



2023



GREATER PEORIA
Economic Development Council

ANNUAL REPORT

www.greaterpeoriaedc.org

OPENING LETTER FROM CEO

I cannot believe how quickly 2023 was over. But when you are busy, having success, and enjoy leading a great team of professionals, time really does fly. It is my pleasure to again share with you some highlights from the great work that the Greater Peoria Economic Development Council accomplished over the past year. In last year's Annual Report I mentioned the word "leverage" and how GPEDC uses the investment of so many of you to drive success. Your investment into our organization allowed us to attract more than an equal amount of state and federal financial resources that were put to use to help our region grow.

This Annual Report outlines some of the successes we had in 2023 – all thanks to your investment and trust in us. We showcased Greater Peoria to the world, welcomed visitors from across the globe, helped over 100 businesses get grants, helped to restart a Port District, saw the start of the next chapter of a key startup strategy, helped thousands of young people better understand their futures, and worked to light up our rural communities with the internet. This small team of just eight people and a handful of contractors leveraged the strength of dozens of partners to make Greater Peoria even greater.

I moved to Peoria a little over twenty years ago, and for the past six years I have had the distinct honor to lead this amazing organization. There are some big changes in store in 2024 and I am already anticipating next year's Annual Report. My sincere thanks to anyone reading this who supports GPEDC, either financially or programmatically. And if you find yourself reading a copy and do not fall into one of those two categories, I know you are still a supporter and an important part of Greater Peoria. Drop me a line if you would like to learn more about how to more directly support our work.



Best Regards

Christopher Setti

ABOUT US

The Greater Peoria Economic Development Council (GPEDC) is a regional economic development organization serving five counties in Central Illinois: Peoria, Tazewell, Woodford, Mason and Logan. GPEDC is both planner and practitioner. We help grow the regional economy by marketing Greater Peoria's assets to businesses across the nation and world; supporting local companies in their growth through a variety of programs; developing initiatives that create a more robust workforce pipeline; helping to create a robust startup ecosystem; and ensuring that our rural communities are connected to economic opportunities. Guided by our nationally recognized comprehensive economic development strategy, GPEDC is committed to advancing the region's economy by supporting business and talent development and attraction.

OUR MISSION

The Greater Peoria Economic Development Council serves as a catalyst for economic development and opportunity by attracting, developing, assisting, and retaining a diversified mix of businesses and investing in community needs that foster balanced economic growth.





2023 HIGHLIGHTS

\$5.9M+
 BACK TO BUSINESS
 GRANTS AWARDED IN
 GREATER PEORIA

60+
 BUSINESS VISITS

74
 SITE SELECTOR
 REQUESTS PROCESSED

150+
 BUSINESSES SUPPORTED
 TO ACCESS GRANTS
 THROUGH THE
 COMMUNITY NAVIGATOR
 PROGRAM

20K
 INDIVIDUALS REACHED
 BY COVID-19 BUSINESS
 BULLETINS

\$17M+
 TOTAL EDA INVESTMENT IN
 LAST THREE YEARS

10K+
 CAREERSPARK
 STUDENTS

200+
 DISTILLERY LABS
 SHOWCASE ATTENDEES

400+
 INNOVATOR &
 COMMUNITY
 INTERACTIONS

7K+
 FOLLOWERS GAINED
 ORGANICALLY ACROSS
 SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

TOGETHER, WE MAXIMIZE OUR CHANCES OF SUCCESS.

Greater Peoria EDC and its partners work collectively to develop and implement economic development strategies that would be difficult to do individually. GPEDC works successfully across multiple political boundaries, between rural and urban communities, among our numerous industry sectors, and in collaboration with partner organizations at the local, state, federal and international levels. GPEDC pools and leverages limited resources to ensure the broader region is appropriately served. Together, we are more effective at sharing our story, taking advantage of opportunities and voicing issues of a collective concern. Together, we maximize our chances of success.



PROGRAMS

BUSINESS ATTRACTION

We strategically position and market Greater Peoria to the rest of the world as a great place for business investment.

