

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

6.1 Introduction

The health of a community's economy is critical in providing opportunities for residents to work and businesses to thrive. A strong economy also helps ensure the stability of the tax base and fiscal health of the municipality. Though "economic development" is often taken to mean the physical development of jobs-producing spaces in a community, true economic development improves the quality of life for residents, workers, and visitors. The factors that individuals and businesses consider when making decisions about where to locate and invest include existing employment and job types, the nature of established and growing industries, the real estate market, property tax rates, and the needs and abilities of the local population. A comprehensive understanding of these existing conditions allows for the creation of forward-looking economic policies and interventions.

This chapter provides a detailed analysis of the demographic, economic, and real estate trends that are working to shape and drive Lincoln's economy. Since the town's local economy is influenced by the larger region and proximity to Providence, the analysis also compares the Town of Lincoln to Providence County.

6.2 Context/Existing Conditions

Lincoln is a suburban town located in Northeast Rhode Island, north of Providence. Its economy has historically been based on small village-based business centers. Lincoln benefits from regional highway access, including Routes 295, Routes 146, and Routes 116, facilitating efficient regional and national market access.

Lincoln's continued population growth reflects its reputation as a healthy community with a positive economic climate. With proximity to Providence, residents and employers in Lincoln have access to a diverse workforce, educational institutions, and cultural amenities. Additionally, the Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce is active in Lincoln and supports businesses with resources, provides workforce development opportunities, and events/networking opportunities in tandem with communities in Northern Rhode Island and Massachusetts.

6.2.1 *Population Trends*

Age Distribution

The total population for the Town of Lincoln was 21,486 in 2016 and grew to 22,415 according to the U.S Census Bureau; with a net increase in population of 929 persons (+4.3%). Lincoln's population gain was higher than the states, as Rhode Island had a population increase of 37,458 (+3.6%).

In comparison to both Providence County and Rhode Island Lincoln has a larger proportion of residents both under 18 years- old and over 65-years-old. Lincoln's median age of 43 is higher than both Providence County (37.5 years) and Rhode Island (40 years). According to Table 6-1, since the 2016 5-year ACS, the population has begun to skew older, with increases in residents over 65 years old. Overall, the median age in Lincoln increased by 1.4 years over that period. Lincoln had decreases in residents ages 25-34 years and 45-54 years, which are both part of critical family household and workforce age groups.

Table 6-1 Population Age Composition						
	Lincoln		Providence County		Rhode Island	
	2021	2016-2021 % Change	2021	2016-2021 % Change	2021	2016-2021 % Change
Under 18	23%	3%	21%	-2%	19%	-6%
18 to 24	8%	7%	11%	-9%	10%	-5%
25 to 34	11%	-7%	15%	18%	14%	18%
35 to 44	12%	7%	13%	-3%	12%	-8%
45 to 54	13%	-5%	13%	-8%	13%	-12%
55 to 64	13%	2%	13%	25%	14%	22%
65+	20%	20%	15%	19%	17%	25%

Source: 2016 and 2021 5-yr ACS

Educational Attainment

The educational attainment of the resident population is something many businesses consider when choosing where to locate. The availability of a suitably skilled workforce is one factor, and for consumer-facing businesses the spending potential of the local population – heavily influenced by income and education – is another factor.

Nearly 45% of Lincoln residents aged 25 or older have a bachelor's degree or higher, which is a higher percentage than those in Providence County (31%) and the state (35%). Lincoln residents are also more likely to have at least a high school diploma than county and state residents. Lincoln is fairly well educated, and residents are continuing to get more education. Similar to county and state trends, from 2016 to 2021 the number of residents with a bachelor's degree (+21%) or graduate/professional degree (+36%) increased significantly, with a decrease in residents with only a high school diploma/GED equivalency (-4%), as shown in Table 6-2.

