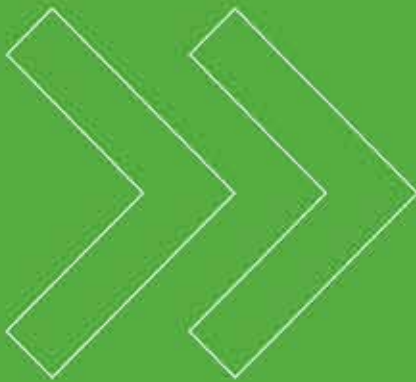


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Renderings courtesy FC Cincinnati

HOW SOCCER TOOK A CITY BY STORM

A well-crafted plan made the rapid rise of FC Cincinnati possible.



by RON STARNER
ron.starner@siteselection.com

Whoever thought a soccer team could capture the imagination of sports fans in the land of the Big Red Machine must have been dreaming.

Yes, they were.

Carl Lindner III, co-CEO of Cincinnati-based insurer American Financial Group, heads an ownership group that brought FC Cincinnati not only into existence, but all the way to the ranks of Major League Soccer — and he did it in less than five years.

To call FC Cincinnati a professional sports franchise success story would be an understatement. In only its fourth year of existence, the club ranked third in attendance in MLS in 2019. Its meteoric rise through the United Soccer League, from 2016 to 2018,

shattered USL attendance records and preconceived notions about the viability of soccer in a mid-tier Midwestern city.

From its inaugural home opener on April 9, 2016 — when it defeated the Charlotte Independence at the University of Cincinnati's Nippert Stadium — to today, FC Cincinnati has drawn a blueprint for how to construct a successful pro sports franchise.

By averaging over 27,000 spectators per match in its first MLS season in 2019, the club proved that success can be achieved quickly. FC Cincinnati captured the hearts of supporters, whose ranks now include billionaire Meg Whitman. The former boss of eBay and Hewlett Packard plunked down \$100 million to buy a 20% stake in FC Cincinnati on Nov. 28, 2019.

Whitman, Lindner and FC Cincinnati

President Jeff Berding aren't resting on laurels, however. Team officials are preparing the organization for its move into a new \$250 million West End Stadium that architect Populous says "features an ambitious interpretation of Cincinnati on the rise." Scheduled to open in March 2021, the 26,500-seat stadium will be unlike any other in MLS.

"There's a dedication and authenticity to soccer in Cincinnati that rivals any city in the U.S.," says Jonathan Mallie, Populous senior principal and lead designer.

Former Cincinnati City Council member and longtime Cincinnati Bengals front-office executive Berding says West End Stadium will be "the Jewel in the Queen City's Crown." In an interview with Site Selection, Berding

discussed the impact of FC Cincinnati on the region and why he himself is a big fan of Greater Cincinnati.

The rapid rise of FC Cincinnati has been one of the more phenomenal MLS success stories of the past decade. What did your organization do to enable this?

BERDING: When Carl Lindner and I created the club, we had a very specific plan about how to build FC Cincinnati. It was going to be a very organic build. We wanted to create a winning team and a family-friendly club that gives back to the community, and we wanted to run it at a major league level. We had a strong ownership group right from the start. We were going to audition in the USL and earn our promotion to MLS through our performance. We wanted to do it in four years. Orlando did it in five. We had influencer groups that we concentrated on — a business community that would buy into the success of building the international reputation of Cincinnati; a strong youth soccer community; and the most passionate soccer fans anywhere. We felt we could organically build the club through those three universes.

Our goal was to draw 10,000 fans per game and sell \$600,000 in merchandise in year one. In year one, we averaged 17,000 in attendance and sold \$1.6 million in merchandise. Our second-year average was over 21,000 in USL. We averaged 30,000 fans at three matches in the U.S. Open Cup. We averaged over 26,000 a game in year three, won the USL Supporters Shield and won our promotion to MLS. We did not have two or three years to prepare. We had 270 days from winning our bid to our first match.

