

# *Shelbyville 2075: Legacy in Motion*

## An Investment Blueprint



# Acknowledgments

TIP Strategies, Inc., would like to thank the leadership from Cooper Steel and Bridge Bedford for providing guidance and feedback that shaped this plan. TIP is also grateful to the many residents, business owners, employers, and workers in Shelbyville and Bedford County who shared their perspectives and contributed insights during the process.

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# Setting the Stage



## Ready for a New Era

Shelbyville is situated along the Duck River in central Tennessee, strategically located between the fast-growing metropolitan regions of Nashville and Huntsville. This position offers access to major markets while preserving the small-town character and quality of life that define the community. Long recognized for craftsmanship, resiliency, and tradition, Shelbyville's reputation draws from its strong manufacturing base, the Tennessee Walking Horse National Celebration, and natural assets such as River Bottom Park and the Duck River Greenway.

As growth pressures from the north accelerate, Shelbyville and Bedford County stand at a defining moment. Rising housing demand and infrastructure constraints highlight the urgency of preparing residents for a changing job market. Despite low unemployment, young professionals continue to leave in search of amenities and experiences found in larger cities. Negative perceptions—both internal and external—further complicate efforts to retain talent and attract investment, even as clear signs of opportunity emerge.

Yet momentum is building. Public and private investment in downtown has already begun transforming the area with new retail, restaurant, and hospitality options, while strengthening connections to the Duck River. At the same time, workforce leaders are expanding local training capacity through the new Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) Bedford County Higher Education Center and Middle Tennessee State University's (MTSU) relocation of the Department of Aerospace to the Shelbyville Municipal Airport. These developments are laying the groundwork for a more competitive future.

**Figure 1. Overlook Rendering, 2025**



Source(s): Image provided courtesy of the City of Shelbyville.

This moment is the catalyst for *Shelbyville 2075: Legacy in Motion—An Investment Blueprint* designed to look beyond today’s challenges and imagine what is possible when strategy and investment are aligned. Stakeholders across the community expressed a clear vision: they want Shelbyville to be welcoming, safe, vibrant, and beautiful, preserving its defining character while embracing forward-thinking growth.

*Legacy in Motion* offers a path to that future. It outlines how aligned leadership, shared commitment, and coordinated action can shape a stronger, more prosperous Shelbyville for generations to come. By directing investment thoughtfully, mobilizing partners with purpose, and sustaining momentum across sectors, the community can transform its assets into long-term advantages. With bold planning and collective leadership, Shelbyville can not only honor its legacy but also build a thriving future—one where opportunity expands, quality of place flourishes, and the vision for 2075 becomes reality.

*Legacy in Motion* is a call to action, created in partnership with community members; leaders in business, education, local government, and nonprofits; and elected officials. Stakeholders were clear during the planning process: this is a pivotal time in Shelbyville’s journey as a community. By aligning resources, engaging partners, and committing to a shared, future-forward vision that guides growth and development over the next 50 years, Shelbyville will establish a strong foundation for long-term growth, competitiveness, and prosperity.

## Casting a Vision

*Legacy in Motion* was created through a collaborative planning process that was facilitated by TIP Strategies, Inc. (TIP), an Austin-based economic development strategic planning firm, funded by Cooper Steel, and informed by robust stakeholder engagement and quantitative analysis. From November 2024 through the fall of 2025, TIP engaged in roundtable discussions, interviews, public events, and a community tour to better understand the strengths, challenges, and opportunities in Shelbyville, as described in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Stakeholder Engagement Overview



Source(s): TIP Strategies, Inc.



As part of the stakeholder engagement process, TIP conducted an online survey of Shelbyville and Bedford County residents that solicited perceptions of and visions for the community. The 14-question survey was open from January 14 to January 30, 2026, and drew 269 respondents. Full results and analysis of the survey are provided in a separate Tableau file. Some of the key takeaways from the survey include the following.

- Shelbyville-Bedford County enjoys a strong sense of community with friendliness (scoring 3.6 out of 5.0), safety (3.4), and high quality of life (3.3) rated as its top strengths for livability. However, most livability factors scored below average (3.0), including educational opportunities (2.8), quality healthcare (2.7), recreation (2.5), and entertainment (2.0).
- Respondents proposed a variety of related methods to enhance Shelbyville-Bedford County’s profile, with “improve mix of local businesses” (5.6 percent of all respondents) and “increase entertainment and retail options” (3.9 percent) both receiving multiple responses.
- Existing residents (3.9 out of 5.0), entrepreneurs (3.5), leisure visitors (3.4), and in-state companies/executives (3.4) scored as the highest priority audiences for marketing.
- To raise Shelbyville-Bedford County’s profile with business executives, respondents noted the importance of revitalizing and beautifying the built environment (18.4 percent of all respondents). As the community pursues business retention and attraction, respondents cited a need to update existing infrastructure (3.4 percent) and ensure that infrastructure can support projected growth (7.8 percent).
- The Walking Horse National Celebration represented Shelbyville-Bedford County’s most frequently selected top tourism attraction by far (32.2 percent of all respondents). The Celebration Grounds/Cooper Steel Arena (10.8 percent) and Shelbyville’s downtown square (6.3 percent) also enjoyed significant recognition. Both assets were identified as having high potential to improve the community’s economic competitiveness following their continued investment (4.0 and 3.9 out of 5.0, respectively).

**Figure 5. Community Visioning Survey: What is the single most important thing Shelbyville-Bedford County can do to raise its profile with relevant business executives and decision-makers?**



Source(s): Survey results compiled by TIP Strategies, Inc.  
 Note(s): Of the 269 respondents, 248 answered this question.



- Lack of communication.** There is not a central location for information about what is happening in Shelbyville, the programs and resources available to people and businesses, or a place where success stories can be celebrated. Better communication can help to counter negative perceptions both within and outside of the community and increase access to resources.

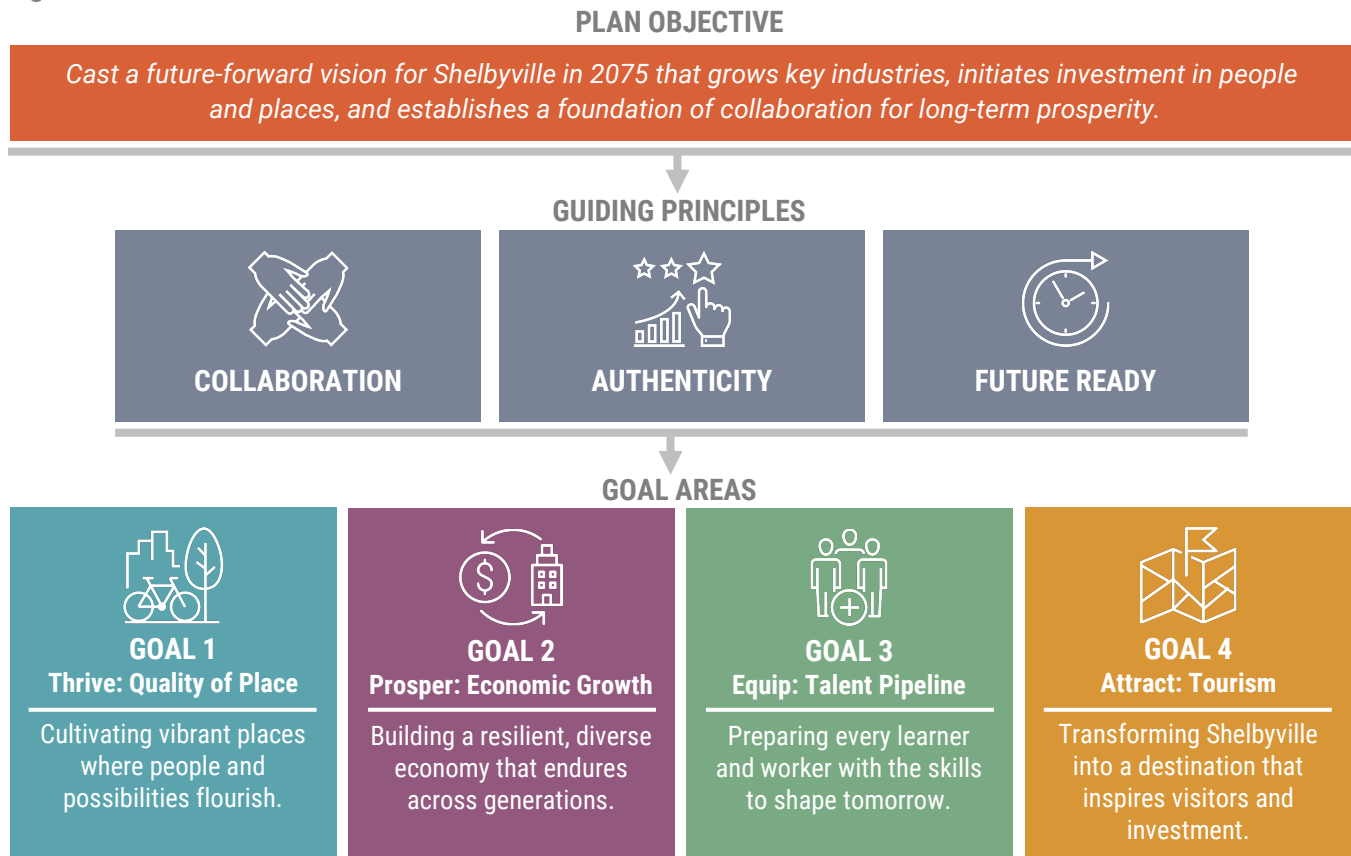
The quantitative analysis component of *Legacy in Motion* relies on national, state, and local data sources to better understand current point-in-time information, trends, and projections 50 years into the future. The Strategic Analysis section (beginning on page 32) highlights key findings from the analysis, which was provided to Bridge Bedford as an interactive data visualization tool.

With a solid foundation of data analysis and stakeholder engagement, TIP worked with Bridge Bedford to draft and refine a framework to guide Shelbyville’s future over the next 50 years. The framework, summarized in Figure 7, includes a plan objective, guiding principles, and goal areas. The strategies and actions designed to support each goal area are in the Call to Action section of this plan (beginning on page 12).

The primary objective of the plan is to cast a future-forward vision for Shelbyville in 2075 that grows key industries, initiates investment in people and places, and establishes a foundation of collaboration for long-term prosperity. The community and economic development values supporting this objective are listed as the guiding principles of collaboration, authenticity, and future ready; each of these are described in more detail below.

- Collaboration.** Work together to build trust, align resources, and initiate actions that achieve a shared vision for the future.
- Authenticity.** Grow in a way that reflects the unique history, culture, and character of Shelbyville.
- Future Ready.** Prepare for tomorrow’s economy by investing in industries, infrastructure, people, and places.

Figure 7. Plan Framework



Source(s): TIP Strategies, Inc.

# Creating Alignment

Sustained success for *Legacy in Motion* will require coordinated leadership, strategic partnerships, and alignment between private and public sector efforts. During the stakeholder engagement phase of this project, participants expressed a desire to see many of these success factors take hold. Stakeholders called for more City/County collaboration, increased support between local businesses and the community, greater alignment of efforts between local government and the private sector, and a renewed sense of pride in Shelbyville as a place with a strong commitment to and a vision for the future.

Participants in the Shelbyville mixer were also asked to rank high-level strategies for each goal area in order of importance, as seen in Figure 8. While not a definitive statement of priority due to the small sample size, these polls provide a first look at the areas some residents and business leaders view as the most important outcomes. As conversations begin about implementation, these polling responses provide a launching point for discussion. The tourism goal area was excluded from Figure 8 live polling response; it was added to the framework later in the process. Growing Shelbyville’s tourism economy, however, was a consistent theme communicated by stakeholders throughout the engagement process.

**Figure 8. Live Polling Response: Highest Ranked Strategies Proposed for Each Goal**

Respondents were asked to rank proposed strategies in order of importance (1 = most important)

 <p><b>GOAL 1</b> Thrive: Quality of Place</p>	1	Invest in infrastructure networks.
	2	Spur development and revitalization.
	3	Establish Shelbyville as a destination of choice for visitors.
	4	Expand access to quality workforce housing.
 <p><b>GOAL 2</b> Prosper: Economic Growth</p>	1	Support existing businesses.
	2	Expand resources for small businesses and entrepreneurs.
	3	Recruit new businesses and industries.
	4	Market Shelbyville as an advantageous location to do business.
 <p><b>GOAL 3</b> Equip: Talent Pipeline</p>	1	Strengthen career and technical education pathways.
	2	Expand career awareness and work-based learning.
	3	Support upskilling and reskilling for adult workers.
	4	Address barriers to workforce participation.

