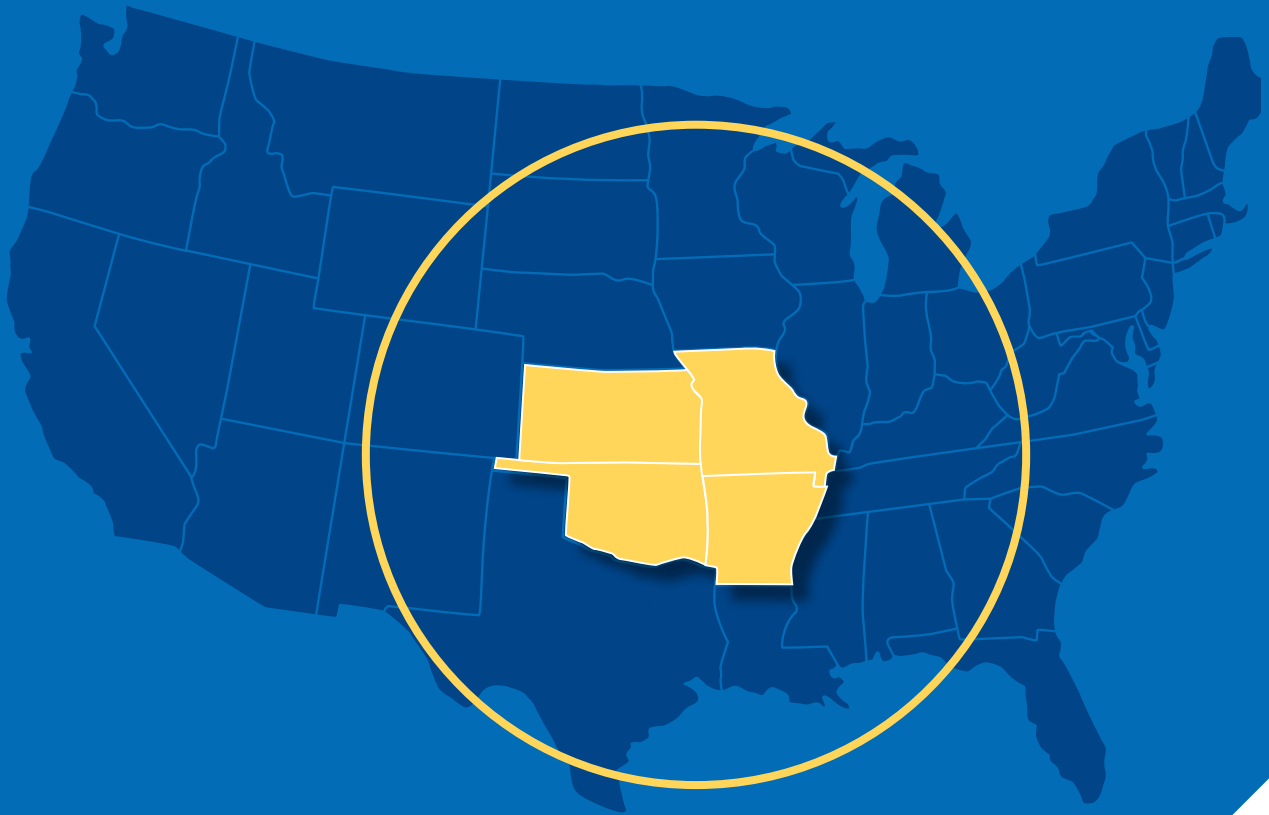


Local Market Assessment

# REGION IX

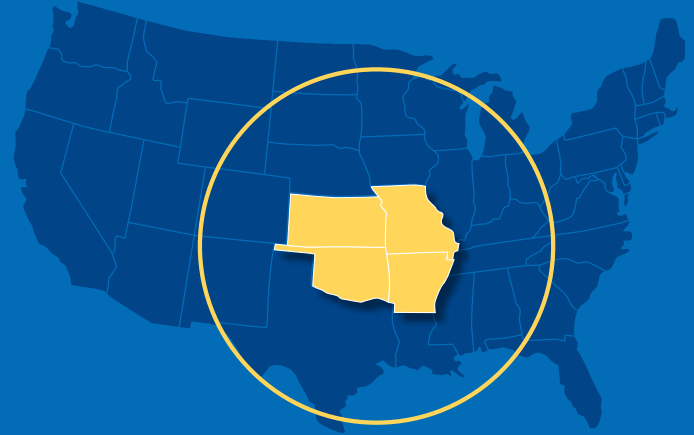
ARKANSAS | KANSAS | MISSOURI | OKLAHOMA

Global Influences  
and Opportunities



# CONTENTS

- Arkansas** ..... 1
- Kansas**..... 5
- Missouri** ..... 10
- Oklahoma** ..... 16



Globalization is continuing to have a monumental effect on the real estate industry, with impacts that can be felt far beyond large transactions in major markets. Foreign investment in U.S. real estate is occurring in both commercial and residential sectors, in every state, in markets of all sizes, and the perennial increase in these activities tells us it’s much more than a short-term trend.

The key to finding global business, even in unexpected areas, begins with adopting a global mindset. In this assessment of local markets, we examine four states—Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma—to help you identify and cultivate global niches.

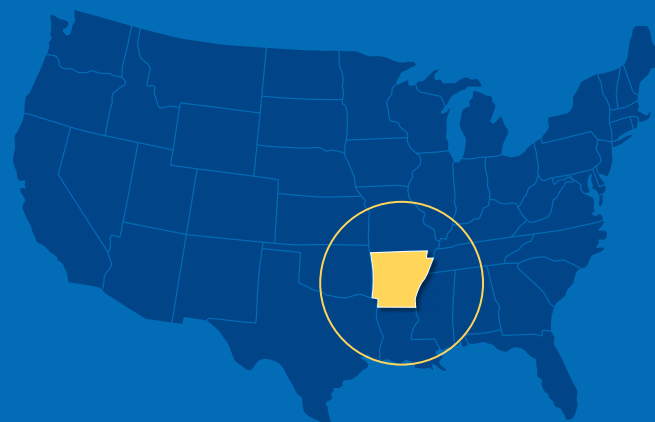
You don’t have to live in these states to benefit from this research. Much of what you’ll discover here is paralleled in many other markets. The processes discussed in these case studies will help you learn how to identify global opportunities that can be applied to any local market. Read on to learn how.

Note: Copies of this report, as well as prior case studies examining the following states can be found at [nar.realtor/global](https://nar.realtor/global).

Explore global real estate opportunities throughout the region. Navigate to a state using the Table of Contents links or the “Quick Navigation” bar at the bottom of each page.



# Take a Closer Look ARKANSAS



## How to find global influences and opportunities in your local market

Arkansas is not usually top-of-mind when discussing international real estate opportunities. As a largely rural state with a strong agricultural base, its immigrant population is small compared to other states. But that's only half the story. Arkansas' immigrant population grew a surprising 5% percent between 2010 and 2015, ranking fourth among all states in terms of the fastest foreign-born growth rate. The relatively strong economy and low cost of living make it an attractive destination for newly-arrived immigrants.

Immigrants are important to Arkansas' economic growth. According to the American Immigration Council, immigrants contributed roughly \$2.3 billion to the state's economy in 2018. Foreign-born workers have played a significant role in northwest Arkansas, where thousands support the state's poultry production, trucking, construction and computer programming sectors.

Arkansas' immigrant population is expected to continue growing. Forward-looking agents should consider tapping international business and following the trend. Here are ways to identify potential opportunities in your market.

### 1. Know who lives and works in your area

Start by learning about immigration in the state and in your area. *NAR's State Economic Data for Engaging in International Real Estate* report for Arkansas contains state-level overviews of immigration, countries of origin, foreign visitors by visa type, homeownership data and more. In the Arkansas report you will find that 5% of Arkansans were born overseas versus 14% for all states. Latinos and Asians are the largest groups, comprising 62% and 23% of the foreign born, respectively. According to the American Immigration Council, the top countries of origin for immigrants in 2018 were Mexico (40%), El Salvador (12%), India (5%), Vietnam (4%) and Guatemala (4%).

#### [Download the NAR report.](#)

While Arkansas' immigrant population is relatively small compared to the U.S., these immigrants are integral to Arkansas's diverse communities. They play an important role in the economy. For example, the state's manufacturing industry relies on immigrants for 14% of its workers, and nearly a quarter of Arkansas residents employed in life,

physical, and social science jobs are immigrants. Arkansas residents in immigrant-led households had \$3.1 billion in spending power (after-tax income) in 2018. On the business side, 2,843 immigrant business owners accounted for 8% of all self-employed Arkansas residents in 2018 and generated \$282.9 million in business income.

One factor that makes Arkansas' immigrant population unique is its community of people from the Marshall Islands in the Pacific—the largest population of Marshallese in the mainland U.S. (Hawaii's Marshallese population is presumed larger.) The Marshallese began moving to the Springdale area in the late 1980s for employment in the poultry industry (home of Tyson Foods) and educational opportunities. Others followed, and the Springdale-area community soon grew from 2,600 in the 2000 census to 4,300 in 2010. Today, estimates are that some 15,000 Marshallese (half of the U.S.-based population) call Arkansas home and reside in Washington County, mainly in the Springdale area. Technically, people from the Marshall Islands are not immigrants; its former status as a U.S.


