FLYOVER ALLIANCE

SIGNAL.™

Beyond the Noise.

We land where others fly over.

1 DECEMBER 2026 VOL. 01 / NO. 001 A BIWEEKLY PUBLICATION

The rise of the regional economy

Rethinking how America develops its communities, deploys capital and creates economic opportunity.

FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to SIGNAL, a biweekly publication on the forces shaping America's regional economies. Each issue identifies consequential research, emerging opportunities and ideas that deserve a closer look.

Smaller cities are not simply smaller versions of major metropolitan areas. They are distinct economic systems, with assets, constraints and possibilities of their own. This first edition explores how those systems can become more effective — and what it will take to make them investable.

01 / THE LEAD SIGNAL

A new playbook for America's governors

Brookings Metro / Joseph Parilla / November 16, 2026

As newly elected governors prepare for 2027, Brookings argues that state economic policy must reflect the regional nature of labor markets, infrastructure and business networks. Its five "plays" give incoming administrations a first-year agenda:

01	02	03	04	05
Define direction	Make regions investable	Align capital	Learn and scale	Run as one team

The central insight is that state authority and regional economic activity operate at different scales; effective policy has to connect them. Brookings backs the plays with concrete mechanisms — multiyear capacity grants for regions, redirected state programs that draw in private and philanthropic co-investment, and outcome metrics that shift money toward what works.

> **SIGNAL PERSPECTIVE** For community leaders the implication is just as direct: a credible regional strategy needs the capacity to execute, not merely a list of aspirations. Regions that arrive with priorities, partners and data will be first in line when states reorganize around them.

Read the Brookings analysis →

01 / THE LEAD SIGNAL — CONTINUED

AI could grow the economy and still leave workers behind

The Washington Post / Ripple / November 24, 2026

The Washington Post asks a question every economic developer should be weighing: artificial intelligence may create new opportunities and significant growth, but a thriving economy does not guarantee that workers share in it.

Growth and broad-based well-being are not the same thing. AI could deliver record corporate earnings, rising productivity and higher GDP while household economic security stalls. The question is not whether AI will create wealth, but who will take part in creating it and who will benefit.

The risk is sharpest outside the largest metros. Picture a community that lands a billion-dollar AI infrastructure project but sees few permanent jobs, flat wages, scarce housing and thinner healthcare access. Has it succeeded? Economic development cannot be separated from workforce, housing, healthcare, transportation and local enterprise.

We may be measuring the wrong things. Most scorecards count what is easy to count. Regions should track both columns:

WHAT WE USUALLY MEASURE	WHAT PEOPLE ACTUALLY FEEL
GDP growth	Real median household income
Corporate profitability	Household financial security
Capital investment	Local ownership and wealth creation
Workers retrained	Workers placed in sustainable careers
Regional economic output	Housing affordability

Three mechanisms connect AI productivity to community outcomes:

PROTECT
Preserve and augment existing jobs as employers adopt AI

TRANSITION
Move workers into emerging career opportunities

CREATE
Build new enterprises, jobs and local ownership

> **SIGNAL PERSPECTIVE** The goal is not to slow AI adoption. It is to design regional economies in which workers and communities share in the value AI creates. Growth is a metric. Participation is a mechanism. Better human outcomes are the objective.

Read the Washington Post article →

02 / CAPITAL SIGNALS

Alabama invests in investment readiness

Office of the Governor of Alabama / November 12, 2026

Alabama is partnering with Heartland Forward to bring its Center for Investment Readiness to communities statewide, working through the Alabama Department of Commerce. It pairs local data and technical assistance with investor relationships, with an investor convening planned for 2027. JPMorganChase, Edward Jones, the Ford Foundation and the Walton Family Foundation are founding funders.

> **SIGNAL PERSPECTIVE** Capital providers can contribute more than financing. Their networks and knowledge help communities turn promising assets into credible investment opportunities. The model is notable for treating readiness as a state responsibility, delivered through the commerce department rather than left to each town. Worth watching for evidence of actual deployment, and for which other states follow Alabama as the program's next partners.

Read the official announcement →

JPMorganChase takes the American Dream local

JPMorganChase / American Dream Initiative / March 31, 2026

JPMorganChase's American Dream Initiative is a multi-year effort to expand opportunity through targeted investment in local communities — small businesses, housing, skills, financial health and local institutions. Its anchor commitments:

~$80B small-business lending over the next ten years	**10M** small businesses with access to capital, advice or tools (from 7M today)	**~5M** reached with financial education (from 1M over five years)	**115K** owners mentored through Coaching for Impact in 80+ cities

The initiative builds on more than a decade of workforce investment — New Skills at Work began with $250 million in 2013 and expanded with a $350 million global commitment in 2019 — and sits alongside the firm's $1.5 trillion Security and Resiliency Initiative in manufacturing, energy, infrastructure and healthcare.

