



eCities 2021 Summary

iLabs, The Center for Innovation Research

College of Business

University of Michigan-Dearborn

eCities is an annual research study that examines community-level factors that foster entrepreneurship and small business development. The focus is on entrepreneurship and small business growth because of their importance to the expansion and diversification of regional economies and job creation. The primary purpose of eCities is to understand the impact of the strategies and success stories of Michigan communities across the state. The data collected not only provides a means for benchmarking performance, but it also allows communities to learn from the qualities and efforts of their neighboring communities.

Background

Across the country, economic development activities are carried out by various entities, including state agencies, regional associations, and counties. While these broader organizations engage in promoting economic development in Michigan, similar activities are also undertaken by many townships, cities, and villages. Given this, the eCities project uses the community as the unit of measurement, and not a county or metropolitan area, as other studies have used.

The eCities project seeks to provide benchmarking tools and overview reports for participating communities and has incorporated new ways to learn from the success stories of local communities across the state. While there is no single solution for every community, the success stories allow communities to understand strategies that can be tailored to local resources and communities. Helping local communities, who often have the most impact on small and entrepreneurial firms, provides an opportunity to improve the environment for entrepreneurialism throughout the state. Since its inception in 2007, eCities has grown from 14 to over 250 eligible communities and more than 300 communities invited to participate each year. As communities continue to demonstrate their interest in the annual project, the eCities team is implementing new ways to benchmark community progress and offer more comprehensive analysis to participating communities.

Data Sources

In 2021, five-year's worth of publicly available data on communities was collected by the eCities team to analyze trends surrounding business and economic cycles. Such data demonstrates growth, investments, and the cost of doing business within the communities.

More specifically, eCities examined eleven publicly available data points relating to community growth and investment metrics that impact the business community. Data was collected on 277 Michigan communities from 54 of the 83 counties in the state. Communities were chosen based on population, geography, and relative size within counties.

Property Values (7 data points): Examines the changes in the amount of real commercial property, real industrial property, real total property, personal commercial property, personal industrial property, total personal property, and overall total property

Property Taxes (1 data point): Examines the changes in the average non-homestead tax rate

Governmental Assets (3 data points): Examines the changes in non-depreciated, depreciated, and total governmental assets

2021 Five-Star and Four-Star Communities

A total of 189 communities were recognized as 5-star and 4-star communities. The 5-star and 4-star communities in the eCities project are part of a group of Michigan communities that have seen the strongest growth in business development over the past five years, while controlling the costs of doing business in town.

Five-Star Honored Communities

City of Albion	City of Grosse Pointe Woods	Charter Township of Oxford
Allendale Charter Township	City of Hamtramck	Paradise Township
Antwerp Township	Harrison Charter Township	Pere Marquette Charter Township
Armada Township	City of Hazel Park	City of Perry
Atlas Township	Highland Charter Township	Plainfield Charter Township
Bangor Charter Township	City of Holland	Port Huron Charter Township
Benton Charter Township	City of Houghton	City of Portage
City of Berkley	City of Hudsonville	City of Reading
City of Birmingham	City of Ironwood	City of Richmond
Byron Township	City of Laingsburg	City of Rochester
Caledonia Charter Township	City of Lansing	City of Rochester Hills
Cascade Charter Township	City of Lapeer	City of Romulus
Chesaning Township	Lawrence Township	City of Royal Oak
City of Davison	Leighton Township	Shelby Charter Township
City of Dearborn	Leoni Township	Springfield Charter Township
Delta Charter Township	City of Litchfield	City of St. Clair
City of Detroit	Macomb Township	City of St. Johns
DeWitt Charter Township	Manchester Township	City of St. Louis
City of East Grand Rapids	City of Marquette	City of Sterling Heights
City of East Lansing	Milford Charter Township	Superior Charter Township
City of Farmington	Mount Morris Charter Township	Sylvan Township
City of Farmington Hills	Charter Township of Mundy	Texas Charter Township
Charter Township of Fenton	City of New Baltimore	Thomas Township
City of Ferndale	City of Niles	City of Troy
Charter Township of Garfield	Charter Township of Northville	Tyrone Township
Georgetown Charter Township	City of Novi	City of Utica
City of Grand Blanc	City of Oak Park	Vassar Township
Grand Haven Charter Township	Oakland Township	City of Walker
City of Grand Rapids	Oceola Township	Washington Charter Township
Green Oak Charter Township	Orion Charter Township	Waterford Township
City of Grosse Pointe	Oshtemo Charter Township	City of Wixom
City of Grosse Pointe Farms	City of Owosso	City of Wyoming
City of Grosse Pointe Park		City of Ypsilanti