From a business standpoint, we were successful right away. We did over 27,000 in attendance — No. 3 in the league — in year one in MLS. There were challenges along the way. We had to go from 30 employees to about 88 today. We wanted to hire a GM on the soccer side. We had to hire the architect

and design a new stadium for 2021. We had to build a new training stadium. If you don't get your front office right, you will not succeed. I think we did that.

How were you able to build up such a large and loyal fan base so quickly?

BERDING: Through word of mouth. People were coming and saying, "Wow, that is fun and awesome," and then they would tell their neighbors and friends. We wanted to be a manifestation of a rising Cincinnati. Cincinnati has been a rising success story since 2001, with Over the Rhine and other developments. FC Cincinnati has been an example of that. When we were pushing to earn a promotion to MLS, I was talking about how we grew organically. Having a great game-day experience was doing something good for the city. Our tag line is "Rise Together." We want to rise as a city together.

Soccer is the one sport with real global currency."

— Jeff Berding, FC Cincinnati President

How has FC Cincinnati impacted the economy in the Greater Cincinnati region?

BERDING: Ask the restaurants and bar owners in Clifton around Nippert Stadium. They would say we are a welcome addition to the social scene. That's good business. Think of all the hotels. We are bringing in people from out of town. You get the economic multiplier — Uber rides, bars, etc. If you're a worker and have a part-time job as usher or ticket taker, you're getting 17 matches a year to help provide for your family. When our business groups are recruiting international companies or talent, FC Cincinnati is often part of the pitch. Soccer is the one sport with real

global currency. People everywhere can relate to international football. They can come to Cincinnati and have a soccer team. It makes us seem a little less remote and foreign. We need things like FC Cincinnati. For Cincinnati, we have been a real positive impact.

What lessons can other MLS franchises learn from the success of FC Cincinnati?

BERDING: The biggest thing is that relevance is so critical. We used our three core values — and the fans know that winning is very important to us. If we did all of that, we knew that we would have the opportunity to build a successful brand.

How has FC Cincinnati integrated itself into the wider community of the city and region?

BERDING: A big part is by living our values. We are giving back. When the pandemic started, a lot of kids were getting their lunch at school. Many kids in the West End were in danger of missing meals. We started collecting donations and we have been funding those meals. In the West End, they never had youth soccer teams before. They now have the West End Pride complete with 10 teams. We also contribute in the leadership of the community. Our owners Carl Lindner and others are big-time leaders in the wider community. Our foundation is significant too. Over a million dollars last year were leveraged or invested in the community.

What do you like best about living and working in Cincinnati, Ohio?

BERDING: The best selling point for Cincinnati is that it's the biggest small town or the smallest big city in America. We have pro sports and a vibrant business community. The geography of the city is interesting. People can get to work in 15 or 20 minutes. You can bike to work. FC Cincinnati players are noticed in this market, and the people of Cincinnati are so nice to them. ▼



Photo: Getty Images

CINCINNATI'S UNIQUE COALITION 'FORGED OVER TIME'

by ADAM BRUNS
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Bruce Katz, director of the Nowak Metro Finance Lab at Drexel University's Lindy Institute for Urban Innovation, is best known as the founding director of the Brookings Institution's Metropolitan Policy Program and the author of "The New Localism: How Cities Can Thrive in the Age of Populism." He's been studying metro-area economies for nearly 30 years.

Katz says several things set Cincinnati apart, starting with a particularly strong network of chambers, large companies, philanthropies and universities. Moreover, there are large companies "that are fully committed not just to place, but to more inclusive growth, and have been for some time," he says. "The supplier diversity effort at P&G and Kroger, which is not a recent phenomenon, shows an understanding of how demographics are changing and an understanding of shared prosperity. Very few cities are able to start, capitalize, steward and sustain these kinds of initiatives over decades, and that's what Cincinnati has been doing.

"They don't crow about it much, but it's quite remarkable," he says. "They have a stick-to-it-iveness that sets them

apart from other places, and it's a manageable city in size and scale, with so many anchor institutions. It's a highly functional place in terms of multi-sector networks and relationships that have been forged over time."