(continued on page 2)

(continued from page 1)

possession allows citizens to travel and work in the U.S. without visas (but they must apply for permanent residency). Rising seas threaten Marshall Islands. This independent island country could be completely submerged by the end of the century—forcing the migration of its population, some of which will likely find their way to Arkansas.

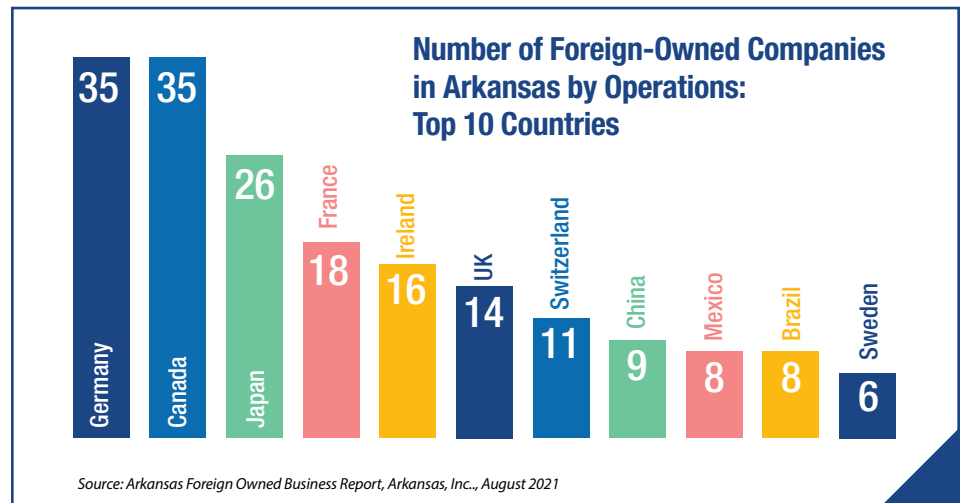
**2. Connect with immigrant communities in your market**

Once local immigrant communities have been identified, the next logical step is to begin making in-roads by eating in their restaurants, frequenting businesses and attending events. Some immigrant groups establish cultural centers or organizations to promote ethnic community connections (but are open to anyone). Examples include the **Hispanic Women’s Organization of Arkansas**, the **Marshallse Education Initiative** and the **Irish Cultural Society of Arkansas**. Joining the local Chamber of Commerce may be another way to meet business leaders from a local immigrant group.



**Cause IQ – A national directory of non-profits. Search by state, city and category. Cause IQ lists 36 cultural and ethnic awareness organizations in Arkansas—based mainly in Little Rock and Fayetteville. You can also search for religious, social, human services and arts organizations.**

Relationships within immigrant communities take time to develop. Americans are largely at ease doing business with strangers but that is not the case in many other cultures. Personal relationships come first. Foreign nationals want to get to know you, and want you to know them. In time, relationships grow and trust is established.



**3. Look for foreign direct investment**

Overseas companies have significant investments in Arkansas. In 2019, they generated over 47,000 jobs—an increase of 45% from 2009. Yet, the state’s overall private-sector employment increased by only 10% during this same period. Over half 62% of the jobs created were in manufacturing, ranking fourth in the U.S., following South Dakota, Michigan and Nebraska.

The Arkansas Economic Development Commission (AEDC) is tasked with attracting and retaining foreign investment. More than 500 international employers have operations in Arkansas. Germany, Canada and Japan top the list of foreign-owned companies in the state by the number of operations. Looking at countries of origin for foreign-owned companies that employ the largest number of residents, Japan, Switzerland, France and Canada lead the list. A comprehensive listing of foreign-owned companies doing business in Arkansas (includes contact information) is available from AEDC. **Download the full report.**

Recent examples of FDI in Arkansas include:

- In 2020, Nestlé announced a \$100 million expansion plan for its frozen food production plant in Jonesboro, adding approximately 100 additional employees to support a new product line.
- The Italian manufacturer, Fiocchi, recently announced plans to expand its operations in the U.S. with a new manufacturing facility in Little Rock. The company will invest \$15 million to establish a fully independent industrial platform in the United States.
- In 2021, Canadian-owned Structurlam Mass Timber Corp. opened one of the world’s largest laminated-timber production facilities in Conway, after allocating \$90 million to retrofit a former steel plant and create 130 new jobs.

The AEDC has two offices in Asia and one in Europe to assist international companies make smart investment decisions that will enhance the company’s competitiveness while boosting Arkansas’ economy. The AEDC offers a variety of incentives to target industries that range from exemptions and reductions to tax credits and grants. The Commission also assists with issues associated with community leadership, infrastructure, utilities, permitting and more.

(continued on page 3)

(continued from page 2)

If your market includes potential sites for commercial and industrial development, investigate ways to get involved with the AEDC. This might include offering property tours or seminars for international business leaders visiting the state via an AEDC-sponsored trip. You may also want to participate in their trade missions abroad. Relationships with AEDC trade representatives can help you gain an inside scoop on which companies and countries are considering investing in Arkansas. For more information, go to [arkansasedc.com](http://arkansasedc.com).



**World Trade Center Arkansas - Dedicated to growing bilateral trade for the state by delivering world class services, global connections and export development programs to Arkansas businesses.**

#### 4. Find companies hiring highly-skilled immigrant workers

Many of the largest employers in Arkansas reach out overseas to find qualified workers, especially in STEM-related fields (science, technology, engineering and math). The H1-B visa program helps American companies hire immigrant workers when American workers with specialized skills cannot be found. According to [MyVisaJobs.com](http://MyVisaJobs.com), in 2021, over 4,100 H1-B visas were requested in Arkansas. The average annual wage for these jobs was \$90,109, significantly higher than the state’s median income of \$48,952 (2019).

The leading H1-B employers in Arkansas include Wal-Mart, Cognizant Technology Solutions, Infosys and the University Of Arkansas For Medical Sciences. The Arkansas cities home to the largest groups of H1-B workers include Bentonville, Lowell, Little Rock and Fayetteville.

Foreign-born professionals who start out on an H1-B visa often later decide to apply for permanent residency and remain in the area. By developing relationships with incoming professionals you can tap into a group of higher-income residential buyers who will also likely refer their incoming friends and co-workers to you.

It is worth noting that the Department of Labor (DOL) typically certifies more than three times the number of foreign work requests than the number of H-1B visas issued, which means the opportunities to assist foreign workers with housing are substantially greater.

Contact human resources departments or housing offices at major employers, universities and hospitals to offer your services in settling new H1-B workers. If you hold the **Certified International Property Specialist (CIPS)** designation, be sure to explain that you have received specialized training in international real estate. Often times this will help to open the door.

#### 5. Look for international buyers of agricultural acreage

Data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) shows that foreign investment in U.S. agricultural land has nearly tripled in the past decade. As of 2020, it totaled 37.6 million acres, including cropland, forest and pastures, representing 2.9% of all privately held agricultural land in the U.S. Institutional investors are increasingly interested in timberland. Foreign renewable energy

companies are investing in land with the intent to lease large tracts for wind and solar farms, enabled by federal tax credits. Since 2015, foreign holdings have increased by a yearly average of about 2.3 million acres.

A 2019 study by The Midwest Center for Investigative Reporting found 610 tracts of land in 56 Arkansas counties owned by entities from 34 nations. Ownership of roughly 150 tracts was marked as “unknown.” These tracts of land represented nearly 1.2 million acres at the end of 2020. Foreign investors were most likely to own forest acreage followed by cropland.

The USDA reports that entities from the Netherlands own the largest amount of foreign-owned agricultural land in Arkansas, at some 416,000 acres, with interests primarily in wind farms. Canada follows at 237,584 acres, mostly identified as wooded land associated with ownership of sawmills and timber interests. Nearly all the acreage owned by entities in those two countries is in the heavily wooded Clark and Dallas counties in the south-central area of the state. Other top countries of origin of business entities investing in Arkansas land are Germany (97,062 acres), Italy (27,458 acres) and the United Kingdom (2,749 acres).

#### Foreign Countries Owning the Most Acreage in Arkansas

Netherlands	416,000
Canada	237,584
Germany	97,062
Italy	27,458
U.K.	2,749

Source: Farm Service Agency, U.S. Department of Agriculture

(continued on page 4)

(continued from page 3)

Under the Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act, all foreign holders of agricultural land, including long-term renters, must report those holdings to USDA. In 2021, the Arkansas General Assembly enacted Act 1046, requiring foreign persons acquiring an interest in Arkansas agricultural land to file a report with the Arkansas Department of Agriculture. REALTORS® working with clients interested in purchasing land should consult with an expert familiar with restrictions and reporting requirements.