Source(s): Live polling conducted by TIP Strategies, Inc., as part of the Shelbyville mixer held on May 20, 2025.

Note(s): The number of responses varied by goal and ranged from 32 (Goal 1) to 27 (Goal 3), out of a total of 60 attendees.

# 50-Year Implementation Structure for Shelbyville 2075: Legacy in Motion

Implementing the 50-year blueprint requires a model built for longevity, adaptability, and shared accountability. This structure assigns Bridge Bedford as the long-term steward of the plan, supported by thematic working groups, a performance framework centered on metrics, and recurring 10-year strategic sprints that allow for recalibration as Shelbyville evolves. This newly formed 501(c)(3) is the organization best positioned to coordinate the execution of the recommended initiatives, identify and pursue grant funding, and report on progress. Bridge Bedford's three organizational pillars (quality of life, beautification & revitalization, and education & engagement) align closely with *Legacy in Motion*.

## 1. Bridge Bedford: Steward and Organizer

Bridge Bedford maintains long-term ownership of the vision—ensuring continuity, alignment, and momentum across generations. Core responsibilities include the following.

- **Stewarding the blueprint** through annual reviews, progress reporting, and management of the implementation matrix.
- **Coordinating partnerships** across public, private, education, and community sectors.
- **Mobilizing resources**, focusing on grants, private funding, and catalytic investments.
- **Ensuring strategic alignment** with core pillars: quality of life, beautification & revitalization, and education & engagement.

## 2. Working Groups: Drivers of Implementation

Four working groups—**Thrive, Prosper, Equip, Attract**—drive action and accountability. They feature rotating membership (every three to five years) and operate on a monthly-to-quarterly schedule.

Each group is responsible for the following.

- Annual and decade-scale work plans
- Strategy prioritization
- Quick wins (one to three years) and long-term investments

## 3. Metrics and Performance: The 50-Year Impact

A nested measurement framework offers transparent, long-horizon tracking.

- Annual key performance indicators for evaluating quality of place, economic growth, talent, and tourism.
- Five-year milestones assessing progress, resources, barriers, and community sentiment.
- Ten-year scorecards comparing outcomes to expectations, trends, and demographic shifts—guiding the next decade's priorities.

## 4. Decade Strategic Sprints

The 50-year plan is executed through five, 10-year sprints.

- **Year 1 Launch:** Confirm decade priorities.
- **Year 5 Review:** Diagnose challenges and recalibrate.
- **Year 10 Impact Report:** Assess, close out, and plan for the next sprint.

This structure transforms a half-century vision into adaptable, manageable cycles.

## 5. Pivot Points for Flexibility

Every five years, the plan undergoes disciplined decision-making to provide the following.

- Continue
- Adapt
- Accelerate
- Retire
- Add new strategies

Decisions incorporate community input, demographic and market data, stakeholder feedback, and performance results.

## 6. Transparent, Ongoing Communication

Consistent trust requires visible progress.

- Annual public dashboard
- Quarterly partner updates
- Community forums to ensure public voice influences evolution

## 7. Future-Ready Tools

To remain resilient across decades, the model includes these tools.

- **Scenario planning** every 10 years (technology, population, climate, infrastructure, supply chain).
- **Leadership continuity planning** to preserve institutional knowledge.
- **Innovation fund** supporting pilots, tech upgrades, creative placemaking, workforce development, and tourism activation.

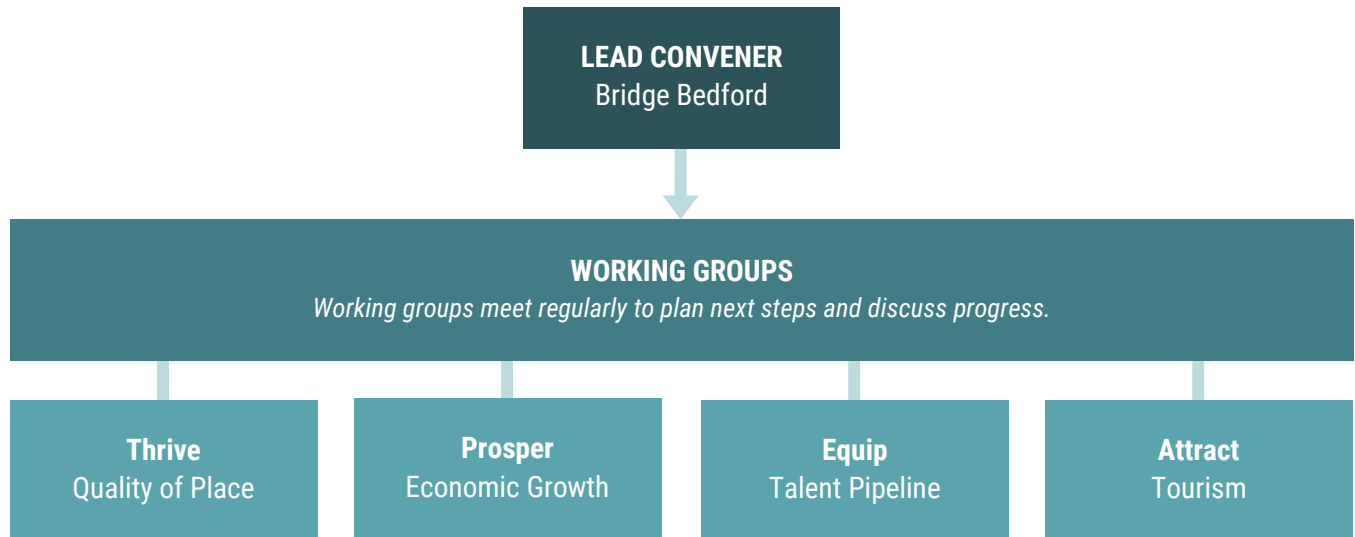
## 8. Summary Model

- Bridge Bedford: Steward, convener, catalyst
- Working Groups: Implementation drivers
- Metrics: Annual, 5-year, 10-year accountability
- Strategic Sprints: Decade-based progress
- Pivot Points: Built-in flexibility
- Scenario and Leadership and Innovation: Future-proof foundation
- Transparency: Trust and alignment across generations

Working groups will track progress using a standalone implementation matrix that accompanies *Legacy in Motion*. This flexible tool can be used to assign lead organizations, identify potential partners, and indicate proposed timing for each strategy and action. While *Legacy in Motion* is designed to be a North Star for Shelbyville, the implementation matrix provides a more flexible approach to implementation that allows priorities, roles, and responsibilities to evolve over time in response to community needs.

A suggested implementation structure is shown in Figure 9.

**Figure 9. Structure for Implementation**



# Call to Action



## Goals and Strategies

*Legacy in Motion's* four goal areas are described in greater detail in this section. Each goal area includes introductory text to outline relevant assets, challenges, and opportunities. The goal narrative is followed by a set of bold priorities and suggested metrics for measuring the community's progress in achieving its long-term vision. Strategies and actions are then recommended for positioning Shelbyville to lead Middle Tennessee as the most desirable, competitive, and welcoming community for residents, workers, businesses, and visitors over the next five decades.

### Goal 1. Thrive: Quality of Place

*Cultivating vibrant places where people and possibilities flourish.*

The Shelbyville square centers on the Bedford County Courthouse, which is surrounded by commercial buildings, creating a nexus of government, commerce, and community life. This style of placemaking was so successful that it was emulated by towns across Tennessee, the South, and the Midwest. Buildings, and the roads, sidewalks, and trails that connect them, are part of creating quality places, but truly great spaces also create an environment where people want to live, businesses want to grow, and visitors want to return. For Shelbyville, enhancing quality of place is essential to competing in a rapidly growing region. As neighboring sites expand, Shelbyville's ability to attract and retain talent, welcome new investment, and foster community pride depends on the vibrancy, accessibility, and welcoming character of the physical environment that makes people want to live, work, and recreate there.

Figure 10. Shelbyville Riverview District Rendering



Source(s): Image provided courtesy of the City of Shelbyville.

Shelbyville has a strong foundation to build on. Its historic downtown, rich equestrian traditions, and scenic landscapes provide a unique sense of identity, offering small-town charm and personal connection with proximity to regional economic engines like Nashville, Murfreesboro, and Huntsville. Yet, challenges remain. A shortage of diverse housing options, especially for young professionals, limits the ability of workers and families to live in town. Infrastructure networks, from broadband to water, roads, sidewalks, and trails, are already constrained and will be further stretched as Shelbyville-Bedford County struggles to keep up with growth. Public spaces and community assets, such as parks, trails, and the waterfront, require new energy and investment to fully meet the needs of a growing population.

By focusing on quality of place, Shelbyville can transform these challenges into opportunities. Revitalizing downtown and activating public spaces will spur new development, tourism, and provide community gathering spaces. Creating multimodal connections (e.g., sidewalks, trails, and bike paths) between catalyst sites, including Celebration Grounds/Cooper Steel Arena/Celebration Campground, downtown, and the riverfront would increase the utilization of these sites by residents and visitors. Expanding access to workforce housing will ensure that growth is inclusive and supports the local economy.

Enhancing quality of place is about creating a Shelbyville where everyone feels at home, where businesses can grow, and where visitors want to return. This goal is the foundation for building a stronger, more vibrant community—one that honors the community’s character, history, and amenities while preparing boldly for the future.

## Bold Priorities

### *Downtown and Riverfront Revitalization*

Position Shelbyville’s downtown and riverfront as vibrant, interconnected destinations for residents and visitors, fostering economic growth and community pride over the next five decades. Transform the River Overlook and the Riverwalk into a signature scenic corridor linking Duck River to Shelbyville square (2026–2028) and develop the Riverview District through multiphase investments in infrastructure, lighting, and event venues.

#### Metrics

- Increase annual riverfront and downtown visitation by 200 percent by 2036 and sustain 10 percent annual growth through 2075.
- Complete all phases of the Riverview District development by 2040, with 90 percent occupancy of event spaces and parking facilities.
- Achieve 85 percent resident satisfaction with downtown public spaces by 2036 and maintain or improve through 2075.

### *Parks and Recreation*

Expand and modernize recreational amenities to support a growing, diverse population and enhance quality of life. Launch the \$2.5M H.V. Griffin Park soccer fields expansion (started in October 2025), and continue to invest in parks, trails, and community spaces to serve evolving needs over the next 50 years.

#### Metrics

- Complete H.V. Griffin Park soccer fields expansion by 2028; increase youth sports participation by 50 percent by 2036.
- Add or upgrade at least one major park or recreation facility every decade through 2075.
- Achieve 90 percent community satisfaction with parks and recreation amenities by 2036 and maintain levels through 2075.

**Figure 11. Proposed Concession and Restrooms at H.V. Griffin Park Soccer Complex**



Source(s): Image provided courtesy of the City of Shelbyville. Original rendering created by Wold and Studio Topography.

## Housing

Expand mid-market and workforce housing options to support inclusive growth, attract and retain talent, and ensure Shelbyville remains competitive and welcoming. Drive sustained residential development that meets the needs of young professionals, families, and the local workforce.

### Metrics

- Increase mid-market housing stock by 30 percent by 2036 and double by 2075.
- Support construction of 500 new workforce housing units by 2036 and 2,000 units by 2075.
- Maintain housing affordability index at or above regional average through 2075.

## Strategies and Actions

**1.1.** Partner with the City of Shelbyville, developers, and anchor institutions to initiate investment in catalyst projects.

