



MIDWEST

PRIMING THE PUMP: STATE POLICIES TO HELP CITIES OF THE MIDWEST PROSPER

Pete Saunders



DETROIT

July 9-12, 2023

MIDWESTERN LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

Priming the
Pump –
State Role in
Urban
Revitalization

**Council of State Governments
Midwestern Legislative Conference
Annual Meeting**

July 11, 2023

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First, a little about me



OK, really about me

- Practicing urban planner working in the Chicago area for more than 25 years
- Had the opportunity to work in the public, private and nonprofit sectors
- Had the opportunity to work in large cities, suburban/exurban areas
- Became a blogger in 2012 (cornersideyard.blogspot.com)
- Since 2012 evolved into an urbanist writer, researcher, speaker

What I cover and study



center for opportunity urbanism

Chicago: A Tale of Two Very Different Cities

By Pete Saunders



Figure 1: Chicago Skyline. Source: archdaily.com

On its surface, the city of Chicago exhibits many of the characteristics associated with gentrification in the nation's top global cities, like New York, Boston, and Washington, D.C. on the East Coast, and San Francisco and Seattle on

- Economic and Social Inequality
- Gentrification

Where I've been found

In Print...

- The Guardian (UK)
- Encyclopaedia Britannica
- New York Times
- Chicago Tribune
- Chicago Sun-Times
- Chicago Reader

On the Internet...

- Forbes
- Planetizen
- Huffington Post
- Business Insider
- Urbanophile
- Curbed Chicago

My driving theme

- The successes and challenges of American coastal cities and tech hubs have been driving the urbanism narrative.
- The successes and challenges of American interior cities (Rust Belt, Sun Belt) are often distinct from coastal cities and tech hubs, but rarely get attention.
- Understanding our interior cities as well as we do our coastal cities and tech hubs can broaden our policy options for all cities.

What is "the Midwest"?

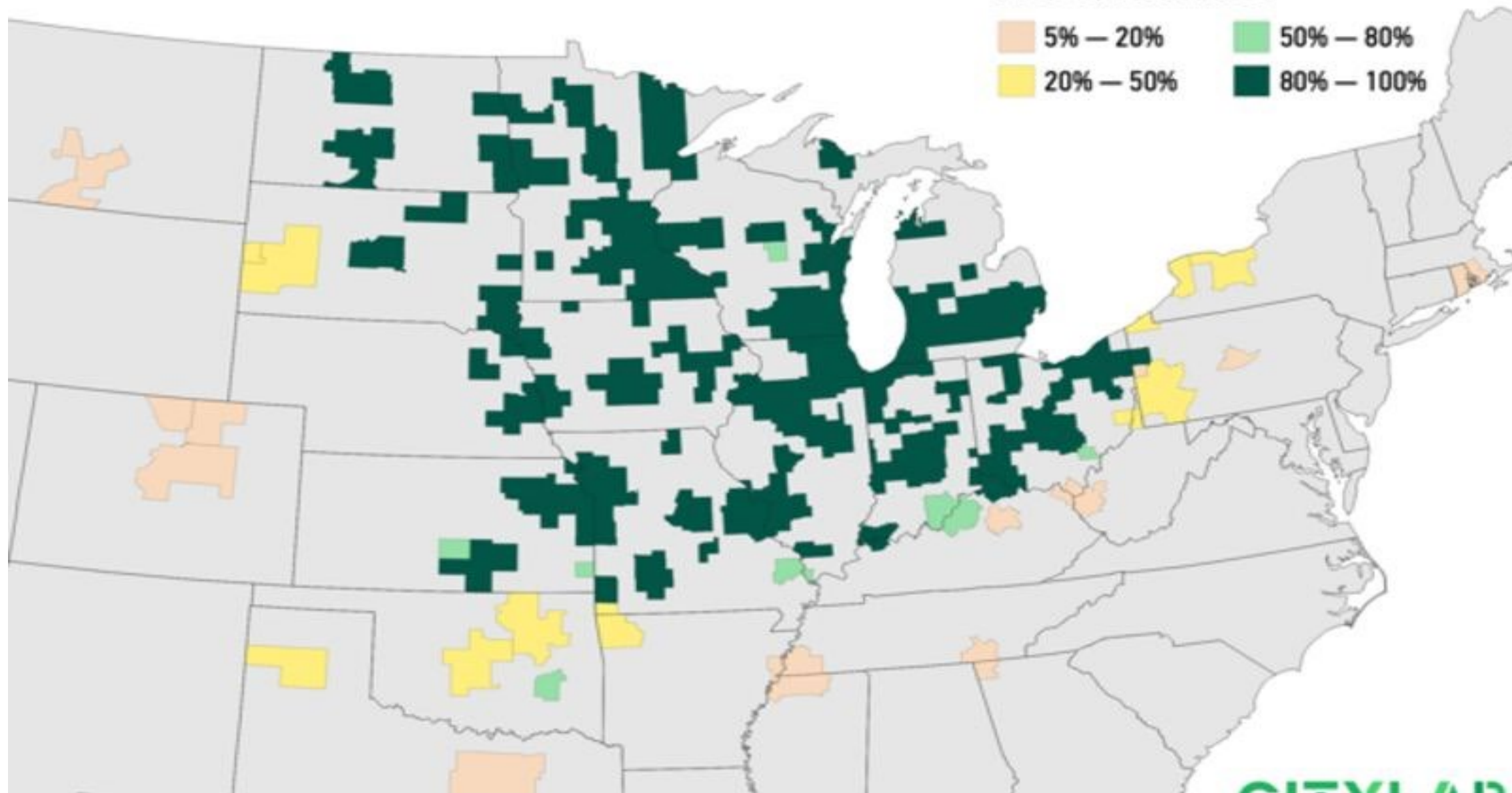
Respondents calling area "the Midwest"