## 6. Don't forget foreign students

In 2021, 5,104 students came from other countries to attend Arkansas colleges and universities, contributing \$98.3 million to the state's economy. The number of students is down 12% from the previous year, likely due to pandemic-related travel restrictions. India and China account for the greatest percentage of international students, with the majority attending the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. Other institutions attracting significant numbers of international students include Southern Arkansas University (Magnolia), University of Arkansas (Little Rock), Arkansas State University (Jonesboro) and University of Central Arkansas (Conway). All data is from **Open Doors**, a project sponsored by the U.S. Department of State.

Wealthy parents sometimes buy condos for their students, either selling them after graduation or renting them for ongoing income. Contact the student housing office of local universities to offer your services to newly-arrived students.

## 7. Leverage your knowledge

When initially investigating global opportunities in Arkansas, it makes sense to focus your efforts on one area of international business. As your experience and contacts grow, however, so will your awareness of other global opportunities. Use what you've learned to expand into new international niches.

The world has become a global marketplace. Immigration and foreign direct investment will be important factors contributing to Arkansas' place in that market. Getting your foot in the door now means that international transactions can lead the future growth of your business.

The global property marketplace offers many exciting and profitable opportunities—including in Arkansas. While this report is an excellent place to begin exploring these opportunities, it does not make you an expert. NAR's Certified International Property Specialists (CIPS) designation provides the knowledge, research, network and tools to expand your global business network and do international business locally. **Learn more about the CIPS designation.** ■

## Arkansas by the Numbers

# #1

Arkansas was the #1 state moved into, by ratio, during 2021. 44% more people moved into the state than moved out.

# 19M

Acres of forestland, driving \$2 billion in new and proposed investments in the state's forest-products industry in recent years.

# \$21B

Amount that agriculture contributes to the state's economy annually.

# 3K

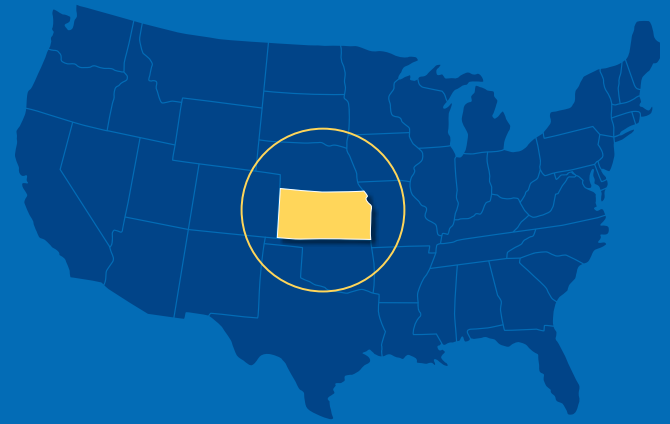
Increase in Arkansas' foreign-born population between 2018 and 2019.

# 40%

Percent of the U.S. population within a day's drive or Arkansas (550 miles/880 kilometers).

(continued on page 5)

# Take a Closer Look KANSAS



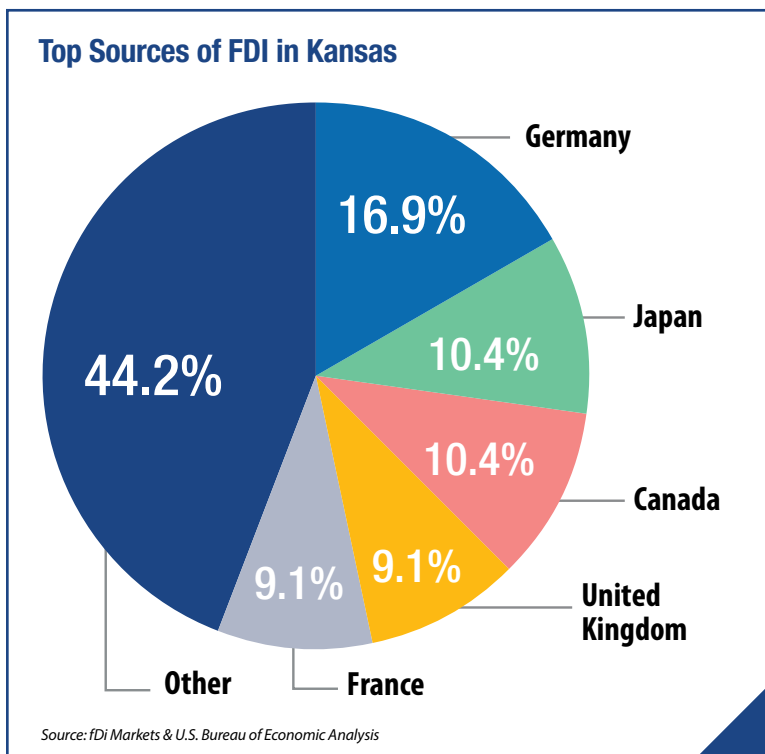
## How to find global influences and opportunities in your local market

Centrally located in the heart of the Midwest, the state’s economic development leaders have focused on building and maintaining a solid multimodal infrastructure, making it easier and more cost-efficient for international companies to ship to and from Kansas. In CNBC’s annual study on top states for doing business, Kansas ranked #6 for infrastructure. Add to this Kansas’ low operating costs, talented workforce and business-friendly policies, and investors will find the state an ideal location to build or expand their business in the U.S.

Kansas has built a diverse industry base that includes bioscience, animal health, energy technology, aviation, advanced manufacturing and agriculture. The state is working to leverage its competitive advantage to catalyze future growth—especially in the advanced manufacturing sector.

While the state’s immigrant population is relatively small, they make up a larger percentage of the workforce. Kansas is becoming more diverse, and immigrant workers are an increasing and vital part of the Kansas labor market.

There are global business influences and opportunities statewide. Use this information to help you identify them.



## Foreign Investment

International companies in Kansas employ 76,100 U.S. workers. Nearly 28,000 of those jobs are in the manufacturing sector, according to **Global Business Alliance**. With approximately 600 international companies operating in the state, Kansas now beats the national average in the number of jobs supported by international investment. Between 2014 and 2019, Kansas’ FDI-related employment rose 33%, compared to just a 3% increase in the state’s overall private sector employment. Among all international employers, those from Germany, Japan, Canada and the United Kingdom supported the largest number of jobs in 2021.

While manufacturing accounts for the highest percentage of jobs supported by foreign investment, other sectors attracting global interest include corporate and professional services, logistics and

(continued on page 6)

(continued from page 5)

distribution, aerospace and defense, animal health, bioscience, agriculture, and energy and natural resources.

In 2022, there were several announcements of foreign corporations selecting Kansas to build or expand their operations in the United States. Most notably, in July, Panasonic Energy announced plans to build one of the largest electric vehicle (EV) battery manufacturing facilities of its kind in De Soto, Kansas. The planned project is expected to create up to 4,000 new jobs and result in an investment of up to \$4 billion, representing the biggest economic development project in Kansas history. The project will support an estimated 4,000 additional jobs created by suppliers and community businesses and 16,500 construction jobs. “Winning this project has shown that Kansas has what it takes to compete on a global scale—and that our pro-business climate is driving the technological innovation needed to achieve a more prosperous and sustainable future,” said Governor Laura Kelly during the announcement in Topeka.

Other recent announcements include:

- Fagron Sterile Services, a Belgium-based manufacturer of health care product lines, announced its expansion in Wichita, which will result in more than 150 new jobs and \$20 million in capital investment over the next three years. (March 2022)
- London-based Sicut Enterprises selected Neodesha as the site of their new North American manufacturing hub, projected to create 132 new full-time jobs over the next five years. (May 2022)

These companies join an impressive list of other foreign-based companies operating in Kansas. Among them are the following:

- SEKISUI America Corporation (Kansas City)—the North American regional headquarters of SEKISUI Chemical, located in Osaka, Japan.
- CZ-USA (Kansas City)—an engineering firm that produces service, hunting and sports firearms and whose parent company is the Czech holding company Colt CZ Group SE.
- Enel Green Power S.p.A. (Lenexa)—an Italian multinational renewable energy corporation headquartered in Rome.
- Figeac Aero (Wichita)—a French aerospace company that manufactures engines and structural and precision parts.
- Futamura/Tecumseh—a Japan-based global leader in sustainable cellulose films for the packaging market.
- GKN Aerospace (Wellington)—a global multi-technology tier 1 aerospace supplier (founded in the U.K.) with a precision machining site in Kansas.

Beyond the commercial business opportunities associated with land, office and industrial sales and leasing for foreign companies looking to locate or expand in Kansas, there is often a residential ripple effect, especially in a tight labor market. Companies may need to attract workers from outside the immediate area and house executives relocating to oversee the local operation.

Position yourself as an expert resource with state agencies and non-profit organizations that assist foreign companies with site selection and other real property needs. Use these resources to tap into inbound FDI business.



**Kansas Economic Development Alliance (KEDA) -**

**A statewide non-profit focused on economic growth and development in Kansas, representing about 100 entities, including cities, counties, regional economic development groups and industry partners.**

**Kansas Department of Commerce – Source for business demographics, investment incentives, tax credits and exemption and other information critical to foreign investors.**

(continued on page 7)



(continued from page 6)

## International Trade

Kansas exports reached an all-time high of \$12.6 billion in 2021. Exports surged by \$2.2 billion compared to the previous year, representing a 20.9% growth. The combined value of the top ten exported commodities was \$9.7 billion—an increase of 25% since 2020. The most significant gains were in the categories of cereals, meat, aircraft and parts, industrial machinery and beverages (ethyl alcohol used in hand sanitizer).

