



BUSINESS GROWTH

ALLEN COUNTY, INDIANA



**KARL LAPAN, PRESIDENT AND CEO**

BUSINESS PROFILE

## NORTHEAST INDIANA INNOVATION CENTER

### QUICK FACTS

Established:

1999

Total Employees:

10

Total Investment:

\$59 million

The Northeast Indiana Innovation Center (NIIC) is committed to putting business growth, innovation and entrepreneurship at the forefront of Northeast Indiana’s economic development. The Innovation Center was formed in December 1999 based on a partnership between the City of Fort Wayne, Allen County, the Greater Fort Wayne Chamber of Commerce and local community stakeholders who were committed to growing a more vibrant regional economy and community.

The Innovation Center is a business incubator and accelerator for high-growth entrepreneurs and their companies. As a non-profit, community based resource, the Innovation Center is dedicated to placing Northeast Indiana as a high-tech industry leader.

In addition to the incubator, the Innovation Center’s Emerging Growth Center offers state-of-the-art conferencing and training facilities available to the public for meetings, workshops, seminars, conferences and events.

### Executive Leadership

Karl LaPan, President & CEO of the Northeast Indiana Innovation Center, has been at the helm of the NIIC since October 2000. Appointed as the driver of innovation, LaPan has thrown himself tirelessly into the search for growth and development with the region. As a recognized

leader in the technology sector, LaPan has built a top team of individuals who continue to bring entrepreneurship to new heights.

“We have a rich history of innovation and entrepreneurship in Northeast Indiana,” says LaPan. “Much of the success of the Innovation Center is due to Dr. Mike Mirro, our founding Board Chair and nationally renowned cardiologist. He provided the visionary leadership that created the foundation and crafted the vision and mission for the Innovation Center.”

### Location, Location, Location

It is no surprise that the Innovation Center’s campus is located in Northeast Indiana’s high tech corridor. The NIIC’s 55-acre parcel of land is adjacent to Indiana-Purdue University Fort Wayne (IPFW), Indiana University’s

# INNOVATION CENTER NORTHEAST INDIANA

3201 Stellhorn Road, Fort Wayne, IN 46815  
Phone: 260 492-6442 / Web: Nicc.net



regional School of Medicine, the IPFW Center for Industrial Innovation & Design and Ivy Tech Community College, which features a 167,000 square-foot technology center on their own campus.

“There was a recognition that the best research parks are located in higher education corridors,” said LaPan. “That’s an important element to the success of any incubation or technology park. We draw upon our neighboring resources for Subject Matter Experts, students that want to be entrepreneurs, capstone learning projects, service learning projects and applied learning projects. All those things are fostered by being in an environment like ours.”

In addition, Northeast Indiana has a rich history as a source of innovation. The television, handheld calculator, electric washer and the world’s first annuity product, among other great inventions, all originated here.

“All of these things are innovations that are born from the great inventive capacity of Northeast Indiana,” said LaPan.

## Planting the Seeds

Capitalizing on the entrepreneurial spirit of the local community, the Innovation Center has become the region’s premier technology business incubator. Housing 36 current companies and boasting a dozen graduates, the business incubator has solidified the center’s dedication to building business and community success.

As capital becomes mobile and ideas become portable, businesses will blossom where infrastructure and amenities exist to support their business. The Innovation Center’s incubator is a prime example of this trend. Several major successes have graduated out of the Innovation Center.

“By and large, incubators are not necessarily a recruitment tool. But there are companies here that have moved to the region from Warsaw, Hamilton County, even Pennsylvania and Michigan,” said LaPan. “The incubator is designed to grow the hometown team and the resources here. We are part of the benefits to businesses that move to the area.”

Businesses gain admission to the incubator through an application process. The criteria include a look at a company’s gaps, strengths and milestones.

“In our process, we look at how coachable you are as a business, if you’re in a technology cluster identified by the state, and whether you are a positive leader in your industry,” said LaPan.

## EXPANSION OF INNOVATION CENTER

**25,000** SQ. FT.  
GLOBAL DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY CENTER

**17,000** SQ. FT.  
CENTER FOR LEADERSHIP IN ADVANCED MANUFACTURING AND PERFORMANCE (CLAMP)



ISO 9001:2000 CERTIFIED TECHNOLOGY & RESEARCH CENTER



TOTAL CURRENT ACREAGE: **55 ACRES** (27.5 AVAILABLE FOR EXPANSION)



TARGET COMPLETION: **END OF 2010**



**412**

**JOBS CREATED**

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## KEY PLAYERS

**THE CITY OF FORT WAYNE,  
ALLEN COUNTY**

**THE GREATER FORT WAYNE  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

**INDIANA-PURDUE UNIVERSITY  
FORT WAYNE (IPFW)**

These key players were all partners of the Innovation Center at its inception. Called the Founding Partners, they raised the initial seed money needed to get the organization off the ground.