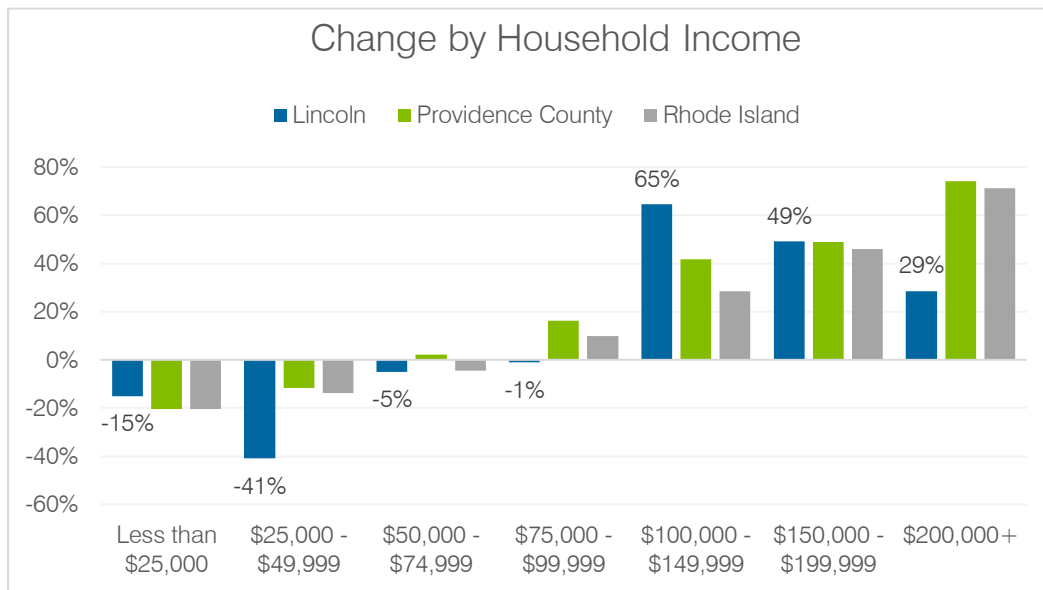
Table 6-2 Educational Attainment				
Level of Educational Attainment	2016	2021	Actual Change	% Change
No High School Diploma	1,313	1,322	+9	1%
H.S. Diploma or GED Equivalency	4,035	3,866	-169	-4%
Associates or Some College	4,034	3,427	-607	-15%
Bachelor's degree	3,581	4,317	+736	21%
Graduate or Professional Degree	1,943	2,632	+689	36%

Source: 2016 and 2021 5-yr ACS

Household Income

As mentioned above, many consumer-facing businesses such as retailers and restaurants may strongly consider local median incomes when deciding where to locate, particularly regional or national chains with specific site selection criteria. In Lincoln, the median household income is \$94,571, compared to the county and the state which have median incomes of \$65,797 and \$74,489, respectively. Visually represented in Figure 6-1, income growth in Lincoln was higher than both the county and the state between 2016 and 2021: median income grew by 44% locally versus 30% and 28% respectively.

Figure 6-2: Change by Household Income



Source: 2016 and 2021 5-yr ACS

The largest income bracket cohort is in households making \$100,000-\$149,000, accounting for 24% of total households. This group grew by 774 households (65%) between 2016 and 2021. Residents making less than \$100,000 decreased by a net of 1,007 residents. While the change for residents making \$200,000+ (29%) in Lincoln was lower than both the county and the state, the proportion of residents out of the total population making \$200,000+ is higher at 13% of the total population. Lincoln initially had a higher proportion of residents making more than \$200,000, which continued to grow. The largest decrease was in households making \$25,000-\$49,999, which saw a decrease of 41% or 751 households. The positive trend of increasing incomes signals a more affluent consumer base that can attract businesses. However, the decrease in households making less than \$74,999 may indicate strategies are needed to address income disparities and ensure sustained growth that benefits a diverse range of residents.