Mexico and Canada were the top three export destinations in 2021, totaling \$4.8 billion—an increase of nearly \$1.1 billion from 2020—and representing 38% of all Kansas exports. The top exports to Mexico (Kansas’ #1 trading partner) were in the agricultural commodities and aircraft/parts categories. For Canada, industrial and electric machinery, beverages (ethyl alcohol), and aircraft/parts contributed to the surge in exports. The Kansas Department of Commerce maintains an office in Mexico City to assist Kansas businesses engage in the Central American market.

The metro Kansas City area is at the center of the recent Kansas City Southern Railway acquisition by Canadian Pacific Railway.) In August 2022, the deal received the required regulatory clearance by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS). The merger creates the first U.S.-Mexico-Canada railroad, linking production areas in Mexico with consumers in the U.S. and Canada and enabling the export of U.S. grain and U.S. and Canadian auto parts and refined products to Mexico.

The Asian countries of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea follow Mexico and Canada as Kansas’ top trade partners, with exports totaling \$2.8 billion (22%). Combining the top five markets, this group accounted for a full 60% percent of total exports in 2021, while the top ten markets accounted for 75% of total exports.

**Trade Missions.** Kansas’ Department of Commerce offers a range of live and virtual events to find new foreign buyers and partners. Look for upcoming events posted **online**. Work with your local economic development group to identify trade mission opportunities with a property

component, e.g., future site selection, office leasing or support for housing needs. Participating in these international trade missions provides direct contact with decision-makers, relevant experts and key figures from the respective areas of the companies involved.

If direct participation is not an option, create relationships with participating companies to lay the foundation for future business opportunities. Demonstrating your understanding of the global market and expertise in global relocations into the U.S. (or connecting U.S. leaders who need assistance with property outside the U.S.) will set you apart from others in your market.



**World Trade Center Kansas City** - Offers programs and resources to stimulate international trade, helps regional businesses launch or expand global operations, and assists foreign businesses gain a foothold in the business community. (Serves the Kansas City metro area, which includes Missouri.)

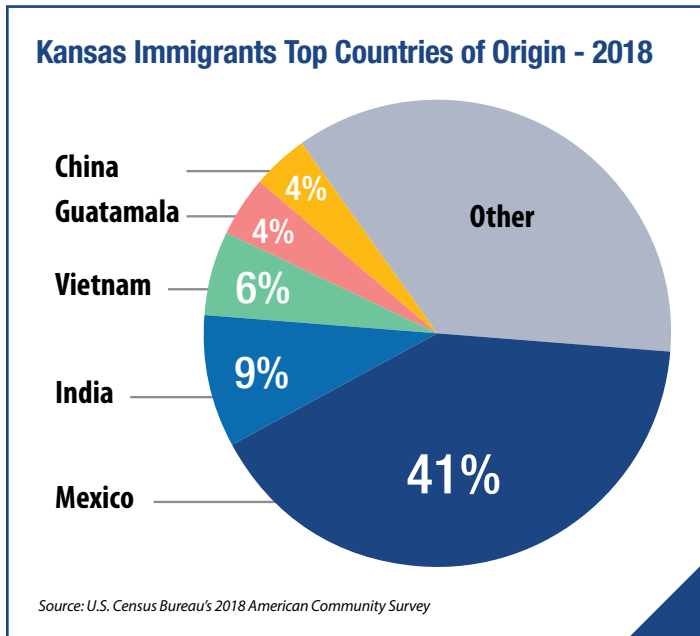
## Immigration

Kansas has a small but growing immigrant community that represents significant financial assets, according to the American Immigration Council. In 2018, Kansas immigrant-led households had \$4.4 billion in spending power. While immigrants in Kansas comprise 7.3% of the state’s population, they make up 9.7% of the workforce. The construction industry relies on immigrants for 15% of its employees. One in five immigrants works in science-related industries.

Mexico is overwhelmingly the source of the largest number of immigrants in Kansas and represents 41% of the state’s foreign-born residents. Kansas is one of five U.S. states outside the Southwest comprised of more than one percent Mexican Americans. Following Mexico, other top countries of origin for immigrants are India (9%), Vietnam (6%), Guatemala (4%) and China (4%). (see chart on following page).

(continued on page 8)

(continued from page 7)



Immigrant entrepreneurs in Kansas generate hundreds of millions of dollars in business revenue. In 2018, 13,938 immigrant business owners accounted for 9% of all self-employed Kansas residents, generating \$322.9 million in business income. In the Kansas City metropolitan area, which spans Kansas and Missouri, immigrants accounted for 14% of business owners.

**H1-B Visas.** Michigan ranks in the lower half (#33) of states for the number of H1-B visa issued by state, with 2,173 visa approvals in 2021 with an average salary of \$97,535. The top five H1-B employers in the state are IBM, Sprint, the University of Kansas Medical Center, Garmin International and the University of Kansas. While IBM may be the top employer of H1-B visa holders, the University of Kansas Medical Centers pays the highest average salary of \$127,885.

H1-B visa holders can buy or rent property in the U.S., and many look to the sponsoring employer for guidance on securing a place to live in the country. Also, foreign-born professionals who begin employment on an H1-B visa often later decide to apply for permanent residency and remain in the area. By developing relationships with incoming professionals, you can tap into a group of higher-income residential buyers who will also likely refer their incoming friends and co-workers to you. Contact human resources departments or housing offices at leading H1-B visa employers to offer your services in settling new H1-B workers. Use the searchable database at [MyVisaJobs.com](https://www.myvisajobs.com) to identify top employers in your market.

## Connect with Kansas' Ethnic Communities

With a 2020 U.S. Census diversity score of 61%, Kansas is a little higher than average for diversity compared to other U.S. states, although it is more diverse than many of its neighboring states. This score is up from 55% in a previous Census report.

The largest ethnic population in the state is Hispanic (18.7%), followed by Asian (6%). (Those identifying as two or more races is 10.2%.) The most common foreign languages spoken in Kansas are Spanish (214,225 speakers), Chinese (13,874 speakers, including Mandarin and Cantonese) and German (12,363 speakers).

Ethnic communities can be a highly productive business opportunity for REALTORS®. A satisfied client is likely to refer you to others in the community, and before long, you can establish yourself as the “go-to” real estate expert for a specific ethnic group. Serving an ethnic community demands understanding the culture and any unique considerations concerning business practices. As is the case when doing business outside the U.S., “local-global” business typically results from an existing relationship.

Kansas REALTORS® who want to grow their business by targeting specific ethnic communities should explore opportunities associated with ethnic chambers and cultural organizations. Also, watch for ethnic-centric exhibits or festivals. For example, Topeka annually celebrates Fiesta Mexicana, one of the largest Mexican festivals in the Midwest. The city’s Hispanic population grew by 24% in the last decade, according to 2020 census data. While the state’s largest cities are more diverse, look for pockets of ethnic communities in smaller markets and engage in the community through civic, cultural and social activities.



**Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Greater Kansas City** - Promotes economic opportunities within the Hispanic market and business community across eight counties in Kansas and Missouri.

**Asian American Chamber of Commerce of Kansas City** - Works to enhance economic opportunities for Asian American businesses through education, networking and advocacy while promoting community engagement and visibility.

**Wichita Hispanic Chamber of Commerce** - Fostering mutually beneficial communication, education and relationships between the Hispanic and general business communities.

(continued on page 9)

(continued from page 8)

**Foreign Students.** Kansas' top universities attract thousands of international students each year, many of whom require housing while studying in the U.S. or upon accepting positions with Kansas employers following graduation. In 2021, 7,738 international students attended Kansas institutions of higher education, down 13% from the previous year. This decline follows a national trend due to pandemic-related travel restrictions. China and India are the countries of origin for nearly 35% of these students. Other leading places of origin include Saudi Arabia, South Korea and Paraguay.

Three universities overwhelmingly attract international students studying in Kansas: Wichita University (2,184), University of Kansas (1,950) and Kansas State University (1,335). All data is from **Open Doors**, a project sponsored by the U.S. Department of State.

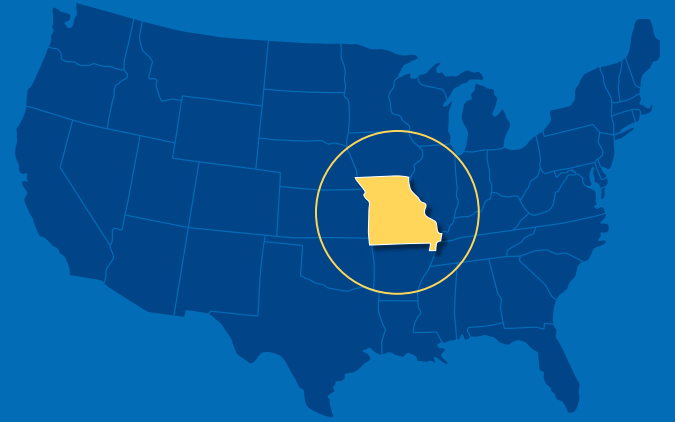
Unlike many American students who live in dorms or rent nearby apartments, wealthy foreign students may have parents who prefer to purchase property for their child's use for the length of their studies. After graduation, the property produces income through student rentals. Reach out to the university department in charge of assisting international students in scoping out this niche. ■

The global property marketplace offers many exciting and profitable opportunities – including in Kansas. While this report is an excellent place to begin exploring these opportunities, it does not make you an expert. NAR's Certified International Property Specialists (CIPS) designation provides the knowledge, research, network and tools to expand your global business network and do international business locally.