## FACTORS

- 1 THE ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT OF THE COMMUNITY**
- 2 HIGHER EDUCATION PARTNERS**
- 3 GRANTS FROM THE 21ST CENTURY SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY FUND, OLIVE B. COLE FOUNDATION AND THE ENGLISH, BONTER, MITCHELL FOUNDATION**

## INCENTIVES

**IN JULY 2009, THE INDIANA GENERAL ASSEMBLY APPROPRIATED \$10 MILLION FOR THE INNOVATION CENTER EXPANSION PROJECT.**

## Positive Future Growth

In July 2009 the Innovation Center received funds to create an expansion of their existing campus. The latest expansion is a 25,000 square-foot Global Design & Technology Center that will support an anchor client yet to be named by Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels. While details are shrouded in secrecy, LaPan offered his thoughts on the new center.

“What is impressive is that this will be a headquarters operation for a division of a company in terms of how it interfaces with their counterparts in India, Mexico, China and other locations. This is a leadership technology that we have a core competency in. We have people in our community who have the kind of knowledge base that is essential to hire for these jobs. It’s a way for us to have a global center of significance where a lot of the research and development or the applied development work will be done right here in Fort Wayne.”

The second building in the Innovation Center’s expansion plan is a 17,000 square-foot Center for Leadership in

Advanced Manufacturing and Performance (CLAMP). This facility will focus on supply chain, incubation for advanced technologies, high-performance manufacturing and co-development of early pre-production units of different manufacturing technologies.

CLAMP creates a place for companies to go for improvement in innovation, process, product and business model while students can get certificates in advanced manufacturing, building the skilled workforce of the region.

While the NIIC campus continues to grow, it won’t stop any time soon, promises LaPan. The campus currently occupies only half of its existing space, paving the way for future growth.

## Certification Is Key

The Innovation Center is the only ISO 9001:2000 certified incubation program in North America and one of only 19 certified technology parks located in the state of Indiana. According to LaPan, these certifications make the center stand out in a special way.

## NORTHEAST INDIANA INNOVATION CENTER



**\$7.6 million**  
TOTAL PAYROLL



**170**  
NEW PRODUCTS  
LAUNCHED



**61**  
NEW PATENTS



**12**  
COMPANIES  
GRADUATED FROM  
CENTER INCUBATOR

“We recognized that we needed a quality management system to ensure that we could get good results for area entrepreneurs and businesses, so we went through the ISO certification process. And in terms of our tech park certification, Indiana needed to bring a lot of visibility to technology so that people understood what great things were happening here.”

## BizWiz: Training Future Entrepreneurs

The Innovation Center’s BizWiz program helps university and high school students plan, launch and operate their own technology business ventures, all while they are completing school.

Research shows the majority of students dream about starting their own business, but very few actually do. The NIIC formed BizWiz to give students the support they need to start a business and be successful.

Student entrepreneurs receive the same support provided to all Innovation Center entrepreneurs. BizWiz students may become eligible for acceleration grants, internships and even resident space in the center’s Student Venture Lab.

## Measurable Successes

The Innovation Center’s vision is to become a dynamic technology, research and growth center that creates, attracts and retains high-quality jobs, enhances learning at all educational levels and contributes to the vitality and competitiveness of our community.

At the Innovation Center, measurable successes are important, providing data to gather grants and resources to further their work in building economic development of the region.

The ways the center currently measures success are tied to:

- Number of jobs
- Average wage rate per job
- Total payroll

At the incubator level, the NIIC measures:

- Survivability
- Retention
- Growth

“Our fundamental economic livelihood depends on small businesses,” said LaPan. The vast majority of businesses in Northeast Indiana are businesses of 20 employees or less. That means 86-89% of business in the region is small business. That’s a huge number to consider.”

## Live, Work, Learn: “A Vision for the High Tech Corridor of Northeast Indiana”

After a solid start, the Innovation Center celebrated a decade of entrepreneurship. The center continues to pave the path to continued prosperity for Northeast Indiana.

LaPan cites the strong work ethic of our region’s workforce, the high quality of life, low cost of living and innovation in critical industries as key factors to Northeast Indiana’s continued success.

“Strong engineering, defense cluster, advanced manufacturing, food processing, bio-science and computer technology are the growth industries of our region,” says LaPan. “Innovation in these industries provides the springboard for why people can start companies here and do well in our region. The center allows companies to leverage resources that are complementary to what they want to achieve. We are part of the toolkit for the region to market itself, and I think that’s a positive.” ■