	2016	2021	Actual Change	% Change
Less than \$25,000	1,204	1,023	-181	-15%
\$25,000 - \$49,999	1,839	1,088	-751	-41%

\$50,000 - \$74,999	1,331	1,266	-65	-5%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	993	983	-10	-1%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	1,200	1,974	+774	65%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	615	918	+303	49%
\$200,000+	818	1,052	+234	29%

Source: 2016 and 2021 5-yr ACS

6.2.2 Labor Force

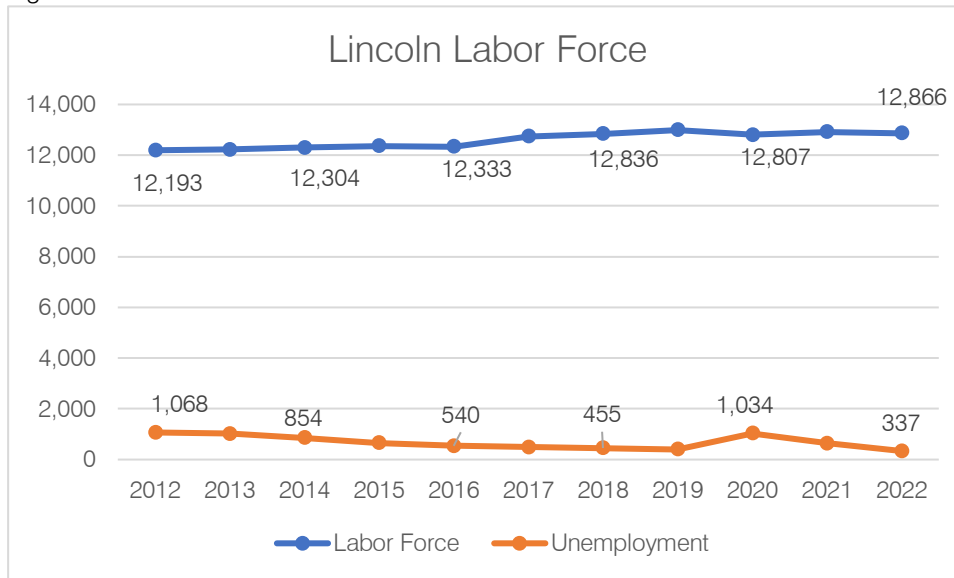
Table 6-4 shows the 2022 annual average labor force and unemployment statistics of Lincoln and Rhode Island. Educational attainment and income are two factors in understanding the preparedness and availability of workers; the overall level of engagement of workers in the local economy is also very influential. Two measures commonly examined regarding worker engagement are labor force participation and unemployment rates. The labor force participation rate measures the percentage of the population aged 16 and over who are either employed or actively looking for employment. If this number is low, then there may be some elasticity in the labor market; if it is already high, then there may not be much flexibility and there are likely few options for employers looking to hire. Likewise, particularly low unemployment would suggest a strong labor market, which is good news for workers but may make hiring a challenge for businesses.

Table 6-4 Labor Force & Employment					
	Labor Force	Labor Force Participation Rate	Labor Force, Employed	Labor Force, Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
Lincoln	12,866	97.4%	12,529	337	2.6%
Rhode Island	569,455	96.8%	551,220	18,235	3.2%

Source: RIDLT, 2022

The labor force is the number of people who are either working or actively looking for work. According to the Rhode Island Department of Labor (RIDLT) shown in Table 6-4, in 2022 Lincoln had a labor force of 12,866, with 377 residents unemployed and an unemployment rate of 2.6%. This was the lowest annual average unemployment rate in the last decade. The local and state unemployment rates are within the range of what economists consider to be “full employment,” which indicates that people who are actively looking for jobs have found them. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, unemployment decreases as educational attainment increases. This can lead to increased

Figure 6-3: Lincoln Labor Force



Source: RIDLT, 2023

wages as employers compete for talent, but it is an indicator that there is very little slack in the labor market and hiring is likely a challenge.