74

RFIS PROCESSED

6

VISITS FROM FOREIGN COMPANIES

Highlights

Showcasing Greater Peoria to the World

This past year saw increased efforts to showcase Greater Peoria to an international market. In the winter of 2023, we collaborated with the Transatlantic Business and Investment Council to visit advanced manufacturing companies in Austria and Southern Germany. European manufacturers are increasingly looking to the US for expansion opportunities because of their challenging energy situation, need to be closer to American customers, and recently created state and federal incentives. We proudly promoted Greater Peoria's stable energy environment and advantageous business conditions, sparking interest among numerous European industry leaders. These efforts are part of our ongoing commitment to forging strong international business relations and attracting foreign investment to our region.

Bringing the World to Greater Peoria

The work to showcase Greater Peoria also includes welcoming foreign business leaders to experience our community first hand. In 2023 we hosted individual companies and delegations from Taiwan, Italy, Brazil, Germany, Japan and Canada. One particular highlight was a visit by a delegation of business leaders organized by the Osnabrück Chamber of Commerce (Germany). The group selected Peoria as a destination during their American trip and joined a roundtable discussion on agriculture, toured Natural Fiber Welding, the AgLab and the Caterpillar Visitors Center, and connected with local business and community leaders. These visits are more than simple meetings: they showcase our region's diverse economic strengths, from our skilled workforce to our advanced infrastructure.

Brazilian Company Finds a Home in Peoria

Sometimes small activities lead to big results. A brief presentation to a group of Brazilian startups in Chicago in late 2022 led to a site visit and then a follow up from DigiFarmz, an AgTech software company looking to break into the US market. GPEDC's concierge approach to helping DigiFarmz connect with potential partners and customers and plug into the larger community paid off when they opened their first American office at Peoria NEXT.



QUICK HITS

- Joined "Team Illinois" at the Select USA trade show.
- Connected with site selectors at Area Development conference in Greenville and Economix in Atlanta.
- Joined the German American Chamber of Commerce.
- Implemented a new public database to catalog our available sites and buildings.
- Awarded a grant from US EDA to conduct a Targeted Industry Analysis.
- Evaluated and responded to 74 RFIs (double the number from 2022).
- Made progress on identifying "mega sites" for industrial development.
- Launched effort to coordinate data sharing about investments in GP communities.
- Led efforts to improve relationships with Japan by creating a sister city pairing.

BUSINESS ASSISTANCE

We help our existing industries and businesses flourish and grow through consistent outreach, targeted programming and resource referrals.

Highlights

60+
BUSINESS VISITS

#42
GLOBAL TRADE
MAGAZINE'S TOP 50
POWER PORT LIST

Expanding Economic Opportunities through Enterprise Zones

GPEDC was instrumental in expanding the Peoria Urban Enterprise Zone, significantly growing its boundaries to encompass 530 acres and 97 parcels. This strategic expansion includes key areas along MacArthur Highway, Knoxville Avenue, and Allen Road. This initiative will help stimulate economic growth and revitalization in these areas through tax incentives and regulatory relief.



Back 2 Business Grant Awards

\$5.9m+
Awarded to 155 total businesses

\$1.1m+
Awarded to 68 business in the arts industry

\$2.9m+
Awarded to 38 hotel businesses

\$1.8m+
Awarded to 49 restaurant businesses

B2B
BACK TO BUSINESS

Revitalizing the Heart of Illinois Regional Port District

GPEDC partnered with the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission to reinvigorate the Heart of Illinois Regional Port District. With the District's board and consultants at Riverside Global, the Illinois Waterway was recognized as a Port Statistical Area, opening doors for additional federal funding. This achievement was bolstered by securing a \$500,000 grant through Senator Koehler to facilitate the hiring of the District's first paid staff in nearly a decade, and establishing its first physical offices in downtown Peoria. GPEDC also supported securing an additional state grant that will create a Port Master Plan in 2024.

COVID Assistance

Since the onset of COVID, GPEDC has been the go-to source of support for the business community. GPEDC was tapped by the State of Illinois to coordinate a network of eleven local agencies across seven counties to serve as "Community Navigators" and help small businesses access state grants. In 2023, businesses in our region split nearly \$6 million in grant funding through the Back-to-Business programs for restaurants, hotels, and the arts. The same network helped area companies navigate the B2B New Business program at the end of 2023.