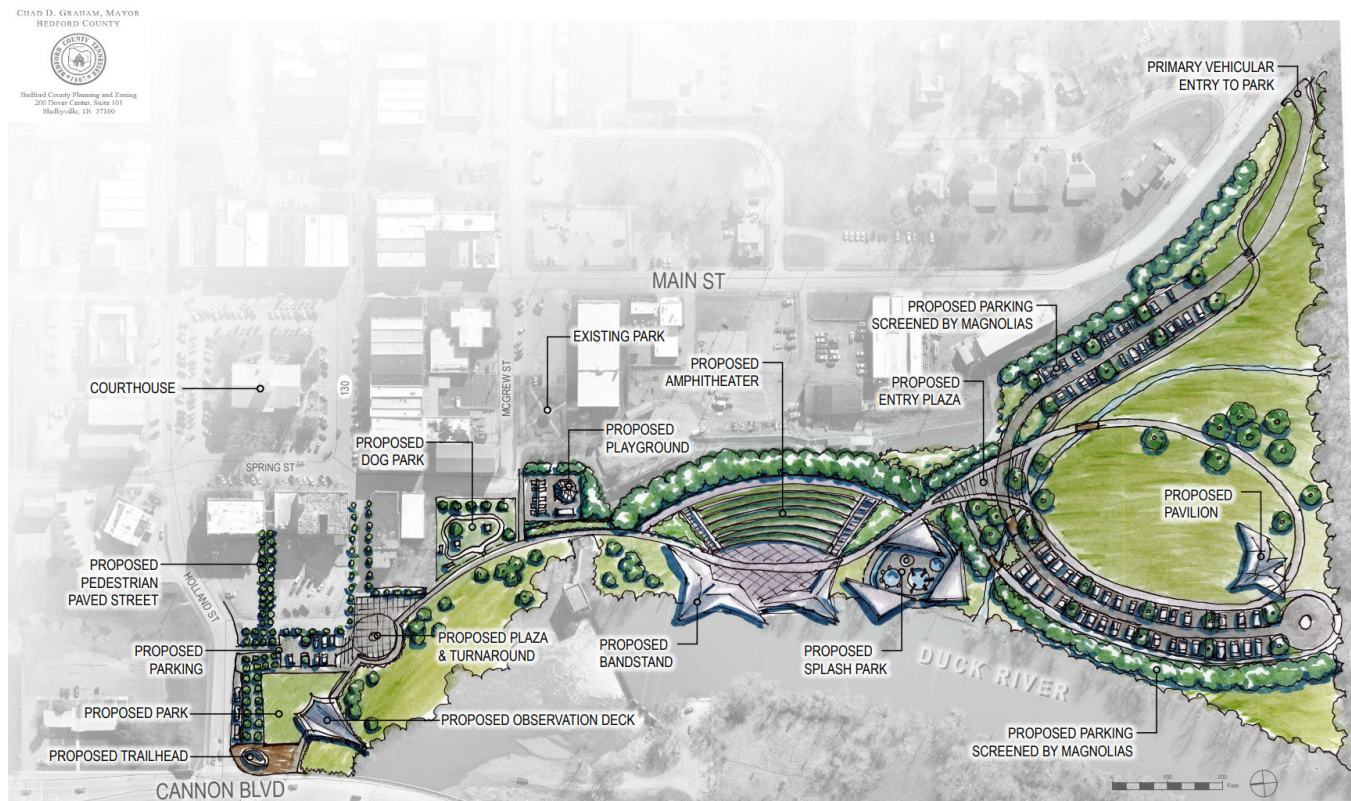
**1.1.1.** Reposition the Celebration Grounds/Cooper Steel Arena/Celebration Campground area into a multiuse and year-round destination.

- Continue to build out the event calendar to market events both within Shelbyville and throughout the region.
- Host temporary outdoor events, such as farmers' markets, makers' markets, and a winter holiday vendor fair to attract visitors.
- Initiate placemaking and amenity investments in the Celebration Campground to attract visitors year-round.

### 1.1.2. Revitalize, activate, and connect downtown Shelbyville and the riverfront.

- Complete the \$3 million Riverview District project (including the River Overlook and the Riverwalk components), which will connect the Duck River to Shelbyville square via a scenic walkway.
- Prioritize development that offers a mix of uses with the ability to create daytime and evening activity.
- Identify potential sites or properties for residential housing downtown.
- Identify potential sites or properties for lodging downtown.
- Link downtown and the riverfront with signage and physical access in the form of sidewalks, trails, and bike paths.
- Prioritize opportunities for infill and redevelopment of existing buildings or sites.
- Launch a downtown activation and revitalization program that includes façade improvements, mixed-used development, pop-up events or retail, and art installations that reflect local history and culture.
- Identify City-owned properties that may be well-positioned for redevelopment and create a strategy for activation.

**Figure 12. Bedford County Downtown Revitalization**



Source(s): Image provided courtesy of Bedford County. Original sketch created by Asa Engineering & Consulting, Inc., for the *Bedford County Downtown Revitalization Vision Plan*, 2019.

**1.1.3.** Establish third-places downtown for people of all ages to gather.

- Identify locations for temporary pop-up events as well as potential sites for investment in permanent gathering spaces.
- Create a public space activation program with funding and technical assistance for events, art installations, murals, and markets.
- Create physical connections between downtown and the Duck River.
- Activate the Duck River for recreational use by creating spaces for boat and paddleboard rentals, special events, and passive recreation.

**1.1.4.** Convene property owners, developers, and City staff to identify issues and potential solutions to regulatory barriers that unnecessarily hinder or prevent priority development projects.

**1.2.** Invest in infrastructure networks for broadband, utilities, roads, sidewalks, and trails.

**1.2.1.** Partner with regional and state agencies to ensure universal access to high-speed broadband.

**1.2.2.** Align future capital improvement plans with the vision and the goals of the blueprint.

**1.2.3.** Implement the greenway, bikeways, and trails master plan.

**1.2.4.** Construct an interconnected trail and greenway network that links catalyst projects with multimodal transportation options.

**Figure 13. Shelbyville Riverview District Rendering**



Source(s): Image provided courtesy of the City of Shelbyville.

- 1.3. Improve and increase infrastructure capacity to support additional workforce housing.
  - 1.3.1. Ensure adequate water and sewer capacity in high-priority areas for new housing.
  - 1.3.2. Create multimodal connections among new housing developments, job opportunities, retail, and recreation amenities.
  - 1.3.3. Encourage master planned communities with housing at a variety of price points.
  - 1.3.4. Ensure that land use policies identify priority areas for new housing and are supportive of a variety of housing types.
- 1.4. Expand access to quality housing through the development of workforce housing.
  - 1.4.1. Conduct a housing needs assessment to quantify where there are gaps in current housing inventory and the scale of demand for workforce housing; use this data to set construction goals.
  - 1.4.2. Identify and increase the amount of land available to support new housing.
    - Create a database of City-owned and tax-delinquent land; identify which properties are most suitable for workforce housing.
    - Develop a framework for property acquisition for sites that could be used to support new workforce housing.
    - Establish a community land bank or other entity that will develop and manage the properties to ensure long-term affordability.

## Goal 2. Prosper: Economic Growth

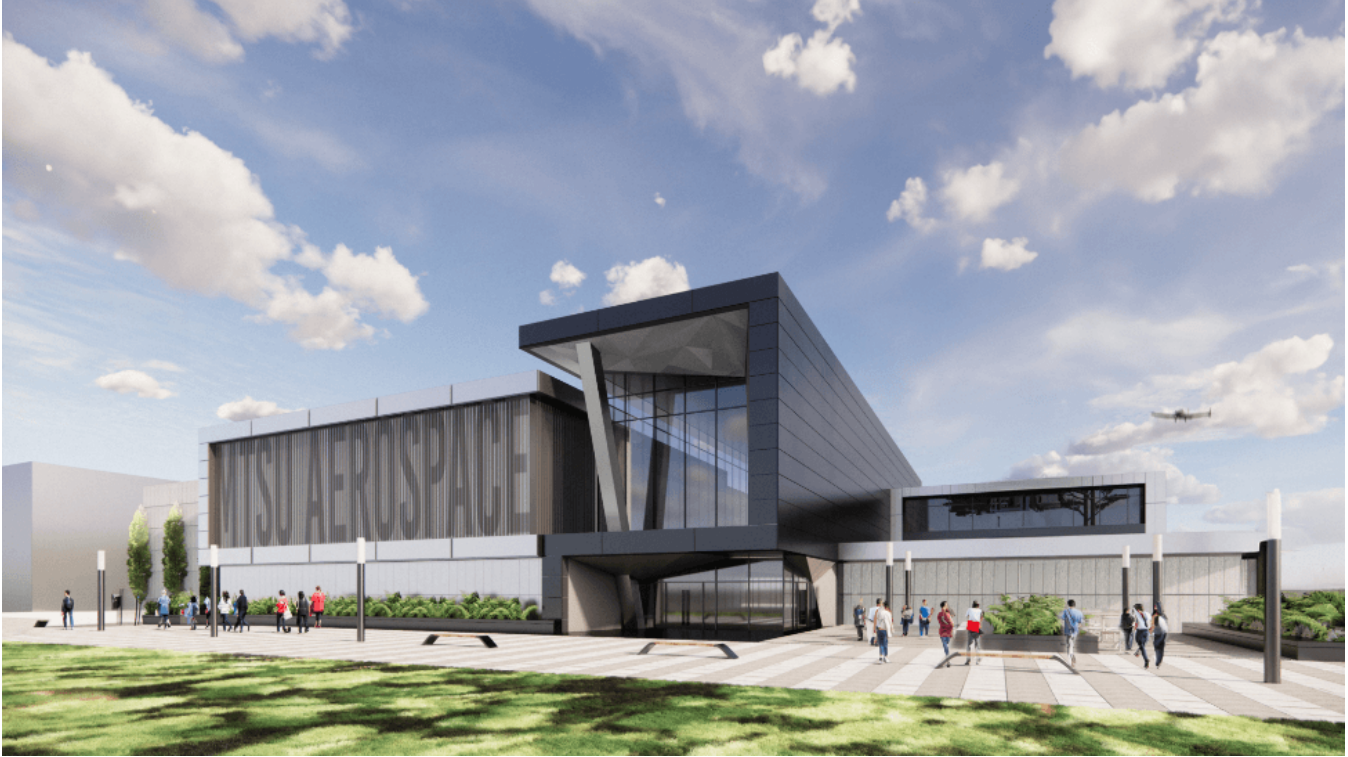
### *Building a resilient, diverse economy that endures across generations.*

A strong and diverse economy, an objective that extends beyond businesses and jobs to include optimism about future opportunities, is the foundation of community prosperity. For Shelbyville-Bedford County, an intentional focus on strengthening existing businesses while attracting new investment is essential not only to creating jobs and diversifying the economy but also to building long-term resilience that allows families, young professionals, and entrepreneurs to thrive. Economic growth in Middle Tennessee is accelerating, and Shelbyville is well positioned to capture a share of this momentum. The community's strategic location, available industrial sites, skilled workforce, emerging training opportunities, and affordability provide a strong platform for expansion.

At the same time, Shelbyville must address several challenges to remain competitive. Existing businesses need support to adapt to changing markets, retain talent, and feel confident making investments and committing to expansion over time. Recruiting new industries requires alignment with the community's assets, from the availability of a skilled workforce to complementary businesses, robust transportation connections, and a strong quality of place that appeals to potential employees. Small businesses and the entrepreneurs who run them—critical drivers of innovation and local identity—often need greater access to resources, mentorship, and capital to thrive. In a competitive marketplace, Shelbyville can create an advantage by investing in business support structures and marketing itself as a welcoming, advantageous place to do business.

By investing in both retention and recruitment, Shelbyville can strengthen its economic ecosystem from within while also expanding outward. This goal centers on supporting existing businesses, attracting new industries, empowering entrepreneurs, and celebrating success stories to create more high-quality job opportunities, enhance economic stability, and ensure that growth benefits both residents and businesses alike. Over the long term, these strategies should result in a diversified industrial base, a stronger and more resilient existing business base, and the attraction of technology- and innovation-driven companies.

Figure 14. MTSU Aerospace Campus Rendering



Source(s): Original rendering via Catalyst Design Group, provided by TMP Partners.

## Bold Priorities

### *Aerospace and Aviation*

Middle Tennessee State University's (MTSU) new \$73.4 million Aerospace Campus at the Shelbyville Municipal Airport in Bedford County represents a new opportunity for industry diversification and growth in Bedford County. Scheduled for completion in 2028, MTSU's Aerospace Campus will house instructors and student pilots from around the world and will also include a flight operations center, a maintenance hangar, and a flight simulation bay. With a significant amount of open land surrounding the airport zoned for industrial use, the campus has the potential to catalyze the attraction of new aviation, aerospace, and defense contractor businesses and employment in the community.