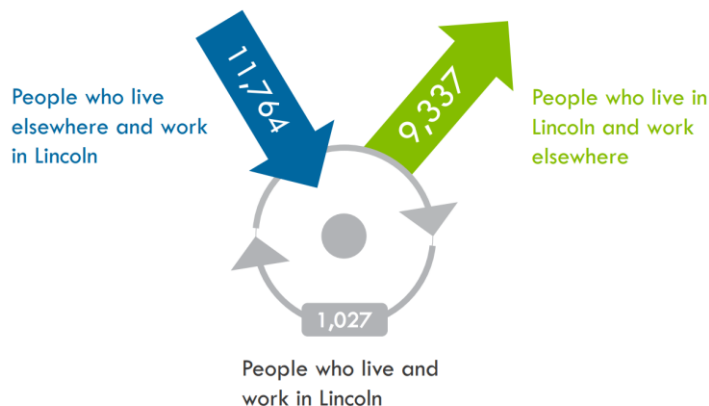
Figure 6-3 illustrates a relatively stable labor force population from 2012-2022, with a visible increase in unemployment in 2020 during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. From 2012 to 2019, the labor force steadily increased from 12,193 to 12,988, paired with a lower unemployment rate. While 2020 and 2021 saw high rates of unemployment, the labor force remained steady. Lincoln’s labor force participation rates have fully recovered to pre-pandemic levels, following county and state trends.

6.2.3 Local Employment

Commuting Patterns

Commuting patterns have important implications for economic development. Changes in the daytime population related to the inflow and outflow of workers and residents impact the viability and types of retail and other amenities in a community. Furthermore, the sources and destinations of workers can suggest opportunities for filling gaps in Lincoln – in housing that is accessible to workers, or in industries that align with residents' skills.

Figure 6-4: Commuting Inflow-Outflow



Source: US Census LEHD, OnTheMap, 2020

Overall, Lincoln is both a hub for employment and housing. According to OnTheMap in Figure 6-4, over 2,400 more people entered town to head to work than left on a given day. Roughly 1,000 people both live and work in Lincoln, with most residents working somewhere outside of Lincoln.

As shown in Figure 6-5, the most common sources of workers in Lincoln are Providence, Pawtucket, and Cranston. More than 1,400 people travel from Providence to Lincoln to go to work, followed by about 800 people from Pawtucket. About 19% of Lincoln's working residents commute to Providence as the major regional employment hub, followed by Pawtucket (6% of Lincoln's labor force work within Lincoln), and about 540 residents commute to Warwick. These figures suggest that Lincoln is

Figure 6-5: Commuting Patterns for Workers in Lincoln & Lincoln Residents

Home Area (Workers in Lincoln)		Count of Workers		Share	
Providence, RI		1,449		11.3%	
Pawtucket, RI		848		6.6%	
Warwick, RI		774		6.1%	
Woonsocket, RI		739		5.8%	
Cranston, RI		593		4.6%	
East Providence, RI		451		3.5%	
Boston, MA		301		2.4%	
Attleboro, MA		262		2.0%	
Cumberland Hill, RI		203		1.6%	
Valley Falls, RI		176		1.4%	

Work Destination Area (Lincoln Residents)		Count of Workers		Share	
Providence, RI		2,043		19.7%	
Cranston, RI		589		5.7%	
Warwick, RI		543		5.2%	
East Providence, RI		484		4.7%	
Pawtucket, RI		446		4.3%	
Boston, MA		298		2.9%	
Woonsocket, RI		290		2.8%	
Fall River, MA		204		2.0%	
Attleboro, MA		132		1.3%	
Greenville, RI		125		1.2%	

Source: US Census LEHD, OnTheMap, 2020

both a robust employment hub and a top residential choice for jobs in nearby communities and is closely tied to the regional economy.

Table 6-5 Employment by Industry, 2-digit NAICS

2-Digit NAICS	2013 Jobs	2023 Jobs	2013 – 2023 Change	2013 – 2023 % Change	2023 Location Quotient	Average Earnings per Job
Finance & Insurance	2,219	2,447	228	10%	3.04	\$122,355
Manufacturing	1,795	2,296	501	28%	1.79	\$69,121
Accommodation & Food Services	850	2,005	1,155	136%	1.35	\$29,693
Government	1,207	1,271	64	5%	0.65	\$34,140
Health Care & Social Assistance	866	1,259	393	45%	0.50	\$76,534
Construction	625	861	236	38%	1.35	\$82,281
Professional & Technical Services	656	825	169	26%	0.87	\$118,286
Retail Trade	796	712	-84	-11%	0.48	\$42,782
Administrative Support & Waste Management.	287	697	410	143%	0.81	\$65,264
Wholesale Trade	640	565	-75	-12%	1.10	\$110,450
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	1,391	433	-958	-69%	2.22	\$28,387
Information	272	393	121	44%	2.11	\$83,259
Transportation & Warehousing	438	369	-69	-16%	1.02	\$54,591
Other services (except Public Administration)	195	347	152	78%	0.64	\$28,582
All Others	569	618	49	9%		
Total	12,440	14,189	1,749	14%		

