



Erie 12th Street Corridor Market Analysis

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Report by Fourth Economy



Fourth Economy is a national community and economic development consulting firm. Powered by a vision for an economy that serves the people, our approach is centered on competitiveness, equity, and resilience principles. We partner with communities and organizations, public and private, who are ready for change to equip them with tools and innovative solutions to build better communities and stronger economies.

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Key Findings

The Erie 12th Street Corridor benefits from a rich industrial heritage and the availability of affordable housing. Its strategic location near I-79 and proximity to downtown Erie present opportunities to further activate the area. The existing infrastructure is well-suited to accommodate greater business and residential density.

However, Erie is grappling with the long-term effects of post-industrial decline, notably a continuous population decrease since the 1960s, culminating in a population drop below 100,000 by 2020. This dwindling population trend threatens the local workforce's size and contributes to increasing vacancy rates within the corridor.

Given this context, Erie faces significant challenges of vacancy. A business vacancy rate of 10.6% exceeds county and state averages, underscoring an urgent need for revitalization and efforts to attract new businesses or expanding businesses. The residential vacancy rate of 6.8% points to underlying issues in housing demand or quality, potentially detracting from the area's appeal to prospective residents.

Transportation patterns reveal that a significant portion of Erie's workforce relies on car commuting, with remote working rates below the state average. This situation underscores possible deficiencies in the transportation network and a shift towards modern work practices. Encouraging more residents to both live and work within the corridor could mitigate housing vacancies and stimulate demand for local businesses.

Economic resilience is further compromised by a lower-than-average labor force participation rate and a higher prevalence of disabilities compared to state figures. Despite Erie's median income falling below Pennsylvania's average, employment and wages in the health, social assistance, and manufacturing sectors highlight the city's economic focal points and strengths. Consumer expenditures in Erie mirror state levels, with a notable resurgence following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A notable concern is the limited variety of businesses within the corridor. Dominated by professional, scientific, and technical services and manufacturing, the corridor needs more accommodation, food services, and amenities for worker support. This absence of business diversity may hinder attracting new residents and impede real estate development.

The following economic and baseline analysis considers market factors such as consumer expenditure, real estate supply and demand, and workforce status, to understand the current conditions impacting the 12th Street corridor. Following our data analysis, we review feedback gathered through market card and interview engagements.

Market Analysis

- **Slower Retail Absorption Rates:** Compared to national averages, the demand for retail space in the Erie Metropolitan Area, including the 12th Street Corridor, is weaker, with slower absorption rates indicating potentially lower business activity in retail sectors.
- **Manufacturing Concentration Without Deep Workforce Presence:** Despite a historical specialization in manufacturing, the 12th Street Corridor lacks a deep concentration of manufacturing workforce, suggesting a disconnect between industry presence and employment opportunities.
- **Low Absorption Rates for Industrial Space:** Industrial space absorption has lagged national averages in Erie, with relatively low rents but also low vacancy. However, these trends only capture space actively available for rent. The 12th Street corridor includes industrial space that does not meet highest and best use standards or is not actively being promoted as available. This might suggest a need for targeted efforts to revitalize the industrial sector, potentially through incentives for manufacturing or warehousing businesses.
- **Challenges in Multifamily Housing Demand:** Despite the increasing rents, the demand for multifamily properties has been weaker than national averages. This could reflect a mismatch between the housing supply and the needs or financial capabilities of the local population, pointing to the need for affordable housing solutions.

Retail Supply & Demand

Retail Conditions

	Net Absorption SF	Net Absorption SF 12 Months	Market Rent Growth 12 Months	Market Rent/SF	Vacancy Rate
2023 Q4	46,382	-7,009	1.9%	\$11	3.8%
2022 Q3	13,512	57,289	2.8%	\$11	3.7%
	Inventory SF	Market Cap Rate	Total Sales Volume	Transaction Sale Price/SF	
2023 Q4	20,785,932	9.1%	\$4.69M	\$193	
2022 Q3	20,785,932	9.2%	\$19.73M	\$108	

Source: National Association of Realtors from the US Census Bureau, US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bureau of Economic Analysis, and Costar 2023

With slower absorption rates for retail, demand for retail space is weaker than nationwide averages in the Erie Metropolitan Area. Retail rents rose slower in Erie than national averages, but vacancy remained lower.

Office Supply & Demand

Office Conditions

	Net Absorption SF	Net Absorption SF 12 Months	Market Rent Growth 12 Months	Market Rent/SF	Vacancy Rate
2023 Q4	5,513	76,210	1.5%	\$16	2.0%
2022 Q3	-11,201	100,818	4.8%	\$15	2.7%
	Inventory SF	Net Delivered SF	Net Delivered SF 12 Months	Total Sales Volume	Market Cap Rate
2023 Q4	10,654,389	0	0	\$0.38M	11.2%
2022 Q3	10,654,389	0	0	\$2.12M	10.7%

Source: National Association of Realtors from the US Census Bureau, US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bureau of Economic Analysis, and Costar

Demand for office space surpassed nationwide demand from quarter four of 2022 to quarter four of 2023. With faster-than-average absorption, rent prices rose faster in Erie than national averages. Vacancy remained low as well.

Industrial Supply & Demand

Industrial Conditions

	Net Absorption SF	Net Absorption SF 12 Months	Market Rent Growth 12 Months	Market Rent/SF	Vacancy Rate
2023 Q4	-116,819	-175,358	5.4%	\$6	2.3%
2022 Q3	71,910	187,209	7.8%	\$5	1.5%
	Inventory SF	Net Delivered SF	Net Delivered SF 12 Months	Market Cap Rate	Total Sales Volume
2023 Q4	28,377,392	0	50,000	9.9%	\$6.83M
2022 Q3	28,377,392	0	0	9.3%	\$5.09M

Source: National Association of Realtors from the US Census Bureau, US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bureau of Economic Analysis, and Costar

Industrial space absorption has lagged national averages in Erie. While rents remain relatively low, so too does vacancy.

Multifamily Housing Supply & Demand

Multifamily Housing Conditions

	Absorption Units	Absorption Units	Market Asking Rent Growth 12 Months	Market Asking Rent Growth 12 Months	Market Effective Rent/Unit	Vacancy Rate
2023 Q4	-3	-10	4.8%	\$1,080	\$1,077	2.5%
2022 Q3	-2	165	5.2%	\$1,031	\$1,028	2.1%
	Net Absorption SF	Net Delivered Units	Net Delivered Units 12 Mo	Net Delivered Units 12 Mo		
2023 Q4	6,839	0	12	8.3%		
2022 Q3	6,839	0	149	7.6%		

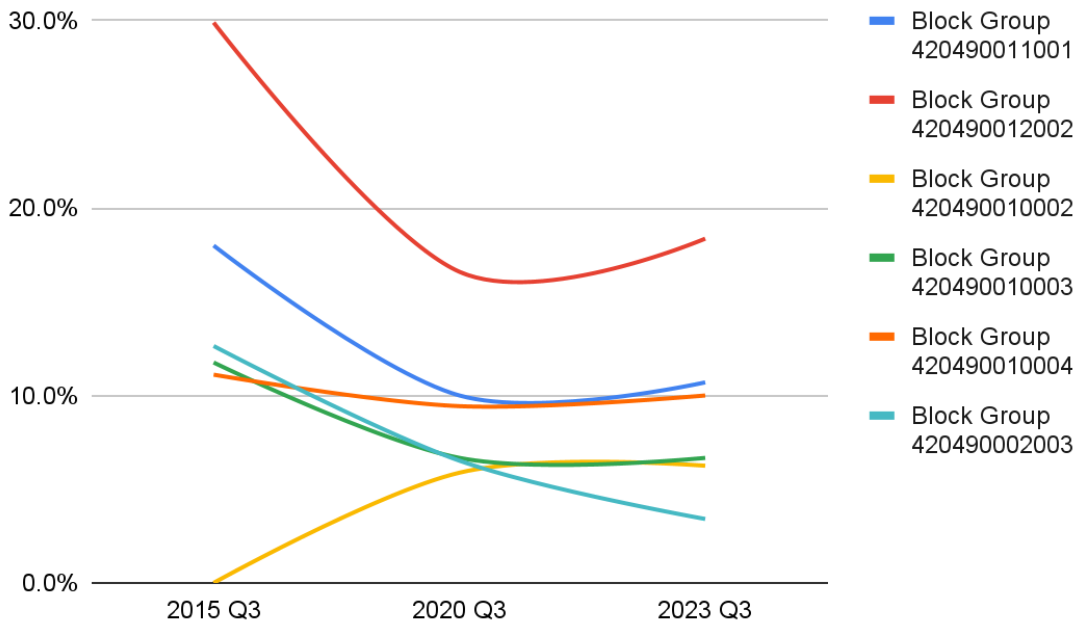
Source: National Association of Realtors from the US Census Bureau, US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bureau of Economic Analysis, and Costar

Demand for multifamily properties has been weaker than national averages. However, rents are increasing faster than national averages. Multifamily vacancy is also relatively low in Erie.