#### Metrics

- Establish at least three formal public–private partnerships with MTSU that engage K–12 schools, Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT), local employers, and private airport operators to support talent pathways, internships, and applied training by 2030.
- Attract five to seven aerospace- or aviation-related firms (including suppliers, service providers, or maintenance, repair, and operations) to sites at or near the Shelbyville Municipal Airport, generating new high-wage employment opportunities by 2036.
- Retain at least 40 percent of MTSU Aerospace Campus graduates in Bedford County or the surrounding region through local employment, entrepreneurship, or continued training by 2036.
- Establish Shelbyville as a recognized regional center for aviation training and aerospace employment, with sustained industry presence, ongoing employer–education alignment, and a robust talent pipeline supporting long-term economic diversification by 2075.

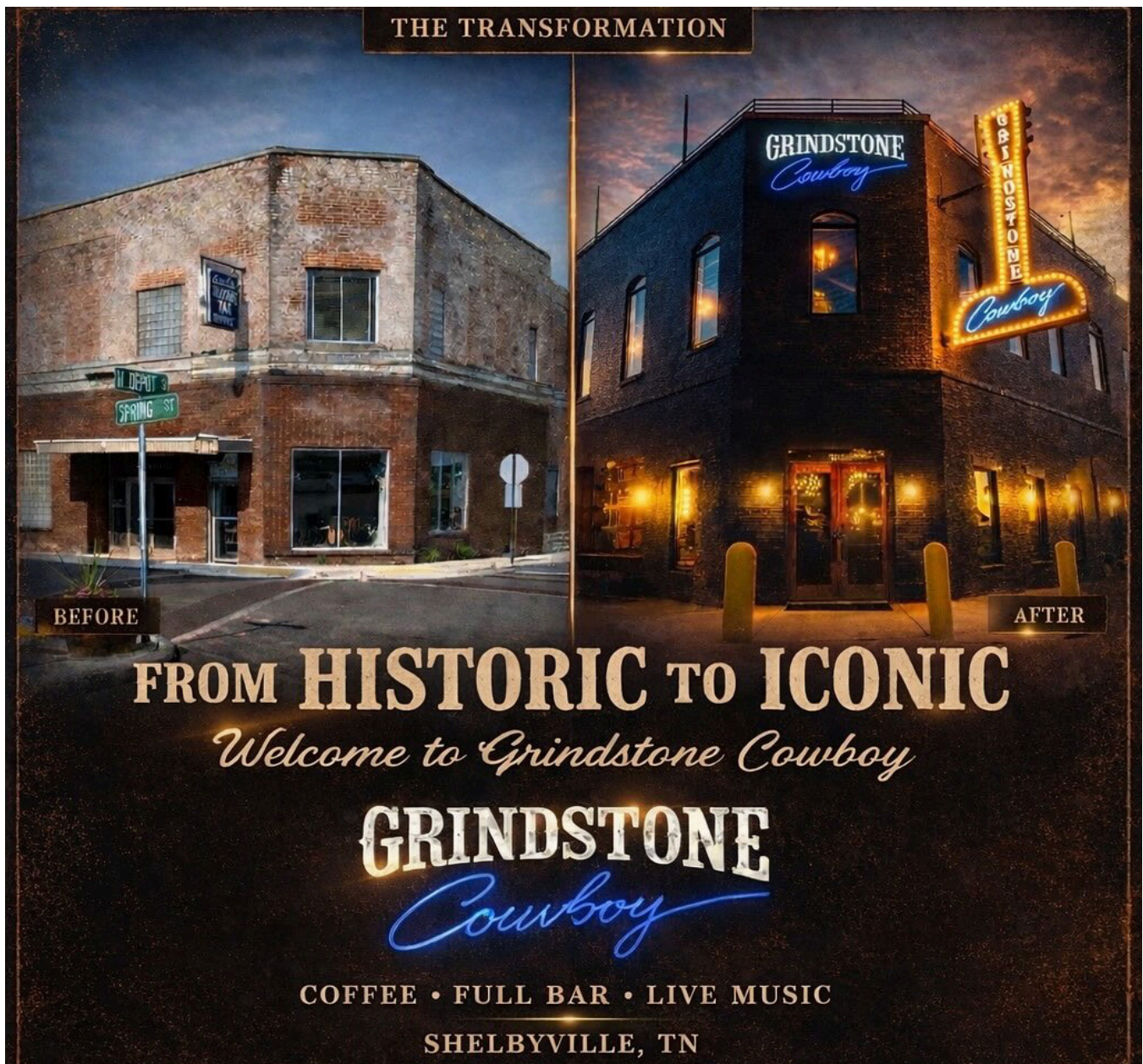
## Entertainment Economy

Build a thriving entertainment economy that leverages the community's natural amenities, facilities, and businesses. Local public, private, and nonprofit entities should work collectively to create a business climate and ecosystem that makes Shelbyville a signature destination for adult sports, regional events, dining, and entertainment. Track audience growth, local spending, business activity, and the economic spillover from events, venues, and districts.

### Metrics

- Target a 5 percent annual Increase in local sales and hotel tax receipts.
- Increase the number of downtown restaurants, bars, and retail partners.

Figure 15. 100 Spring Street in Historic Downtown Converted to the Grindstone Cowboy



Source(s): Grindstone Cowboy via Facebook.

## Workforce Acceleration Hub

Position Shelbyville as a regional leader in workforce development through TCAT's \$45.4M Higher Education Center, offering advanced training in welding; heating, ventilation, air conditioning, and refrigeration; and industrial maintenance to meet employer demand.

### Metrics

- Expand training capacity by 50 percent by 2030.
- Achieve and maintain an 85 percent program-to-employment placement rate.
- Conduct annual employer advisory reviews to ensure curriculum alignment with industry needs.

## Strategies and Actions

### 2.1. Support existing businesses with business retention and expansion services.

- 2.1.1. Expand business retention efforts by meeting annually with top employers to facilitate relationship building and assist with issue identification and resolution of retention or expansion needs.
- 2.1.2. Develop a local supply chain support program to help existing businesses connect with regional buyers, suppliers, and distributors.
- 2.1.3. Offer permitting concierge services for major business investment projects to facilitate a smooth experience.

### 2.2. Recruit new businesses or industries aligned with Shelbyville's competitive position.

- 2.2.1. Identify target industries to prioritize in business recruitment efforts; build on competitive advantages in sectors, such as manufacturing and agriculture.
- 2.2.2. Establish a database of available sites with information about current ownership, site conditions, zoning, utility availability, transportation infrastructure, and environmental considerations.
- 2.2.3. Coordinate with regional and state partners to recruit businesses and host familiarization tours.

### 2.3. Expand resources for small businesses and entrepreneurs.

- 2.3.1. Partner with the Tennessee Small Business Development Center in Murfreesboro to establish a satellite location in Shelbyville that offers mentorship and technical assistance resources for current or aspirational small business owners.
- 2.3.2. Work with business owners and funders (banks, revolving loan funds) to identify and address gaps in access to capital.
- 2.3.3. Develop a retail strategy that supports small businesses and reduces vacancies downtown.
- 2.3.4. Create a business incubator and co-working space downtown to support makers and emerging small business owners.
- 2.3.5. Expand the small business passport program to continue beyond the winter holiday season.

### 2.4. Market Shelbyville as an advantageous location to do business.

- 2.4.1. Refresh economic development marketing materials, with a priority on cultivating a strong and engaging online presence, to appeal to site selectors and business owners.
- 2.4.2. Establish a business ambassador program to engage local employers in peer-to-peer recruitment and storytelling.

## Goal 3. Equip: Talent Pipeline

*Preparing every learner and worker with the skills to shape tomorrow.*

A skilled and adaptable workforce is critical for long-term economic competitiveness. Developing a talent pipeline means making sure every resident—whether a high school student exploring career options, a parent or individual looking to reenter the workforce, or an experienced worker adapting to new technologies—has the support and opportunities they need to succeed. For Shelbyville-Bedford County, the ability to meet the needs of existing employers while preparing for future opportunities depends on strong connections among education, training providers, employers, and workers. As industries evolve and new technologies reshape the workplace, investing in talent development will be critical to sustaining growth and ensuring that residents can fully participate in the local economy.

Shelbyville has important assets to build on, including a strong network of K–12 schools and postsecondary training providers, proximity to regional higher education institutions, and employers committed to workforce partnerships. Unfortunately, despite these assets, many young people are unaware of local opportunities and assume that they need to leave Shelbyville to find a long-term career path. The community faces challenges common across the nation: a need to expand career and technical education (CTE) pathways, increase access to adult upskilling and reskilling, and ensure that residents are aware of and prepared for available career opportunities. Barriers, such as access to transportation, a lack of quality childcare, and limited awareness of training resources, further limit workforce participation for some residents.

By strengthening career pathways, expanding opportunities for work-based learning, and addressing barriers to employment, Shelbyville can build a talent pipeline that not only meets the needs of employers but also empowers residents to pursue fulfilling career pathways. This goal ensures that the community’s most valuable asset—its people—is equipped to succeed in a changing economy and contribute to the long-term prosperity of Shelbyville-Bedford County.

**Figure 16. Community High School Health Sciences**



Source(s): Image provided courtesy of Bedford County Schools.

## Bold Priorities

### *Career Pathways Expansion and Employer-Aligned Training*

Strengthen Shelbyville’s long-term workforce competitiveness by expanding K–12 and postsecondary pathways aligned with high-demand careers. This includes dual enrollment growth, industry-led advisory groups, and expanded coordination with TCAT and MTSU to ensure programs match employer needs.

#### Metrics

- Increase dual-enrollment participation annually through 2030.
- Launch employer-led advisory groups across priority sectors by 2027.
- Align 100 percent of CTE and technical programs with employer-validated curriculum frameworks by 2030.

### *Youth Career Awareness, Exploration and Work-Based Learning Network*

Build a comprehensive career awareness ecosystem for K–12 students by expanding business exposure, mentorship, and hands-on learning. This includes classroom visits, site tours, a regional futures expo, and a youth apprenticeship and mentorship network modeled on the Bedford County Schools Innovative Career Opportunity Network.

#### Metrics

- Conduct annual business site visits for every middle and high school grade starting in 2027.
- Establish a countywide youth apprenticeship and mentorship network by 2028.
- Achieve 75 percent student participation in the annual futures expo by 2030.

Figure 17. Shelbyville Central High School Aviation Maintenance



Source(s): Image provided courtesy of Bedford County Schools.

## Adult Upskilling and Workforce Barriers Reduction Initiative

Accelerate workforce participation by expanding adult upskilling programs, strengthening employer-matched credential incentives, and addressing key participation barriers, including childcare and transportation.

### Metrics

- Increase adult credential completions by 50 percent by 2030.
- Launch an employer-matched training incentive program by 2027.
- Establish at least two new childcare facilities near employment or training hubs by 2030 and implement transit solutions for high-need routes.

## Strategies and Actions

### 3.1. Strengthen career and technical education pathways.

- 3.1.1. Continue to support dual enrollment programs and look for ways to expand programmatic offerings to students that align with in-demand careers.
- 3.1.2. Launch industry-led advisory groups comprised of key employers, high school CTE providers, and post-graduation workforce training programs at TCAT and MTSU to ensure curriculum is aligned with employer needs.

Figure 18. TCAT Shelbyville



Source(s): Tennessee Board of Regents.

### 3.2. Expand career awareness and work-based training.

- 3.2.1. Launch a career awareness campaign for K–12 students.
  - Provide field trips to local businesses and in-classroom visits from local professionals.
  - Create connections with local training providers, such as the MTSU flight training program and offerings at TCAT Shelbyville.

- 3.2.2. Build on the success of the Innovative Career Opportunity Network to develop a youth apprenticeship and mentorship network connecting students with local employers.
- 3.2.3. Host an annual futures expo to showcase local careers, training programs, and local businesses to high school and post-secondary students.
- 3.3. Support upskilling and reskilling for adult workers.
  - 3.3.1. Offer employer-matched training incentives for workers completing industry-recognized credentials.
  - 3.3.2. Facilitate partnerships between local employers and workforce training providers to create career-building training pathways for current employees.
  - 3.3.3. Cultivate connections between students at MTSU and TCAT with leaders, businesses, and experiences in Shelbyville as part of a student retention initiative.
- 3.4. Address barriers to workforce participation, such as transportation and childcare.
  - 3.4.1. Form a working group of the region's large employers, workforce providers, and the South Central Area Transit Service to identify high-need routes and small-scale transit solutions.
  - 3.4.2. Invest in affordable, high-quality childcare facilities near major employment, education, or workforce development areas.
  - 3.4.3. Partner with Tennessee Child Care Resource & Referral and workforce development providers to provide technical assistance to people working on home-based childcare certification.