QUICK HITS

- Assisted a Eureka business successfully apply for an EDGE tax credit.
- Partnered with Tri-County Regional Planning Commission and Terracon to submit a Brownfield Assessment grant application.
- Prepared and submitted amendment for Peoria County Rural Enterprise Zone.
- Developed programming under the Illinois Defense Manufacturing Communities Consortium.
- Contributed as Planning Committee Member for the May 2023 National Defense Industry Association Symposium.
- Helped host the first annual Illinois Waterways Commission annual meeting in Peoria.
- Facilitated conversations about expansion of an Enterprise Zone into Havana and Mason County.

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

We connect employers to the workforce development system to ensure the development of a more resilient, robust, and equitable talent pipeline.

Highlights

65

SCHOOLS REPRESENTED
AT CAREERSPARK

121

COMPANIES ON GREATER
PEORIA REGIONAL JOB
BOARD

CareerSpark: Igniting Student Passions and Career Pathways

The 7th annual CareerSpark event successfully inspired over 3,500 8th graders this year. In partnership with Junior Achievement, CareerSpark offers hands-on career simulations across diverse sectors, providing students with a vivid preview of potential career paths as they transition into high school. This large-scale event, involving more than 500 volunteers, not only fulfills state-mandated career exploration requirements at no cost to schools but also plays a vital role in sparking early career interest among students. Its impact in shaping future workforce directions continues to demonstrate our community's dedication to nurturing young talent.



Spotlight on Peoria: Showcasing Our Region's Best

GPEDC helped support a unique effort to highlight the region's appeal. The Choose Greater Peoria team organized a memorable event on Peoria's riverfront in the summer of 2023. The highlight was a four-hour broadcast by the Chicago Bears radio team from ESPN Chicago 1000, showcasing the amenities our community offers. This partnership, augmented by engaging commercials promoting Choose Greater Peoria on ESPN Chicago 1000 and local WMBD 1470 broadcasts, served as a dynamic platform to attract talent to the region.



QUICK HITS

- Launched Illinois' first Talent Pipeline Management pilot and focused on manufacturing and logistics.
- Assisted Illinois Central College and its partners in promoting the IT Workforce Accelerator.
- Hired Newmark to conduct an in-depth laborshed study and workforce analysis of the region.
- Developed an asset map for job seeker support services.
- Assumed management responsibility for the Regional Workforce Alliance.
- Over 5,000 high school students registered for the online CareerSpark You're Hired job expo.
- Expanded capacity of the Greater Peoria Job Board - now 121 companies listing jobs.

INNOVATION & STARTUPS

We recognize that economic diversity and resilience is homegrown and work with new business owners, professionals exploring opportunities, and students to develop, scale, and grow their new business ventures.

40

INNOVATION
NETWORKING/LEARNING
LABS EVENTS HOSTED

1k+

REACHED VIA
DISTILLERY LABS
NETWORKING EVENTS

Highlights

Groundbreaking of Distillery Labs: A Unifying Step for Innovation

GPEDC has been proud to be a critical part of the Distillery Labs initiative. From stewarding the original feasibility report in 2016 to helping to secure state and federal funding to taking over interim leadership, GPEDC has been at the center of this important economic strategy. In August 2023, the region celebrated a significant milestone with the commencement of construction on the facility. This “hammer swinging” event was a convergence of diverse and influential stakeholders, including local community and business leaders, burgeoning entrepreneurs from the region’s startup ecosystem, and key financial contributors from the Illinois Capital Development Board and the US Economic Development Administration. This groundbreaking ceremony was more than just the start of a construction project; it was a vivid representation of the spirit of unity, innovation, and collaboration that is deeply ingrained in the fabric of Greater Peoria.

Distillery Labs' Second Startup Showcase: A Night of Innovation

The second annual Distillery Labs Startup Showcase was held in June at the Peoria Riverfront Museum and built on the success of its inaugural 2022 event. The event highlighted the region's growing entrepreneurial talent, featuring ten local startups who had graduated from the gBeta accelerator and were making their first public pitches. The Showcase highlighted the region's diversity of innovation – fashion, athletics, irrigation, agriculture and everything in between. Attracting a mix of community and business leaders, the Showcase reaffirmed Distillery Labs' role in nurturing and promoting local innovation.