**Learn more about the CIPS designation.**



# Take a Closer Look MISSOURI



## How to find global influences and opportunities in your local market

Missouri sits at the geographic center of the United States population. Its distance from U.S. borders might lead you to believe that it's removed from global influences—until you take a closer look. Being in the middle also gives Missouri relatively easy access to the rest of the country. Missouri's central location provides efficient access to both coasts and markets in Canada and Mexico. The state is within 600 miles of many of the nation's fastest-growing metros, including Austin, Dallas, Houston, Nashville, Oklahoma City and San Antonio, based on recent Census data and within 600 miles of 51% of U.S. households and 50% of U.S. manufacturing establishments.

The metro Kansas City area is at the center of the recent Kansas City Southern Railway acquisition by Canadian Pacific Railway.) The merger created the first U.S.-Mexico-Canada railroad, linking production areas in Mexico with consumers in the U.S. and Canada and enabling the export of U.S. grain and U.S. and Canadian auto parts and refined products to Mexico.

Missouri has long been recognized for its low business costs and high work ethic, in addition to being one of the most tax-friendly states. These qualities have played a strong role in helping it attract businesses and new residents from around the world—many related to initiatives associated with solving important world challenges in agriculture, medicine and healthcare.

## Unique Competitive Advantages

Missouri REALTORS® promoting their markets to the world need to know how it stacks up against other destinations. Companies and individuals are drawn to Missouri for several reasons, including:

**Business** - Missouri's companies encompass a strong and diverse set of industries, including advanced manufacturing, aerospace and defense, agriculture technology and food solutions, energy solutions, financial and professional services, health innovation and distribution & logistics.

Its 3.1 million workforce is better educated than most other U.S. states, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. Yet, its hourly wage is 11.1% lower than the national average. To counter the tight labor market in the United States, **Missouri One Start** provides businesses with a

tailored workforce strategy to address their business needs. At no cost to eligible companies, Missouri One Start will customize services ranging from pre-employment screening and recruitment to designing job-specific training during and after the onboarding process.

In 2020, Missouri's corporate income tax rate dropped to 4%, making it one of the most tax-friendly states. It also adopted a single factor, market-based corporate income tax apportionment model based only on sales. Missouri has not adopted a worldwide or nationwide unitary tax assessment in computing multinational corporate income tax liability.

**Transportation** - Air travelers from Missouri can reach most cities in the U.S. and Canada in less than three hours. Two of the largest U.S. rail terminals are located in Kansas City and St. Louis, linking over 4,800 miles of track in the state. Twenty freight railroads operate in Missouri, carrying the

(continued on page 11)

(continued from page 10)

nation’s fourth largest freight tonnage. Plus, Missouri has unmatched access to the two largest river systems in North America, including the Mississippi River on which 552 million tons of product are moved annually.

**Foreign Trade Zones (FTZ)** - The Greater Kansas City Foreign Trade Zone is one of the largest zones in the country, with 450+ million square feet of approved foreign trade space. It handles more volume than FTZs in Chicago, Dallas, Denver and Minneapolis and has more available space than any other area in the country. Missouri is also home to two other FTZs in St. Louis and Springfield.

Missouri has another unique feature—more than 30 million square feet of underground storage created from former limestone quarries. Scattered across the state, these facilities offer natural climate-controlled, secure, adaptable and environmentally-friendly commercial real estate, perfect for frozen, refrigerated and dry food distribution, records and bulk paper storage and communications/data centers. The largest, SubTropolis, has 6 million square feet of underground storage and another 8 million available for expansion. Located in Kansas City, the facility counts the U.S. Postal Service, the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Archives and Records Administration among its tenants. Because of SubTropolis, 10% of the city’s commercial real estate is underground. (See map on this page.)

## A Global Agenda

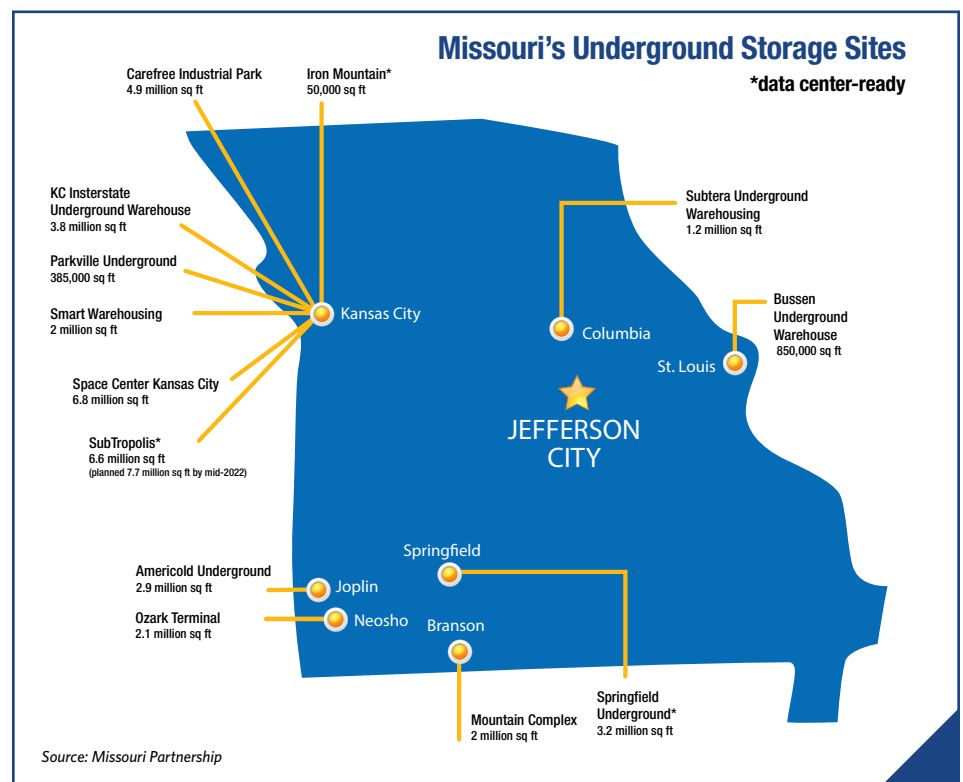
Missouri actively pursues a global economic growth strategy. **The Missouri Partnership** works with the Missouri Department of Economic Development, the Hawthorn Foundation and economic development agencies across the state to directly support companies interested in investing in Missouri. With 15 foreign offices worldwide, it plays a major role in generating leads for foreign direct investment (FDI).



Use the **Missouri Partnership database** to find local and regional economic development agencies near you.

The Missouri Partnership has actively participated with the Missouri REALTORS® to showcase Missouri as a destination for foreign direct investment at the annual MIPIM commercial property exhibition in Cannes, France. NAR featured the MIPIM exposition partnership in a March 2022 article in **Commercial Connections** magazine.

Monies raised by the **Hawthorn Foundation** support the efforts of the Missouri Partnership, among other state economic development efforts. Hawthorn Foundation investors support trade mission travel and diplomatic expenses, which allow the Governor to promote Missouri and Missouri businesses overseas as part of the administration’s overall economic development efforts. The Foundation’s 140+ members range from multinational companies to entrepreneurial firms and fellow economic development agencies.



(continued on page 12)

(continued from page 11)

## Sector Spotlight: AgTech

Missouri's global leadership in agriculture technology (AgTech) is on display worldwide. Missouri has more than 95,000 farms—the second highest number in the U.S.—contributing nearly \$94 billion to the local economy in 2021, according to the state's Department of Agriculture. From advanced genomics with seeds to the use of data on a square inch of a field, Missouri talent is developing every aspect of AgTech today. The state is attracting interest from companies worldwide involved with artificial intelligence, robotics, the internet of things (IoT), edge computing, 5G, blockchain and supercomputing to support the agriculture sector.

Missouri is the global headquarters of the Climate Corporation, which uses data to enable farmers to make real-time decisions on the ground and maximize their returns on every hectare. The state is also the new North American headquarters for Wyld Networks, a satellite-connected IoT monitoring service used by farmers in areas with no internet or cellular service, and for AgIdea, a contract R&D company based in Pergamino, Argentina. The state has the world's first AgTech innovation community, 39 North. The 600-acre district includes the headquarters for Bayer Crop Science's Global Seeds & Traits and KWS's North American Research and the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center, among other leading AgTech organizations.