> **SIGNAL PERSPECTIVE** The significance is the combination: capital, coaching and skills delivered through local institutions rather than stand-alone grants. For second cities and rural regions, the question is readiness to absorb it — investable projects, capable intermediaries and a coordinated local agenda. Communities that can name their priorities and their partners will be easier to lend into, coach and train. Success should be judged by community-level reporting on loans deployed, businesses grown and wages gained, not by national reach.

Explore the American Dream Initiative →

02 / CAPITAL SIGNALS — CONTINUED

Data centers become a growth engine, and a local policy fight

Bank of America Institute / November 2026

Bank of America Institute reports that data center investment added nearly 70 basis points to U.S. growth in the first half of 2026, supporting construction and manufacturing jobs. It also notes that states and localities are adopting measures on ratepayer costs and resource use that could raise development costs or slow investment.

> **SIGNAL PERSPECTIVE** The communities that win these projects will be the ones that settle power, water, tax terms and public input before the developer arrives. Readiness now includes community consent.

Read the Bank of America Institute analysis →

Washington closes an overseas data center loophole

The Philadelphia Inquirer / November 16, 2026

A new Commerce Department rule, effective in 90 days, restricts overseas data centers that sell significant computing power to firms headquartered in high-risk countries such as China, Russia and Iran, and requires them to vet their customers.

> **SIGNAL PERSPECTIVE** The direction favors building AI capacity at home. For second cities, the prize is the suppliers and jobs around a facility, not just the facility.

Read the report →

Tulsa weighs a 2027 vote on a nearly $1 billion project

FOX23 Tulsa / November 19, 2026

In his State of the City address, Mayor Monroe Nichols highlighted Project Nexus, a proposed downtown development valued at nearly $1 billion, and cited 5,500 jobs announced in 2026. He hopes to bring a bond package to voters in 2027; no funding plan, election date or ballot language has been released.

> **SIGNAL PERSPECTIVE** Announced jobs are a starting point, not an outcome. The test for Tulsa, as for every region, is how many of those jobs are filled, by whom, and at what wages.

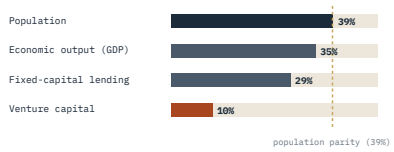
Read the report →

03 / RESEARCH WORTH READING

The heartland's investment gap

Heartland Forward & McKinsey Institute for Economic Mobility / October 1, 2026

A joint study examines how heartland communities can improve their capacity to attract and use investment, pointing to local economic conditions, support systems for families and workers, and institutional coordination. The gap is starkest in risk capital.



$2 trillion

Additional economic output if the heartland's share of U.S. GDP matched its share of population. *A scenario, not a forecast.*

Explore the research →

SIGNAL PERSPECTIVE The study frames this as a readiness problem, not only an access problem: capital follows places with investable projects, credible partners and data — and readiness can be built locally.

SIGNALS IN BRIEF

6,576
tracts designated
2,594 rural

The Opportunity Zone map is set for a decade

U.S. Treasury & IRS / November 5, 2026

Treasury and the IRS designated 6,576 census tracts as Qualified Opportunity Zones, effective January 1, 2027 for ten years. Roughly two in five are rural and qualify for enhanced incentives: Qualified Rural Opportunity Funds earn a 30% basis step-up after five years (versus 10%), and the substantial-improvement test falls to 50%.

WHY IT MATTERS: *Designation is not deal flow. Rural tracts that assemble investable projects now will be first to draw new OZ capital.*

Read the announcement →

$3.38B
investment
2,390 new jobs

Honda adds a fourth Ohio auto plant

Governor of Ohio / JobsOhio / November 9, 2026

A plant of roughly $3 billion between Marysville and East Liberty will build hybrid, gasoline and electric vehicles from 2029. Retooling at the Anna and Russells Point plants brings the total to $3.38 billion.

WHY IT MATTERS: *The jobs land in a corridor of small towns. Supplier expansion, housing and workforce pipelines in surrounding counties will decide how widely the gains spread.*

Read the announcement →

CRA
banks + CDFIs
share the risk

The Fed makes the case for bank partnerships

Federal Reserve / Governor Michael S. Barr / November 18, 2026

At the New York Fed, Governor Barr argued that information gaps and coordination problems stall investment in underserved places, and that banks working with CDFIs and community groups can lower those costs, coordinate lending and share risk — citing rural and tribal examples from Montana to Mississippi.