Source: RIDLT 2023, Lightcast 2023

Employment by Industry

According to RIDLT, in the first quarter of 2023, Lincoln hosted 14,189 jobs, a 14% increase from the 12,440 jobs in 2013. As displayed in Table 6-5, the largest industry by employment in the town is Finance & Insurance with 2,447 jobs. Manufacturing and Accommodation & Food Services are also significant industries, each employing between 2,300 and 2,000 people.

The largest growth in Lincoln is in Administrative Support & Waste Management and Accommodation & Food Services, with growth in employment over the last decade, up 143 and 136%, or 410 and 1,155 jobs, respectively. Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation had the largest decrease (69% or 958 jobs) since 2013. A portion of the increase in Accommodation & Food Services was due to the added Twin River Hotel in 2018, as well as expanded food services in Bally's

Twin River casino. The top five industries, Finance & Insurance, Manufacturing, Accommodation & Food Services, Government, and Health Care & Social Assistance are all experiencing growth.

Location Quotients

Location quotients (LQs) compare employment by industry in two or more geographic areas. The location quotient is a ratio of the percentage of an industry's employment in one geography to that of a larger comparison geography. If the ratio falls between 0.80 and 1.20, then the proportion of jobs is very similar in both geographies. If the ratio is less than 0.80, then the identified industry sector is thought to be under-represented in the local economy. Conversely, a ratio greater than 1.20 can show a specialty within the local economy as compared to the larger geography.

Location quotient can be useful in identifying opportunities for certain industry sectors to gain a larger share of the employment base or to indicate when a community may be heavily reliant on one or two industry sectors. In some cases, a high location quotient may indicate a specialty area in the local economy. The comparison geography used for Lincoln in this instance was Rhode Island.

