

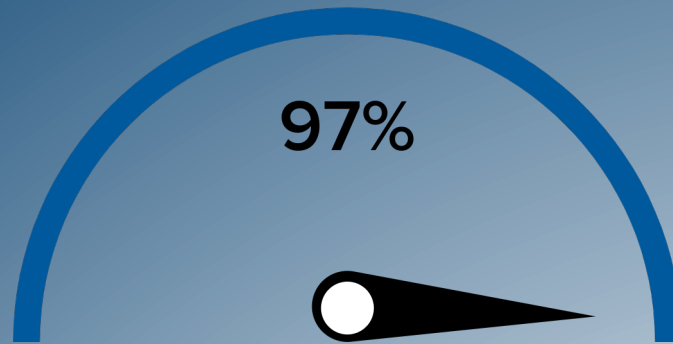
Business Growth Barometer Survey Results & Quarterly Update



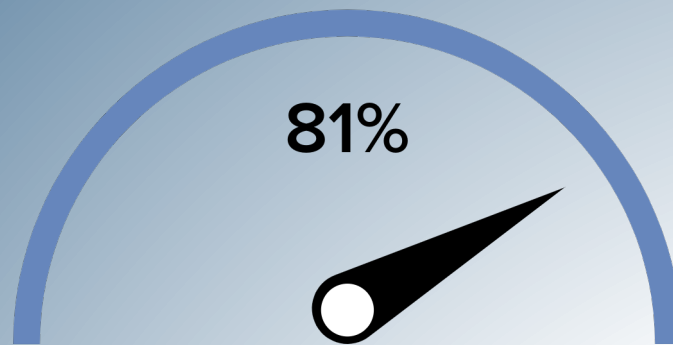
FIRST QUARTER 2026

The Traverse Connect Quarterly Growth Barometer provides a concise update on strategic initiatives, our economic development on behalf of public-sector partners, key political advocacy updates, and metrics detailing the regional business sentiment, outlook, and current challenges.

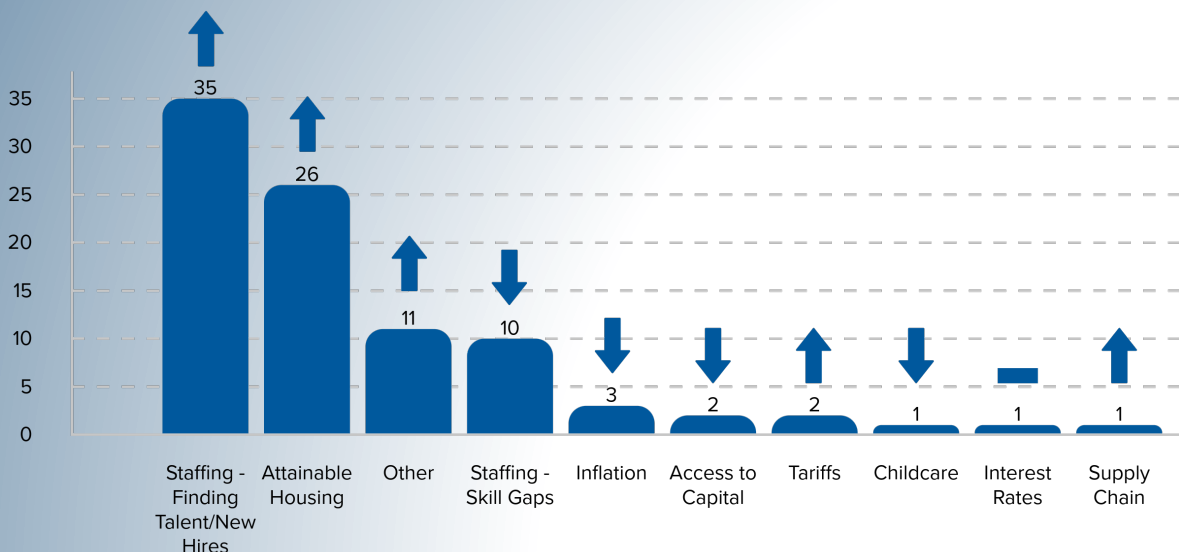
IS OUR REGION A GOOD PLACE TO GROW YOUR BUSINESS? (Net response)