## Goal 4. Attract: Tourism

### *Transforming Shelbyville into a destination that inspires visitors and investment.*

Tourism represents one of Shelbyville's most significant opportunities to diversify its economy and elevate its national profile.

With riverfront beauty, rich cultural heritage, equestrian traditions, and growing agritourism assets, Shelbyville has the foundation to become a recognized destination—one that draws visitors year-round and strengthens local businesses.

Today, tourism remains an underdeveloped part of the community's economic base. Strategic investment in lodging, marketing, riverfront and downtown connections, and a coordinated events strategy will position Shelbyville as a destination of choice. At the same time, modernizing infrastructure networks will ensure residents and visitors alike can seamlessly access housing, employment, recreation, and entertainment. A recent success is the Tennessee General Assembly appropriating \$2.7 million in its 2026–2027 budget to support the renovation and expansion of the three RV parks at the Tennessee Walking Horse National Celebration.

Over the next five decades, this strategy will evolve from foundational riverfront and downtown revitalization toward a broader tourism ecosystem—one defined by signature events, enhanced trails, strengthened agritourism, expanded lodging options, and improved public safety. Community partners have already begun activating key assets. Bridge Bedford's inaugural Walking in a Winter Wonderland event, debuting at Celebration Grounds in 2026, will bring holiday lights, ice skating, and family programming to the community and complement existing events like the Connected Community 5K.

This momentum aligns with Shelbyville's new tourism branding campaign, which leans proudly into the City's heritage as Walking Horse Country. This contemporary brand identity celebrates the community's history while appealing to new audiences and reinforcing Shelbyville's unique sense of place.

Together, these efforts create a powerful pathway forward—expanding Shelbyville's visitor economy, reinforcing community pride, and elevating the City as a vibrant regional destination for generations to come.

Figure 19. Community Visioning Survey: What are Shelbyville-Bedford County's top tourism attractions or events?



Source(s): Survey results compiled by TIP Strategies, Inc.

Note(s): Of the 269 respondents, 166 answered this question.

One of the main barriers to local tourism growth is the lack of hotels and accommodations for visitors and business travelers. To meet this challenge, TIP recommends the City of Shelbyville and Bedford County undertake a 10-year Stay in Shelbyville pilot initiative designed to expand local hotel tax revenue and lodging space. Such an initiative would employ strategies designed to maximize Tennessee's state tourism tax allowances, encouraging new hotel development and short-term rental activity, strengthening tourism tax administration and transparency, building additional local tourism partnerships, and aligning City-County taxes and policies.

## Bold Priorities

### *Tourism Funding and Lodging Expansion Initiative*

Strengthen Shelbyville's tourism economy by modernizing revenue tools, expanding lodging options, and ensuring tourism funds are reinvested into high-impact visitor experiences. Near-term efforts include optimizing Tennessee's 8 percent hotel tax cap, expanding short-term rental compliance, and dedicating tourism revenues to visible projects that drive visitor growth.

#### Metrics

- Implement staged hotel tax increases aligned with new lodging openings beginning in 2027.
- Increase lodging inventory by recruiting at least one national-brand hotel and one boutique or extended-stay property within five to seven years.
- Achieve full compliance in short-term rental tax collection by 2028.

## Lodging Priority Zone and Investment Prospectus

Accelerate hotel development by establishing a lodging priority zone encompassing the Riverwalk, the Riverview District, the historic square, and major corridors. Streamlined development processes, fast-track permitting, and a hotel investment prospectus will attract investors, reduce risk, and clarify Shelbyville's prime hospitality locations.

### Metrics

- Formally adopt the lodging priority zone in local planning documents by 2026.
- Publish and distribute a hotel investment prospectus and deal toolkit by 2027.
- Reduce hotel development review timelines by 30 percent within the priority zone.

## Signature Experiences and Tourism Infrastructure Activation

Leverage Shelbyville's signature assets—Riverwalk, Riverview District, Tennessee Whiskey Trail, Music City Kartplex, and outdoor recreation amenities—to create year-round visitor demand. This includes events programming, wayfinding improvements, trail and riverfront connections, and a comprehensive tourism master plan.

### Metrics

- Launch at least three new annual tourism-driven events by 2030.
- Complete wayfinding and trail-connection improvements linking tourism assets by 2032.
- Increase annual visitation to riverfront and downtown event zones by 50 percent by 2036.

Figure 20. Shelbyville Riverview District Rendering



Source(s): Image provided courtesy of the City of Shelbyville.

## Strategies and Actions

- 4.1. Fund tourism development and meet rising demand.
  - 4.1.1. Maximize state law allowances to grow hotel tax rates within Tennessee’s 8 percent cap earmarked for tourism projects.
  - 4.1.2. Encourage new hotel and short-term rental development near the riverfront, downtown, and the Tennessee Whiskey Trail to expand the taxable lodging base.
  - 4.1.3. Strengthen tourism administration by improving compliance and transparency in hotel and short-term rental tax collection.
  - 4.1.4. Dedicate a share of new tourism revenue to high-impact projects that build community support and reinforce reinvestment.
  - 4.1.5. Align the City-County tourism strategies to avoid policy conflicts and coordinate staged hotel tax adjustments.
- 4.2. Establish a lodging priority zone and streamline development.
  - 4.2.1. Designate a lodging priority zone encompassing the Duck River, the Riverwalk, the Riverview District, the historic square, and major highway corridors.
  - 4.2.2. Formally adopt the lodging priority zone in local planning documents to signal priority locations for hotels, boutique inns, and mixed-use lodging concepts.
  - 4.2.3. Streamline zoning, parking requirements, and design review for hotels and mixed-use projects within the lodging priority zone to accelerate development.
- 4.3. Develop a lodging investment prospectus and hotel deal toolkit.
  - 4.3.1. Produce a lodging investment prospectus using current and projected visitor spending, event calendars, and average daily rate/occupancy assumptions, and occupancy insights to demonstrate market demand.
  - 4.3.2. Pair the lodging investment prospectus with a hotel deal toolkit that includes limited, performance-based property tax abatements, fast-track permitting with clear timelines and coordination, and eligibility for local tourism-funded grants to support hotel-related infrastructure (streetscape, wayfinding, shared parking).
- 4.4. Leverage signature tourism assets to drive lodging demand.
  - 4.4.1. Position the River Overlook and the Riverwalk and the Riverview District as anchor destinations by establishing an events plan that ensures consistent year-round activity (e.g., concert series, riverfront festivals, equestrian/heritage weekends).
  - 4.4.2. Bundle anchor assets, such as the Tennessee Whiskey Trail, the Duck River, sports, and recreation, into two- to three-night itineraries that demonstrate concrete demand to hotel brands and developers.
  - 4.4.3. Publicly commit to reinvesting incremental hotel tax growth into tourism products and marketing to create a visible feedback loop that reinforces lodging investment.

Figure 21. Shelbyville Riverview District Rendering

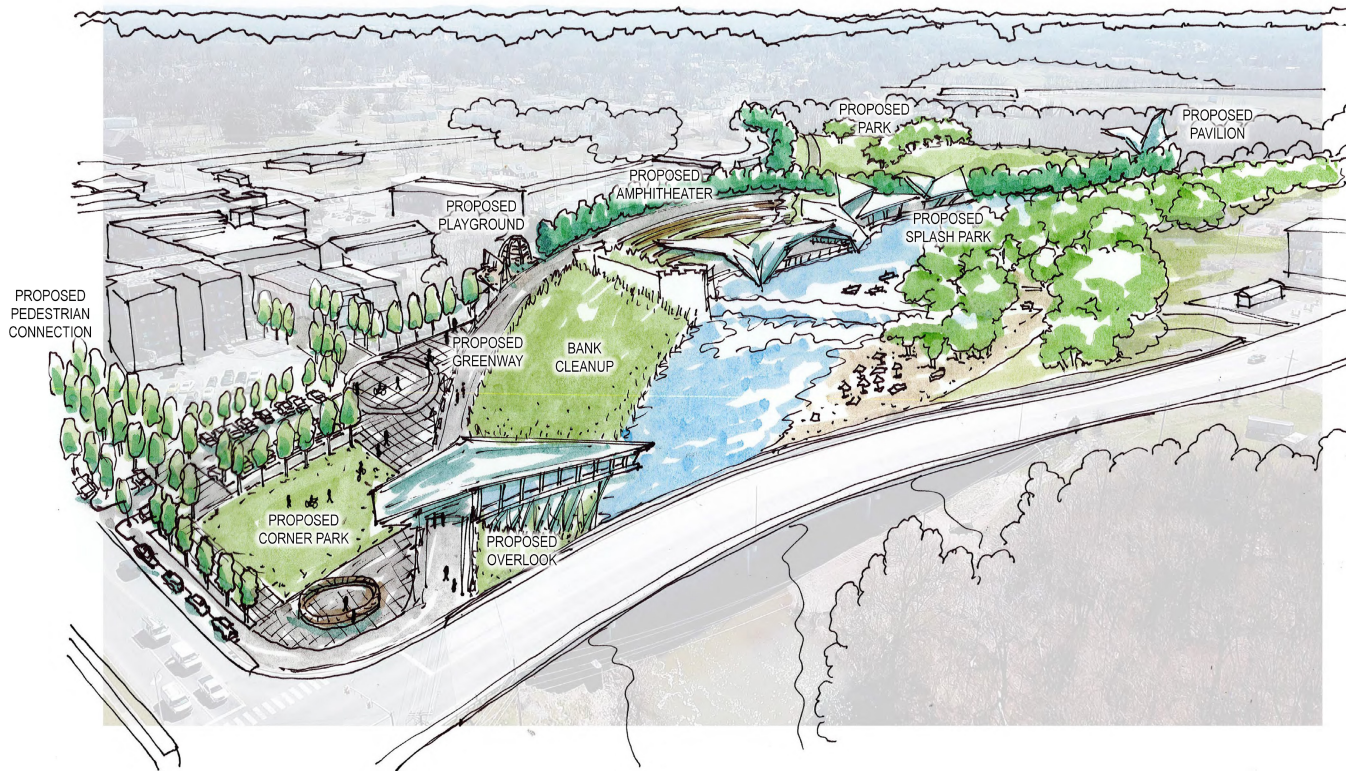


Source(s): Image provided courtesy of City of Shelbyville.

#### 4.5. Recruit national-brand and boutique concepts.

- 4.5.1. Launch a targeted hotel recruitment campaign focused on mid-scale and upper-mid-scale brands, as well as boutique and extended-stay concepts.
- 4.5.2. Build a 10-year brand recruitment roadshow that leverages the Hampton Inn project's momentum, and pitch priority brands using site options and the investment prospectus.
- 4.5.3. Focus recruitment on sites with strong visibility, highway access, and proximity to riverfront and downtown amenities.
- 4.5.4. Use partnerships rather than direct subsidies to address infrastructure needs (utilities, turn lanes) that support hotel development.
- 4.5.5. Ensure policy alignment between hotel tax reinvestment and short-term rental regulations so traditional hotels are not disadvantaged, and all lodging revenue streams are captured.
- 4.5.6. Launch a public Stay Here, Build Here campaign highlighting how new lodging supports local jobs, events, and expanded amenities.

Figure 22. Bedford County Downtown Revitalization Vision Plan, Riverside Greenway Concept Sketch



Source(s): Image provided courtesy of Bedford County. Original sketch created by Asa Engineering & Consulting, Inc., for the *Bedford County Vision and Park Plan*, 2019.

#### 4.6. Invest in tourism infrastructure and marketing.

- 4.6.1. Ensure adequate staffing levels in the City's Department of Tourism and Marketing to lead tourism development, promotion, and partner coordination.
- 4.6.2. Develop a comprehensive tourism master plan that identifies assets, signature events, outdoor-recreation focused opportunities, and priorities for investment.
- 4.6.3. Strengthen partnerships with regional organizations, such as the Tennessee Whiskey Trail and the South Central Tennessee Tourism Association, to expand Shelbyville's visibility.
- 4.6.4. Enhance the visitor experience by improving wayfinding signage, building trail and riverfront connections, and linking Shelbyville's amenities to regional assets.
- 4.6.5. Launch a cohesive marketing campaign highlighting the City's history, Walking Horse heritage, and connection to the Tennessee Whiskey Trail.
- 4.6.6. Create locally specific events and festivals to promote Shelbyville's unique culture, history, and community spirit.
- 4.6.7. Promote Shelbyville as a destination for outdoor sports, recreation, and tournaments and continue to invest in facilities that support sports tourism.