GPEDC and Distillery Labs Driving Smart City Innovation

The Central Illinois Living Lab (CILL), a key program of Distillery Labs, has been making strides in smart city innovation. Supported by funding from the Illinois DOT, Peoria County, and the City of Peoria, CILL has already achieved notable successes. This includes GridMatrix, a New York-based startup, piloting their AI traffic analysis technology in Peoria, and local startup Drizzl, a gBeta Distillery Labs graduate, securing funding to pilot their smart device technology within the city. These advancements underscore CILL's commitment to positioning Greater Peoria as a leader in fostering a smarter, safer, and more connected future.



QUICK HITS

- Provided leadership to Distillery Labs through August 2023.
- Coordinated the hiring of Doug Cruitt as the new Executive Director of Distillery Labs.
- Collaborated with Peoria County to launch and support their SmartStart platform and micro-grant program for startups.
- Expanded the Nest coworking space to better serve our members and the community.
- Attended a GovTech conference in San Francisco to learn more about opportunities to build and attract smart city innovators.
- Assisted City of Peoria with its Tech Industry grant program.
- Engaged Bradley students through “Coffee on Campus” and the Big Idea competition.
- Helped coordinate BizLab workshops and social networking events for entrepreneurs.

We ensure that our region's rural communities are full participants in the region's economy and have access to the resources they need to keep themselves vibrant and vital.

\$5.3m+
ENERGY TRANSITION GRANT
SECURED

4k
BROADBAND SURVEY
RESPONSES

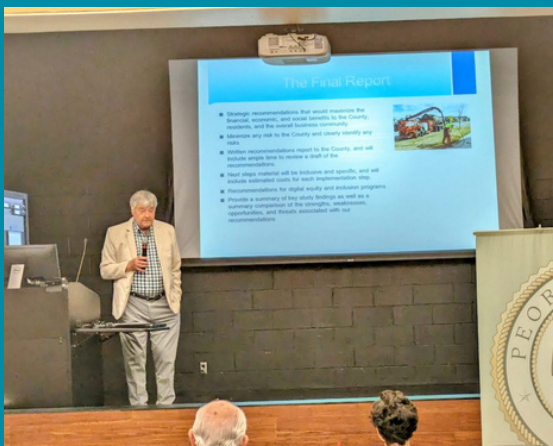
Highlights

Accelerating AgTech Through Regional Collaboration

Our region is rich in agricultural resources, including innovative minds to capitalize on those resources and drive economic success. GPEDC and its partners at Distillery Labs, Bradley University, and the Morton EDC worked throughout the year to identify opportunities for networking and collaboration. The AgTech Connect series continued to bring together local stakeholders and create collision opportunities between innovators and farmers. This included a great gathering at CSE Software in November that drew over 40 participants. GPEDC and partners also attended the Illinois State Fair and the 70th Annual Farm Progress Show to interact with innovators, customers, and agricultural leaders from across the state and Midwest.

Planning for Broadband Expansion

Last year, Greater Peoria witnessed significant advancements in broadband expansion driven by collaborative efforts and strategic funding. GPEDC and Peoria County, in partnership with Design Nine, conducted a comprehensive countywide broadband feasibility survey focusing on rural areas. Funding from the Just Transition Fund (JTF) and Peoria County ARRA funds will help guide infrastructure development plans. Logan County was selected for the Broadband Breakthrough project, led by the Illinois Broadband Lab and Benton Institute. Mason and Tazewell counties have allocated funding from their Energy Communities Transition grants to conduct studies in 2024, both of which will be augmented with JTF funding provided through GPEDC. These concerted efforts in 2023 have set a strong foundation for bridging the region's digital divide and fostering economic growth and innovation in the burgeoning fields of agriculture and technology.



QUICK HITS

- Helped secure \$5.36 million in Energy Transition Community grants for Peoria, Tazewell, Mason, and Fulton counties.
- Selected as the host of an Economic Recovery Corps Fellow who provide business outreach and assistance in rural areas.
- Partnered with UIUC students to help plan Safe Routes to School in Bartonville, performing walkability audits and helping with grant applications for sidewalk improvements.
- Assisted in applying for the USDA Rural Business Development Grant for the Illinois River Visitor Center and Biological Research Facility, focusing on regional tourism, education, and workforce development.
- Ensured small businesses in rural areas could access the state's various Back-to-Business grants.
- Supported submission of a grant help install fast-charging EV charges in rural communities.