IS OUR REGION IMPROVING AS A PLACE TO GROW YOUR BUSINESS? (Net response)



WHAT IS THE SINGLE-BIGGEST BARRIER TO GROWING YOUR BUSINESS? (Percentage)



BUSINESS EXPANSION

- ***City of Traverse City***
Construction ramped up in the first quarter for the Keen Mill District development. This 1.6-acre mixed-use development will transform a former industrial site into a hub of retail, restaurant space, and market-rate housing, with the first commercial buildings slated for a 2027 opening.
- ***Garfield Township***
Traverse Connect is working with private developers and Garfield Township on an Airport Gateway town-center concept on South Airport Road immediately adjacent to the airport entrance. A mixed-use development could include hotels, restaurants, retail, and workforce housing.
- ***Blair Township:***
A new 160,000-square-foot Meijer supercenter will anchor the Chums Corner area and will include a gas station, garden center, and potential for future outlot development.

DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

- Our NorthSky Uncrewed Systems (drones) industry cluster initiative took a big step forward in the first quarter with the announcement of the designation of the National All-Domain Warfighting Center (NADWC) at [Camp Grayling as a national Uncrewed Aerial Systems \(UAS\) training and testing center](#). With this designation, the NADWC will serve as one of the designated national ranges for uncrewed aerial systems training and testing for military applications and dual-use commercial technology.
- Traverse Connect hosted our second annual Northern Michigan Defense Conference, which connects our region's producers with opportunities in military procurement and government supply chains.
- We published the [2025 Performance Report for the Michigan's Creative Coast](#) program. Job board utilization, candidate engagement, and the Northern Navigators programs continue to grow, and our marketing reach for these programs has truly reached a national audience. Note the metrics and testimonials from candidates and hiring managers.

POLITICAL ADVOCACY ISSUES

- The Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance hosted the annual Northern Michigan Policy Conference, with record attendance, significant state-wide press coverage, and a very robust lineup of speakers and special guests. Now in our eighth year, this conference has become one of the premier policy-oriented events in the state, serving to strongly highlight the policy and legislative priorities of Northern Michigan.
- Traverse Connect joined Senator John Damoose, Representative Betsy Coffia, Networks Northwest, and the Leelanau Early Childhood Development Commission to testify before the Senate Housing and Human Services Committee on the successful child care Micro Centers pilot program in Leelanau County and the opportunity for the state to extend this program on a more permanent basis.

BY THE NUMBERS

Business engagement was robust in the first quarter, with Traverse Connect providing **190** direct business referrals and **25** new member companies. We conducted nearly **400** business outreach and retention visits and hosted over **1,500** total attendees at **19** events, providing valuable opportunities for business and community leaders across our region to discuss issues, develop partnerships, and grow their businesses.

SAVE THE DATE

FOR UPCOMING EVENTS FROM



**MONDAY, MAY 4 &
TUESDAY, MAY 5**

PROFIT MASTERY

LOCATION | BLUE ROOM

TWO-DAY WORKSHOP FOR BUSINESS CONTROL &
SUCCESS

WEDNESDAY, MAY 13

**DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD LUNCHEON &
TRAVERSE CONNECT BUSINESS & COMMUNITY AWARDS**

LOCATION | PARK PLACE HOTEL

LUNCH HONORING RAY MINERVINI AND LIVE VOTING

THURSDAY, MAY 28

COCKTAILS AND CONNECTIONS

LOCATION | TBD

NETWORKING

MONDAY, JUNE 8

NEW INVESTOR ORIENTATION

LOCATION | TRAVERSE CONNECT

ONE-ON-ONE SUPPORT AND NETWORKING

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17

ECONOMIC STRATEGY SESSION III

LOCATION | TRAVERSE CITY COUNTRY CLUB

SPEAKERS & BREAKFAST

Help your business shine by sponsoring events with Traverse Connect