# Key Findings

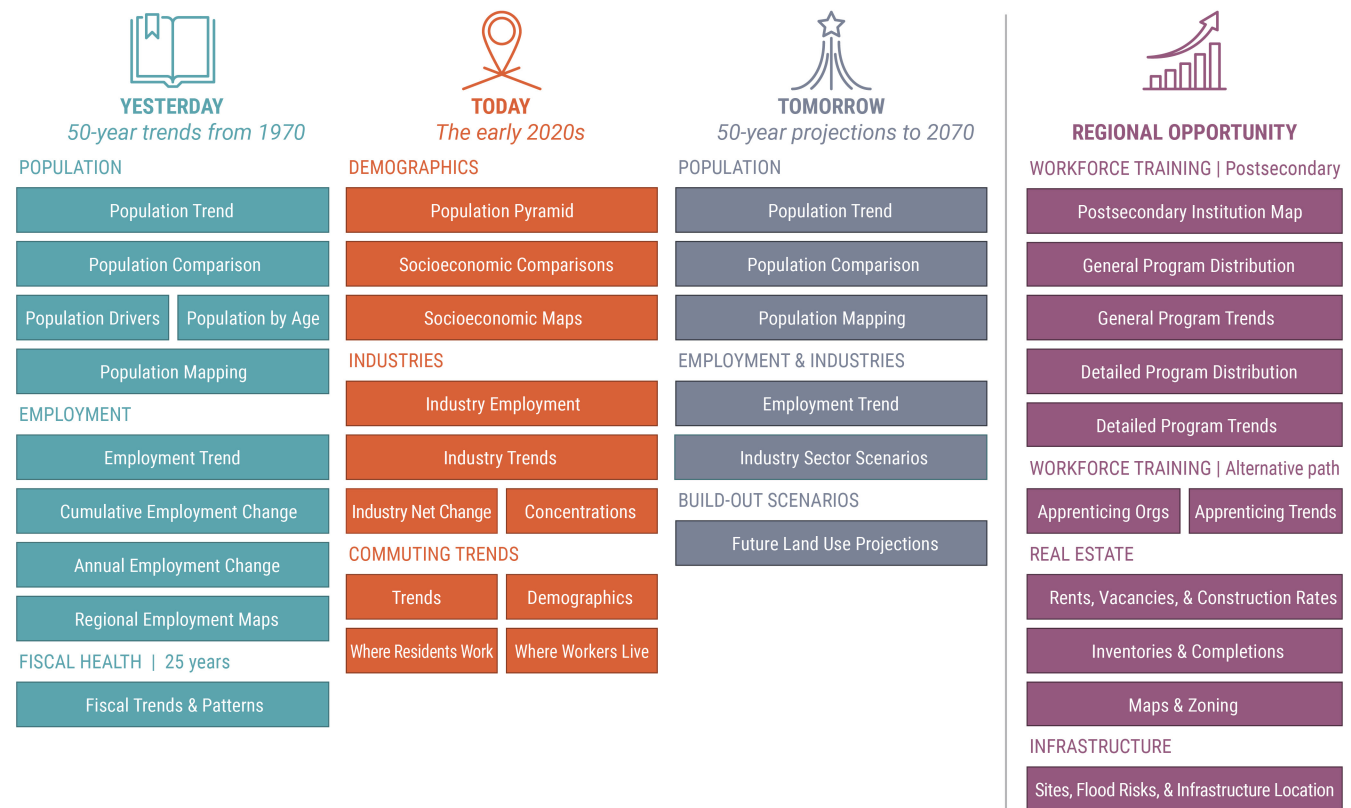


# Strategic Analysis

The quantitative analysis was briefly mentioned at the beginning of this document and is described in greater detail here. The Strategic Analysis section introduces key findings from the data analysis that provide additional context and support for the goals, strategies, and recommendations in the blueprint.

The analysis provides an overview of Shelbyville-Bedford County’s competitive position with comparisons to the Nashville-Huntsville-Chattanooga Triangle region,<sup>1</sup> the state of Tennessee, and the US. Initial data collection began in November 2024 during TIP’s discovery phase and the analytical work continued into the final phase of the engagement. An in-depth analysis, the *Shelbyville-Bedford Partnership Strategic Analysis*, was delivered to Cooper Steel in spring 2025 in an interactive data visualization, the menu of which is shown in Figure 23.

Figure 23. Menu of the Interactive Deliverable



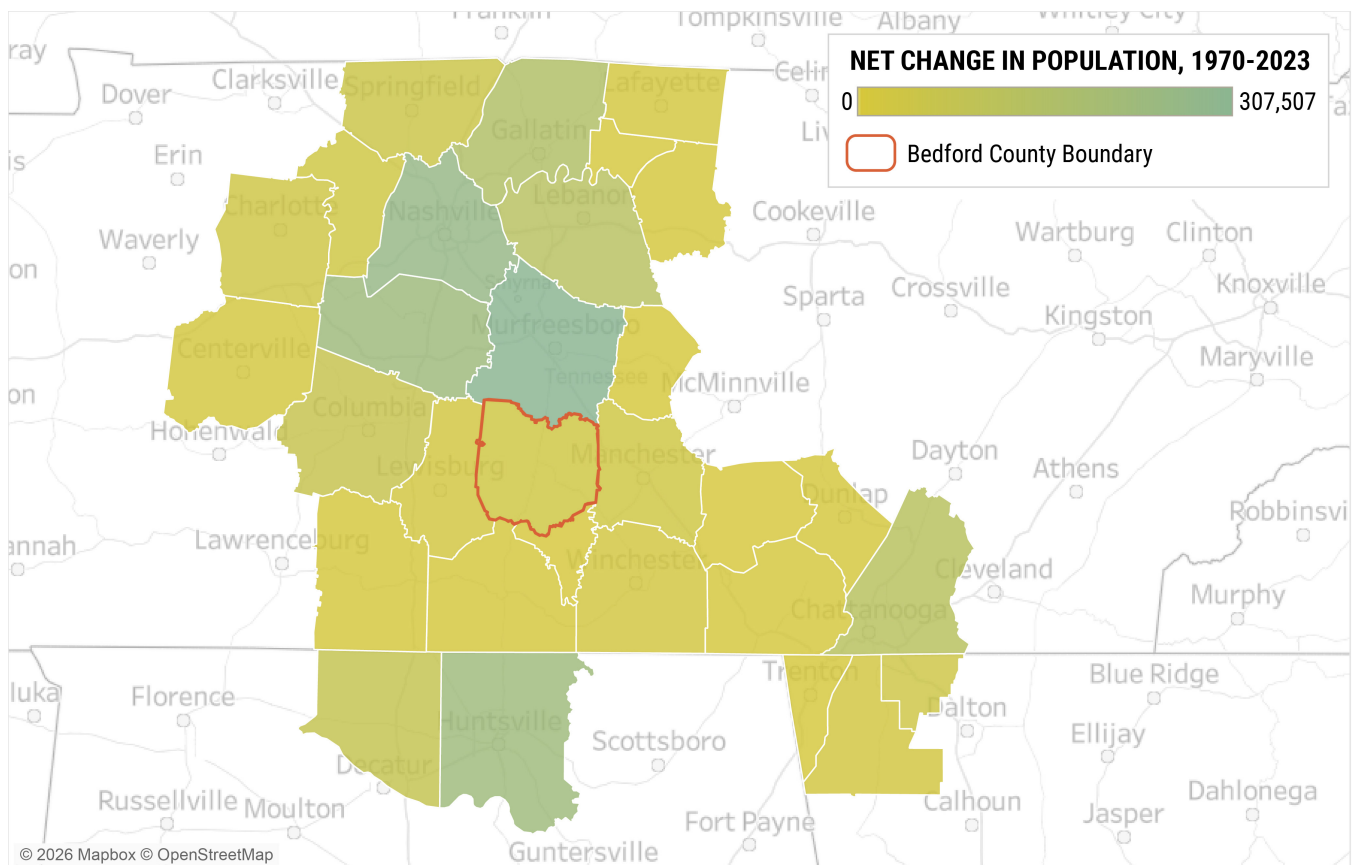
Source(s): TIP Strategies, Inc.

<sup>1</sup> The 30-county Nashville-Huntsville-Chattanooga Triangle region is made up of 25 counties in Tennessee (Bedford, Cannon, Cheatham, Coffee, Davidson, Dickson, Franklin, Giles, Grundy, Hamilton, Hickman, Lincoln, Macon, Marion, Marshall, Maury, Moore, Robertson, Rutherford, Sequatchie, Smith, Sumner, Trousdale, Williamson, and Wilson); 2 counties in Alabama (Limestone and Madison); and 3 counties in Georgia (Catoosa, Dade, and Walker).

### Steady local population growth will increase in the coming decades.

Though its relative population growth has been less than that of the entire Nashville-Huntsville-Chattanooga Triangle region, Bedford County has seen its population more than double since 1970, adding nearly 28,000 residents by 2023. Bedford County lies outside of the Nashville-Davidson-Murfreesboro-Franklin, TN Metropolitan Statistical Area (Nashville MSA), which itself experienced a population increase of more than 164 percent over the same period. The impact of this growth is most pronounced in the Nashville MSA’s outlying counties as growth continues to sprawl outward from the city of Nashville. Rutherford County, Tennessee, the immediate northern neighbor of Bedford County and home of Murfreesboro, saw the largest net population increase of any county in the Triangle region from 1970 to 2023, adding well over 300,000 residents (an increase of 516 percent, Figure 24). Williamson County, Tennessee, the home of Franklin, has seen the region’s largest relative population increase, with a change of almost 670 percent (adding nearly 230,000 residents). In the coming decades, this rapid growth is expected to expand to nearby counties. The main series population estimate for Bedford County in the year 2070 projects a population of nearly 92,000 (an increase of almost 73 percent), while the high growth estimate tops out at over 116,000 (an increase of 120 percent). In both scenarios, the relative growth of Bedford County exceeds that of its benchmark regions. The county’s low growth estimate of more than 72,000 (an increase of just under 36 percent) is exceeded in comparative growth among benchmarks by only the Nashville MSA.

**Figure 24. Net Change in Population, 1970–2023**  
 Thirty-county region forming the Nashville–Huntsville–Chattanooga Triangle region