Shared history takes time, but enables a community to react quickly in times of crisis, Katz says, and the current pandemic offers a case in point. Regions such as Cincinnati that have local capital invested locally and a strong cluster of intermediaries are able to pivot quickly and get things done.

"As we look to the future, we'll see even more reshoring of certain manufacturing," Katz says. "This whole crisis has reinforced the question of 'Why aren't we making these goods here?' Cincinnati is well positioned to continue to play that role," with a strong healthcare and life sciences sector, vibrant startups and accelerators, a diverse industry mix and a robust center city whose Over the Rhine district and other amenities compete with the assets of much larger cities. "Cincinnati is not a one-trick pony," says Katz.

Mostly, though, it's a region that's not performing tricks at all. It's just going about its work. Katz recalls a line from

singer Dolly Parton: "Find out who you are and do it on purpose." That sense of authenticity rings loud and clear in this tri-state region.

"One thing that makes Cincinnati such a unique and special place is large anchor institutions with a history of doubling down when things get tough," says Kimm Lauterbach, president and CEO of REDI Cincinnati. "We are a midsize city that feels a lot like a small town when it's time to get together."

Cincinnatians have been getting together in huge numbers at new MLS club FC Cincinnati's soccer matches. Not only did the team's arrival coincide perfectly with the Over the Rhine transformation and an infusion of millennials, but the team chose the West End, a historically disadvantaged community, for its stadium, and has been working to ensure opportunities for area residents. And it's been funded largely by individuals who just believe in the region, including non-resident Meg Whitman, who before her Silicon Valley ascent was a brand manager at P&G.

"It's just such a uniquely Cincinnati story," Lauterbach says. "It puts a bow on what Cincinnati has been doing over the last decade." ▼

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by ADAM BRUNS
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AMAZON HUB TURNS ECONOMIC GEARS

Photos courtesy of Amazon

air cargo thanks to DHL's hub operations there. In fact, as Amazon works toward its air hub's official opening in 2021, the company has worked with DHL in the interim, operating 18 aircraft and 36 daily flights out of CVG since May 2017.

"This hub is going to let us get packages to customers faster," said Amazon Founder and CEO Jeff Bezos. "That's a big deal."

CVG in 2019 became the eighth-largest cargo airport in North America. More than 700,000 tons of cargo pass through the airport annually.

The spinoff growth is concrete: Satco Inc., a manufacturer of Unit Load Devices (ULDs) and other equipment for commercial cargo and passenger aircraft, announced it will establish a new location in Miami Township, Ohio. FEAM Aero employs approximately 200 technicians who provide MRO services for DHL, Amazon, and passenger aircraft. A new \$19 million hangar will mean another 100 aircraft mechanic jobs. New York-based Atlas Air, contracted to fly for DHL and Amazon, is building a facility in Erlanger where the company plans to hire 600 workers over 10 years.

Those companies are part of an overall northern Kentucky economy that has recently welcomed job-creating investments from Fidelity Investments, Gentis Solutions and Step CG, among others, as an urban renaissance continues across such cities as Covington, Newport, Erlanger, Ft. Mitchell and Florence. Northern Kentucky Tri-ED is the economic development entity for Boone, Campbell and Kenton counties.

"Northern Kentucky Tri-ED is entering a transformative phase defined by substantial growth and development

of jobs, talent and the business environment," said Lee Crume, former global business development director for JobsOhio, when he took the helm as Tri-ED's president and CEO last spring.

New Transportation Secretary Not New to Air Cargo Impact

Even before Amazon Air's hub announcement, economic development investments helped accelerate progress on Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) plans to reduce congestion with major pavement and interchange improvements within a 10-mile radius of CVG.

At the KYTC helm is newly appointed Kentucky Secretary of Transportation Jim Gray, a former mayor of Lexington who was busy drumming up business for design-build firm Gray Construction in the 1980s when he found himself in the earliest UPS meetings about Louisville.