WHY IT MATTERS: *For regional and community banks, partnership is not philanthropy — it is how to see and price opportunity in markets they already serve.*

Read the speech →

03 / RESEARCH WORTH READING — CONTINUED

Stanford: no consensus on what AI will do to growth

Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research / November 23, 2026

At its Fall Policy Forum, SIEPR found that the rapid layoffs and productivity surge many expected have not arrived, and that AI use is broad but shallow. AI is reaching blue-collar work too: mechanics and farmers use it to inspect engine parts and plan crops.



20×

Spread between the lowest and highest estimates cited at the forum.

A range of views, not a forecast.

SIGNAL PERSPECTIVE Panelists proposed a negotiating framework smaller municipalities can use with data center developers. With individual income making up 85% of federal tax revenue, how workers fare is a public-finance question too.

Read the SIEPR summary →

SIGNALS IN BRIEF — CONTINUED

HUB
regional intelligence

Western Massachusetts launches One Western Mass

WWLP / November 19, 2026

The Western Massachusetts Economic Development Council's new initiative aims to improve collaboration among businesses, colleges and economic development groups, anchored by a Western Mass Intelligence Hub.

WHY IT MATTERS: *Shared regional data is becoming the starting point for coordinated strategy.*

Read the report →

18 of 18
Ohio communities voted to restrict

Ohio voters put limits on data centers

Ohio Capital Journal / November 9, 2026

Residents in 18 Ohio communities voted on curbing or banning data centers on November 3, and restrictions passed in every one, led by small county seats such as Wilmington, Piqua and Upper Sandusky.

WHY IT MATTERS: *Community consent is now a site-readiness factor, not an afterthought.*

Read the report →

2.5%
U.S. GDP growth expected, 2027

Oxford Economics sees a resilient 2027

Oxford Economics / November 21, 2026

The firm expects U.S. GDP growth to strengthen to 2.5% in 2027 from 2.4% in 2026, above the consensus forecast of 2.1%.

WHY IT MATTERS: *National growth sets the backdrop; regional readiness decides who captures it.*

Read the forecast →

04 / THE FORWARD SIGNAL

The Mathematics of Better Communities

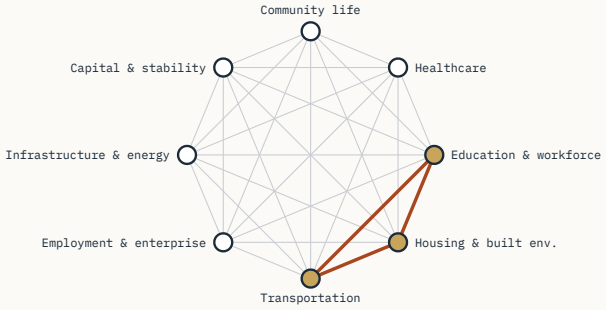
An original Flyover Alliance perspective

Economic development is fundamentally a mathematical problem. Communities are complex systems in which interconnected elements influence one another, creating both opportunities and constraints. Investments made one at a time miss the interactions that matter most.

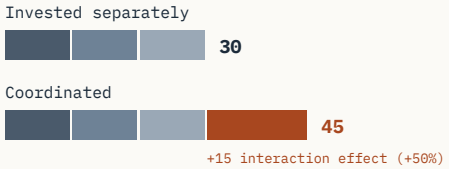
The Flyover Alliance Community Dynamics Model™ introduces a mathematical framework for evaluating individual system performance, relative importance, interaction effects and execution readiness across eight systems: community life; healthcare; education and workforce; housing and the built environment; transportation; employment and enterprise; infrastructure and energy; and capital and stability.

$$O = R\left[\sum_{i=1}^{8} w_i x_i + \sum_{i<j} \beta_{ij} x_i x_j\right]$$

O = community outcomes · x = system performance · w = relative importance · β = interaction effects
R = execution readiness and constraints



8 systems · 28 pairwise relationships



Illustrative: workforce training, attainable housing and transportation (highlighted at left) yield 30 points funded separately and 45 when coordinated.

Rather than evaluating investments independently, the model examines how coordinated investments amplify measurable outcomes. Powered by RTG HARMONICS™, the proposed methodology shifts conventional economic development toward the analytical engineering of better communities. It requires community-specific data and calibrated relationships — which is where the work begins.

From promoting communities to optimizing them.

CLOSING NOTE

This issue's signals point the same way. States are reorganizing around regions, capital providers are building readiness programs, and a new Opportunity Zone map is set for a decade. Data center and AI investment is arriving fast, but voters want a say and workers want a share. The communities that benefit will be those that can show investors a coordinated plan, the capacity to carry it out and outcomes people can feel. SIGNAL will track who is doing that, and how.

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