Real Estate

- **High Business Vacancy Rate:** At 10.6%, the business vacancy rate in the 12th Street Corridor surpasses both county (7.7%) and state (8.5%) averages, indicating a need for revitalization and business attraction strategies.
- **Residential Vacancy:** Residential vacancy rate stands at 6.8%, suggesting housing demand or quality challenges, which could impact the corridor's attractiveness to new residents and workers. Relatively few residents both live and work in the corridor. Increasing this share could both fill housing demand and create a larger local market for main street services.
- **Underutilized Real Estate Potential:** The presence of available office, retail space, and vacant land, combined with relatively low lease rates, highlights underutilized real estate potential that could be leveraged for economic development.

Commercial Vacancy by Census Block Group



Source: PolicyMap 2023

As of the third quarter of 2023, business vacancy averaged 10.6% in the 12th Street Corridor, surpassing county (7.7%) and state (8.5%) averages. In the same corridor, residential vacancy was 6.8% in quarter three of 2023.

Available Properties in the City of Erie

	Properties Available	Square Footage Available	Lease Rate per sq. ft.
Office	3	13,400	\$14.75
Retail	2	30,889	\$7.50
Vacant Land	15	-	-

Source: [State of Pennsylvania Real Estate Portal](#)

One of each class is available in the available office space. [Loopnet](#) features only one commercial property for lease within the 12th Street Corridor, a class C office building with a lease rate of

\$6/sq ft.



Source: Loopnet

[Zillow](#) shows several residential properties for sale or rent along the 12th Street Corridor, ranging from \$7,500 for a vacant lot to \$115,00 for a multi-family property.

Consumer Expenditures

- **Increased Spending in Restaurants and Bars:** Restaurant and bar spending in the corridor showed significant growth in 2022 and 2023, with the trend continuing upward in the first quarter of 2024. This suggests a growing interest in dining and nightlife, which could be leveraged to attract more businesses and visitors to the area.
- **Rising Entertainment and Recreation Spending:** Similarly, entertainment and recreation spending in 2023 surpassed previous years, with an upward trend in 2024. This indicates potential for further development of recreational and cultural facilities or events to boost local economy and community engagement.

Consumer Expenditures Erie Metro Area (Household Average)

	Consumer Expenditure	Share of Income
Housing	\$23,442	32.7%
Local Transportation	\$8,131	11.4%
Pensions and social security	\$7,386	10.3%
Health Care	\$6,034	8.4%
Food consumed at home	\$5,325	7.4%
Entertainment / Recreation	\$2,980	4.2%
Dining out (Food away from home)	\$2,854	4.0%
Household Services	\$2,012	2.8%
Travel	\$1,712	2.4%
Apparel & Services	\$1,710	2.4%
Education	\$1,310	1.8%
Personal Care Products and Services	\$741	1.0%
Life and other insurance	\$556	0.8%
Alcoholic beverages	\$517	0.7%

Source: Census Business Builder 2022

Erie's consumer expenditure closely matches that of Pennsylvania. More than half of consumer expenditure is spent on housing and transportation.

The following analysis considers spending in the three census tracts in the Erie 12th Street Corridor.

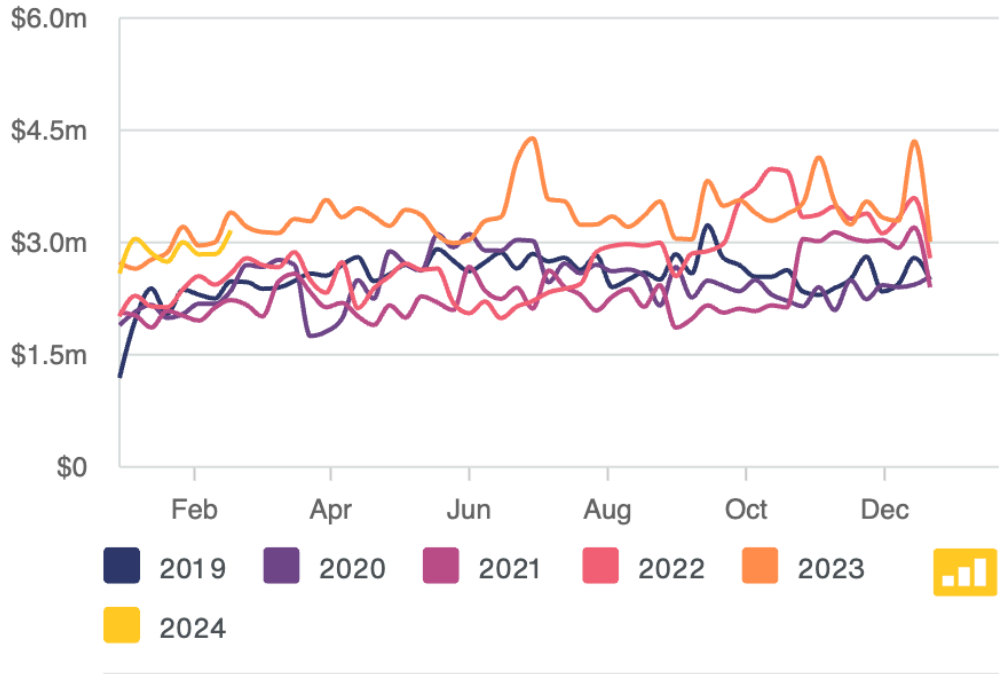
10 (Erie, PA) & 2 Other Areas

REPLICA

Retail

Spend at merchant location in this geography, weekly total

2019 to 2024



Source: Replica (as of March 1, 2024)

Retail spending trended up in the corridor in 2023 compared to 2019. In addition to large seasonal spikes at the end of the year, there was a retail spending spike in the area in the summer of 2023.

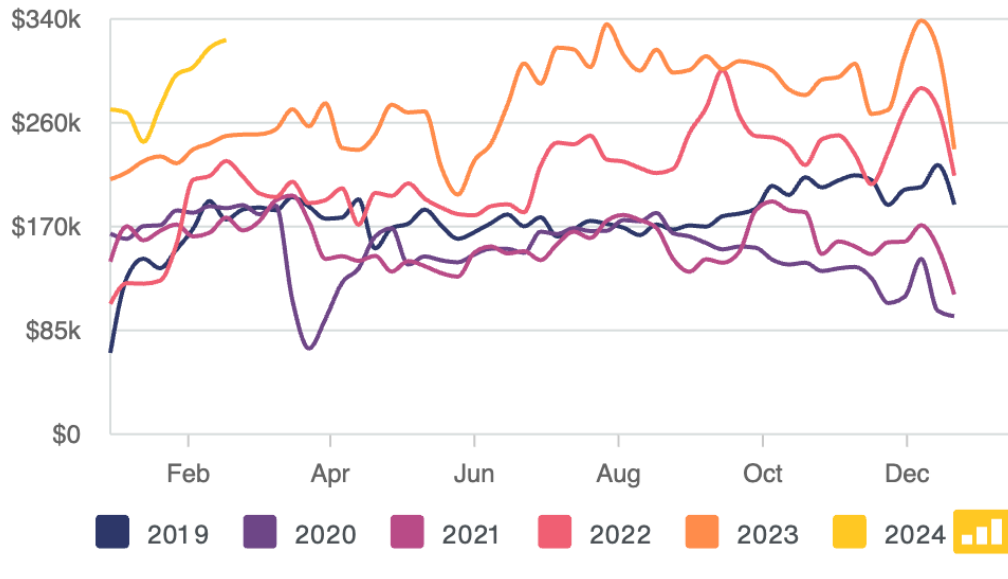
10 (Erie, PA) & 2 Other Areas

Restaurants & Bars

REPLICA

Spend at merchant location in this geography, weekly total

2019 to 2024



Source: Replica (as of March 1, 2024)

Restaurant and bar spending trended considerably above previous years in 2022 and 2023. Spending in the first quarter of 2024 is trending further upward in the area.