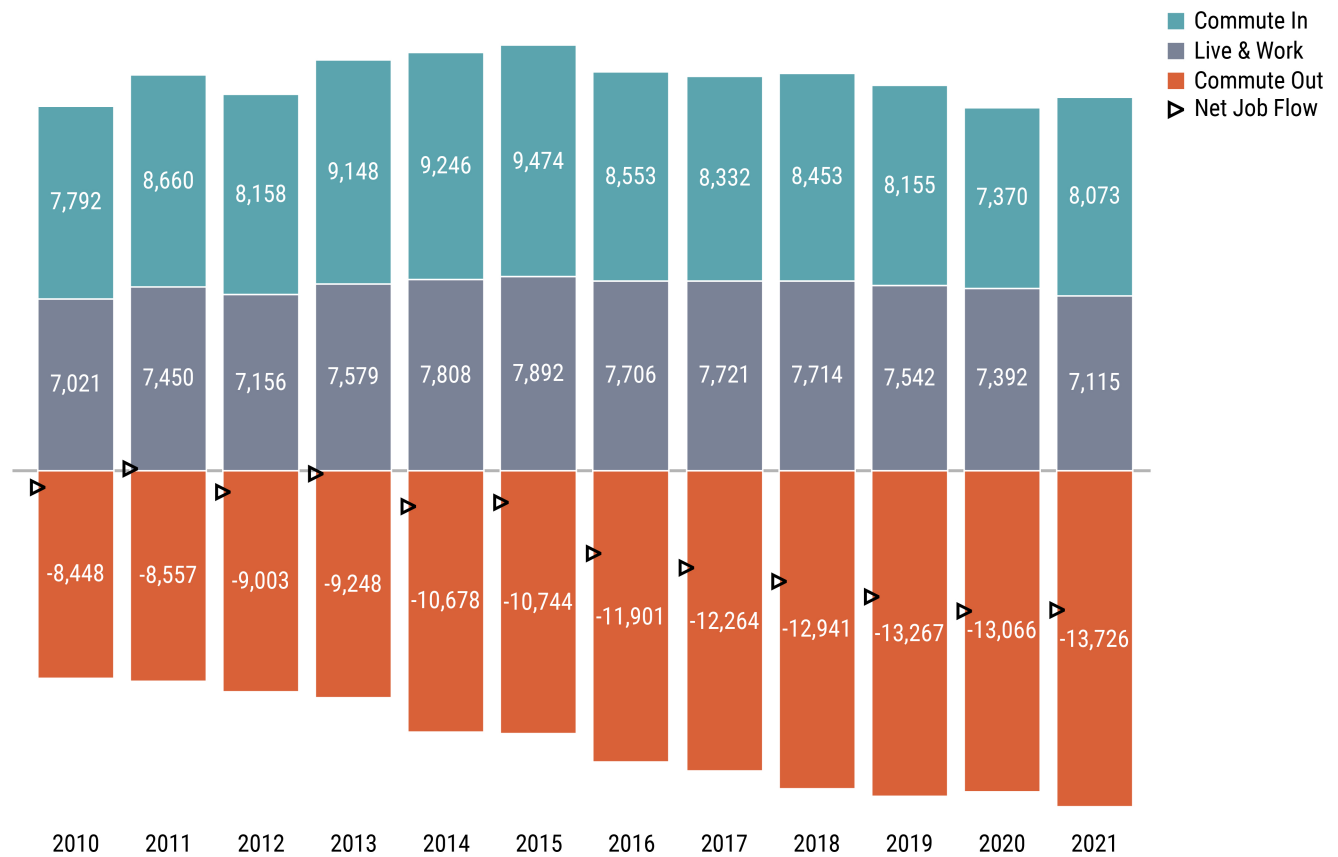


Source(s): US Census Bureau, 2024 TIGER/Line Shapefiles; US Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program; Moody’s Analytics; TIP Strategies, Inc.  
 Note(s): Population estimates prior to 2010 are sourced from Moody’s Analytics. Estimates from 2010 to 2023 are sourced from the US Census Bureau’s Population Estimates Program vintages 2020 and 2023. The Nashville MSA is comprised of the following 14 counties: Cannon, Cheatham, Davidson, Dickson, Hickman, Macon, Maury, Robertson, Rutherford, Smith, Sumner, Trousdale, Williamson, and Wilson.

**Despite the regional draw of Shelbyville, Bedford County is increasingly a labor exporter.**

As the largest municipality in Bedford County, the City of Shelbyville is undoubtedly the county’s center of economic activity. The City is a net importer of labor, with more than three-quarters of its workers commuting into, rather than living in, Shelbyville. The largest share of these commuters arrives from unincorporated portions of Bedford County (20.8 percent of all Shelbyville workers), though Murfreesboro and Nashville lead the list of other origins for inward commuting workers (4.7 and 3.6 percent, respectively). The industry sectors in which Shelbyville sees the largest net inflow of workers reflect some of Bedford County’s largest industries by employment, including manufacturing, transportation & warehousing, education, and retail trade. Despite the clear draw Shelbyville presents for workers in the county and beyond, Bedford County overall is increasingly a net exporter of labor. Nearly two-thirds of its working residents are employed outside of the county (Figure 25), drawn largely to Nashville (13.9 percent) and Murfreesboro (11.5 percent). Countywide, the transportation and warehousing sector remains a major driver for inward commuting workers, with its net inflow of 723 workers far exceeding that of the only other net-importing sector (utilities, at 32 workers). However, Bedford County is a net exporter of every other industry sector, driven heavily by the outflow of healthcare and social services workers, echoing the county’s low concentration in this sector amid significant regional job growth.

**Figure 25. Flow of Workers and Residents through Bedford County, Tennessee, 2010–2021**

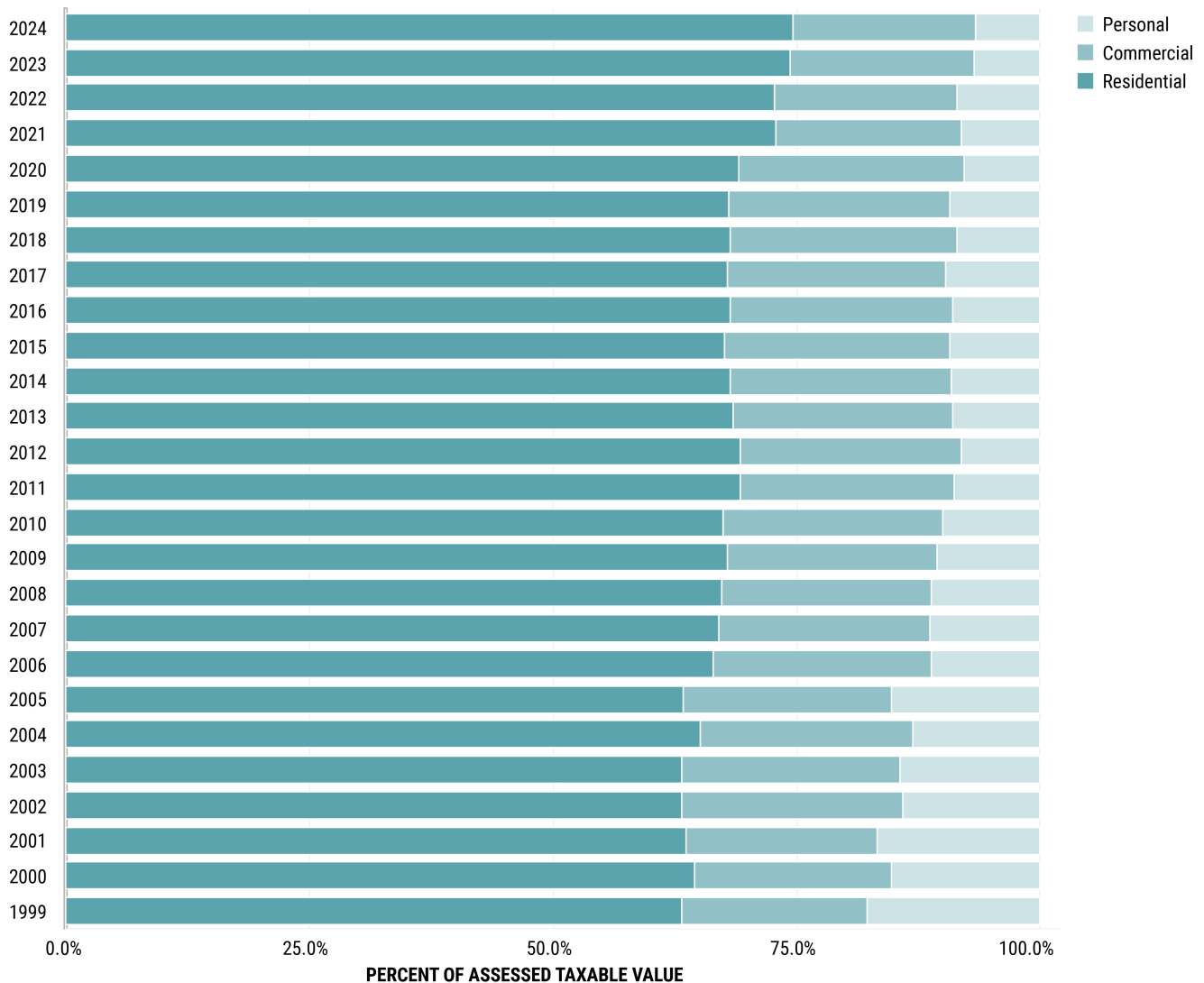


Source(s): Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, Origin-Destination Employment Statistics; TIP Strategies, Inc.  
 Note(s): Only includes residents and workers in Tennessee.

### Opportunities for infill and placemaking can ease the residential tax burden.

In comparison to its benchmark regions, Bedford County is less affluent, with its median household income (\$62,193) falling below all benchmarks. Accordingly, the county’s poverty rate (13.6 percent) and its share of residents with no health insurance (13.3 percent) are the second highest and highest, respectively, among benchmark regions. Housing affordability especially is an issue for Bedford County. The county’s share of cost-burdened owners—those who spend 30 percent or more of their income on housing costs—is the highest among its benchmarks (22.9 percent), despite a relatively low median home value (\$255,300, in comparison to the national figure, \$303,400). Despite this, Bedford County’s built environment has historically been dominated by housing. In every year since at least 1999, property taxes have made up more than one-half of the county’s tax revenue. In each of these years, residential property has made up no less than 63 percent of this property tax base, with the figure reaching a 25-year high in 2024 at nearly 75 percent (Figure 26).

**Figure 26. Property Tax Base Components, Bedford County, Tennessee, Fiscal Years 1999–2024**



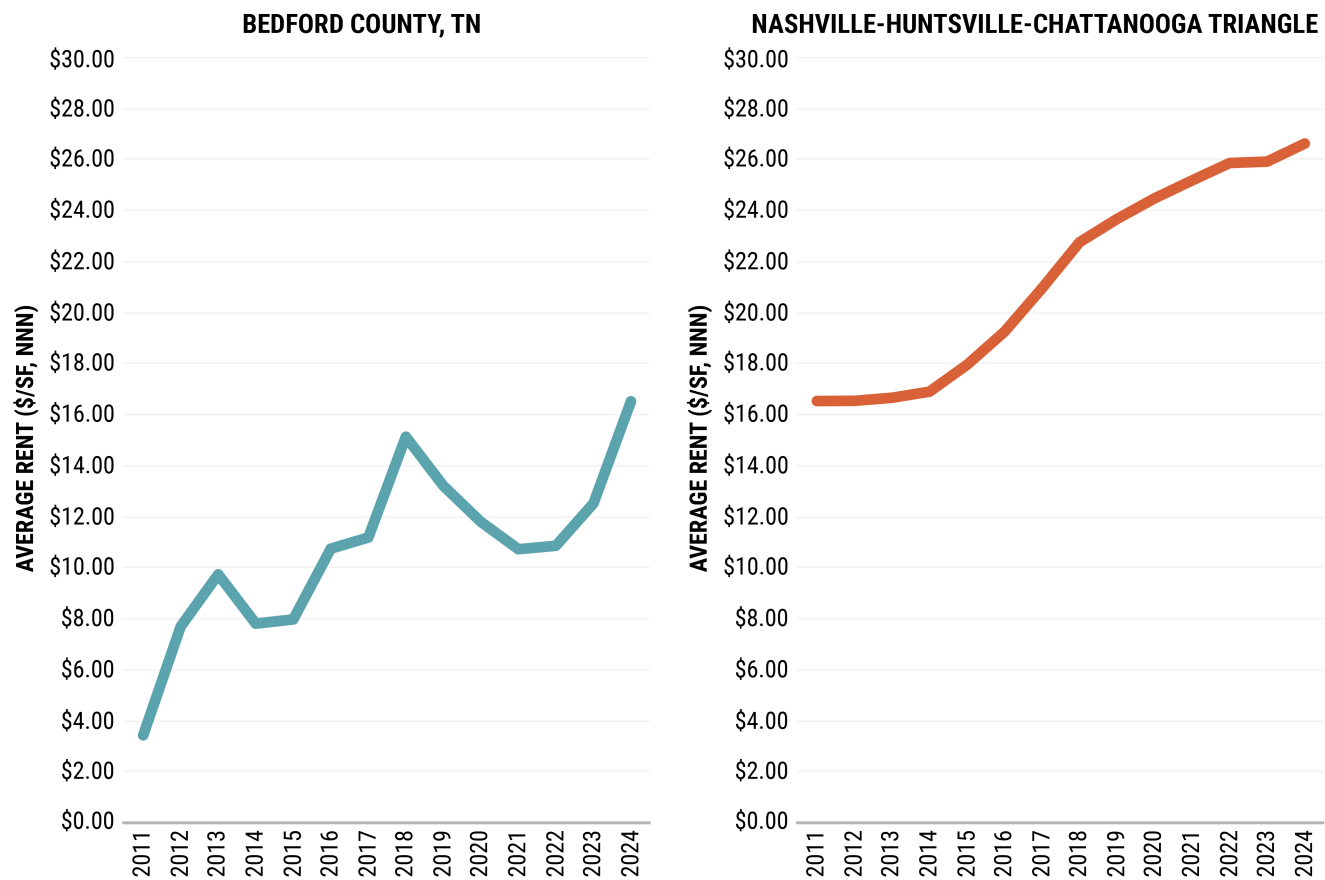
Source(s): Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury and Bedford County, Tennessee, *Comprehensive Annual Financial Report* (various years); TIP Strategies, Inc.

