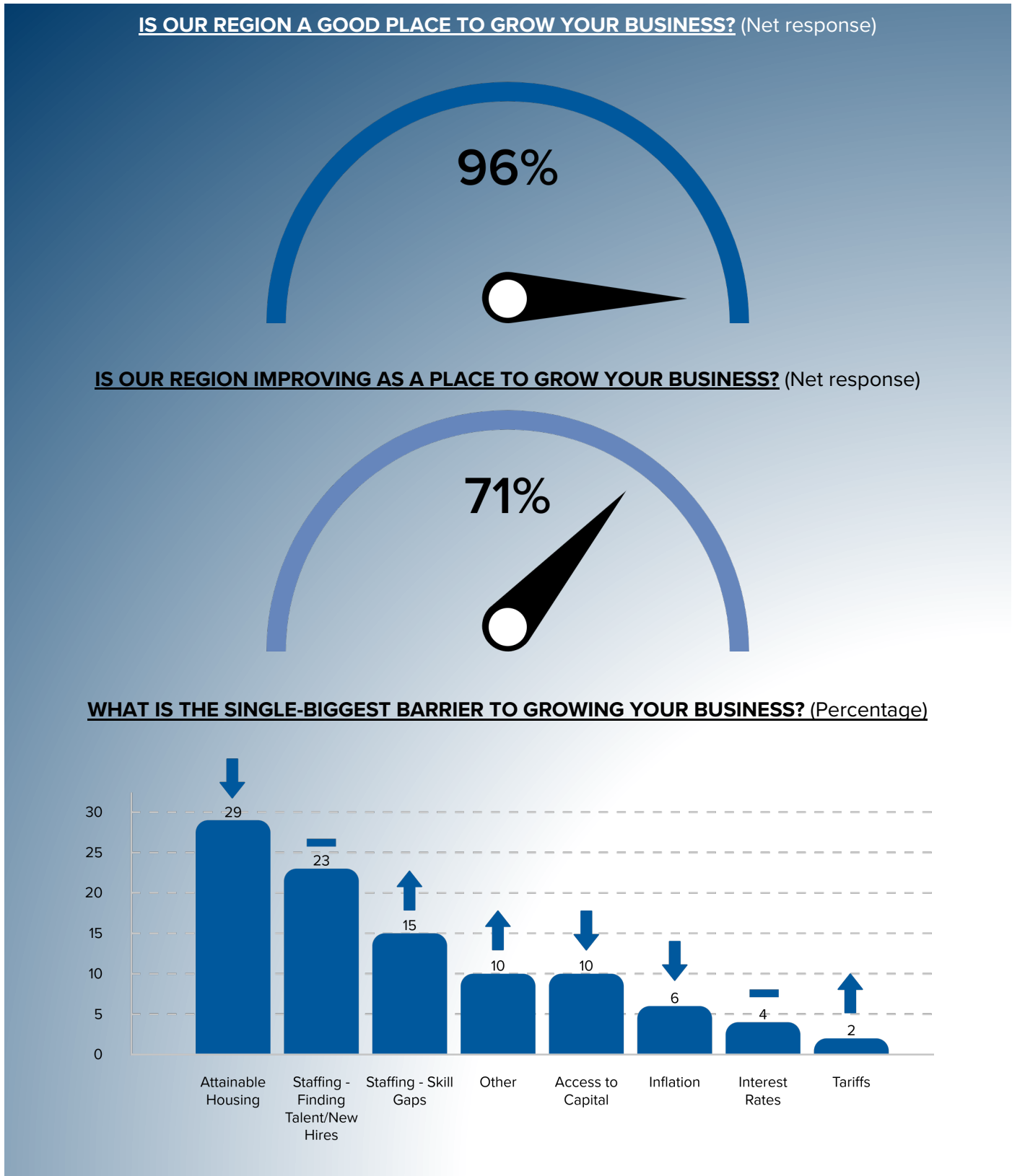


Business Growth Barometer Survey Results & Quarterly Update

THIRD 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.



DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

- Grand Traverse Plastics recognized by GM: Longtime GTAMC member Grand Traverse Plastics earned its sixth General Motors Supplier of the Year award. [UpNorthLive featured the company's growth and innovation in injection molding](#), highlighting and reinforcing the impact of our strong regional manufacturing sector, skilled workforce, and the diversification benefits this brings to our economy.
- WarBird Protection Group earns Make It in Michigan Impact Award: Traverse Connect joined the MEDC and Michigan Works! to present [WarBird Protection Group with the inaugural 2026 Make It in Michigan Impact Award](#). The award recognizes organizations driving state economic development through People, Places and Projects. WarBird makes body armor at its state-of-the-art facility in Kalkaska. The company also joined the Grand Traverse Area Manufacturing Council.
- Drone and defense leadership: Traverse Connect hosted the Michigan Low Altitude Airspace Consortium, which brought together state, military, and industry partners working on Michigan's drone airspace framework. We also represented the NorthSky Consortium at a Camp Grayling roundtable led by U.S. Senator Elissa Slotkin and Under Secretary of the Army Mark Obadal. The discussion covered how Michigan's drone companies and manufacturing base can expand to support U.S. national security.
- AI and manufacturing convenings: Traverse Connect hosted a Community AI Roundtable with leaders from manufacturing, education, professional services, and the arts to shape industry AI working groups and digital literacy efforts. We are also supporting a manufacturing AI workgroup designed to support the research, development, and deployment of artificial intelligence in the manufacturing process.

POLITICAL ADVOCACY ISSUES

- USCG national test site designation: Working with Senator Slotkin's office, we are pursuing a national test site designation for Coast Guard Air Station Traverse City, which would make it the national test center for USCG uncrewed and autonomous systems. Members of Michigan's congressional delegation signed a letter supporting the designation, and it has been sent to the Commandant of the Coast Guard.
- Rethinking Michigan economic development: Traverse Connect is working with partners from around the state to coordinate efforts and develop solutions for modernizing the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and revamping the state's approach to economic development strategy.
- State budget outcomes: The FY2027 state budget kept two of our key priorities, the Going Pro workforce program and the Office of Rural Prosperity, while significantly reducing funding for many other state programs. We continue to watch property tax reform proposals and a possible "tourist services" excise tax that could affect northern Michigan's tourism economy.

BY THE NUMBERS

Traverse Connect's business engagement for the third quarter included **269** direct business referrals, and we welcomed **35** new member companies. We conducted over **436** business outreach and retention visits and hosted **25** events with over **750** total attendees.

SAVE THE DATE
FOR UPCOMING EVENTS FROM



TRAVERSE CONNECT

THURSDAY OCTOBER 22

COCKTAILS & CONNECTIONS

LOCATION | HISTORIC BARNS PARK AT THE BOTANIC GARDENS

COCKTAILS & NETWORKING

MONDAY NOVEMBER 9

ANNUAL ECONOMIC SUMMIT

LOCATION | GRAND TRAVERSE RESORT

SHOWCASE & NETWORKING

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 7

MEMBER BENEFITS WORKSHOP

LOCATION | TRAVERSE CONNECT CONFERENCE ROOM

MEMBER BENEFITS & NETWORKING

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 9

COFFEE CONNECTION: YEAR IN REVIEW

LOCATION | TRAVERSE CITY PHILHARMONIC

SPEAKERS & NETWORKING

Help your business shine by sponsoring events with Traverse Connect
Contact **Molly MacGirr**, Director of Events & Programs