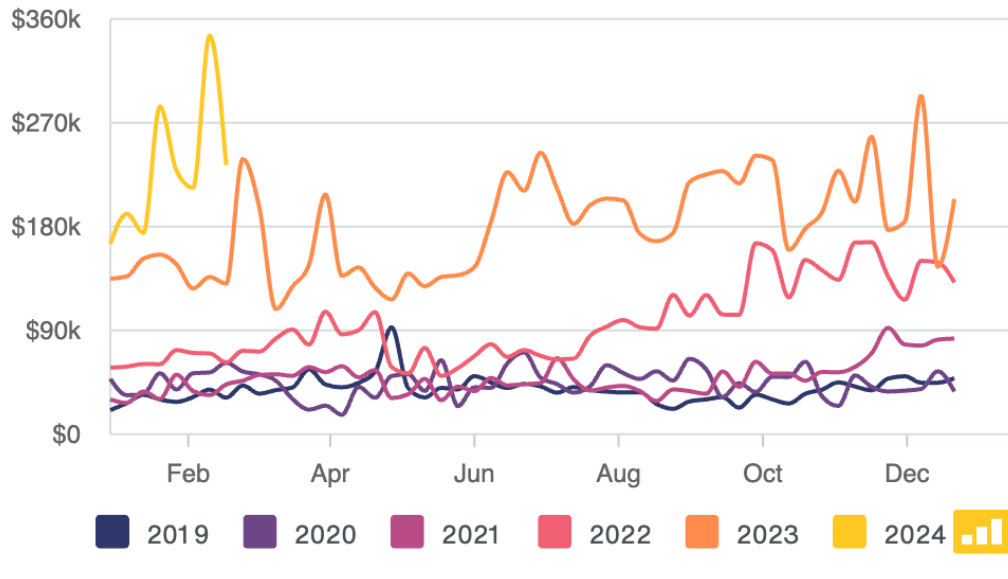
10 (Erie, PA) & 2 Other Areas

Entertainment & Recreation

REPLICA

Spend at merchant location in this geography, weekly total

2019 to 2024



Source: Replica (as of March 1, 2024)

Much like restaurant and bar spending, entertainment and recreation spending in 2023 surpassed that of previous years. Additionally, 2024 spending is trending further upward.

Spending Potential*

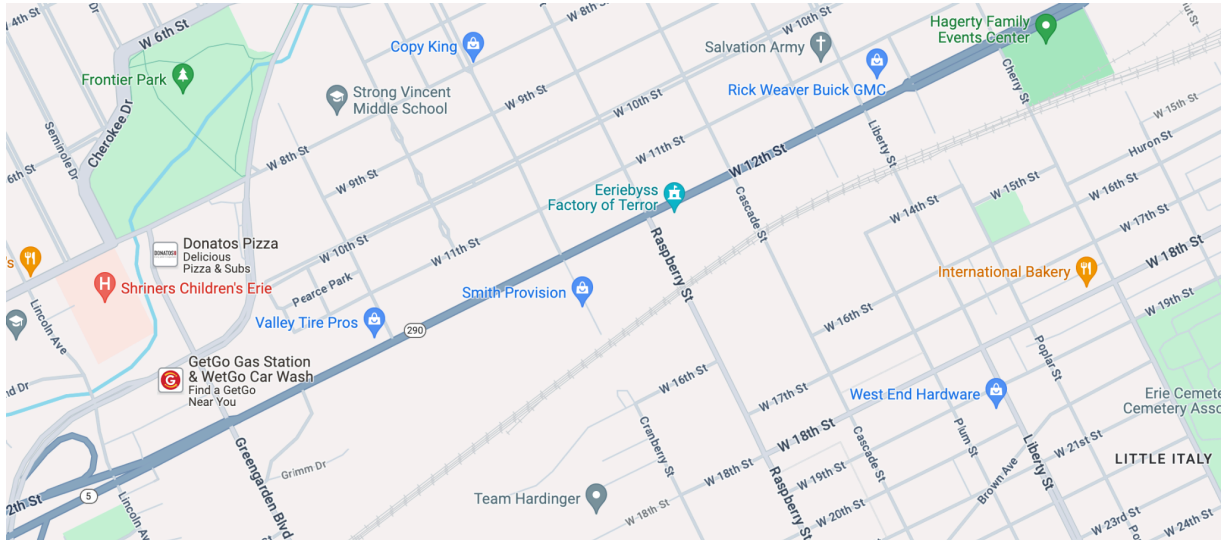
	Unmet Demand Spending Gap	2023 Payrolled Business Locations	Businesses Supported	Market Need
Food and Beverage Stores	\$373,430,927	112	186	Additional Businesses that could be supported
Furniture and Home Furnishings Retailers	\$212,031,740	33	163	Additional Businesses that could be supported
Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers	\$113,398,880	109	38	Additional Businesses that could be supported
Clothing, Clothing Accessories, Shoe, and Jewelry Retailers	\$96,900,266	82	85	Additional Businesses that could be supported
Gasoline Stations and Fuel Dealers	\$85,439,380	100	35	Additional Businesses that could be supported
Personal and Household Goods Repair and Maintenance	\$74,765,238	17	170	Additional Businesses that could be supported
Electronics and Appliance Retailers	\$61,443,457	43	59	Additional Businesses that could be supported
Drinking Places (Alcoholic Beverages)	\$35,698,565	75	126	Additional Businesses that could be supported
Personal Care Services	\$26,395,199	158	68	Additional Businesses that could be supported
Book Retailers and News Dealers	\$5,871,587	9	9	Additional Businesses that could be supported
Museums, Historical Sites, and Similar Institutions	-\$304,737	9	0	Need to attract consumers to support existing businesses
Performing Arts, Spectator Sports, and Related Industries	-\$1,137,643	21	-1	Need to attract consumers to support existing businesses
Drycleaning and Laundry Services	-\$1,903,615	16	-2	Need to attract consumers to support existing businesses
Other Miscellaneous Retailers	-\$26,469,993	56	-21	Need to attract consumers to support existing businesses
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Musical Instrument, Book, and Miscellaneous Retailers	-\$86,838,033	155	-76	Need to attract consumers to support existing businesses
Repair and Maintenance	-\$137,958,976	207	-111	Need to attract consumers to support existing businesses
Amusement, Gambling, and Recreation Industries	-\$180,244,449	86	-74	Need to attract consumers to support existing businesses
Educational Services	-\$199,447,952	74	-45	Need to attract consumers to support existing businesses
Restaurants and Other Eating Places	-\$246,052,222	441	-179	Need to attract consumers to support existing businesses
Ambulatory Health Care Services	-\$605,497,343	508	-253	Need to attract consumers to support existing businesses
Insurance Carriers and Related Activities	-\$2,437,233,799	124	-121	Need to attract consumers to support existing businesses

Source: BLS, ACS

*Note spending potential measures in-person retail consumption and does not capture online purchases.

Across Erie County, spending gaps reveal that the county could support additional retail establishments, particularly Food and Beverage Stores, Furniture and Home Furnishing Retailers, and Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers.

Baseline Analysis

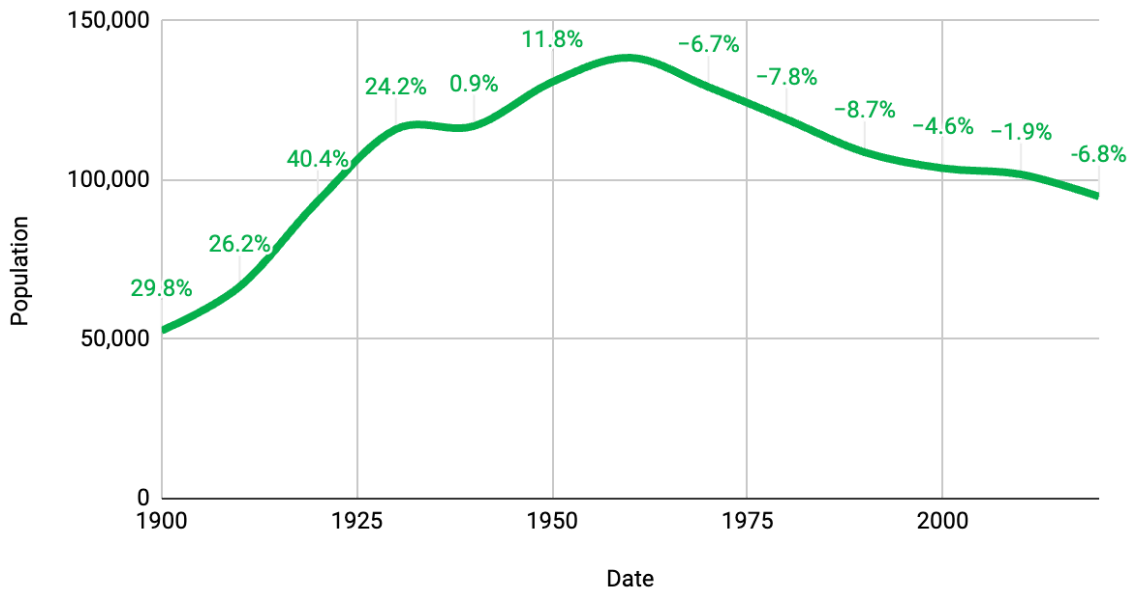


In the context of this plan, the Erie 12th Street Corridor spans 12th Street from the I-79 interchange (1600 block) to Cherry Street (600 block).

Demographic Profile

- Population Demographics:** Erie's population is slightly younger than Pennsylvania's overall, with a median age of 35 compared to 40.8 at the state level. The city also has a slightly higher percentage of individuals under 18 years and a lower percentage of those 65 years and over. This younger demographic could be a key asset in workforce development and educational programs designed to meet the needs of emerging industries.
- Lower Educational Attainment:** Erie's percentage of residents with a Bachelor's degree or higher (22.4%) lags Pennsylvania's average (33.8%), pointing towards potential workforce skill gaps and economic disadvantages.
- Car Dependence and Limited Remote Work:** A high percentage of workers in Erie commute by car, and the city has a lower rate of remote workers compared to Pennsylvania, indicating potential issues with transportation infrastructure and evolving work trends.

