

Illinois

The tech industry breathes life into the Windy City

Illinois fell from an Innovation Leader to an Innovation Adopter this year, but Chicago’s tech boom continues. Pharmacy giant Walgreens announced plans to double the number of employees in its tech office, which oversees the systems responsible for store operation nationwide.

Chicago’s well-educated workforce is a bright spot in the Land of Lincoln, and shows no signs of slowing down after two decades of growth. From 1990 to 2010, the share of 24-year-old Chicagoans with bachelor’s degrees jumped from 19 to 33 percent, and those numbers continue to climb.

In the city’s South Loop, the University of Illinois, the University of Chicago and Northwestern University will team up on the Discovery Partners Institute, a center dedicated to training and retaining tech talent.

“It’s an attempt to really take advantage of the assets that the state and the city have to accelerate economic development,” says University of Illinois President Timothy Killeen, an accomplished scientist, “and to provide opportunities for our students to stay in the state and for innovations to flow into our economy.”

The 62-acre center will link researchers, students and private companies in specialized research projects on areas including Big Data, agriculture and health.

Sources: (Manhattan Institute) (Chicago Magazine) (Chicago Tribune) (Chicago Tribune) (University of Illinois)

WHAT DID WE DO RIGHT?

Illinois boasts a higher percentage of residents with advanced degrees than most other states.

WHAT CAN WE DO BETTER NEXT YEAR?

Illinois should overturn state laws that allow local authorities to restrict drones — regulations better left to the FAA, which has jurisdiction to govern airspace.

WHERE HAVE WE MOST IMPROVED?

Illinois passed a bill to prevent local governments from prohibiting the use of self-driving vehicles.

Best & Brightest	C
Fast Internet	B
Grants Advanced Degrees	B+
Tech Workforce	B
Tax Friendly	B-
Attracts Investment	B
Entrepreneurial Activity	D
Ridesharing	B
Short-Term Rentals	B-
Sustainable Policies	C-
Self-Driving Vehicles	A
Drones	D-



Fast Internet

65 percent of Illinois households have internet connections of at least 10 mbps, and nearly half enjoy speeds of at least 25 mbps.



Entrepreneurial Activity

From Q2/2011 to Q4/2016, Illinois small businesses added nearly 29 net jobs per 1,000 residents.



Short-Term Rentals

Short-term rentals are banned in some areas of Chicago, a major market.



Tech Workforce

With more than 520,000 tech jobs — about 41 per 1,000 people — Illinois outpaces many other states.

Chicago Connects Students to Startups, and Teaches Them to Design and Code New Apps

In Chicago, a handful of new initiatives will give students a chance to get ahead in tech fields.

The University of Illinois plans to build the Discovery Partners Institute, a research center serving 2,000 students and faculty members, in partnership with the University of Chicago, Northwestern University and the Israeli government. The \$1.2 billion center will enable students to conduct research while working for local startups.

Apple has also announced a citywide rollout of its “Everyone Can Code” program to teach Swift, its programming language, to high school students. The effort is a partnership with the Mayor’s office, Chicago Public Schools, City Colleges of Chicago and a handful of nonprofits and private businesses.

The program also includes after-school coding clubs for students, which will provide instruction in designing and prototyping new apps.

PHOTO CREDIT: Apple | Sources: (Daily Illini) (Apple)