5% — 20%

50% — 80%

20% — 50%

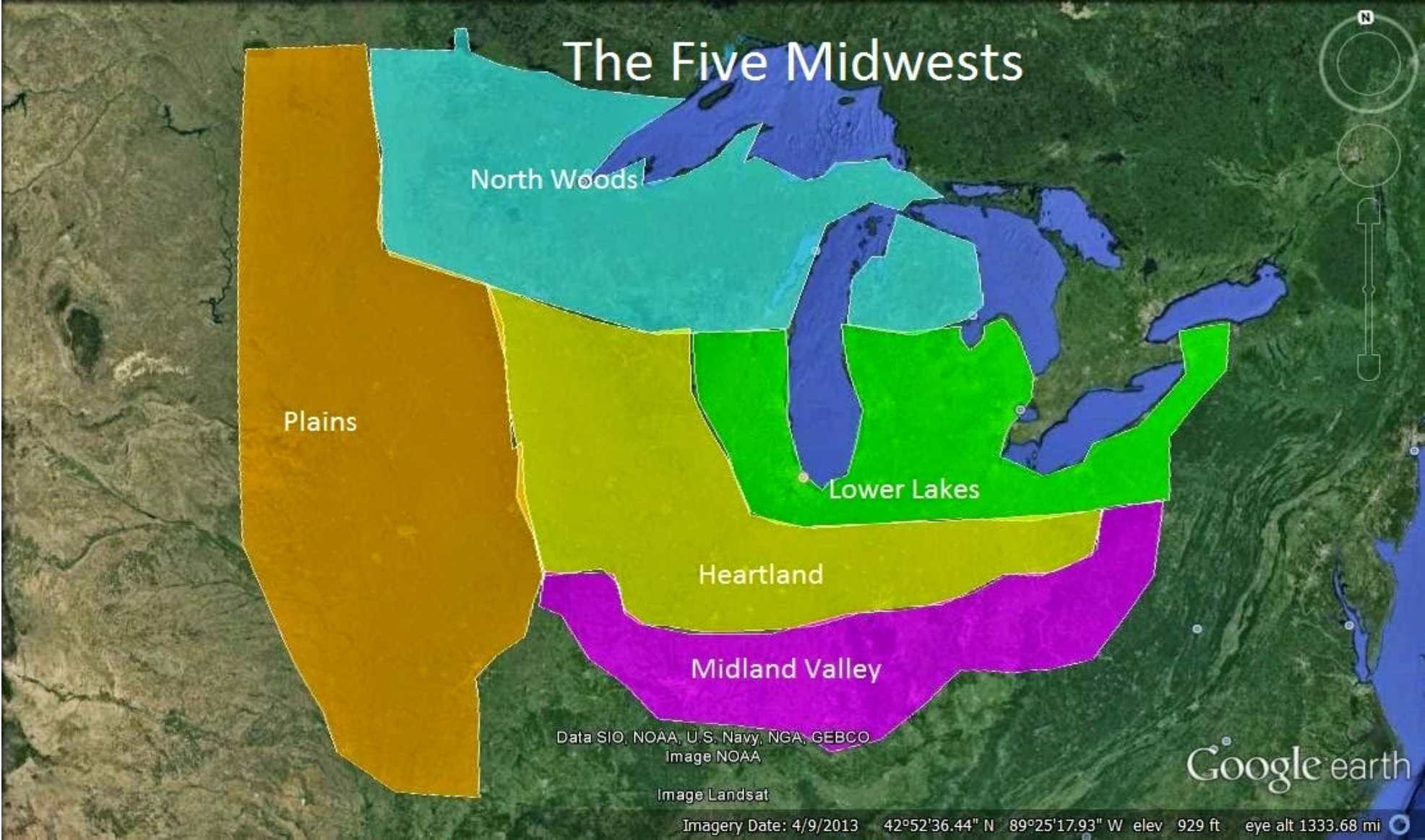
80% — 100%



Source: CityLab survey of 12,431 respondents at whatsthemidwest.com

CITYLAB

The Five Midwests Theory



The Five Midwests Theory

Region	Population (2010, est.)	Full States Included	Partial States Included	Largest Metro	State Capitals
North Woods	4,500,000	---	MI, WI, MN	Twin Cities	St. Paul (MN)
Lower Lakes	29,000,000	---	NY, PA, OH, MI, IN, IL, WI	Chicago	Lansing (MI); Madison (WI)
Heartland	15,500,000	---	OH, IN, IL, WI, IA, MN	Indianapolis	Columbus (OH); Indianapolis (IN); Springfield (IL)
Midland Valley	13,500,000	---	PA, OH, WV, KY, IN, IL, MO	St. Louis	---
Plains	7,500,000	---	MN, IA, ND, SD, NE, KS	Kansas City	Bismarck (ND); Pierre (SD); Lincoln (NE); Topeka (KS)

The Five Midwests Theory

Region	Period of Initial Settlement	Period of Greatest Growth	American Settler Groups	Immigrant Settler Groups	Initial Primary Industries
North Woods	1850 - 1880	1880 - 1910	New Englanders; other East Coast residents	Germans; Swedes; Finns; Norwegians	Logging; Mining; Milling
Lower Lakes	1810 - 1840	1880 - 1910	New Englanders; other East Coast residents	Germans; Irish Catholics; Poles; Italians	Agriculture; Manufacturing
Heartland	1820 - 1850	1900 - 1930	Appalachians; New Englanders	Germans; Scots Irish	Agriculture; Manufacturing
Midland Valley	1790 - 1820	1870 - 1900	Appalachians	Germans; Scots Irish	Agriculture; river trade/ commerce; Manufacturing
Plains	1870 - 1900	1900 - 1930	Other Midwesterners	Germans; Scots Irish	Agriculture; ranching

The Five Midwests Theory

- There are wide differences in the settlement patterns, settlement timing, urban and rural distribution and development, culture and economy in Midwestern states.
- These differences in settlement, development, culture and economy rarely coincided with established state boundaries, creating cultural, economic and political conflict within states.
- This is evident in the way Midwestern cities have been supported by state governments throughout each state's history.

Cities: The Last 50 Years



Midwestern Cities: The Last 50 Years



Is there a compelling data case supporting investment in cities?

Yes and No.

Is there a compelling data case supporting investment in cities?

- Increasing income, relative to metro areas.
- Increasing educational attainment, relative to metro areas.
- Gross domestic product.

How are successful cities doing it?

- State capitals.
- Home to major universities.
- Successfully transitioned from manufacturing economy to service and knowledge economy.

Areas of State Investment

Traditional

- Infrastructure
- Economic Incentives
- Workforce Development
- Regulatory Environment
- Education

Non-Traditional

- Local Government Collaboration
- Regional Planning