Erie City Population 1900-2020

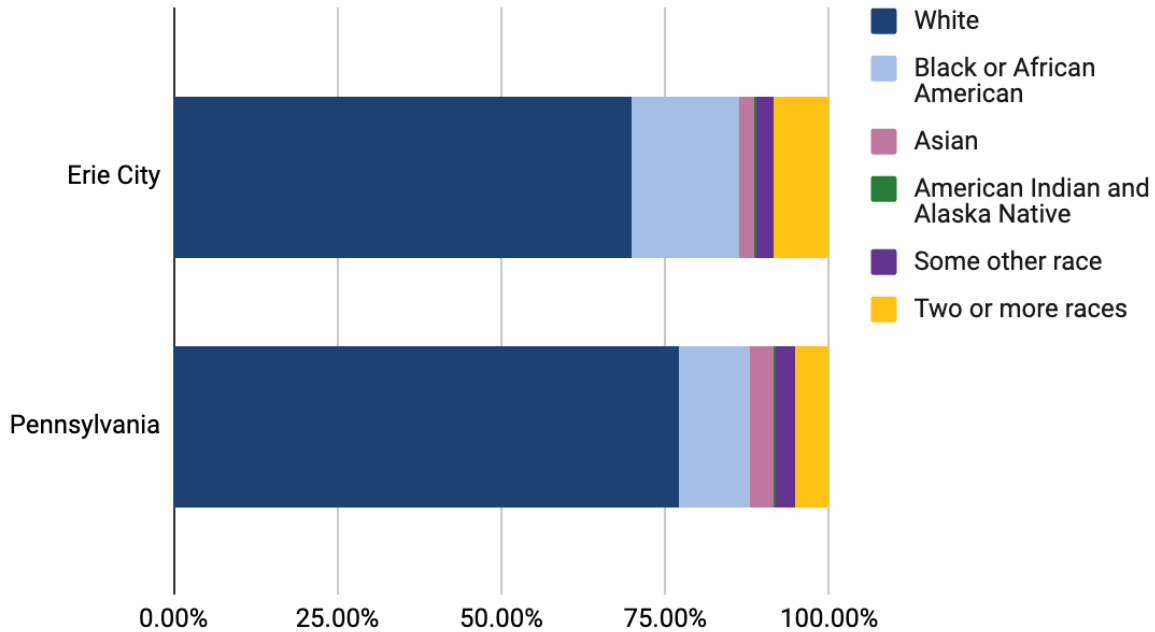


Source: Decennial Census 1900-2020

Like many Rust Belt cities, Erie’s population has declined since the 1960s. However, decade over decade, population loss remained at a single-digit level. As of 2020, the city of Erie’s population fell below 100,000. Population loss is slower in the county than in the city.

Erie County’s population loss rate (-3.4%) was half the city’s (-6.8%) from 2010 to 2020. At the county level, the population is expected to decrease by 0.9% between 2023 and 2028, or 2,503 people (Lightcast™).

Racial Composition



Source: Census ACS 2022

The city of Erie is slightly more racially diverse than the state of Pennsylvania. More than 16% of Erie’s population identifies as Black, compared to 11% of Pennsylvania residents. Erie is home to a similar share of Latino/Hispanic (8.3%) identifying residents compared to Pennsylvania (8.1%).

Age

	Erie City	Pennsylvania
Under 18 years	21.4%	20.5%
Working age (25 to 64 years)	50.2%	51.5%
65 years and over	15.5%	18.7%

Source: Census ACS 2022

Erie’s population is slightly younger than Pennsylvania’s, with a median age of 35 compared to 40.8 at the state level.

Educational Attainment

	Erie City	Pennsylvania
High school degree or higher	88.6%	91.7%
Percent Bachelor's degree or higher	22.4%	33.8%

Source: Census ACS 2022

Erie lags Pennsylvania averages in educational attainment. One-third of Pennsylvanians hold Bachelor's degrees or higher compared to just 22% of Erie residents.

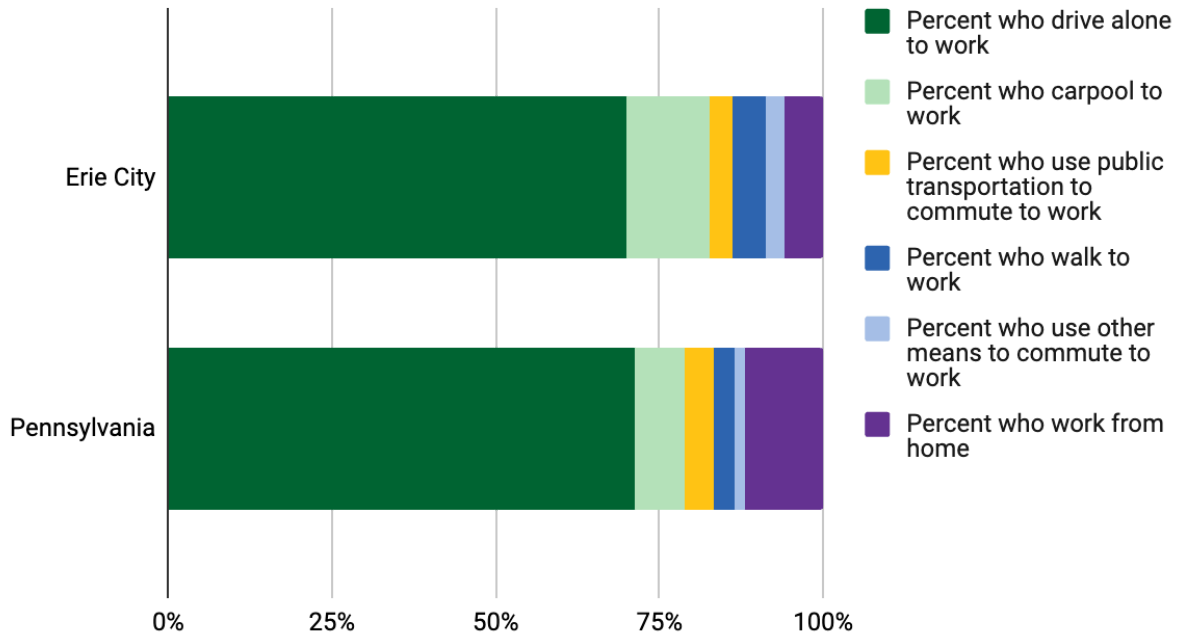
Workforce & Economy Profile

- **Decreasing Population:** Erie's population has been in decline since the 1960s, with the city's population falling below 100,000 in 2020. This trend could affect labor market size and consumer base.
- **Economic Performance:** Erie's median income is significantly lower than Pennsylvania's average, combined with a lower labor force participation rate and a higher share of people with disabilities, which could impact economic resilience and growth potential.
- **Limited Diversity in Business Types:** The corridor primarily hosts professional, scientific, technical services, and manufacturing businesses, with a notable absence of accommodation, food services, and worker-support services. This lack of diversity could limit economic dynamism and community services.

Erie's median income (\$43k) is significantly lower than Pennsylvania's (\$73k). At 59%, the city's labor force participation rate is slightly lower than Pennsylvania (63%). However, the region is home to a **larger share of people with disabilities (18.2%)** than the state (14.1%).

From 2018 to 2023, jobs declined by 4.3% in Erie County, PA, from 134,724 to 128,962. This change fell short of the national growth rate of 3.6% by 7.9%. The number of jobs in Erie County is projected to remain stable from 2023 to 2028 (Lightcast).