"Air cargo at that time was just emerging, and of course UPS was at the leading edge," Gray told me recently. "It seemed important at the time, but I don't think I realized how transformational it would be." Working with UPS all those years, "we have a better sense of what Amazon will be. The Cabinet has been working very closely with Amazon. I just had meetings examining the roads and highways in and around the facility at CVG ... We're even examining other opportunities to improve the transportation network in the area, so the workforce and the whole system will work as efficiently as possible."

The 40 years since UPS landed in Louisville have dramatically boosted that region. One look at the reach of Amazon in the world today and "you can quickly imagine," says Gray, "what it's going to mean for northern Kentucky." ▼

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-Site Selection Magazine, May 2020

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-BEA, 2018

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nation's
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coming tech
markets.

-Zillow, Inc., 2020

#3

The Northern Kentucky/
Greater Cincinnati
Airport (CVG) is ranked
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-Skytrax

#1

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major metros.

-Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2019

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Images courtesy of the University of Cincinnati



NEW DISTRICT IS NEXT CHAPTER IN 'NEXT LIVES HERE' STRATEGY

A conversation with University of Cincinnati Chief Innovation Officer David Adams

by ADAM BRUNS

adam.bruns@siteselection.com

In March, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine, Lt. Governor Jon Husted, JobsOhio, the University of Cincinnati and Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center announced a first-of-its-kind partnership designed to build, retain and attract talent to Ohio by formally introducing the Cincinnati Innovation District.

"The three most important elements to developing a vibrant, modern economy are innovation, talent and investment," said Lt. Governor Husted. "Great ideas must find a way from the lab to the marketplace if they are to improve the quality of life for the public and create jobs and economic opportunity. This innovation district will make this process faster and more effective."

JobsOhio will invest up to \$100 million that aims to foster over the next decade up to 15,000 STEM graduates as well as the execution of \$2 billion of research and real estate development within the District, ultimately resulting in an estimated 20,000 new jobs and \$3 billion of annual economic impact.

"We are humbled and inspired by

this historic investment in our Next Lives Here vision for talent, research and innovation," said UC President Neville Pinto.

UC developed an innovation district blueprint through the creation of the 1819 Innovation Hub and the 400,000-sq.-ft. Digital Futures complex, which already have attracted major corporations such as P&G and Kroger, small- and mid-sized companies and startups. It's in keeping with recent Brookings Institution research, based on data from AUTM (formerly the Association of University Technical Managers), that shows universities with a downtown presence punch above their weight. "They produce more patents (often twice as many), licensing agreements, licensing revenue and startups, given the size of their student populations, than those located in smaller 'college towns' and in suburban and rural areas," the report stated.

The new district is expected to attract significant investment in mixed-use

buildings that will provide office/lab, retail, housing and nightlife that will make the area attractive to job creation, private investment, and talent seeking an urban experience.

"The Cincinnati Innovation District is the next big thing for Cincinnati's growth," said Cincinnati Mayor John Cranley.

Leading the charge for that next big thing is David Adams, chief innovation officer at the University of Cincinnati and president of the 1819 Innovation Hub. He came there from overseeing the \$1.2 billion financial and operational aspects of the University of Louisville as chief administrative officer. Before that, he led the operational improvement and merger of Indiana's \$30 billion pension systems for Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels. In addition to those leadership roles in all the states comprising the Greater Cincinnati region, he was also a founding member of the executive team that grew i2 Technologies from \$4 million to \$1.1 billion in seven years, driving it to NASDAQ 50 status.

Adams recently responded to a few questions from Site Selection.