Four-Star Honored Communities

Ada Township
City of Adrian
City of Allen Park
City of Alma
City of Ann Arbor
City of Auburn Hills
Bay City
Bedford Township
City of Belding
Blackman Charter Township
Blendon Township
Brandon Charter Township
Bridgeport Charter Township
City of Brighton
Brownstown Charter Township
City of Burton
City of Cadillac
Cambridge Township
Charter Township of Canton
City of Charlotte
Chesterfield Charter Township
City of Clawson
Charter Township of Clinton
City of Coldwater
Commerce Charter Township
Comstock Charter Township
City of Dearborn Heights
Delhi Charter Township
City of Dexter
East Bay Charter Township

City of Eastpointe
Emmett Charter Township
City of Escanaba
City of Fenton
Charter Township of Flint
City of Flushing
City of Frankenmuth
Gaines Charter Township
Charter Township of Grand Blanc
City of Grand Haven
City of Grand Ledge
Grand Rapids Charter Township
City of Grandville
Hamburg Township
City of Harper Woods
Hartland Township
Holland Charter Township
Holly Township
City of Howell
City of Huntington Woods
Imlay City
Independence Charter Township
City of Kalamazoo
City of Kentwood
City of Lincoln Park
City of Livonia
Lyon Charter Township
City of Madison Heights
Marine City
City of Marysville
City of Mason

City of Melvindale
City of Milan
City of Mount Clemens
City of Mount Pleasant
City of Northville
Park Township
City of Petoskey
City of Plymouth
Plymouth Charter Township
City of Pontiac
City of Port Huron
City of Rockford
City of Roseville
City of Saline
Scio Township
City of South Lyon
Spring Lake Township
City of St. Joseph
City of Sturgis
City of Taylor
Traverse City
Union Charter Township
Van Buren Charter Township
Vienna Charter Township
City of Walled Lake
City of Warren
Charter Township of West Bloomfield
White Lake Charter Township
Ypsilanti Charter Township
City of Zeeland

Highlights

This year, the 277 eligible communities from 54 counties span the state of Michigan and are home to 71% of its population. Over the five-year period of 2016-2020, these communities increased their capital assets by an average of 2.9% per year by investments such as park facilities, water and sewer infrastructure projects, and emergency vehicles. Further, these places are home to 86% of Michigan's real commercial property and have 64% of the state's total property value.

In 2021, eCities recognized 189 municipalities as four- and five-star communities. These communities vary in size, with some being the most populated places in the state, to others being home to just over 2,000 residents. From 2016-2020, these communities were able to grow property values (up 6%) and capital assets (up 4.25%) annually, while only increasing taxes by four-tenths of a percent.

Conclusion

eCities 2021 marked more than a decade of helping communities to improve the state's entrepreneurial climate by collecting and sharing the strategies and successes of Michigan municipalities and providing an understanding of what strategies are successful in engaging the business community. The eCities project highlights how local governments from across Michigan are growing their communities and supporting businesses. As a university, the University of Michigan-Dearborn wants to share the successes and educate about the best practices that can be used by other communities in the state. As the nature of economic development evolves, eCities is a tool to help local governments demonstrate their role in the changing economy. These governments are supporting unique and innovative efforts locally, while collaborating regionally to help Michigan businesses compete in an ever-changing business climate.

Much like the entrepreneurs whom they covet, communities need to understand that strategies cannot be copied and applied without consideration. Communities need to recognize and match their resources to best meet the needs of their businesses if they are to encourage growth and attract entrepreneurial investment.

To learn more about the eCities project or iLabs, please contact kporembi@umich.edu or visit the [eCities website](#).