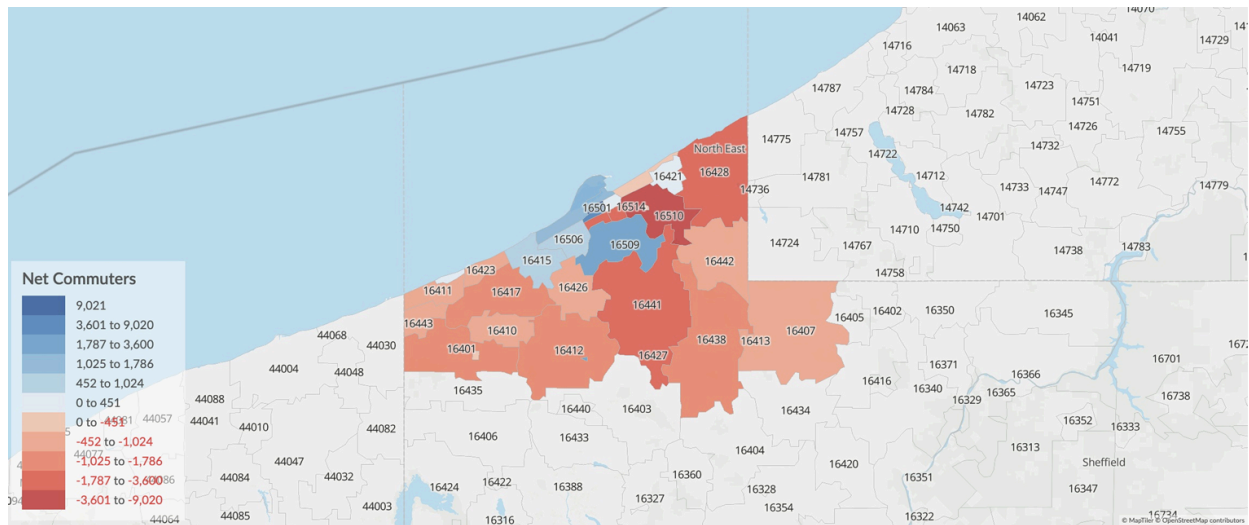
Commuting Methods



Source: Census ACS 2022

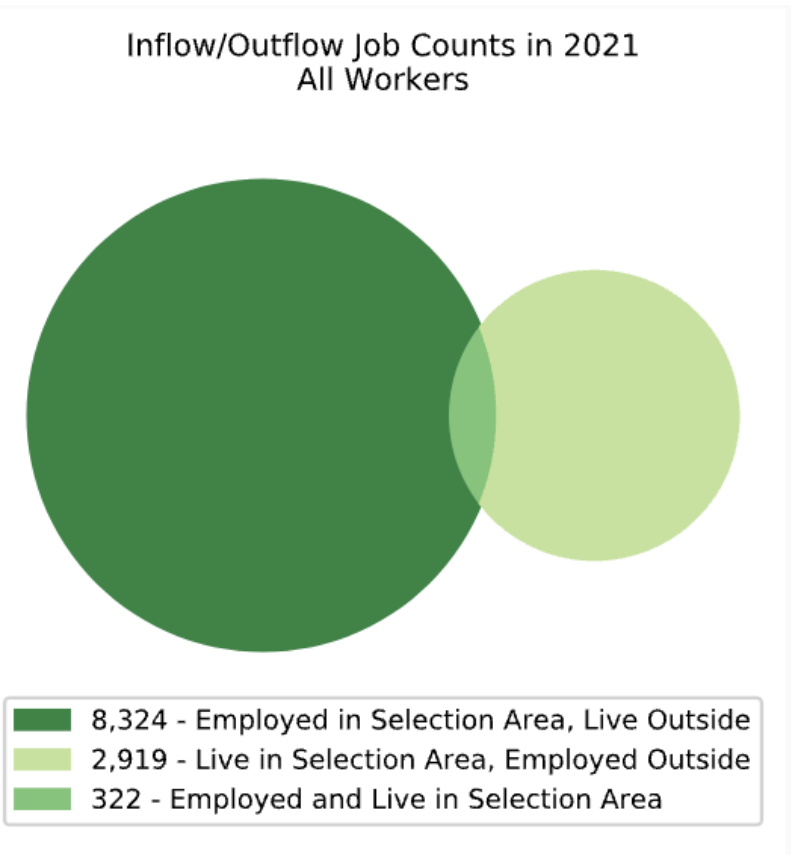
Similar shares of workers drive alone to work in Erie as in Pennsylvania; however, 12.6% of Erie workers carpool compared to 7.7% of Pennsylvanians. Despite car dependence, **more households are without vehicles in Erie (17.3%)** than in Pennsylvania (10.6%). Erie has **half the rate of remote workers (5.8%)** compared to Pennsylvania (11.8%).

Commuting Patterns



Source: Lightcast™

Several zip codes intersect the 12th Street Corridor, including area employment centers 16501 and 16505 where 9,000-10,000 people work.

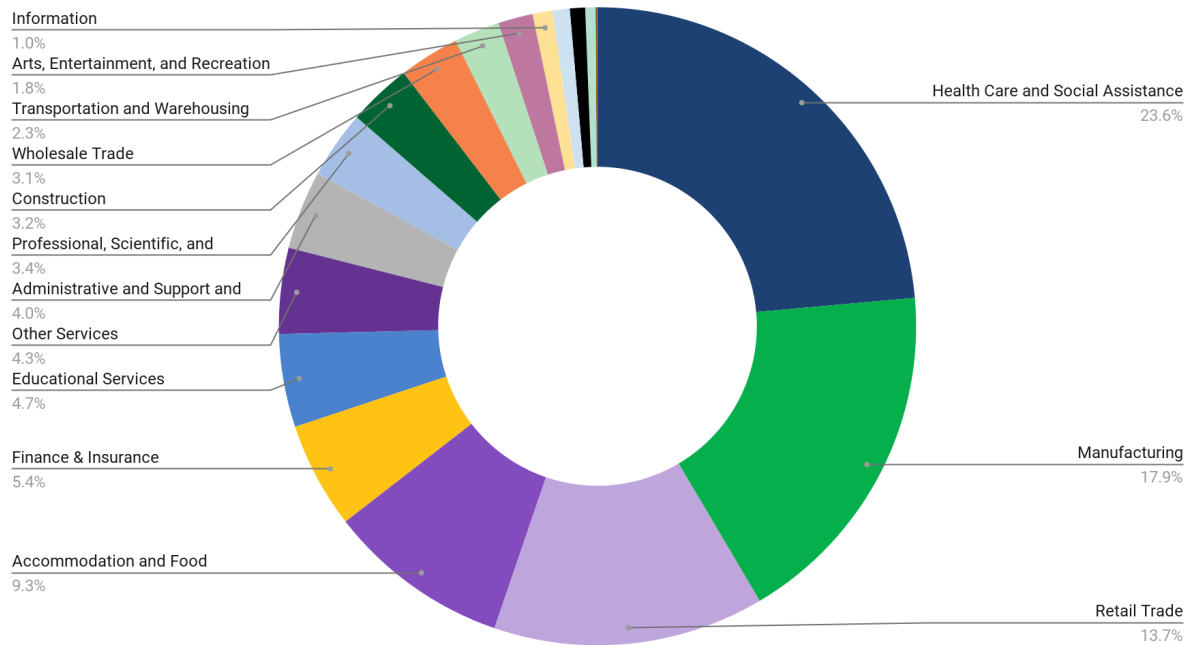


Source: Census LEHD 2022

The census tracts that include the corridor experiences an inflow of workers who live outside the area that surpasses those who commute out of the area for work. Very few workers both live and within the selected area, which places additional strains on transportation needs and car dependency.

Sector Analysis

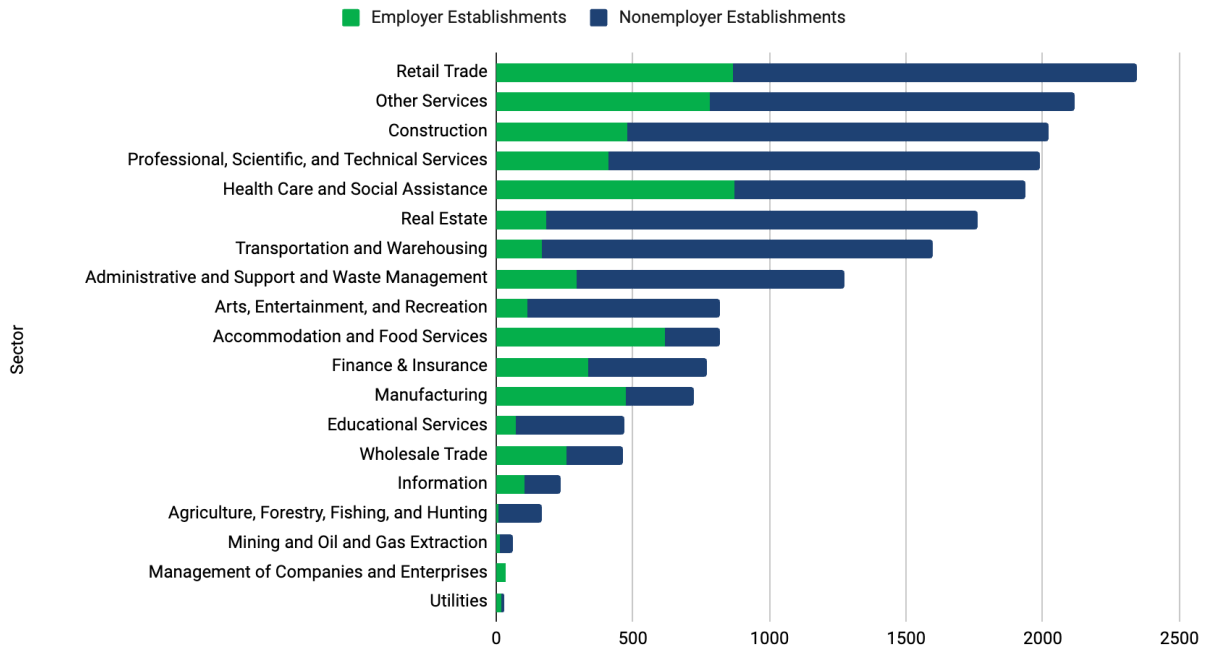
Employment by Sector



Source: County Business Patterns 2022

Nearly one-quarter of Erie County residents are employed in Health Care and Social Assistance. Manufacturing, a regional legacy industry, is the next largest employing industry at 18%. Together, Retail Trade and Accommodation and Food Service consist of nearly another quarter of employment in Erie.