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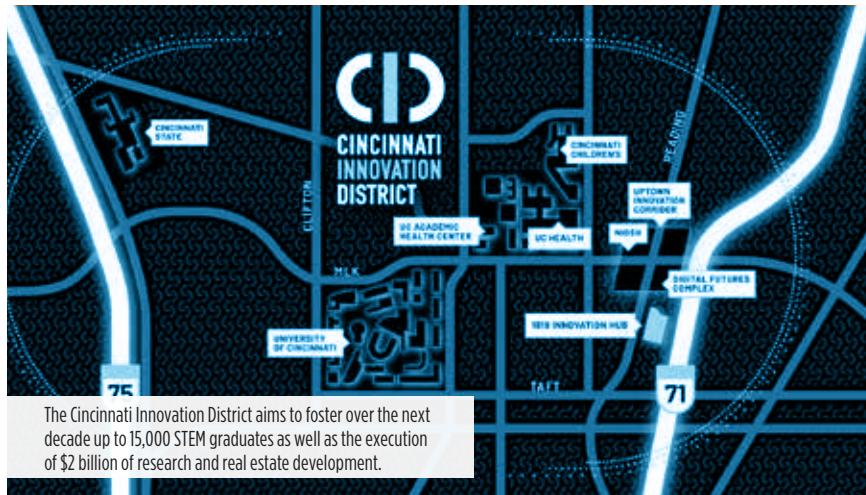
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Just as every region once tried to have its own brand of Silicon Valley or Bio Corridor, today it seems like innovation districts are everywhere. As you survey the landscape, which districts do you seek to emulate, and what makes them work?

University of Cincinnati Chief Innovation Officer

David Adams: Great question. We invested significant time researching and visiting innovation districts prior to launching the Cincinnati Innovation District. The successful ones have a common denominator – they are all anchored by major research institutions like the University of Cincinnati. Major research institutions, like universities and medical research centers, provide a significant supply of student and faculty talent. One keen observation is that talent is drawn to locations where innovation is occurring, and organizations are drawn to locations that have the talent. If you look at the cities where these successful districts are located, they are attracting talent and the organizations that seek that talent.

A powerful aspect for your newly announced district is the fact that, as in Philadelphia and a few other places, you have the partnership of a major healthcare institution. How does this distinguish your efforts?

David Adams: Having a Carnegie level-1 research institution and one of the

top healthcare research institutions located right next to one another is truly remarkable. It dramatically expands the solutions that we can bring to the problems that society faces – combined we conduct over \$450 million in research each year.



David Adams

I've talked to university leaders for many years about evolving approaches to loosening control of intellectual property (IP), and UC seems to have made that pivot as part of the Next Lives Here agenda. Tell me how you approached this.

David Adams: Like everything else we do, we went and asked faculty, investors like venture capitalists and companies about the impediments to engaging with our university around IP. We learned there were many, and sought to reduce or eliminate the friction. We worked with our partners and the university board to revise our policies and create standard agreements. From a corporate standpoint, companies can now own

the IP created with researchers — an innovative approach. This was a major issue with companies like Kroger and P&G who develop significant IP. No longer an issue.

We flipped the IP policy for faculty, giving them exclusive rights to their IP, and accelerated moving ideas from the lab to the marketplace. As for students, they now own their IP. Since these changes, we have experienced a 1000% increase in the number of startups generated from the university — a dramatic increase. As a further testimonial, UC is the blueprint for Lt. Governor Husted's "Ohio IP Promise," rolled out to all 14 state colleges and universities. We have essentially eliminated the friction, focusing our attention on solving partner problems.

Tell me how the time-tested coalition of institutions and anchor employers in Greater Cincinnati has stepped forward in support of this new district and the region's startup/entrepreneur culture.

David Adams: It's a team effort. We will accelerate our efforts with the launch of the Cincinnati Innovation District because of our partners. We are fortunate to have Fortune 500, small to mid-size and start-up companies headquartered here. Cincinnati is a highly collaborative community, and innovation requires collaboration. The Cincinnati Innovation District creates the ideal place to facilitate creative collisions between partners. Proximity matters.

Is there a sense that your Office of Innovation can not only spark commercialization and startups, but spark transformation in how UC operates too?

David Adams: Absolutely. With the recent announcement of the Cincinnati Innovation District and the \$100 million investment from our partner JobsOhio, we are accelerating our STEM graduates by 15,000 and research by \$2 billion. That is transformational for a university. We are rapidly moving

towards a "connected supply chain" — understanding our industry (customer) needs and connecting them with students and faculty (supplier), both at the university and at high schools. That is transformation too.