GREATER PEORIA MANUFACTURING NETWORK

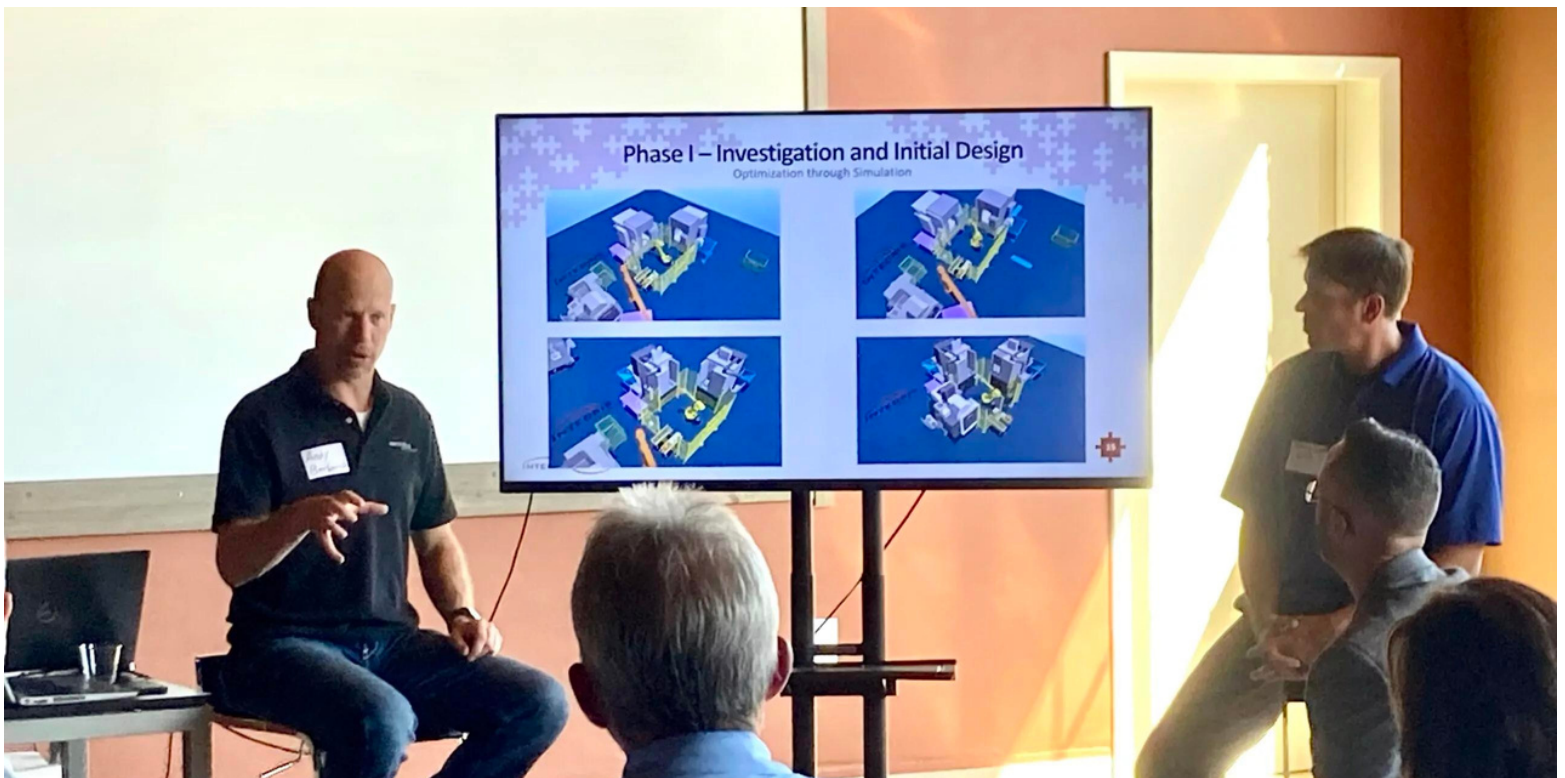
We connect the region's manufacturing community to one another and market their individual and collective capabilities to the world.