Establishments by Sector



Source: County Business Patterns 2022

Erie County is home to nearly 20,000 businesses, 31% of which are employer establishments.

2023 Location Quotients

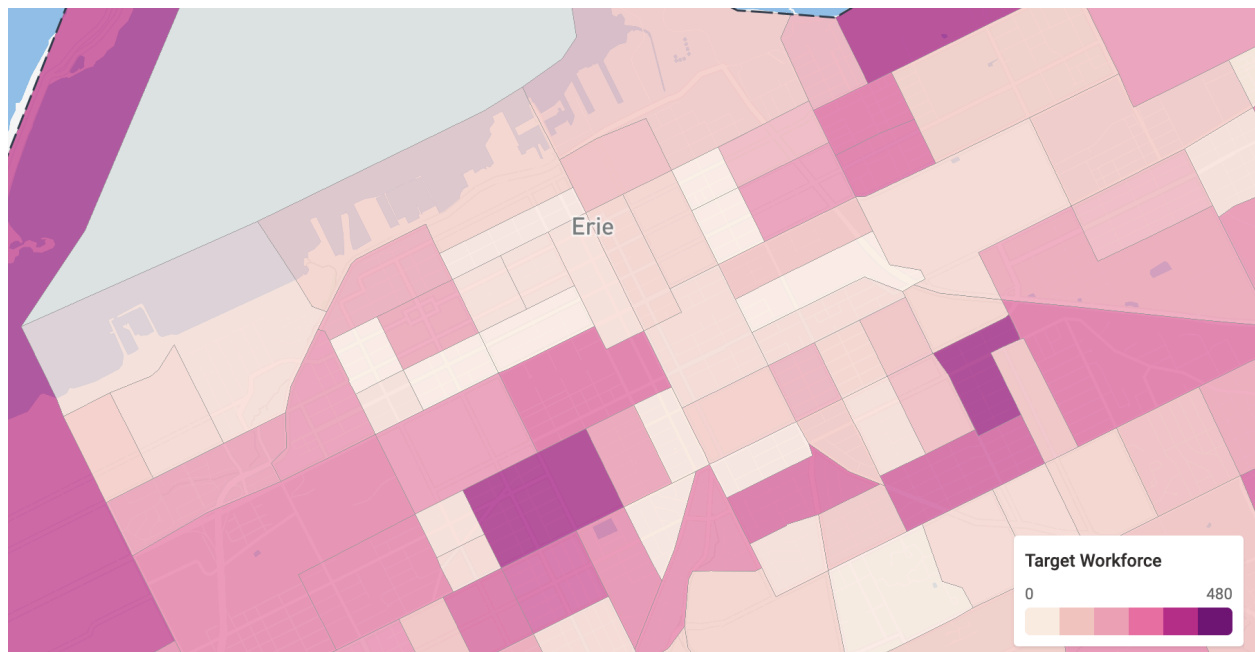


Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics 2023

A location quotient (LQ) is a statistic that measures a region’s industrial specialization relative to the United States. An LQ is computed as an industry’s share of a regional total for some economic statistic (earnings, GDP by metropolitan area, employment, etc.) divided by the industry’s share of the national total for the same statistic. For example, an LQ of 1.0 in mining means that the region and the nation are equally specialized in mining, while an LQ of 1.8 means that the region has a higher concentration in mining than the nation.

Erie maintains a specialization in legacy industry manufacturing. Health and education industries in Erie also surpass national averages. Notably, health and education wages are relatively higher in Erie. Erie has a lower concentration of financial, information, professional, and business services, potentially threatening the information economy.

Manufacturing Employment Concentration (Number of Workers)



Source: [Erie County Economic Development](#) 2023

Despite the focus corridor's manufacturing location, quotient dominance, and industrial feel, Erie’s 12th Street corridor lacks a deep concentration of manufacturing workforce.

12th Street Corridor Businesses

Establishments (including Sole Proprietors)	
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	18
Manufacturing	11
Retail Trade	6
Construction	3
Transportation and Warehousing	3
Wholesale Trade	2
Finance and Insurance	1
Other Services	1
Real Estate Renting and Leasing	1
Total	46

Source: Google Business Cards 2024

The 12th Street corridor is home to sole proprietor professionals and manufacturing facilities. There is a notable absence of accommodation and food service establishments. This is consistent with feedback that the corridor lacks worker-support services.

Market Card Engagement Activity

In-Person Results from 3/27/2024 Activity

Engagement Overview

On March 27, 2024, the client team hosted a community engagement event at the Haggerty Family Events Center on the future planning of the Erie 12th Street Corridor. Nearly 70 individuals attended, including representatives from local news, city council, business owners, and community groups. The aim was to gather stakeholder input on potential business and development opportunities to improve the corridor, particularly at its key entry points.

The event featured a **Market Card activity led by Fourth Economy, an economic development consulting firm**, designed to facilitate discussion on various development options through a scoring system where 1 indicated least desired outcomes, and 5 indicated most desired outcomes.

The agenda for the two-hour event started with registration and introductions, followed by an explanation of the Market Card Activity. This activity encouraged participants to discuss and prioritize different types of businesses and improvements for the corridor. Using market cards and fact sheets, attendees discussed various options, ranging from new business types to infrastructure and public spaces improvements. Each card was debated regarding its current relevance, necessity, and desirability, then scored on a scale from 1 to 5. The event concluded with groups sharing their findings and discussing the next steps in integrating these preferences into the Erie 12th Street Corridor's strategic plan. This process aimed to ensure the planning efforts aligned with community needs and had a tangible impact on the corridor's development.

Overall Averages by Category from Most Wanted to Least Wanted

- Quality of Place: Average score of 3.76
- Food and Entertainment: Average score of 3.28
- Innovation/Entrepreneurship: Average score of 3.13
- Sustainability: Average score of 2.96
- Goods/Services: Average score of 2.10
- Health and Wellness: Average score of 1.53

Overall Order of Scoring from Most Wanted to Least Wanted

- Bike Lanes, Street Scaping, Streetscape Lighting (Quality of Place) - 5.0
- Community Garden (Quality of Place) - 4.14
- Movie Theater/Entertainment (Food and Entertainment), EV Charging (Sustainability) - 4.1
- Restaurant (Food and Entertainment), Food Truck Park (Quality of Place) - 3.9
- Public Art, Shared Community Space, Transit Hub (Quality of Place) - 3.6

- Grocery (Food and Entertainment), Makerspace/Innovation Lab (Innovation/Entrepreneurship) - 3.4
- Museum/Cultural Center, Artisan Market, Daycare (Quality of Place), Community Tech Hub (Innovation/Entrepreneurship) - 3.3
- Deli (Food and Entertainment) - 3.0
- Public Trails Info Center, Bike Rental, Outdoor Gear (Goods/Services), Green Tech Showcase, Urban Tree Nursery (Sustainability) - 2.9
- Co-Working Space (Innovation/Entrepreneurship) - 2.7
- Farmer's Market, Ethnic Grocery Store (Food and Entertainment), Sustainable Living Workshops (Sustainability) - 2.6
- Alcoholic Beverages (Food and Entertainment), Lawn/Garden Nursery (Goods/Services) - 2.4
- Theater/Performing Arts (Quality of Place), Zero-Waste Store (Sustainability) - 2.3
- Bakery, Tea/Coffee/Book Store (Food and Entertainment), Fitness Park (Health and Wellness) - 2.1
- Clothing/Apparel, Dry Cleaner, Hardware Store (Goods/Services) - 2.0
- Fitness/Wellness Center (Health and Wellness) - 1.9
- Barber Beauty Salon Spa (Health and Wellness), Vehicle Repair Shop (Goods/Services) - 1.6
- Yoga and Mindfulness Center (Health and Wellness) - 1.3
- Pet Supplies/Grooming (Goods/Services) - 1.0

Categories (Ordered by Priorities' Averages)

Food and Entertainment

- Movie Theater/Entertainment - 4.1
- Restaurant, Tea/Coffee/Book Store - 3.9
- Grocery - 3.4
- Deli - 3.0
- Farmer's Market, Ethnic Grocery Store - 2.6
- Alcoholic Beverages - 2.4
- Bakery, Tea/Coffee/Book Store - 2.1
- Health and Wellness
- Fitness Park - 2.1
- Fitness/Wellness Center - 1.9
- Barber Beauty Salon Spa - 1.6
- Yoga and Mindfulness Center - 1.3

