

# Industry Trends Panel Discussion

## Summary of Key Points

### Panelists:

Dawn Baetsen – Atlas Insight  
Chris Knezevic – Ernst & Young  
Dennis McAndrew – Silverlode Consulting  
Leslie Wagner – Ginovus

- Consultants were appreciative of the opportunity to visit Northeast Indiana and learn more about the industries and talent available in the region. Some were familiar with Northeast Indiana and some were not at all familiar. All do a high number of locations in the Midwest every year and were impressed with the turnout and support from the whole region.
- When asked about the status of their project pipelines in the current economy, all agreed that activity is picking up and are cautiously optimistic about the sustainability of this activity.
- Considering the current state of the economy, creative incentive packages are more influential than ever in the location decision. However, communities should not be afraid to do their due diligence on a company to be sure the fit is right before they put together a competitive incentive package.
- The consultants are seeing an activity uptick especially in the biomedical and renewable energies industries. They also believe that NEI is well positioned for landing data center projects due to our abundance of rural sites. However, it is important to have existing infrastructure to attract data centers.
- It is important to send a clear message to consultants that our communities can be creative and flexible in meeting a company's needs. It is advisable to determine policies and procedures prior to the interest of a prospect so that all debate has been completed before they arrive.
- Rural communities are typically more flexible and excited about attracting companies to their area. The consultants were under the impression that rural communities, especially in NEI, contributed to high work ethic and strong employment offering. This gives NEI a recognized competitive advantage.
- NEI should be proud of the higher ed offerings and home-grown talent in the region. Our universities are a huge competitive advantage that we can market to companies thus bringing jobs that will retain the talent in the area. In addition, case studies such as Raytheon are helpful for the consultants to identify talent pools that have been attracted to the area from the outside.
- Most of the consultants spoke favorably of spec buildings as long as they are constructed strategically targeted at certain industries. Buildings-in-a-box, ready-to-go infrastructure and plans, were also highlighted as an opportunity that is helpful and not as risky as a spec building.
- Regarding FDI, most activity is coming from China and Germany. Both countries' companies typically form partnerships with existing US companies or states. China is investing fairly heavily in vacant manufacturing buildings and/or old buildings that can be renovated to fit their needs (old school buildings for instance).