

## AGTECH CONNECT: ADVANCING INNOVATION IN AGRICULTURE

The first AgTech Connect event of the year, hosted at the USDA's National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research (NCAUR), brought together innovators, researchers, and industry leaders to explore advancements in agriculture, sustainability, and bioprocessing. The event opened with Steven Cermak, Research Leader of the Bio-Oils Research Unit at USDA-ARS, who provided an insightful overview of NCAUR's groundbreaking work. Bryan Moser, a USDA-ARS Organic Chemistry Researcher, followed with a presentation on developing biobased alternatives to PFAS, a critical step toward more sustainable industrial chemistry. Additional highlights included Todd Main of the Illinois Soy Innovation Center, introducing a new initiative to expand soy-based product innovation; Aaron Armstutz of Natural Fiber Welding (NFW), sharing breakthroughs in biomaterial processing; and Tyler Strom of the Illinois Agri-Food Alliance, emphasizing the agri-food sector's statewide economic impact—supporting 900,000 jobs and representing 15% of Illinois's workforce.



## INDUSTRY PROFILE: PEORIA IS PLANT-BASED

Greater Peoria's growing leadership in bioprocessing and sustainable agriculture is now captured in a new industry profile, Peoria is Plant-Based. Created by GPEDC to support site selectors and industry leaders, the profile outlines our region's strengths in plant-based innovation, precision fermentation, and bio-renewable product development. Backed by world-class research assets like the AgLab, a trained workforce, and an efficient intermodal logistics network, the region is ready to support scaling operations in biomanufacturing. Highlighted companies include Alto Ingredients, Natural Fiber Welding, and Midwest Bioprocessing Center, along with significant investments like the \$51 million Illinois Fermentation and Agriculture Bioprocessing Hub (iFAB).

Scan the QR Code to explore the profile.

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# QUARTERLY REPORT

January- March 2025



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## EPIC MEDICAL SELECTS GREATER PEORIA FOR FIRST NORTH AMERICAN MANUFACTURING SITE

A major business attraction success headlined the first quarter as Epic Medical, a Singapore-based medical device innovator, announced plans to build its first North American manufacturing center in Pekin. The \$25 million investment will bring approximately 100 new jobs to the region and strengthen supply chain access by producing IV bags domestically. The result of exceptional collaboration among state and local partners—including Intersect Illinois, the City of Pekin, DCEO, and utilities—this win highlights Greater Peoria’s readiness for global investment and reaffirms its strategic position for advanced manufacturing growth.



## CAREER SPARK RECOGNIZED AS A STATEWIDE BEST PRACTICE

Career Spark has been named a best practice by Education Systems of Northern Illinois University (EdSystems), validating its role as a standout workforce development initiative in Illinois. In partnership with Junior Achievement of Central Illinois, GPEDC is proud to see Career Spark recognized for its effectiveness in connecting students with career pathways and serving as a model for similar programs across the state.

## LAUNCHING LOGAN COUNTY'S BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION PROGRAM

In September, our Economic Recovery Corps Fellow, Dorsey, in partnership with Lincoln Economic Advancement & Development (LEAD), hosted Logan County's inaugural Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) Committee meeting. Representatives from local governments, educational institutions, workforce alliances, and the private sector collaborated to design a community-centered BR&E program. This initiative aims to strengthen existing enterprises, encourage job retention, and stimulate economic growth in Logan County by proactively addressing their needs. Enhancing the region's overall economic health makes it more attractive to investors and new enterprises.

## WE ♥ FTZS: CELEBRATING FOREIGN-TRADE ZONES AND THEIR IMPACT

February 14 marked both Valentine's Day and National Foreign-Trade Zone (FTZ) Day, offering a moment to recognize the impact of FTZs in promoting global commerce. GPEDC administers FTZ #114, which serves a 24-county region and supports companies like Caterpillar in Peoria and Bell Sports in Champaign County. Celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, FTZ #114 continues to help regional manufacturers reduce duties, cut costs, and remain globally competitive—fueling growth across our economy.



## BUSINESS WALKS: STRENGTHENING BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT IN LOGAN COUNTY

In partnership with the Logan County Business Retention & Expansion Committee, GPEDC conducted Business Walks in Mt. Pulaski and Lincoln to connect with local businesses and identify their needs. Led by Economic Recovery Corps Fellow Dorsey Hill and Andrea Runge of LEAD, the team engaged 17 businesses across the two communities. The insights gathered are now helping local leaders identify solutions and strengthen the county’s business support network.