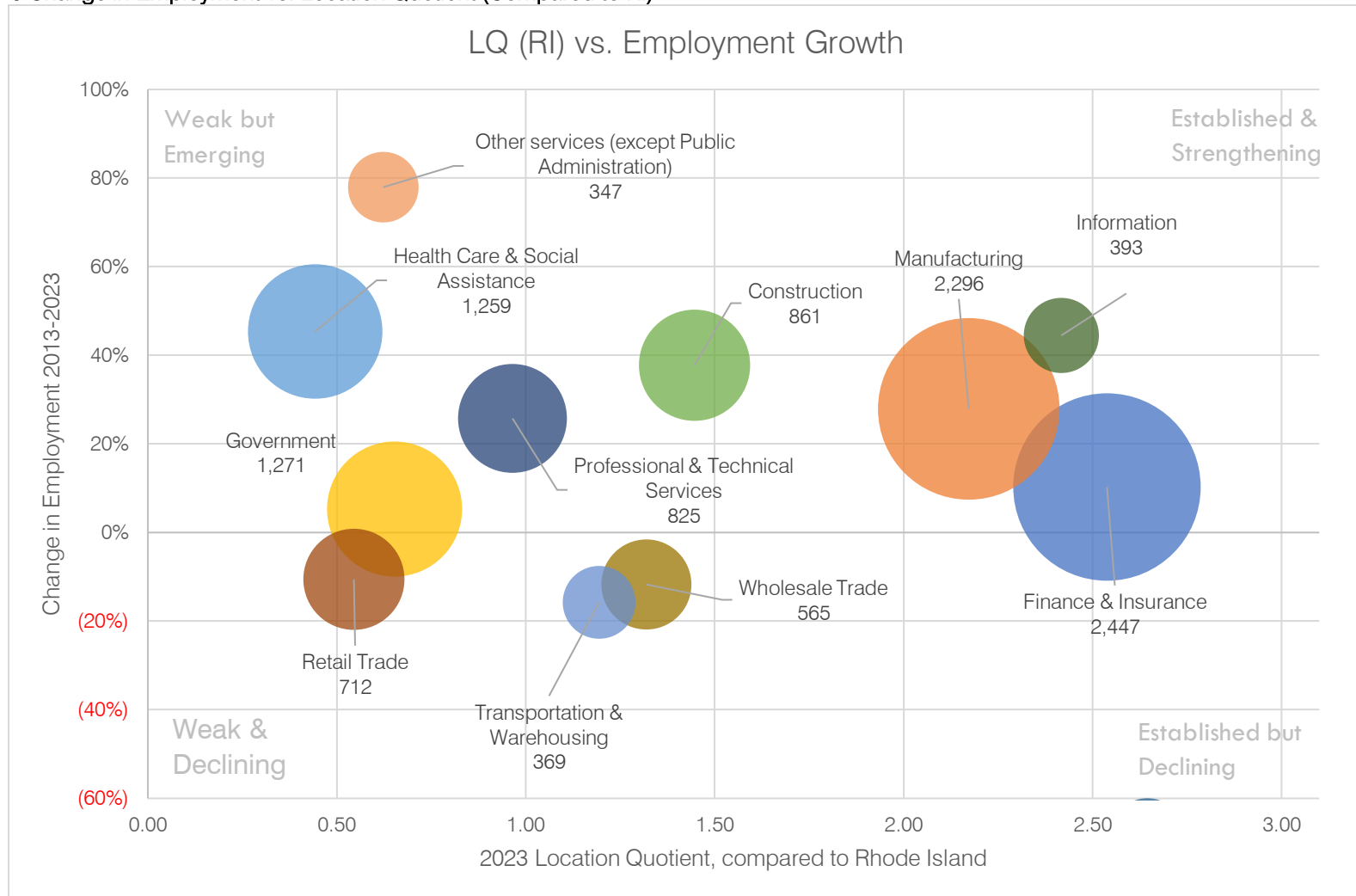
Lincoln has several industries that are over-represented compared to regional employment estimates, represented in Figure 6-6. Finance & Insurance leads in this category, with an LQ of 3.04, meaning that jobs in this industry are 3 times as common in Lincoln as in Rhode Island. Other industries experiencing a local competitive advantage include Manufacturing, Accommodation & Food Services, Arts Entertainment & Recreation, Information, and Construction. Most larger industries in Lincoln are growing, and well-established industries are also experiencing solid growth.

However, Transportation & Warehousing and Arts, Entertainment & Recreation are strong locally but are both declining industry sectors by 16% and 11% respectively.

Lincoln does face challenges in certain sectors where the employment landscape is shrinking or declining. Retail Trade, for instance, exhibits a location quotient of 0.55, indicating that this industry is under-represented in comparison to Rhode Island.

While Lincoln enjoys a competitive advantage in several thriving industries, acknowledging and addressing the challenges posed by declining sectors is crucial for achieving a balanced and sustainable economic development strategy. Balancing growth opportunities in leading industries with targeted interventions in shrinking sectors will contribute to the overall resilience and prosperity of Lincoln's economy.

Figure 6-6 Change in Employment vs. Location Quotient (Compared to RI)



Source: Lightcast, Industry Report, 2023.4 datarun

Table 6-6 Largest Employers		
Company	Sector	Number of Employees
ACS Industries, Inc.	Manufacturing	4,200
Amica Insurance	Finance and Insurance	3,700
Costa	Manufacturing	3,000
PharmaCare Management Services Inc.	Healthcare	1,500
Bally's Twin River Casino	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	700
Tanuary	Manufacturing	200
Greystone of Lincoln	Manufacturing	200
Pare Corporation	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	180
Gem Plumbing and Heating	Administrative and Support and Waste Management Services	201
Maccoll YMCA	Health Care and Social Assistance	200
Greystone of Lincoln	Manufacturing	200
Materion Technical Materials	Manufacturing	200
Bicc General	Manufacturing	200

Source: Zippia 2023, Lightcast 2023

6.2.4 Local Businesses & Largest Employers

The largest employers in Lincoln reflect the retail, manufacturing, and government-focused industries that operate in the town. According to Zippia (career and job search platform) and Lightcast (labor market analytics platform), the largest employer in Lincoln is ACS Industries, employing 4,200 people. Table 6-6 shows a full listing of the top thirteen largest employers in Lincoln.

