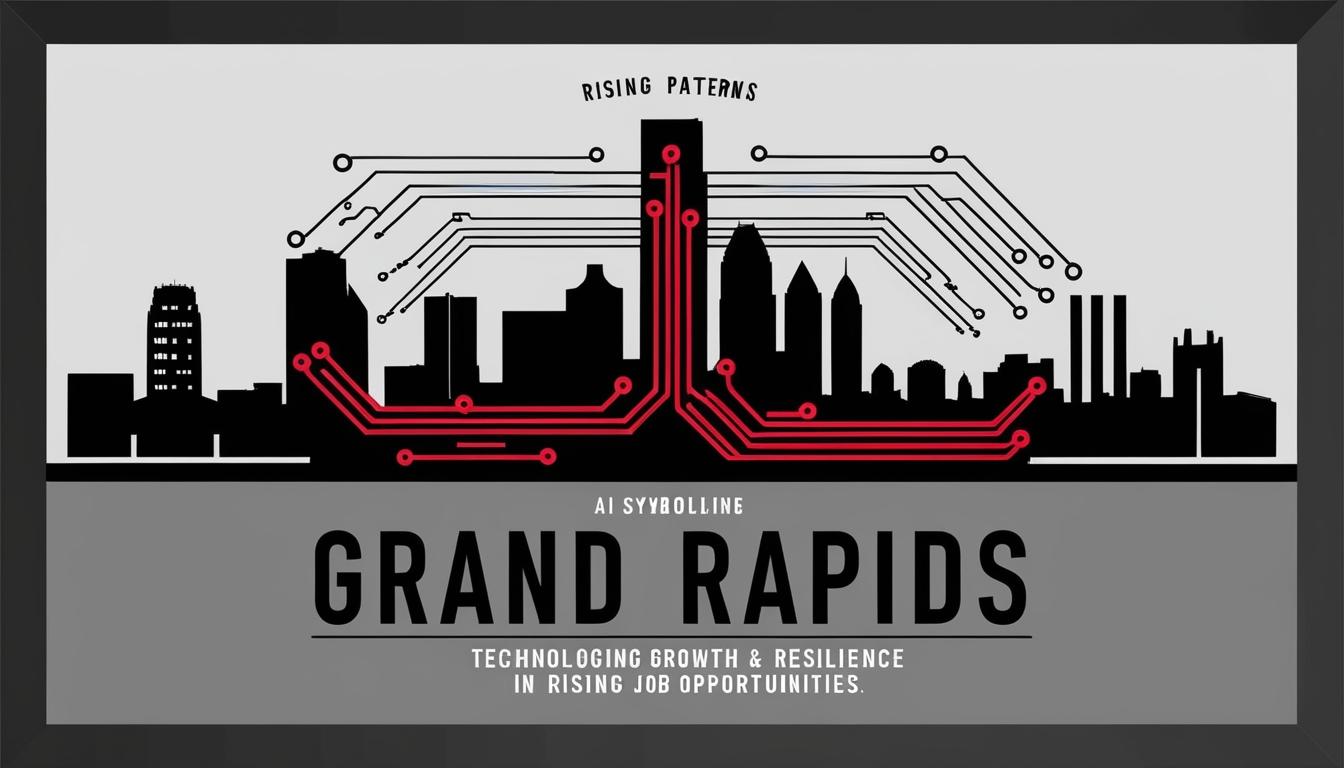
# Grand Rapids embraces AI to drive manufacturing growth



In the face of ongoing global developments in technology, particularly in artificial intelligence (AI) automation, Michigan's manufacturing sector is showing signs of resilience and growth. A recent discussion highlighted the importance of embracing these technologies to enhance economic health, and drawing attention to the projected growth in job opportunities within the tech-based economy of the region.

The initiative aims to boost the region's tech-based economy from 6% to 10% over the next decade, necessitating the creation of approximately 20,000 jobs. As of now, over 4,300 jobs have already been generated, keeping the region on course with its strategic objectives for economic growth. Speaking to Bridge Michigan, a representative noted the need to adjust the technological focus of companies in response to shifts within the software sector. “A lot of software expenditure has shifted to AI, and so that’s created a moment where some of our software companies are making adjustments to provide more AI-oriented offerings,” the representative remarked.

In Grand Rapids, local leaders have developed an "AI roadmap for manufacturers." This roadmap serves to clarify the overwhelming array of options available in the AI landscape, providing guidance for local businesses. The primary recommendations focus on leveraging AI to boost operational efficiency, enhance human resources practices, and open up new avenues for business development.

The concerted efforts for economic development in the region are exemplified by the cooperation between various organisations, including The Right Place, Lakeshore Advantage, and Greater Muskegon Economic Development. These groups are working collaboratively to secure a share of $75 million in state revitalisation grants for 13 counties in Michigan. The emphasis on growth contrasts with broader conversations in communities across the country, where expanding economies are often viewed with skepticism.

Since 2019, Grand Rapids has experienced a significant increase in its population of young adults holding bachelor’s degrees or higher, rising by 19.7% against a statewide average of 9%. This demographic shift is indicative of the region's educational offerings and its ability to retain graduates – approximately 80% of the 10,300 college graduates produced annually remain in the area. The synergies between local colleges and employers play a vital role in holding onto this talent, cementing Grand Rapids' competitive edge.

Various cities have served as sources of inspiration for the local leaders in West Michigan, notably Denver. A representative, who previously resided in Denver, pointed out the importance of focusing on quality standards when developing public assets to enhance community living experiences. With a keen eye on pedestrian experience, Denver has successfully integrated urban planning that fosters connectivity and accessibility.

As the region navigates the ongoing challenges brought about by the pandemic and emerging technologies, there is a growing belief that Grand Rapids is poised to become a benchmark for other mid-sized communities. The prediction is that, unlike larger markets that have faced significant strains during the slow recovery from COVID-19, Grand Rapids may lead by example in leveraging AI to sustain and enhance its economic and social resilience.

In summary, with a proactive approach to integrating AI and technology within manufacturing, along with a strategic focus on workforce development, Grand Rapids stands as a potential model for economic growth and innovation in the coming years.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

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