With \$1 billion in global financing in the first two months of 2022, investment in the AgTech sector shows no signs of slowing down, making this sector ripe for opportunity for real estate professionals who tap into the land, office and housing needs associated with this expanding sector. Learn more about the AgTech sector at the [Missouri Partnership](#) website.

## Foreign Direct Investment

More than 700 businesses from around the globe have established manufacturing plants, bio facilities, distribution centers and more in Missouri. Combined, they employ 144,000 workers, 48% in the manufacturing sector, according to 2020 data from Global Business Alliance. Companies based in the UK, Germany, Canada, Japan and France supply the most foreign direct investment (FDI) jobs in the state. Between 2013 and 2018, FDI employment grew 44% compared to overall employment in Missouri, which grew 7% during that period. In 2021, the state exported \$15 billion of goods worldwide.

Missouri Partnership maintains a [list of foreign-owned companies](#) operating in the state—categorized by location, parent company and parent country. Following are some recent FDI announcements.

### New Investment

- German global engineering and design company **RLE International** announced plans in 2022 to establish a modification and engineering center in Kansas City, investing \$7.5 million and creating 85 high-paying jobs.
- Canadian AgTech firm **Ostara Nutrient Recovery Technologies** will invest \$25M to construct a new sustainable fertilizer production facility in St. Louis, creating 40 new jobs. The facility will be Ostara's largest facility in the U.S.
- **Swift Prepared Foods**, owned by Brazil-based JBS, will build a new Italian meats and charcuterie production facility in Columbia, representing a \$200 million investment and 251 new jobs. This project follows the 2020 announcement of a new JBS bacon facility in Moberly, bringing 200 new jobs to the region and \$68 million in capital investment.

### Expansions

- **Kawasaki Motors Manufacturing** expanded its presence in Missouri by opening a new manufacturing facility in Boonville in 2021, creating more than 270 new jobs in the area. The Japanese engine maker was the first foreign vehicle manufacturer to open a plant in the U.S. Built in 1989, the Maryville, Mo. facility has grown to over 900,000 sq. ft. on 114 acres of land employing over 1,100 people.
- **WEG Transformers USA**, a subsidiary of Brazil-based WEG Industries, broke ground in 2022 on its third transformers manufacturing facility in Washington, a 147,000-sq. ft. The new facility represents an investment of more than \$10 million.
- **Hitachi Energy**, a Switzerland-based global technology leader in the utility sector, announced in 2022 plans to invest approximately \$10 million to expand its presence in its Jefferson City facility, adding 75 new jobs and helping meet the demand for electrical transformers.
- Italy-based **Prysmian Group**, a world leader in the energy and telecom cable systems industry, completed a \$3.5 million manufacturing facility in 2021—the first of a two-phase expansion of its Pettis County operation.

(continued on page 13)

(continued from page 12)

- Beverage bottler **Refresco**, headquartered in the Netherlands, invested \$6.8 million in the expansion of its Joplin facility in 2020, creating 95 new jobs.



**Missouri Partnership International Connections** – A snapshot of international connections between Missouri and 28 countries—including import/export data, heritage and corporate business activity.

### Foreign Workers

In 2021, companies in Missouri applied for over 8,200 work visas, primarily in the St. Louis and Kansas City areas (according to **MyVisaJobs.com**). The average salary for these jobs was \$96,802.

**Jefferson City** - 105 visas for primarily business analysts and software engineers. Employers hiring the largest number of H1-B visa workers were Wipro Limited, Tata Consultancy Services and Synapsis.

**Columbia** - 193 visas almost entirely for the University of Missouri, primarily for university professors, but also some medical and IT positions.

**Springfield** - 145 visas, primarily software developers for Securenet Systems Corporation and physicians for Mercy Clinics and Missouri State University.

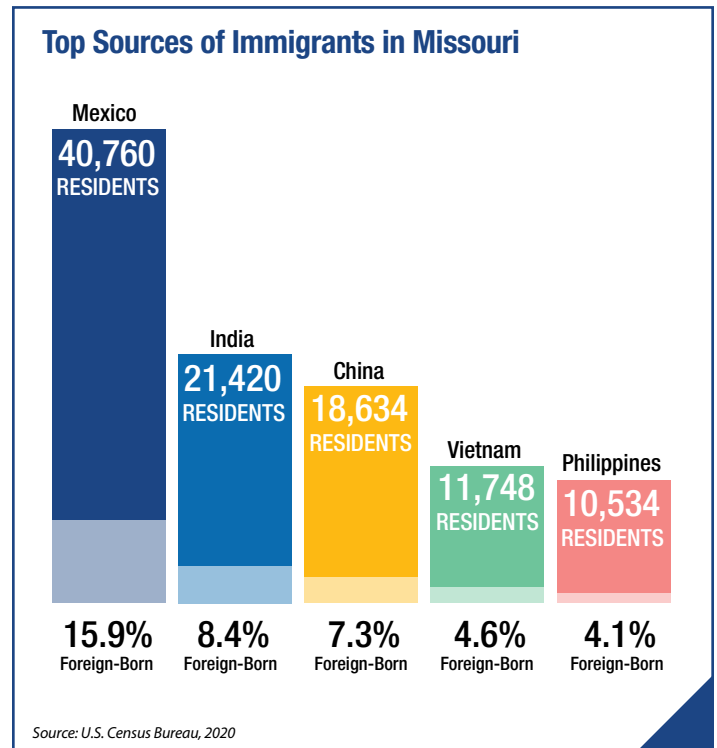


**H1B Expert** – Use the free source to learn more about H1-B visas and identify top H1-B employers in your area.

### Immigration

In 2019, foreign-born residents of Missouri comprised 4.3% of the state’s population, making it home to over 262,000 immigrants, up from 2.7% in 2000. Nearly 5% of all business owners in Missouri are foreign-born. Mexico is overwhelmingly the leading source of immigrants into the state, accounting for almost 16% of all foreign-born residents. Other top sources include India, China, Vietnam and the Philippines.

A look at the metro level reveals some interesting differences. In Kansas City, Mexican-Americans account for 29% of the area’s foreign-born population. On the other side of the state, immigrants from India outnumber those from Mexico in the St. Louis Metro region. St Louis is also home to more than 8,000 immigrants from Bosnia-Herzegovina—many of whom came to the U.S. during the Bosnian War in the mid-90s. The metro area is home to the largest population of Bosnians in the U.S. and worldwide outside of Europe.



(continued on page 14)

(continued from page 13)

Ethnic communities are a source of significant business. Data from the St. Louis Mosaic Project (see below) shows that immigrants are 60% more likely to start a business, 3x more likely to be highly skilled and 130% more likely to have an advanced degree compared to the native-born population. These statistics suggest opportunities for both commercial and residential specialists. Further, immigrants are a great source of referrals. A well-served client is likely to recommend you to others in the community.



The **St. Louis Mosaic Project** is a regional initiative dedicated to building regional prosperity through immigration and innovation. It aims to add 25,000 foreign-born to the region by 2025. The Project

offers several opportunities, including Mosaic Ambassadors and its Professional Connector Program. To get involved and build your own connections, visit the group's **Get Connected** webpage.



The **Refugee & Immigrant Services & Empowerment (RISE)** is part of the Kansas City Library. The program connects immigrant populations with the library's services and resources through outreach,

education and advocacy. Volunteers are needed to help immigrants prepare for their citizenship test. NAR's **2020 State Economic Data for Engaging in International Real Estate report for Missouri** shows that naturalized foreign-born citizens have a higher homeownership rate (70%) than native-born residents (68%). Learn more on the **volunteer webpage**.

Serving an ethnic community calls for understanding the culture and any unique considerations concerning doing business. As is the case when doing business outside the U.S., "local-global" business typically results from an existing relationship. Missouri REALTORS® who want to grow their business by targeting specific ethnic communities have opportunities across the state to connect with these communities through philanthropic, cultural and social events and by directly engaging with organizations that support immigrant services. Consider these volunteer opportunities, or look for others in your community.

**Foreign Students.** Missouri's higher education institutions attract thousands of international students each year, many of whom require housing while studying in the U.S. or upon accepting positions with Missouri employers following graduation. In 2021, 17,234 international students attended Missouri's top universities, down 14% from the previous year, likely due to pandemic-related travel restrictions. The Springfield campus at Missouri State University reported in August 2022 that its international student enrollment is up 42% (540 students).

China and India are the countries of origin for nearly 60% of these students. Other top sources include Saudi Arabia, South Korea and Canada. Washington University in St. Louis hosts the largest number of these students (4,376). Other universities attracting a significant number of students include Missouri State University (Springfield), University of Missouri (Columbia), University of Missouri (Kansas City) and University of Central Missouri (Warrensburg). All data is from **Open Doors**, a project sponsored by the U.S. Department of State.

Many parents of foreign students, especially from China, opt to purchase property for their child's use for the length of their studies. After graduation, the property produces income through student rentals. Get in touch with the university department that assists international students with housing to explore this niche.

(continued on page 14)



(continued from page 14)

## Innovation

Several of Missouri's institutions of higher education play an important role in supporting the state's efforts to drive growth through innovation. The following initiatives also attract global interest, drawing highly-skilled professionals from around the world to Missouri.