- Information and Technology
- Quality of Life
- Sustainability and Resilience

The “Steampunk” Analogy



A Path Forward



A Path Forward

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (CONTINUED)

Michigan has many, if not most, of the assets it needs to reset its growth trajectory. But time is of the essence. Today's speed and scale of change is unprecedented and will require rapid and agile action across government agencies at all levels, closely aligned with the efforts of the private and civic sectors.

To better position the state to succeed, we propose the creation of a **Michigan Economic Transformation Alliance**. Organized as a blue-chip, multi-sector panel spanning relevant cabinet and departmental agencies and including leaders from the state's business, startup, higher education, labor, and civic communities and other relevant stakeholders, its work should be organized around three key pillars:

■ TRANSFORMATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

The future of the automotive industry will turn on innovations in software, artificial intelligence, and digital technology; electric power and batteries; and more. Michigan must act now to engage in today's transformation by better aligning the research and development assets of its world-class universities with its leading industries.

■ TALENT

The key resource of the knowledge economy is talent. But while the state retains much of the overall talent it produces, it continues to lose critical talent in key fields like computer science and electrical engineering and fails to attract talent from elsewhere. Michigan must double down on its efforts to create, attract, and retain talent.

■ PLACEMAKING

Educated, skilled, and talented people are mobile and can choose where they live. Fortunately, Michigan has an incredibly diverse portfolio of places to attract and retain them—gritty urban centers, affordable suburbs, verdant rural areas, and lakefront communities. But one advantage that the state has not leveraged nearly enough is its college towns. From Palo Alto and Cambridge to Austin and Boulder, college towns not only produce top talent; they are where young tech workers often choose to live. Michigan must act now to grow and scale Ann Arbor, East Lansing, and its other college towns and strengthen their connections to Detroit and other economic centers across the state.

By moving forward on this agenda, Michigan can create a stronger 21st century economy, one that generates opportunities for residents across all its many and varied communities. In doing so, it can forge a new model of sustainable and inclusive economic growth—for the nation and the world.



Thank you!

Blog: cornersideyard.blogspot.com

Twitter: [@petesaunders3](https://twitter.com/petesaunders3)