2026 SWOT Update

Strengths

1. **Logistics crossroads:** I-75 / I-80/90 / I-280 junction, CSX and Norfolk Southern mainlines, and Port of Toledo access to the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence system
2. **Specialized manufacturing clusters:** glass and advanced materials (including solar), automotive, refining, and food processing, with supplier networks already in place
3. **Abundant freshwater plus flat, accessible, low-hazard sites:** 158 industrial properties in the region certified or ready (Jobs Ohio)
4. **Applied higher-ed and training pipeline:** UToledo, BGSU, Owens CC, Terra State, Northwest State, with existing industry-aligned programs
5. **Energy generation and fuel infrastructure:** Davis-Besse and Fermi 2 nuclear plants, refineries, solar,
6. **Lake Erie and quality of place at low cost:** islands and shoreline, Metroparks, museum and zoo, etc.
7. **Productive farmland linked to agribusiness and food processing**

Weaknesses

1. **Shrinking and aging labor pool:** population change of -1.17% since 2010, with retirements outpacing new entrants
2. **Housing mismatch:** aging housing stock and little new construction near growing job centers
3. **Concentration in cyclical industries, especially auto**
4. **Thin capital base:** limited local match for grants and little angel or venture capital
5. **Barriers to labor force participation:** transportation options, childcare, benefits cliffs.
6. **Deferred maintenance on water, sewer, and road infrastructure**:

Opportunities

1. **Reshoring and federal industrial policy** favoring domestic production of solar, glass, batteries, and defense supply chains
2. **Leverage proximity to Canada to increase global trade competitiveness:** Access to Canada and the Gordie Howe International Bridge could increase development in the region.
3. **Data driven demand for computing capacity and electricity**
4. **Automation and AI that raise output per worker:** A partial answer to our shrinking labor pool
5. **Water and climate stress in the Sun Belt and West**: Every year our story of being a long-term refuge for water-intensive industry and residents gets stronger.
6. **Targeted state and federal programs** aligned with our priorities [Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, H2Ohio, site-readiness funds]

Threats

1. **Trade-policy volatility:** tariffs, U.S.–Canada tensions, and the USMCA joint review
2. **Auto industry restructuring:** uncertain EV transition pace, platform and plant decisions, tariffs on parts, Chinese imports
3. **Rising power costs from PJM capacity pricing and grid strain**
4. **Growing national opposition to development:** moratoriums, restrictive zoning, organized community opposition
5. **Possible AI investment industry correction or overbuild**

6. **Shifting state and federal funding priorities**, including federal surface transportation reauthorization
7. **Federal Medicaid cuts and hospital financial strain:** Healthcare is a large regional employer and job cuts hit families and rural access to care
8. **Lake Erie water quality:** algal blooms worsened by climate, upstream runoff, and the region's own agricultural runoff