Reflecting employment trends from Lightcast, retail, and manufacturing are the largest market within Lincoln. According to Moody's Analytics REIS (economic research and financial modeling platform with real estate and market analytics data) in the past decade, the number of commercial buildings has not had substantial increases, with the most recent commercial building built in 2015. As shown in Table 6-7, office properties have the most recent average year built (1970) but have not had any recent construction, with the most recent office property type built in 2011. Some of the aging office properties may suggest outdated and aging infrastructure that lack the amenities modern businesses require. Some larger companies may have renovated the space within older buildings.

Table 6-7 Real Estate Markets					
Category	Number of Properties	Average SF	Total SF	Average Year Built	Rent /SF
Office	29	31,498	881,942	1970	\$18.02
Retail	52	28,370	1,333,405	1964	\$25.53
Warehouse	22	49,990	1,099,788	1961	\$4.59

/Distribution					
Flex/R&D	11	31,630	347,935	1933	-
Industrial	54	41,001	2,050,025	1944	-

Source: Moody's Analytics REIS, 2023

6.2.5 Property Tax Rates

Tax rates are an important consideration that businesses, and even individuals, evaluate when making choices about where to locate. While low property taxes can help attract businesses and residents, limited funding can result in insufficient provision of public services and amenities, inhibiting a town's ability to remain competitive with its neighboring communities. In most communities, property taxes represent a sizable majority of municipal revenues.

Lincoln's residential and commercial/industrial tax rates are displayed in Table 6-8, along with similar and abutting communities to Lincoln. Lincoln's residential and commercial tax rates fall within the middle range compared to neighboring towns and cities. Additionally, Lincoln has the second lowest personal property tax rate, only higher than Cumberland.

Table 6-8 FY 2023 Municipal Tax Rates			
Municipality	Real Estate	Commercial	Personal Property
Lincoln	\$16.45	\$24.68	\$30.00
Johnston	\$23.24	\$28.34	\$64.34
Smithfield	\$13.36	\$18.70	\$59.74
Pawtucket	\$16.58	\$29.02	\$52.09
Woonsocket	\$13.98	\$25.94	\$46.58
Cumberland	\$14.99	\$14.99	\$29.98

Source: RI Division of Municipal Finance, FY2023

6.2.6 Commercial/Industrial Districts & Corridors

The COVID-19 pandemic created challenges for commercial districts across the country. There was a plateau of commercial activity during quarantines, lockdowns, and a continued rise in the use of online shopping and online platforms for ordering goods, services, food, and beverages. These challenges have led to small business closures, altered consumer behavior with a preference for online shopping, and potential declines in community vibrancy. Recognizing and addressing these issues is vital for economic recovery, small business support, adapting to changing market dynamics, and preparing for future crises.

Lincoln's office buildings range in size, with many office tenants occupying space in retail centers, while others are residential home-to-office conversions. There are an assortment of multi-tenant office spaces built in the last twenty years. The main retail center in Lincoln is in the Lincoln Mall in Lincoln Commons on George Washington Highway, with 35 stores consisting of chain retail, services, and restaurants. Recently, more commercial establishments have popped up in the surrounding area. Additionally, there are strip shopping malls near Cumberland. In the Lonsdale Village, the Front Street commercial area has smaller local businesses and the Lincoln Shopping Center.

6.3 Issues and Opportunities

6.3.1 *Issues*

The increase in the median age of Lincoln's population may lead to potential labor force challenges as the workforce ages, necessitating strategies to attract younger workers and retain local talent.

Some of the town's largest employers, like ACS Industries (Manufacturing), have a concentration in specific industries, which poses a risk to the community as there may be a lack of diversity. Economic diversification may be necessary to reduce vulnerability to fluctuations in these industries. Lincoln is a growing employment hub with stability in the labor force. However, the limited number of commercial properties, particularly in the office space category, could hinder the town's ability to attract diverse industries. Aligning available spaces with the needs of growing sectors, such as finance and manufacturing, becomes crucial for fostering a dynamic economic landscape.