**Cortex Innovation Community** – Founded in 2002, Cortex serves as the anchor for St. Louis' innovation efforts in bioscience and technology research, development and commercialization. The 200-acre district was named the global best practice for "Organizing for Success" by the Global Institute on Innovation Districts. The recognition acknowledges Cortex as a model for districts worldwide to create systems, structures, incentives, and finance mechanisms to drive new waves of innovative growth.

**BioSTL/GlobalSTL** – In 2011, **BioSTL** emerged as a new regional organization to champion St. Louis' growth in bioscience. The coalition includes top academic, civic, philanthropic and scientific leaders. Its efforts to support new startups are complimented by **GlobalSTL**, which recruits international companies to establish a U.S. presence in St. Louis.

## Get Involved

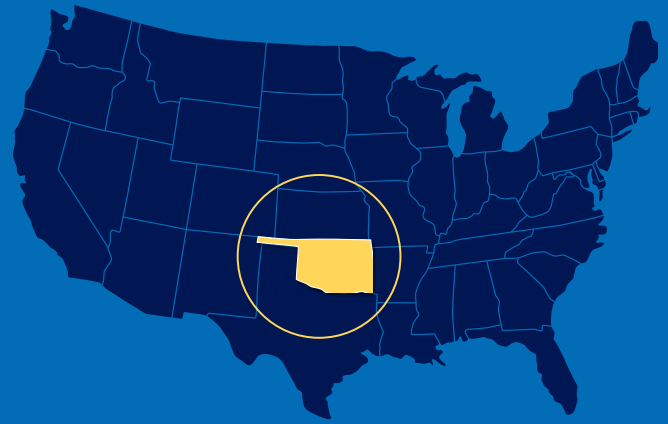
Whether its attracting international companies and workers, inviting foreign students and immigrants, or shaping its economy to deliver innovation to the world market, Missouri is actively engaged in building global connections. These efforts also represent nearly unlimited opportunities for real estate professionals to contribute to and benefit from their own global involvement. ■

The global property marketplace offers many exciting and profitable opportunities—including in Missouri. While this report is an excellent place to begin exploring these opportunities, it does not make you an expert. NAR's Certified International Property Specialists (CIPS) designation provides the knowledge, research, network and tools to expand your global business network and do international business locally.

**Learn more about the CIPS designation.**



# Take a Closer Look OKLAHOMA



## How to find global influences and opportunities in your local market

If the sweeping melodies of a Rodgers & Hammerstein musical are what come to mind when you think about the state of Oklahoma, think again. Geographically central and culturally diverse, Oklahoma represents prosperity and stability for those who live there and those seeking investment opportunities.

In Oklahoma, foreign investors will find a business ecosystem that supports opportunity and growth. The state is known for its business-friendly political climate and low cost of living. Oklahoma’s industries are diverse—ranging from aerospace and defense to bioscience, manufacturing and film—and supported by a world-class workforce ranked among the top 10 most productive in the U.S.

Located at a crossroads of North America, Oklahoma is within 800 miles of 26 major U.S. cities. Its state-of-the-art infrastructure, which includes four inland ports, 135 public-use airports, 3,850 miles of rail and 12,000 miles of highway, provides easy access to international destinations.

These are just some factors representing global business opportunities for REALTORS® in Oklahoma. Follow these steps to learn more and to pursue international real estate opportunities.

### Step 1.

#### Know the business profile of your state

A 2022 report from Deloitte indicates that foreign investors in U.S. commercial properties resurged in the second half of 2021 with the easing of pandemic-related restrictions. The market saw a \$53 billion bump in the year’s second half, accounting for the vast majority of the \$69 billion total for 2021. According to Real Capital Analytics, this was the strongest H2 since 2001, when this data was first tracked.

Oklahoma REALTORS® looking to tap into this rise in foreign direct investment (FDI) need to understand what investors look for and how their market fits those needs. Key considerations include supported industries, property availability, workforce resources, cost and reliability of utility service and the tax/business environment. Following is a brief overview of Oklahoma’s strategic advantage for each consideration.

**Supported Industries.** Oklahoma is a leader in a diverse group of industries, including:

- Aerospace + Defense
- Agribusiness
- Automotive
- Bioscience
- Film and Music
- Information + Financial Services
- Manufacturing
- Renewable and Traditional Energy

(continued on page 17)

(continued from page 16)

Key facts about Oklahoma industries:

- Oklahoma is home to the world's largest Department of Defense Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) facility and the world's largest commercial airline MRO.
- Google's second-largest data center is in Mayes County, one of 16 co-location data centers and dozens of enterprise data centers across the state.
- More than 75% of the state is farmland, some of which also supports wind turbines.
- Oklahoma biotech companies are pioneering research and development in advanced materials, microscopy and healthcare advances, among other areas.
- The 2021 "Filmed in Oklahoma Act" created one of the most competitive film incentives in the U.S., with up to 38% cash rebates.
- More than 4,200 manufacturing firms operate in the state.
- The largest wind farm in North America is in Weatherford, generating power equivalent to powering 300,000 homes annually.



**Oklahoma Commerce - Industry Sectors** – Explore the state's eight leading sectors and available resources for each.

**Property availability.** Oklahoma Commerce helps bring foreign investment to the state and is an excellent source of demographic information a foreign investor will want to know. Explore the resources of regional and local agencies, which may offer information targeted to your market. The U.S. Economic Development Agency maintains a **directory of state agencies**.



**LocateOK.com** – This online public database supports searches for office, retail, industrial and shovel-ready sites. Features include filters to narrow your search, property photos and downloadable brochures and labor, incentive and infrastructure data to create custom demographic reports for a prospective investor. (Make sure your listed properties have a complete listing on the site!)

**Workforce resources.** Oklahoma Commerce offers workforce development support to companies looking to base their operations in the state, including a career training system designed to respond quickly to industry-specific needs. Since 2013, the number of engineering graduates in the state has increased by 48%. Nine of the state's institutions of higher learning offer aerospace degrees and certifications, creating a critical pipeline of talent for leading industries based in the state.



**State Regents for Higher Education** – The State Regents provides a snapshot of the pipeline of talent coming out of the state's colleges and universities for six state regions.

**Cost and reliability of utility service.** Rising energy prices and climate-related instability of energy sources in global manufacturing centers such as China make the cost and reliability of utilities a critical consideration for international companies looking to establish or expand their operations. Oklahoma's industrial electricity rates are 20% to 30% lower than the national average. In 2021, the state ranked #3 in the nation in clean power installations. More than 30% of the state's electricity comes from renewable resources, primarily wind. Oklahoma ranks #3 in installed wind capacity in the U.S., with 10,994 MW generated in 2021. Large multinational companies look to Oklahoma to utilize this energy versatility.



**American Clean Power** – Explore highlights from the 2021 Clean Energy Market Report for a deeper dive into Oklahoma's renewable energy advantages (click on the "State Highlights" link).

**Tax/business environment.** Oklahoma routinely appears on lists of top U.S. states for business friendliness and affordability. It ranked #1 on CNBC's 2021 ranking of America's Top States for Business in the cost of doing business category and #2 as the most affordable state in 2020 by U.S. News & World Report.

Oklahoma's corporate and personal taxes are some of the lowest in the nation. Oklahoma ranks #10 on The Tax Foundation's 2022 corporate tax component ranking. Operating costs are dramatically lower than in coastal locations like New York or California. Despite being

(continued on page 18)

(continued from page 17)

landlocked, Oklahoma is home to four inland ports, including the Port of Catoosa, the nation’s furthest inland, all-weather port, connecting the state to the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico. Add to this the 20 rail operators in the state, and it’s clear that Oklahoma investors have highly favorable access to domestic and international destinations, lowering the business cost associated with the global supply chain.

The state offers cash and tax credit incentive packages (some industry-specific), reducing the tax burden and giving companies a competitive advantage. While you will likely need to connect a prospect to Oklahoma Commerce to determine qualifications for incentives for foreign investors, it’s helpful to have a high-level understanding of potential options (see Resource).



**Oklahoma Business Incentives and Tax Guide** – Download Oklahoma Commerce’s 2022 guide for information on the numerous incentives available to corporations investing in the state, including basic requirements for foreign corporations, partnerships and limited liability companies.

Oklahoma is home to four Foreign Trade Zones, designated sites that help American businesses compete in the global economy by reducing tariff burdens on the importation of foreign inputs and exported finished products. These sites cover areas in and around Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Muskogee and 2,942 acres within three sites in Durant and Ardmore.

Top 5 Countries for FDI by # of Business Establishments		Top 5 Countries for FDI by # of Workers Employed	
Canada	66	Mexico	6,846
United Kingdom	64	United Kingdom	5,852
Japan	55	France	5,707
Germany	46	Japan	3,869
France	44	Ireland	3,558

**Step #2:**  
**Know who is investing and working in your state**

Oklahoma is home to more than 140 global companies that support approximately 50,000 jobs across multiple industries—representing a significant source of investment in the state. The majority of these jobs are in the manufacturing sector. Oklahoma’s FDI employment rose 22% between 2014 and 2019, compared to the state’s overall private sector employment, which rose only 3% during this same period. The leading sources of foreign investment in Oklahoma come from companies based in Canada, the United Kingdom, Japan, Germany, France, Switzerland, Australia, the Netherlands, Mexico, Ireland and Sweden.