Note(s): Bedford County’s fiscal year ends annually on June 30. Numbers include Bedford County’s primary government tax revenues on a modified accrual basis of accounting.

Pursuing infill development in and around downtown Shelbyville presents a way to foster a community identity, as Bedford County seeks placemaking opportunities that leverage its unique position in the Triangle region. Local businesses and entrepreneurs can benefit from both the county’s relatively low average retail rent (\$13.49 in 2024, falling well below the Triangle region figure of \$21.97), and its commitment to marketing Shelbyville as a destination with unique cultural and recreational offerings. Likewise, the county’s relatively low office rent (\$16.55 in 2024 compared to \$26.66 regionally; Figure 27) represents a pull factor for regional employers who could capitalize on the county’s office vacancy, which has risen overall since 2007. With the highest share of single-family housing among its benchmark communities (76 percent), Bedford County has the additional opportunity to pursue workforce housing options and mixed-use development that serve residents at various price points and densities, seeking to alleviate its heavy reliance on residential property owners.

**Figure 27. Average Office Rent, 2011–2024**

Bedford County, Tennessee, and the 30-county Nashville-Huntsville-Chattanooga Triangle region



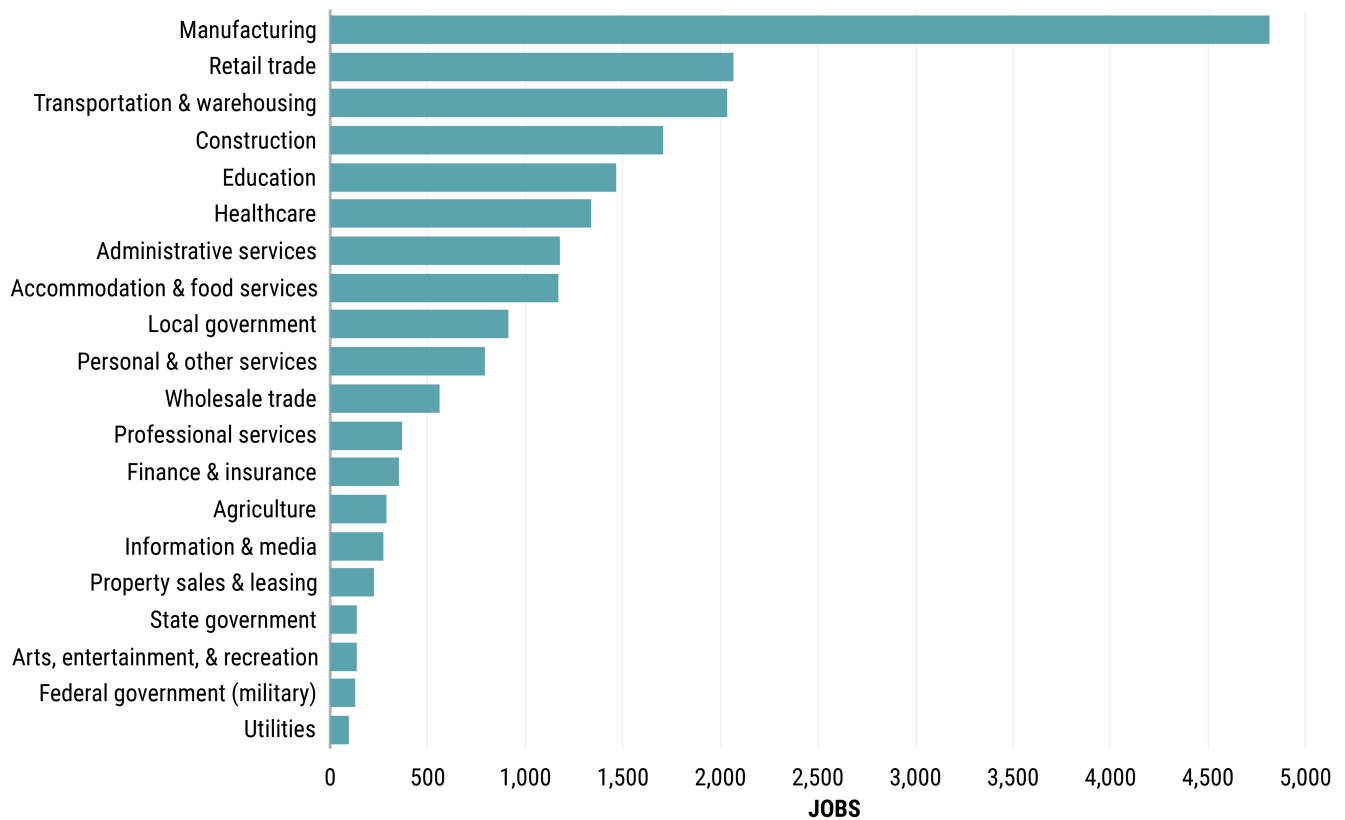
Source(s): CoStar Group; TIP Strategies, Inc.

Note(s): All data are estimated by CoStar as of early November 2024. For office property, rent periods are annual and the spatial units of analysis are square feet (SF). NNN stands for triple net lease.

**Leaning on existing and emerging industry strengths will set Bedford County apart.**

Bedford County has experienced largely steady population growth since 1970, though it has seen virtually no long-term increase in jobs since the mid-2000s. The county’s total number of jobs in 2023 (20,105) was only nominally higher than its pre-Great Recession (2007–2009) total (20,016 in 2007). Comparatively, the broader Triangle region had exceeded its 2007 job count by 2014 and has continued to grow rapidly in the decade since. The distribution of regional job growth reflects that of population growth: Williamson and Rutherford Counties, Tennessee, have seen the Triangle region’s highest relative employment gains since 1970, growing by approximately 1,660 and 730 percent, respectively. Though Bedford County will likely see its employment increase significantly as the region continues to grow, local job growth must be carefully guided. Presently, manufacturing is the county’s largest industry sector by a wide margin, representing nearly one-quarter of all jobs (Figure 28), though this sector has lost more than 36 percent of its jobs since 2015. Other typically blue-collar industries have seen employment gains significantly outpace those of the Triangle region, including transportation & warehousing and construction. In keeping with this trend, Bedford County’s largest local industry cluster is local real estate, construction, and development. Two of its largest traded clusters—those serving outside markets and representing specific local advantages—are transportation & logistics and distribution & electronic commerce. Both traded sectors demonstrate relative growth since 2001 that has far outpaced that of the county’s benchmarks. As Bedford County continues to grow, it must support existing high-concentration industries like livestock processing, automotive, and various manufacturing clusters, while also seeking ways to leverage recent growth in logistics and other traditionally low-concentration clusters like education & knowledge creation and business services.

**Figure 28. Bedford County, Tennessee, Employment by Industry Sector, 2023**



Source(s): US Bureau of Labor Statistics; Lightcast 2024.4—Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, and Self-Employed; TIP Strategies, Inc.  
 Note(s): Only includes sectors with at least 50 jobs in Bedford County, Tennessee, in 2023.

## SWOT Analysis

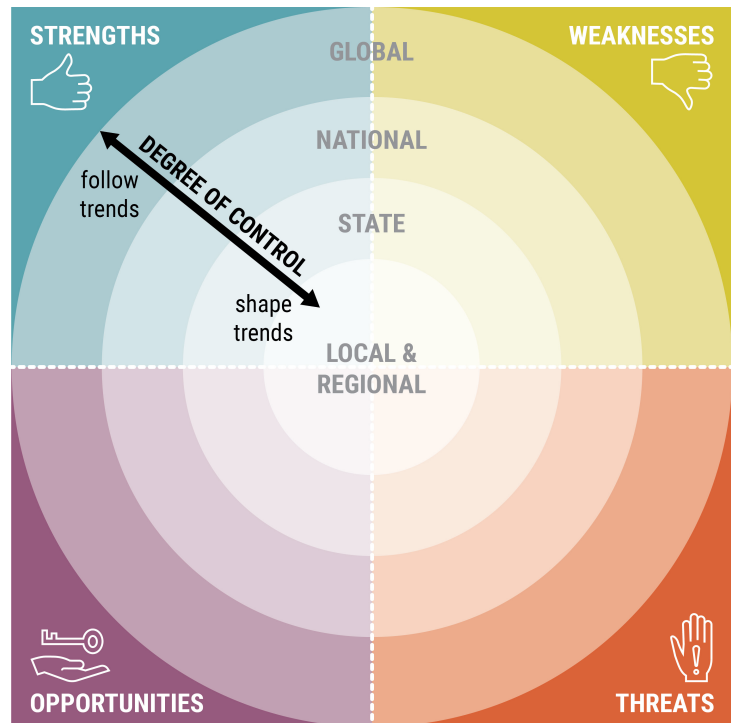
During the initial phase of the project, the consulting team gathered qualitative input from stakeholders in Shelbyville and Bedford County concerning local economic development issues. In addition, TIP conducted quantitative data analyses to understand Shelbyville-Bedford County's competitive position in the region. The results of these efforts informed the following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis.

In compiling the analysis, consideration is given to the degree of control that Shelbyville-Bedford County has in shaping the trend or opportunity (as illustrated in Figure 29). This approach recognizes the value in tracking state, national, and global trends, while keeping the focus on maximizing local strengths and opportunities.

Findings from the Shelbyville-Bedford County SWOT analysis are summarized in Figure 30 (page 39). The summary is delineated by the degree of control Shelbyville and Bedford County leaders have over the issue and is further grouped by the four components, which can be defined as follows.

- **Strengths.** Assets and resources that can be built on to grow, strengthen, and diversify the local/regional economy.
- **Weaknesses.** Liabilities and barriers to economic development that could limit economic growth potential.
- **Opportunities.** Competitive advantages and positive trends that hold significant potential for the attraction of new businesses, investments, and skilled workers.
- **Threats.** Unfavorable factors and trends (often external) that could negatively affect the local/regional economy.

Figure 29. SWOT Overview



Source(s): TIP Strategies, Inc.

Figure 30. Summary of SWOT Analysis for Shelbyville-Bedford County

	High Degree of Control Local, Regional, State	Low Degree of Control National, Global
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sense of community and small-town feel</li> <li>• Municipal airport</li> <li>• Tennessee Walking Horse National Celebration</li> <li>• Tennessee Whiskey Trail: Nearest Green and Jack Daniels</li> <li>• Cooper Steel Arena</li> <li>• TCAT Shelbyville</li> <li>• Strong manufacturing base</li> <li>• Comparatively low cost of living</li> <li>• Low unemployment rate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proximity to Nashville and Huntsville</li> <li>• Natural amenities</li> <li>• Technological advancements across industries, which may benefit local employers</li> <li>• Evolving global digital communications and internet infrastructure</li> <li>• Mobile workforce (opportunity for recruitment)</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited housing availability and variety</li> <li>• Mismatch between worker skills and job opportunities</li> <li>• Lack of public transit options</li> <li>• Lower than average median household income</li> <li>• Lower than average educational attainment</li> <li>• Limited organizational capacity for economic development</li> <li>• Lack of hotels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High inflation</li> <li>• Shrinking middle class in US, and economic inequality generally</li> </ul>
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Available land for development</li> <li>• Increased regional collaboration</li> <li>• History of local collaboration</li> <li>• Investments in downtown revitalization</li> <li>• New and expanded workforce development programs at TCAT and MTSU</li> <li>• Tourism expansion</li> <li>• Expanded broadband</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Artificial intelligence technologies and increased productivity</li> <li>• Growing demand for data centers</li> <li>• Domestic manufacturing: reshoring and near-shoring</li> <li>• Green energy transition</li> <li>• Efficiencies in smart cities</li> </ul>
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uncertainty in City/County relationship</li> <li>• Loss of young professionals</li> <li>• Lack of economic diversity</li> <li>• Difficult to expand local infrastructure</li> <li>• Growing reliance on property taxes</li> <li>• Resistance to change, no-growth sentiment</li> <li>• Negative perceptions within and outside of the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact of tariffs and uncertainty about international trade policies</li> <li>• Impact of automation on labor, especially in manufacturing</li> <li>• Global military conflicts</li> <li>• Climate change</li> <li>• Uncertain political environment</li> <li>• Aging infrastructure</li> <li>• Declining birth rates (i.e., weak natural population growth)</li> </ul>

Source(s): TIP Strategies, Inc.



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