Quality of Place

- Bike Lanes, Street Scaping, Streetscape Lighting - 5.0
- Community Garden - 4.14
- Food Truck Park - 3.9

- Public Art, Shared Community Space, Transit Hub - 3.6
- Museum/Cultural Center, Artisan Market, Daycare - 3.3
- Public Trails Info Center - 2.9
- Theater/Performing Arts - 2.3

Goods/Services

- Bike Rental, Outdoor Gear - 2.9
- Lawn/Garden Nursery - 2.4
- Clothing/Apparel, Dry Cleaner, Hardware Store - 2.0
- Vehicle Repair Shop - 1.6
- Pet Supplies/Grooming - 1.0

Sustainability

- EV Charging - 4.1
- Green Tech Showcase, Urban Tree Nursery - 2.9
- Sustainable Living Workshops - 2.6
- Zero-Waste Store - 2.3
- Innovation/Entrepreneurship
- Makerspace/Innovation Lab - 3.4
- Community Tech Hub - 3.3
- Co-Working Space - 2.7

Overall Community Prioritization

The community's top priorities are centered around the **"Quality of Place"** category, underlining a compelling interest in developments that enhance the area's aesthetic appeal and environmental sustainability. High valuations for Bike Lanes, Street Scaping, and Streetscape Lighting signal a unified demand for infrastructure improvements that foster a safer, more walkable, bike-friendly environment. These elements and a marked focus on Community Gardens and EV Charging stations showcase the community's dedication to sustainable living practices. Additionally, there's a consensus that initiatives like facade improvement, enhanced sidewalks, and wayfinding signage are critical initial steps to invigorate the corridor, attract investors, and lay the groundwork for a transformative project. This underscores the necessity for a bold vision to rally the city's political support and ensure a stable, consistent effort toward realizing these community goals.

Following closely, the **"Food and Entertainment"** category shows a high demand for diverse and quality culinary experiences alongside engaging entertainment options, with Movie Theaters/Entertainment venues and Restaurants leading the preferences. This indicates a desire for the corridor to be a social and cultural activity hub, fostering community cohesion and attracting visitors.

"Innovation/Entrepreneurship" and **"Sustainability"** categories underscore the community's forward-looking stance, prioritizing spaces for creativity, collaboration, and green technologies.

This aligns with a broader vision of fostering a culture of innovation and environmental stewardship within the corridor.

Though ranking lower in overall prioritization, the "Goods/Services" and "Health and Wellness" categories still reflect essential community needs. Preferences for bike rentals and outdoor gear, alongside wellness centers and parks, suggest a community that values health, outdoor activities, and practical services to support daily living.

Category Summaries

Quality of Place: The community's vision for Quality of Place centers around creating a safe, attractive, and environmentally friendly area. Investments in bike lanes, street lighting, and green spaces are crucial to this goal.

Food and Entertainment: There is a strong appetite for enhancing the corridor's culinary and entertainment landscape, with a particular emphasis on creating spaces that offer diverse food options and social entertainment activities.

Innovation/Entrepreneurship: The support for maker spaces, community tech hubs, and co-working spaces indicates a desire to cultivate a dynamic corridor that encourages creativity, learning, and business development.

Sustainability: Priorities in sustainability focus on integrating green technology, supporting electric vehicles, and promoting sustainable living practices, underscoring the community's commitment to environmental health and future-proofing the corridor.

Goods/Services: Preferences in goods and services reflect the community's practical needs, focusing on enhancing outdoor activities and providing essential services that support the local population's daily requirements.

Health and Wellness: Though ranked lowest, the emphasis on fitness and wellness facilities illustrates an underlying concern for the physical and mental health of the community, indicating a holistic approach to the corridor's development.

Feedback from the Community

The community's feedback on the future of the Erie 12th Street Corridor presents a unified call for a bold vision that can transform the area into a vibrant, sustainable, and inclusive urban space. A central theme is the need for a consistent and reliable city government to support this vision with the requisite political will and resources. This support is essential for the vision's realization and maintaining momentum through consistent city staffing and policy backing.

A significant priority identified is beautifying the corridor, which is fundamental to making the area more attractive to residents and investors. This includes immediate improvements such as

facade enhancements, the introduction of green spaces, and the development of pedestrian-friendly sidewalks, collectively contributing to a more appealing urban environment.

The feedback emphasizes a holistic approach to the corridor's redevelopment, addressing various aspects of urban living and infrastructure to ensure a comprehensive transformation. Currently, the street is considered unsafe for multi-modal transportation, highlighting an urgent need for infrastructure that can safely support various modes of transport, including walking and biking.

Key to the success of this vision is the implementation of bike lanes and the planting of trees, which contribute to the corridor's environmental goals and enhance its aesthetics and usability for residents and visitors alike. Moreover, the support and inclusion of existing city businesses in the redevelopment process are critical, ensuring that the corridor's growth benefits the current economic ecosystem and fosters a sense of community ownership and involvement in the transformation.

This vision acknowledges the corridor's current challenges, including safety concerns for pedestrians and cyclists, the absence of greenery, and the need for a more welcoming and inclusive environment. Addressing these issues head-on, with a clear and ambitious vision supported by a committed city government, is crucial for the corridor's successful redevelopment.

Market Card Engagement Activity Survey Results

The Erie 12th Street Corridor Virtual Market Card Activity online survey gathered insights from community members unable to attend the primary event, providing a valuable perspective on the development preferences for the corridor. The survey encompassed multiple areas, including types of businesses desired, community features, support services for businesses, environmental sustainability initiatives, transportation improvements, and housing options. Here is an overall summary of the survey results:

Overview

The survey attracted a broad range of stakeholders, including local residents, business owners, and other community members, reflecting diverse interests and concerns. There were 17 respondents.

The questions of the online survey were similar to those in the market card in-person activity and included:

- **Preferred Business Types:** Inquiry about which new businesses are needed.
- **Community Features:** Features that could enhance the quality of life.
- **Business Support:** Services desired to support existing and new businesses.
- **Sustainability and Environment:** Importance of green initiatives.
- **Transportation and Accessibility:** Priorities for transportation and accessibility improvements.
- **Housing:** Types of housing developments seen as necessary.

Key Findings

Business Needs: There was significant interest in adding grocery stores, ethnic grocery options, entertainment venues, and cafes, highlighting a demand for services that cater to daily needs and enhance social life.

Community Features: Respondents emphasized the need for more communal spaces like community gardens, public art, and artisan markets, suggesting a desire to improve the corridor's aesthetics and social functionality.

Business Support: The data showed a preference for resources that foster business growth and innovation, such as co-working spaces and community tech hubs, reflecting a forward-thinking approach to economic development.

Environmental Initiatives: Green initiatives were highly valued, with many participants advocating for more community gardens, tree planting, and sustainability-focused education, indicating strong environmental consciousness.

Transportation Improvements: There was a clear call for better pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure, including bike lanes and safer walkways, to enhance mobility and safety in the corridor.

Housing: Affordable housing and mixed-use developments were frequently mentioned, underscoring a need for inclusive and versatile housing solutions to support a growing and diverse population.

Overall Implications

The survey results demonstrate a robust community interest in seeing the Erie 12th Street Corridor develop into a more vibrant, sustainable, and inclusive area. The feedback suggests a strong preference for a holistic development approach that enhances economic opportunities and improves the environmental and social landscape. There is a strong preference to support local and regional businesses as a priority by providing resources and opportunities to companies that have been a historical part of the legacy of the manufacturing corridor.

The insights from the in-person session and online survey help provide a snapshot of some of the community's needs and aspirations.

Interviews

Fourth Economy conducted interviews with five identified stakeholders during the week of April 8th, 2024. The individuals interviewed were Casey Bowes, Aaron Snippert, Tina Mengine, Chris

Groner, and Chet Dine. Full interview notes are [available](#). The following includes six major takeaways from these interviews.

Interview Key Themes

1. As a major entrance to the city, the 12th Street corridor needs to be welcoming.

The 12th Street Corridor, as a principal gateway into Erie, holds a critical role in shaping the initial impressions of the city for both residents and visitors. Currently, the corridor's appearance reflects Erie's industrial past more than its potential future, characterized by an uninviting and stark landscape that many see as a physical reminder of decline. This pervasive view contributes negatively to the local psyche, with residents continually exposed to the sight of unused and deteriorating buildings, reinforcing a narrative of stagnation rather than progress.

Despite significant investments to revitalize downtown Erie, the 12th Street Corridor remains a stark contrast, presenting visitors with their first glimpse of the city through a lens of blight and disrepair. Such conditions – littered and vacant buildings, cracked sidewalks, and sparse vegetation – severely undermine the city's curb appeal. Even significant local businesses prefer to route visitors along the Bay Front Highway to avoid the less appealing 12th Street, further indicating the corridor's need for a transformative approach.

