanoff, T. (2003, June 1). City's 90s Boom Weak by National Standards. *The Indianapolis Star*. D1.

**Table 6: Structure of Local Governments in Nine Regions**

**Table 6a: Number of Local Government Units, 1997**

Region	Total	County	Townships	Municipal	Special Districts*
Austin	203	10	–	58	135
Central Indiana	1,429	44	492	279	614
Cincinnati	525	22	159	182	162
Cleveland	836	23	344	293	176
Columbus	784	25	401	203	155
Kansas City, MO	1,549	49	360	412	728
Nashville	467	54	–	160	253
Raleigh-Durham	177	18	–	101	58
Sacramento	569	11	–	38	520

\* Special districts include conservation; development; health, education, and welfare; power; transportation; water and wastewater; and other services such as cemeteries, fire protection, and parks and recreation.

**Table 6b: Measures of Local Governments, 1997**

Region	Local governments per 100,000 people	Local government employees per 100,000 population	Local government employees per local government
Austin	18	5,046	288
Central Indiana	49	4,108	84
Cincinnati	25	4,020	164
Cleveland	18	4,580	255
Columbus	35	4,341	125
Kansas City, MO	65	4,957	76
Nashville	20	4,037	197
Raleigh-Durham	11	4,670	437
Sacramento	26	4,974	190

**Table 6c: County Seat Municipal Governments by Type, 1990**

Region	Council-Manager	Commission	Mayor-Council
Austin	67%	–	33%
Central Indiana	3%	–	97%
Cincinnati	36%	7%	57%
Cleveland	15%	–	81%
Columbus	14%	–	86%
Kansas City, MO	55%	–	45%
Nashville	26%	3%	71%
Raleigh-Durham	82%	–	18%
Sacramento	85%	–	8%

<sup>4</sup> Irwin, D.A., & Klenow, P.J. (1996, November). Sematech: Purpose and Performance. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*. 93, 12,739–12,472.

<sup>5</sup> The data on built investments are obtained from McGraw-Hill Construction Dodge, and personal income data are from the U.S. Census Bureau.

<sup>6</sup> Clingermyer, J.C., & Feiock, R.C. (2001). *Institutional Constraints and Policy Choice: An Exploration of Local Governance*. Albany, NY: The State University of New York Press.



## Central Indiana's Future: Understanding the Region and Identifying Choices

Central Indiana's Future: Understanding the Region and Identifying Choices, funded by an award of general support from Lilly Endowment, Inc., is a research project that seeks to increase understanding of the region and to inform decision-makers about the array of options for improving quality of life for Central Indiana residents. Center for Urban Policy and the Environment faculty and staff, with other researchers from several universities, are working to understand how the broad range of investments made by households, governments, businesses, and nonprofit organizations within the Central Indiana region contribute to quality of life. The geographic scope of the project includes 44 counties in an integrated economic region identified by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Comparing Central Indiana with eight comparison regions can increase understanding about what is occurring in this region and inform choices for the future. For these reasons, the Center for Urban Policy and the Environment is undertaking a series of interregional comparisons. This issue brief sets the context for these comparisons and illustrates their value. This report draws examples from the work of Professor Sam Nunn, Professor Wolfgang Bielefeld, Amy Worgan, Kami Linders, and others of the Center staff. For example, see *Building Urban Landscapes: The Uneven Nature of Built Investments in Indiana's Metropolitan Regions, 1991–2001* (Nunn, 2003) and *The Nonprofit Sector Plays a Vital Role in Central Indiana Urban Areas* (Bielefeld and Linders, 2003). These reports are available on the Center Web site.



Central Indiana Region

The Center for Urban Policy and the Environment is part of the School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis. For more information about the Central Indiana Project or the research reported here, contact the Center at 317-261-3000 or visit the Center's Web site at [www.urbancenter.iupui.edu](http://www.urbancenter.iupui.edu).

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