While Oklahoma and Tulsa counties attract the majority of FDI, foreign-owned business operations are located throughout the state, providing commercial and residential real estate opportunities. Beyond the commercial business opportunities associated with land, office and industrial sales and leasing, there is often a residential ripple effect. Companies may need to attract workers from outside the immediate area and house executives relocating to oversee the local operation. Position yourself as an expert resource with the state and regional economic development agencies that assist foreign companies with site selection and other real property needs.

(continued on page 19)

(continued from page 18)

### Foreign Landholders

As of December 31, 2020, more than 1.5 million acres (4%) of Oklahoma land were held by foreign investors—primarily cropland and pasture. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Oklahoma saw the biggest increase in foreign-held agricultural acres in 2020—nearly 383,600. Unlike many other states, however, much of that acreage is in the form of long-term leases held by wind energy companies, which prefer to lease rather than purchase land for their turbines and other infrastructure. Five Oklahoma counties have foreign landholdings exceeding 100,000 acres:

**Cimarron – 212,865**

**Custer – 183,801**

**Texas – 179,079**

**Woods – 169,489**

**Washita – 114,529**

Canadian corporations hold nearly half of all foreign-held acreage. Other top countries include Italy, Germany, the U.K. and the Netherlands. The USDA's **Foreign Holdings of U.S. Agricultural Land report** provides information for all of Oklahoma's 77 counties.



**Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food & Forestry (ODAFF) – The ODAFF's Market Development Division works to**

**stimulate rural economic development and develop opportunities for producers, processors, wholesalers and retailers of Oklahoma products in domestic and international markets.**

**H1-B Visas.** Some domestic employers in Oklahoma reach out overseas to find qualified workers, especially in STEM-related fields (science, technology, engineering and math). The H1-B visa program helps American companies hire immigrant workers when American workers with specialized skills cannot be found. According to **MyVisaJobs.com**, in 2021, nearly 1,500 H1-B visas were requested in Oklahoma, representing an average annual wage of \$94,473—significantly higher than the state's median income of \$53,156.

The leading H1-B employers in Oklahoma are the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, Oklahoma State University and Paycom Payroll. Foreign-born professionals who enter the U.S. on an H1-B visa often later apply for permanent residency and remain in the area. By developing relationships with incoming professionals, you can tap into a group of high-income residential buyers who may refer their incoming friends and co-workers to you.

The Department of Labor (DOL) typically certifies more than three times the number of foreign work requests than the number of H-1B visas issued, which means the opportunities to assist foreign workers with housing are substantially greater.

### Step #3: Connect with immigrant and ethnic communities

According to the **American Immigration Council** (2018 data), Oklahoma is home to 236,882 foreign-born individuals, who comprise 6% of the state's population. 2020 Census data shows Mexico is overwhelmingly the top source of Oklahoma immigrants at 44%. Other leading sources include Vietnam, India, Guatemala and China.

Immigrants make up a vital part of the state's labor force. One in 12 Oklahoma workers is foreign-born, representing 8% of the labor force in 2018 and adding billions to the economy. Oklahoma residents in immigrant-led households had \$4.2 billion in after-tax income in 2018, and immigrant entrepreneurs generate hundreds of millions of dollars in business revenue. Nearly 15,000 immigrant business owners accounted for 7% of all self-employed Oklahoma residents in 2018, generating \$252 million in business income.

Among all Oklahomans, 11% identify as Hispanic, most of whom are of Mexican descent. There is also a significant representation of Puerto Rican, Cuban, Guatemalan and Salvadoran roots across the state. Spanish is the second most spoken language in Oklahoma after English. The Oklahoma Hispanic Chamber of Commerce reports nearly 20,000 Hispanic-owned businesses in the state. This number reflects a 52% increase between 2010 and 2019.

(continued on page 20)

(continued from page 19)

### Look for Ethnic Populations in Your Market

Local areas may have unique immigrant profiles. Tulsa is home to an estimated 9,000 Zomis, an ethnic minority in Myanmar, making it the largest concentration of Zomi people in the U.S. A group of about 50 Zomis in the 1990s grew rapidly when the U.N. Refugee Agency began resettling Zomis in 2007. This group continues to grow exponentially every year. In 2022, Tulsa hosted a biennial conference of Zomis, attracting roughly 6,000 attendees. This thriving ethnic community is an opportunity for Tulsa REALTORS® who engage with the community.

Elsewhere in the state, the Oklahoma City-Norman metro region is home to the largest concentration of Pacific Islanders and Asian Americans. Also, Oklahoma and Cleveland counties have sizeable Indian, Korean, and Vietnamese populations.

NAR's **2020 State Economic Data for Engaging in International Real Estate report** shows that between 2013 and 2018, the homeownership rate for naturalized foreign-born residents in Oklahoma was 68.5%, 2% more than native-born residents. The median immigrant household income for this period was \$55,144, compared to \$52,007 for native-born residents.

Serving an ethnic community calls for understanding the culture and any unique considerations concerning doing business. Like doing business outside the U.S., "local-global" business typically results from an existing relationship. Oklahoma REALTORS® who want to grow their business by targeting specific ethnic communities have opportunities across the state to connect with these communities through cultural and social events and by directly engaging with organizations that support immigrant services. (See Step #5)

### Step #4:

#### Don't forget foreign students

While international students comprise just 5% of all students in higher education in the state, they represent a significant opportunity. In 2021, 6,147 international students attended Oklahoma colleges and universities, down nearly 16% from the previous year, likely due to pandemic-related travel restrictions. The majority of these arrive from China and India. Other leading countries of origin include Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Nigeria. Oklahoma State University in Stillwater hosts the largest number of these students (1,718), followed by the University of Oklahoma in Norman (1,674). University of Central Oklahoma, Tulsa University and Oklahoma Christian University round out the top five. All data is from **Open Doors**, a project sponsored by the U.S. Department of State.

Parents of wealthy international students (notably from China) often purchase property for their child's use for the length of their studies. After graduation, the property produces income through student rentals. Explore this niche by contacting the university department that assists international students.

### Step #5:

#### Leverage your knowledge

When initially investigating global opportunities in Oklahoma, it makes sense to focus on one area of international business. For those just getting started, consider a personal connection or interest, e.g., your ethnic background or global experiences. As your experiences and contacts grow, so will your awareness of other global opportunities. Use the information in this report to pursue new international niches.

Oklahoma has many international aspects that can help you make a business connection. Consider these opportunities:

**Consular Corps.** Oklahoma is home to 11 Honorary Consulates representing countries from East Asia, Europe and Latin America. An honorary consul performs limited consular functions, such as fostering business relationships and hosting cultural education programs in a foreign city without a diplomatic mission. Visit the **International Protocol page** on the Oklahoma Commerce website for contact information for these 11 countries.

(continued on page 21)

(continued from page 20)

**Trade Shows.** Oklahoma Commerce has an active global trade program to help companies develop international business plans and navigate trade issues. Work with your local economic development group to identify trade mission opportunities with a property component, e.g., future site selection, office leasing or support for housing needs. Participating in international trade missions provides direct contact with decision-makers, relevant experts and key figures from the respective areas of the companies involved.

If direct participation is not an option, create relationships with participating companies to lay the foundation for future business opportunities. Demonstrating your understanding of the global market and expertise in global relocations into the U.S. (or connecting U.S. leaders who need assistance with property outside the U.S.) will set you apart from others in your market.

**Ethnic Festivals.** Cities throughout Oklahoma host annual celebrations of ethnic heritage, providing an opportunity to learn more about a culture and get to know community leaders who may advise on establishing yourself as a real estate resource in the community. Tulsa is the “queen” of ethnic festivals, hosting annual heritage celebrations of India (**India Fest**), Germany (**Oktoberfest**), Greece (**Tulsa Greek Festival**) and Scotland (**Scotfest**). Other popular festivals include:

- **Fiestas del las Americas** (Oklahoma City) – celebrates Hispanic heritage each September.
- **McAlester Italian Festival** (McAlester) – celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2022.
- **Oklahoma Czech Festival** (Yukon) – is the largest outdoor free festival in Oklahoma.
- **Prague Kolache Festival** (Prague) – draws 20,000+ visitors annually, celebrating Czech heritage.

**Sister States and Cities.** Oklahoma maintains sister state relationships with China’s Gansu Province, Japan’s Kyoto Prefecture and Taiwan. In addition, eight Oklahoma communities enjoy Sister City relationships with cities in about a dozen countries. These alliances engage multiple sectors and involve programs and exchanges to further these relationships—including for business purposes.

**Discover “sister” programs in your region. ■**

The global property marketplace offers many exciting and profitable opportunities—including in Oklahoma. While this report is an excellent place to begin exploring these opportunities, it does not make you an expert. NAR’s Certified International Property Specialists (CIPS) designation provides the knowledge, research, network and tools to expand your global business network and do international business locally. **Learn more about the CIPS designation.**