You've had considerable international experience. To what extent are innovation corridors, districts and hubs on the radar of FDI prospects from other countries?

David Adams: Earlier this year, I visited the innovation districts in Sydney and Melbourne, Australia. What resonated strongly with me is they view the "talent war" as a global competition. I received the same message when I visited the MaRS innovation district in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. We share a similar view with the Cincinnati Innovation District. We are driven by one mission:

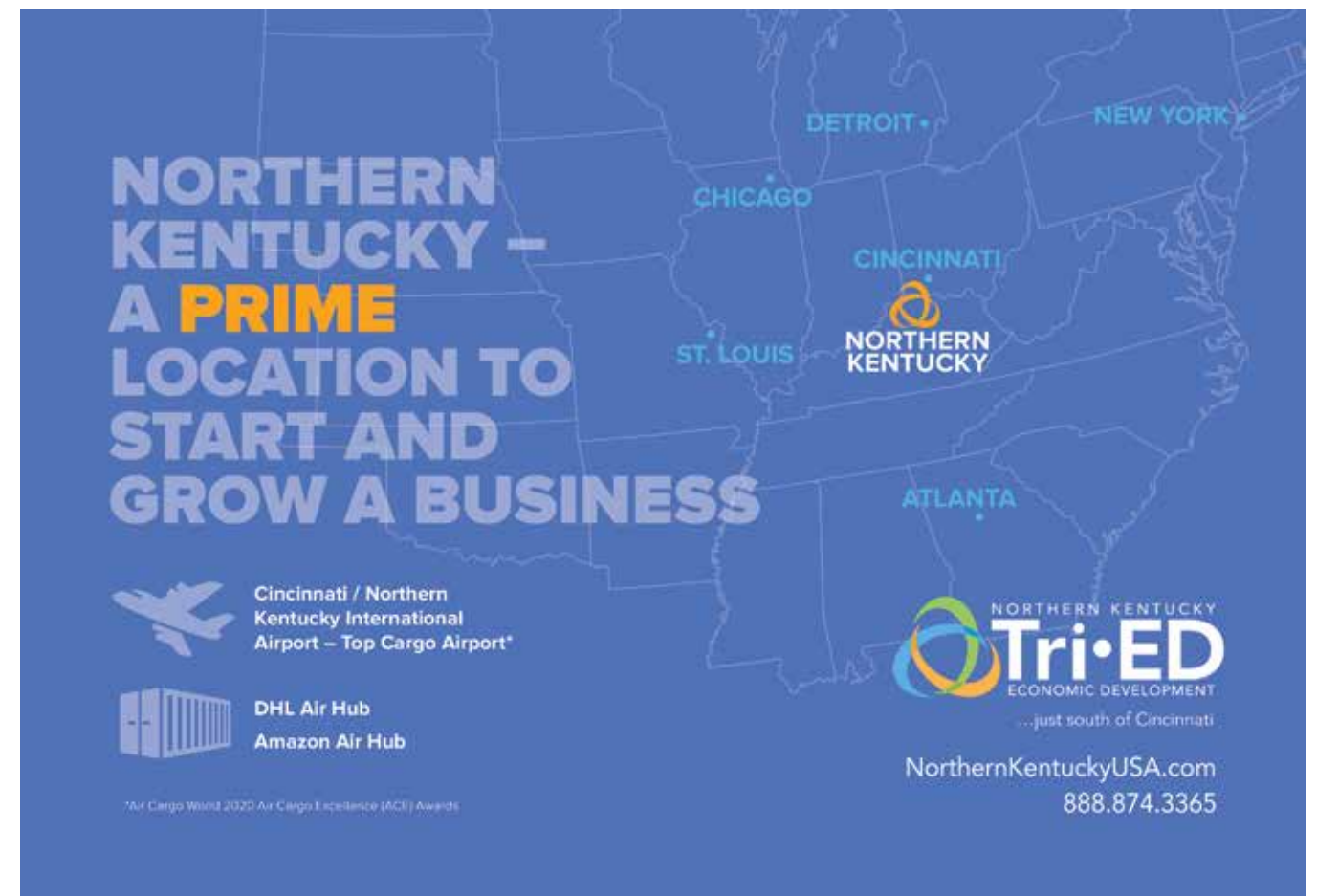
to solve the talent crisis. This is a global crisis. Our message to all companies around the world: Come to Cincinnati and we will solve your need for talent. We deliver on this promise for global companies already.