The corridor lacks consistency and coherence, with scattered investments that have yet to yield a fully revitalized block or establish a unified aesthetic. The mix of occupancy and use along the corridor appears random and disjointed, needing a discernible plan or strategy. This haphazard development pattern has led to a call for establishing standards to guide future investments and ensure uniformity in the corridor's redevelopment.

A multi-pronged approach is needed to improve the corridor's ambiance and make it truly welcoming, focusing on aesthetic enhancements and structural reforms. There is significant interest in implementing a road diet to reduce traffic congestion and enhance safety, making the area more conducive to multi-modal transport options such as walking and cycling. This would not only improve accessibility but also help in softening the corridor's harsh, concrete texture.

Beautification efforts such as consistent facade improvements, coherent signage, and the introduction of green spaces could dramatically alter the corridor's appearance and atmosphere. Strategic plantings or the development of a tree canopy enhance the visual appeal and contribute to environmental sustainability. Regular maintenance and trash pickup are essential to sustain these improvements and help in changing perceptions of the corridor and the city as a whole.

The challenge lies in aligning the various stakeholders to a common vision and executing a coordinated plan that transforms the 12th Street Corridor into an inviting, vibrant, and functional entry point to Erie. This requires commitment and investment from both public and private

sectors and a collective agreement on the future direction of the corridor, ensuring that any development respects the area's historical context while promoting modern urban living and commerce.

2. Land holders sitting on land are holding the 12th Street corridor back.

Landholders retaining undeveloped properties significantly obstruct progress along the 12th Street corridor, a theme consistently highlighted across nearly all interviews. Many stakeholders noted that external investors have acquired properties, especially in recent years, but left them idle, exacerbating the corridor's challenges rather than contributing to its revival.

The issue of absentee ownership and the lack of active property development have emerged as central barriers to revitalizing the corridor. These properties often fall into disrepair, detracting from the corridor's overall appeal and discouraging further investment from neighboring businesses. As one city official pointed out, the presence of neglected buildings raises a critical question: why would business owners invest in improving their properties if they are surrounded by disinvestment?

The strategic focus of city investments compounds the problem. Several interviewees suggested that funds are often redirected to other parts of the city where the potential for returns on investment is perceived to be higher and more immediate. This reallocation leads to a cycle where the 12th Street corridor remains underfunded and overlooked despite the recognized need for housing and commercial revitalization in the area.

A significant concern was the lack of accountability for the state of properties along the corridor. Stakeholders called for the city to enforce stricter standards and regulations to halt the degradation of these properties. It was suggested that instead of dispersing redevelopment funds thinly across multiple projects, targeting them specifically at critical issues like facade improvement could significantly enhance the corridor's appearance and attract more positive attention and investment.

Specific attention has been drawn to large vacant properties, such as the former Lord site, with potential for substantial development. The uncertainty surrounding plans for such prominent sites creates a ripple effect, making it difficult for nearby businesses and potential investors to commit to long-term plans. Knowing the future of these key properties could catalyze broader corridor-wide planning and investment.

3. Neighborhood groups adjacent to the 12th Street corridor are making strides.

Neighborhood groups adjacent to the 12th Street corridor are actively enhancing their local environments, signaling progressive change despite the challenges posed by their proximity to the corridor. The neighborhood to the north is predominantly residential, focusing on community cohesion and residential stability. In contrast, the southern neighborhood hosts a combination of

residential and industrial areas, which presents unique opportunities for integrating these spaces with the corridor’s activities.

Organizations like the West Bay Front group are pivotal in spearheading initiatives to unify the community and improve the local environment. Their work, along with the sustained efforts of the Redevelopment Authority over the past seven years, demonstrates a committed approach to neighborhood revitalization. These organizations have been crucial in fostering a sense of community and advocating for necessary changes that could lead to a more vibrant and cohesive corridor community.

However, these neighborhoods currently bear the brunt of the negative impacts stemming from the 12th Street corridor, including high traffic volumes and the visual and structural decay of the corridor itself. Local leaders have expressed that any improvements made to 12th Street could significantly enhance the quality of life in the adjacent neighborhoods and potentially synchronize the ongoing efforts to revitalize these areas. The synergy between improved corridor conditions and neighborhood initiatives could lead to comprehensive urban renewal.

Despite these positive strides, neighborhood groups face limitations due to insufficient capacity and insufficient financial support. Strengthening these organizations by providing them with the necessary resources could amplify their impact and ensure the sustainability of their efforts.

Moreover, enhancing homeowner maintenance programs in these areas could provide a dual benefit: stabilizing the residential environments and signaling to private investors that the 12th Street corridor is ripe for investment. By ensuring that the neighborhoods adjacent to the corridor are stable and attractive, private businesses may consider investing in the corridor, seeing it as a viable extension of the adjoining community efforts. This integrated approach could transform the corridor into a dynamic area supporting residential well-being and business opportunities.

4. There is a desire to see a mixed-use, walkable 12th Street corridor.

The desire to transform the 12th Street corridor into a mixed-use, walkable area is strong among community stakeholders. Current conditions along the corridor, characterized by poorly maintained sidewalks, inadequate crosswalks, and insufficient tree cover, hinder pedestrian friendliness and overall walkability. The proximity of the sidewalks to the street, combined with the minimal setback of buildings, places pedestrians dangerously close to high-speed traffic, further discouraging foot traffic along the corridor.

Improvements such as better-maintained sidewalks, safer crossing options, and increased tree cover are necessary to enhance the pedestrian environment and complement other investments along the corridor. These changes would make the corridor more navigable and create a more pleasant and attractive urban landscape that encourages walking and other non-motorized transit.

Significant developments planned at both ends of the corridor present opportunities to establish new standards for walkability that could serve as models for future projects. These developments

should prioritize pedestrian accessibility and safety, setting a precedent that can be replicated throughout the corridor.

There is a call for investments to focus on serving the needs of the existing neighborhood rather than trying to attract outside visitors. This community-focused approach would ensure that improvements are relevant and beneficial to those who live and work in the area, fostering a sense of ownership and engagement with the corridor’s development. An interviewee emphasized the importance of considering the existing community’s needs and integrating those into the planning and development process to avoid disconnects between new projects and community expectations.

5. There is a need for development to catalyze change beyond a singular property along the 12th Street corridor.

The need for strategic development that sparks broader change along the 12th Street corridor is becoming increasingly apparent. Current developments in downtown Erie and the Bayfront areas have not significantly impacted most of the 12th Street corridor, except for the sections closest to downtown. This uneven development spread highlights the necessity for thoughtful planning that encourages widespread improvement rather than isolated enhancements.

The Redevelopment Authority has expressed aspirations to use their project at 12th and Cherry as a model for other businesses, aiming to inspire similar investments along the corridor. This approach underscores a desire not to concentrate substantial funds—such as a \$30 million investment—at one location without stimulating additional investments nearby. Such focused investments risk creating pockets of development that do not contribute to the corridor’s overall progress, as surrounding areas might remain underdeveloped and neglected.

Concerns also exist around sustaining investment momentum beyond the current period of financial incentives, such as those provided by the American Rescue Plan. Stakeholders contemplate investment strategies once these incentive programs conclude and how to maintain development progress without such substantial financial support.

Introducing mixed-use development is a viable strategy for invigorating the 12th Street corridor. By combining retail or office spaces with residential units, these developments can increase the number of people living and working in the area, who would then support local businesses such as restaurants and retail shops. This model enhances the corridor’s vibrancy and ensures that improvements benefit a broad segment of the community, supporting a sustainable urban ecosystem.

There is a clear need for a coordinated development strategy beyond enhancing individual properties to foster a comprehensive and sustained transformation of the 12th Street corridor. This strategy should create a vibrant, mixed-use environment that attracts and retains residents and businesses, contributing to the corridor’s long-term vitality.

6. There is an opportunity to connect the 12th Street corridor with existing assets and to other redevelopment activities.

The 12th Street corridor possesses significant potential to enhance the broader urban redevelopment efforts within Erie. Recognizing the corridor's proximity to other key redevelopment sites, such as at 8th and Green Garden, allows one to extend successful development strategies along 12th Street. The 8th and Green Garden development is highly regarded and is a compelling model that could inspire similar achievements if replicated along the 12th Street corridor.

Integrating 12th Street with the successful elements observed at 8th and Green Garden could involve creating pedestrian-friendly sidewalks, enhancing street and environmental beautification, and adding plantings. These improvements could transform 12th Street into a vibrant, appealing destination, fostering a sense of community and belonging that anchors and strengthens the area. By doing so, 12th Street could enhance its attractiveness and serve as a seamless extension of the city's revitalization efforts, reinforcing the interconnectedness of Erie's urban landscape.

There is a noteworthy opportunity to physically connect the 12th Street corridor with existing green assets through infrastructure developments like a mixed-use trail. Such a connector could extend from Frontier Park, creating a linked bike trail system that either runs directly along the corridor or adjacent to it by the railroad tracks. This trail would not only increase accessibility but also encourage healthier, eco-friendly modes of transportation and recreational activities, enhancing the corridor's utility and enjoyment.