

Independence for All Update

August 2018

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Independence, MO

Mayor Announces Independence Works 2025

Independence Works 2025 is a new workforce development initiative launched by Mayor Eileen Weir. Through this program, Independence's local efforts will align with regional and statewide economic development initiatives aimed at building the work-ready population.

Independence Works 2025 is modeled on [KC Rising](#), a regional plan for prosperity that strives to position the Kansas City region as a top-10 peer city by the year 2025 in three key metrics: gross regional product, number of quality jobs, and median household income.

As the fifth largest city in Missouri, Independence has a major role to play in not only our success as a city but our success as a region.

Independence Works 2025 is built on robust, multi-sector partnerships representing education, job training, social services and faith communities, industry employers, and innovators and entrepreneurs.

"Independence is positioned to be a workforce development leader," Mayor Weir said. "By improving existing systems and creating new systems within our city, we can and will close the gap between workers and employers."

"Around our state, and around the country, industries are struggling to find employees with the necessary skills to fill job vacancies," Mayor Weir said. "Large segments of the population lack the proper education and training for today's job market and the job market of the future. There is no doubt that local leadership has the best chance to positively impact economic opportunity."

Cabinet Objectives:

Assess barriers to educational attainment, employments and economic mobility;

Identify high-opportunity employment sectors, and develop action items to expand workforce development in these sectors;

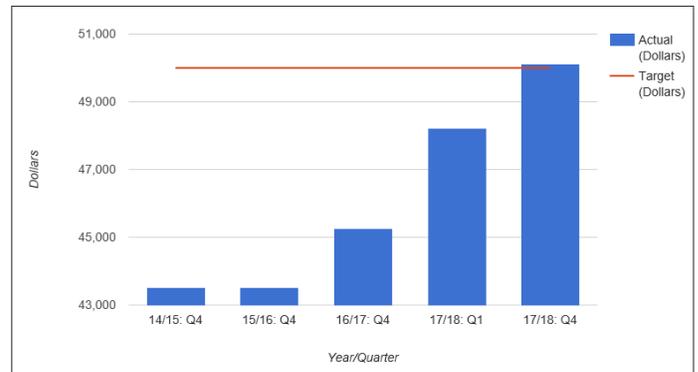
Contribute to the on-going development of IndepWorks.com; and,

Develop creative solutions to impact all segments of the workforce including the unemployed, underemployed, low-skilled, & highly-skilled workers.

50 by 20 - City reaches goal

Economic growth is a key component of *Independence for All*. Mayor Eileen Weir set the City's sights on reaching a median income of \$50,000 by the year 2020 to measure the community's success. A secondary goal was exceeding 120,000 by the year 2020.

"Independence had been flat on population for decades," said Mayor Weir. "I thought it was important to attract new residents to move the needle on economic prosperity. We have some of the best public schools in Missouri, a great location, and a warm and welcoming community. I know we have a great product to sell."



Median income and population are measured by the Independence Economic Development Corporation utilizing the ESRI GSI mapping software. 2018 estimated projections place median income at \$50,122 and population at 121,018. Independence lags Columbia, MO in population by fewer than 1,000 residents, making Independence the fifth most populated city in Missouri.

Mayor Weir credits a strong local economy, quality public education, and robust strategic partnerships inside and outside the city for reaching the income and population benchmarks ahead of schedule.

"My next focus is on job creation in Independence. Only 36% of our residents work in the city where they live. We will continue working on job growth, attraction, and creation to take Independence to the next level."

Working toward the future

Since its implementation in 2017, more than 20 percent of *Independence for All*'s 74 strategies have been completed as the City works to improve customer focus; ensure City finances are stable and sustainable; increase economic prosperity of the community; and achieve livability, choice, access health and safety through a quality built environment. You can read the plan in its entirety at indep.us/indep4all and follow progress at indep.us/dashboard.

This newsletter will provide a quarterly update on these strategies and programs created to meet the identified needs within the plan.

For more information, please contact Independence Mayor Eileen Weir's office at (816)325-7027 or email eweir@indepmo.org.

Independence Works 2025

Education • Training • Support • Industry • Innovation

Addressing the digital divide

Independence now offers free public Wi-Fi on its fixed route [IndeBus](#) service. IndeBus operates within the City of Independence over six routes and connect with [Ride KC](#) at the Metro Center located on Noland Road and Truman Road.

The digital divide is real,” Mayor Weir said. “It is estimated 20 percent of Independence residents lack access to the internet. Through discussions with our local school districts, however, we learned that more than 95 percent of school families have access to at least one smart phone. Now transit riders in Independence can access on-line services through their smart phone or other digital device while traveling to work, school, doctor appointments, or shopping.”

Riders who log on to the IndeBus Wi-Fi will be directed to [IndepWorks.com](#). This digital portal is a workforce development tool designed specifically for job seekers and employers within the City of Independence. It is a customized job search tool that connects people to employment opportunities that meet not only their skill and experience level, but also lifestyle needs like availability of transportation and stable work schedules. [IndepWorks.com](#) also allows employers to post job openings to recruit workers in the City of Independence.

Mayor Weir also hopes to increase ridership as a choice.

“Using public transit reduces congestion and pollution, aligning with our goal to make Independence the Greenest City in America,” Mayor Weir said. “It reduces impaired and distracted driving, making our city safer.”

“Our mission is to transform our community through engagement, innovation, and sustainable services,” Mayor Weir said. “Providing equal access to the digital world levels the playing field for all our citizens and gives them a tool that they may otherwise struggle to access.”

The addition of free public Wi-Fi is just one of the investments the Independence City Council has made in 2018. The Council also recommended expanding service on five of the six fixed routes until 7 p.m. and improving bus stops at several locations. Independence is working with the [KCATA](#) on planning for a future east/west bus rapid transit route connecting Independence to major employment hubs in Kansas City.

For more information on [IndepWorks2025](#) visit [indepworks.com](#).



Greenest City in America

Independence strives to be the Greenest City in America by developing innovative policies and strategic investments. Becoming the Greenest City aligns with the Independence for All goals to increase economic prosperity and enhance livability, choice, and health for the community.

In July, Independence opened its second community solar farm in partnership with [MC Power](#) and [Gardner Capital](#). With the additional capacity, Independence leads the State of Missouri with 11 MW of solar power.



An aerial view of the 18,000 solar panels added as part of the Phase 2 Community Solar Farm Expansion.

The City’s commitment to renewable energy and energy efficiency has been demonstrated in a number of ways. In 2014 the Council pledged to increase renewable energy sources to 10 percent by 2018 and 15 percent by 2021. Current wind and solar assets make up 12 percent of the Independence Power & Light energy portfolio. The City’s primary power plant was converted from coal to natural gas in 2015 and the smaller coal-fired Missouri City plant has ended production.

Independence was the first city of its size in the nation to convert 100 percent of its streetlights to LED, and built the award-winning LEED Platinum Independence Utility Center by repurposing a former office building.

“Being ‘green’ is about using what you already have,” Mayor Eileen Weir said. “I’m proud that the Council had the vision and commitment to look at vulnerable properties like the MCI hospital and Rockwood Golf Club and find ways to give them new life that meets our sustainability goals.”



Councilmembers, City Manager Zach Walker, MC Power and Gardner Capital to celebrate the ribbon cutting of the Rockwood Community Solar farm.

Renewable energy is just one part of the Greenest City in America effort. Independence has adopted sustainable policies to protect the natural environment and continues to expand its transportation and trails system to provide circulation and walkability. 2018 goals include setting environmentally friendly building and construction codes, increasing electric and autonomous vehicle in the City fleet, and installing more electric vehicle charging stations.