You have lived in a lot of places. What are the top few things you've discovered about Greater Cincinnati since you arrived?

David Adams: It's a very collaborative community with a can-do attitude and strong work ethic. Organizations are willing to work together for the greater good. My other key observation, having lived and worked many places around the world, is how great a city and region this is to live in. We are humble and hard-working in the Midwest, and have a tendency not to beat our chest. That is about to change. ▼



UC'S OFFICE OF INNOVATION AND THE 1819 INNOVATION HUB DROVE A 400% INCREASE IN STARTUPS OVER A RECENT ONE-YEAR PERIOD.



by ADAM BRUNS
adam.bruns@siteselection.com

CORNERING THE MARKET: SOUTHEAST INDIANA'S CRUCIAL ROLE IN THE CINCINNATI REGION

Image courtesy of One Dearborn, Inc.

The southeastern corner of Indiana combines industrial sites, low taxes, a reverse commute, full access to the Cincinnati MSA's labor shed and Indiana incentives with a unique quality of place. Corporate investors like the value they find in this often overlooked part of the Cincinnati region.

"Through careful analysis of each of their facilities, Anchor Glass Container Corporation decided to invest in the Greendale, Indiana, plant," Kyle Ferguson, regional controller for Anchor's Lawrenceburg and Elmira plants, tells Site Selection. "Anchor Glass was impressed with the active participation of and collaboration with various city parties including the Greendale Redevelopment Commission, Greendale Utilities, the City of Greendale and the mayor's office ... Their dedication to the community and to the success of the company played a major factor in Anchor's decision to invest in the Greendale plant."

Ferguson, who relocated to the Cincinnati area from central Texas 13 years ago, says the Cincinnati region allows "for a more reasonable cost of living while still providing the benefits of a large metropolis," including the unique

BLINK festival he and his wife recently enjoyed downtown. What his employer enjoys are ideal location assets.

"Dearborn County is ideally situated for business, especially for the container glass industry," he says. "We are located near a major rail yard in Cincinnati, the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport, and the I-75 corridor. This close proximity to a major rail & trucking routes in particular helps us avoid supply chain disruptions."

"In fact, the Indiana portion of the MSA is closer to Cincinnati's city center and the airport than several major suburbs that have seen rapid commercial development," notes Terri Randall, president and CEO, One Dearborn, Inc., the economic development organization formed in 2017 when Dearborn County's private businesses, public officials and not-for-profit leaders came together to create a vision for the future. "While not perfect for every project, there are some unique logistics, workforce, incentives and tax climate advantages that are worthy of deeper review."

Those advantages include greenfield industrial sites on the I-74 corridor.

"We rely on two community colleges within the region for training of our workforce — Ivy Tech in Lawrenceburg

and Gateway Community & Technical College in Kentucky," says Ferguson.

"Being a part of the Greater Cincinnati area also affords the opportunity to source talent from top tier universities for engineering and mechanical specialties."

Other companies expanding in the region include Whitewater Mills, Siemer Milling and GE aircraft engine parts supplier Polycraft. In 2014 polymer and composite parts and tooling firm Polycraft moved into its Greendale facility, 10 miles west of its first plant in Cleves, Ohio. Kay Landers, a company principal and the wife of company founder Tom Landers, says since expanding to the Greendale site, the company has grown from 54 employees to around 85. Economic development funds coming from the area's casino revenues were crucial to the incentive package. But just as crucial was the attitude.

"There is very little self-interest involved in working with people here," she says of area leaders. "The people are honest and direct."

Does a smaller community and bureaucracy mean faster permitting and regulatory approvals? "Absolutely," she says. "More people want to help you do what you need to do." ▼