6.3.2 *Opportunities*

Lincoln possesses a significant asset in its highly educated residents, with nearly 45% holding a bachelor's degree or higher. This educational advantage provides a foundation for fostering a skilled and adaptable workforce. Additionally, Lincoln's dual role as both an employment hub and a sought-after residential location presents a unique opportunity. The town should strategically capitalize on this asset by encouraging businesses to establish a presence in Lincoln, benefiting from the well-educated talent pool. Incentives for Lincoln residents to work locally should be explored, aiming to reduce commuting times and enhance the appeal of Lincoln as a place to both live and work.

The town's economic growth is evident in sectors like finance, insurance, and manufacturing. To further diversify the economic landscape, Lincoln should actively support businesses in these thriving sectors. This strategic encouragement contributes to a more robust and varied economic environment.

A proactive approach to real estate development is crucial. The creation of more commercial and industrial properties could enable Lincoln to meet the needs of growing businesses in the region. Diversifying existing available space has the potential to attract a broader range of industries, which will contribute to the town's economic growth. With the lack of available land and the high cost of land in Lincoln, it's imperative to recognize these barriers as crucial factors shaping the town's future economic development. The focus must shift towards the redevelopment of existing buildings and the more efficient utilization of current commercial areas. As the town navigates through limited land resources, emphasizing sustainable growth strategies becomes paramount.

Mixed-use development offers a strategy to promote both housing and commercial development simultaneously. By creating synergy between residential and commercial areas, Lincoln can attract a more diverse range of businesses. This approach not only increases the town's appeal but also fosters a sense of community and walkability. The historical villages within Lincoln, such as Manville, Albion, Lime Rock, Quinville, Lonsdale, Saylesville, and Fairlawn, serve as vital components in this strategy. These villages, each with their unique history and character, can contribute to the mixed-use vision by preserving historical architecture, providing spaces for local businesses, and promoting a vibrant and interconnected community. Additionally, the existing infrastructure and

community facilities in these villages can be integrated into the overall development plan, offering amenities and services that enhance the overall quality of life for residents and businesses alike.

By focusing on leveraging its educated workforce, promoting local employment, supporting growing industries, expanding real estate options, rejuvenating commercial districts, and embracing mixed-use developments, Lincoln's can increase its competitiveness as a place to do business. This comprehensive approach positions Lincoln for sustained economic success and an enhanced quality of life for its residents.

6.4 Goals and Policies

Goals and their corresponding policies reflect the desired changes of Lincoln residents for the next ten years, as gathered from a public workshop held in May 2024. Building off the high employment rate of the Town, goals highlight furthering job pathways to success with training opportunities and career growth counseling. One component of increasing Lincoln's competitiveness in attracting businesses is expansion of its local tourism potential, including of agricultural tourism. The goals also capture the rejuvenation of commercial districts and the promotion of local businesses and farms.

Goals	Policies
ED1. Town Wide Encourage and support economic development that is in keeping with the Town's rural character while expanding and diversifying the Town's tax base.	ED1.1. Town Wide Support local tourism efforts that highlight the rural character and abundant natural resources of the Town through cultural events and agriculturally based tourism.
ED1. Town Wide Encourage and support economic development that is in keeping with the Town's rural character while expanding and diversifying the Town's tax base.	ED1.2. Town Wide Coordinate with local educational institutions and other entities that provide career growth counseling, technical education and training opportunities and management of apprenticeship/internship programs.
ED2. Town Wide Work towards creating a business environment that holds existing commercial and industrial development to a high standard while providing for a streamlined regulatory process to establish and expand appropriate economic opportunities in the community.	ED2.1. Town Wide Promote and encourage agriculture as a way to preserve existing farms, supporting and introducing efforts to capitalize on agricultural tourism opportunities.
ED2. Town Wide Work towards creating a business environment that holds existing commercial and industrial development to a high standard while providing for a streamlined regulatory process to establish and expand appropriate economic opportunities in the community.	ED2.2. Town Wide Support and encourage partnerships with local and existing businesses to enhance and promote the attractiveness of commercial districts for employers, workforce, and visitors.

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