23
NETWORK
MEMBERS

Highlights

Showing Off a Collaboration Success Story

The Greater Peoria Manufacturing Network (GPMN) continued to exemplify its core mission of fostering collaboration among network members to find innovative solutions. During the quarterly meeting held at Integris Group in September, the theme of automation and robotics in manufacturing took center stage. Andy Berberich of Integris Group and Jeremy Casper of Quality Metal Products presented a year-long robotics project, illustrating how network members collaborate to address challenges. This project served as a prime example of the GPMN's dedication to promoting cooperation among manufacturers, resulting in increased productivity and a significant return on investment. Additionally, representatives from FANUC showcased a fully functional Collaborative Robot (COBOT), underscoring the potential for future automation initiatives that align with the GPMN's mission of driving innovation through collaboration.



QUICK HITS

- Added two new members: Lozier Oil and Hardin Industries.
- Refined marketing approach and reformulated use of Thomas.net platform.
- Coordinated a legislative update by the Illinois Manufacturers' Association.

We connect GPEDC's various programs to cohesively communicate our activities, initiatives, opportunities, regional assets and achievements across the region and beyond.

200K+
ORGANIC LINKEDIN
IMPRESSION

250k
USERS REACHED AND
INFORMED VIA
FACEBOOK

Highlights

Enhancing Communications and Reporting

Recognizing the essential need for clear and consistent communication with our audience and investors, we initiated the creation and distribution of an annual report, quarterly reports and a CEDS progress report. Combined with an improved website, which underwent Phase II improvements in 2023, and robust use of social media, these tools reflect our dedication to keeping our internal stakeholders and external audiences informed and engaged, ensuring they remain connected and well-informed about our initiatives and the impact we are making in the region. As we move forward, we anticipate these reports will become an integral part of our ongoing dialog with those we serve and represent.



Supporting the Rise Summit with the Peoria Area Chamber of Commerce

In collaboration with the Peoria Area Chamber of Commerce, we played a key role in supporting the planning and execution of the inaugural Rise Summit. This landmark event, held from August 21-23, was tailored for young professionals across the Midwest, focusing on themes of Diversity, Equity and inclusion, Quality of Life, Professional Development, and Innovation and Entrepreneurship. The two-day summit featured various keynote speakers and interactive sessions designed to foster connections, spark personal and professional growth, and stimulate thought-provoking discussions. The success of this conference highlights our commitment to empowering the next generation of professionals.



QUICK HITS

- Supported the launch and ongoing work of the Choose Greater Peoria initiative.
- Completed Phase II of our website restructure and moved the Big Table CEDS webpage from the Data Hub to the new website. The restructured and revamped CEDS page can be found at www.greaterpeoriaedc.org/ceds.
- Moderated an AI and Emerging Technologies panel at the IEDC Annual Conference, discussing Peoria's advancements towards becoming a Smart City.
- Finalized, promoted and distributed The Big Table report from 2022's event, utilizing the inputs collected during the community event.
- Developed promotional materials highlighting GPEDC's support for international entrepreneurs establishing their first U.S. business or office, linked with the Soft Landing Greater Peoria program.

THANKS TO OUR INVESTORS

LEADERSHIP LEVEL INVESTOR



PLATINUM LEVEL INVESTORS



GOLD LEVEL INVESTORS



SILVER LEVEL INVESTORS

**Ameren | Bradley University | City of East Peoria | City of Washington | Good Energy | Mason County
West Central Illinois Building and Construction Trades Council | Woodford County**

BRONZE LEVEL INVESTORS

**Advanced Medical Transport | Bard Optical | Busey Bank | Cullinan Properties | Heartland Bank
Illinois Central College | Komatsu America Corp | Logan County | Morton Community Bank
River City Construction | RLI Corporation | Village of Peoria Heights | Wabash Valley Power Alliance**

OUR FRIENDS

1060 Machine
American Water Works Co
ARi Global
Cast Technologies
CGN & Associates, Inc
City of Chillicothe
City of El Paso
City of Elmwood
City of Eureka
City of Havana
City of Lincoln
City of West Peoria
Comcast
Commerce Bank
CORE Construction

DSMH Consulting
Enercon
Farnsworth Group
G&D Integrated
Goodwill Industries of Central IL
Hanson Professional Services
Hardin Industries
Heart of Illinois United Way
Heart Technologies, Inc.
Inland Tool
Integris Engineering
Iowa Interstate Railroad
Keith Electrical Design
Lozier Oil Company
Manusis4

Metamora Industries
Morton EDC
Morton Industries
O'Shea Builders, Inc.
Pearl Technology
Peoria Production Solutions
Phillipi Hagenbuch
Quality Metal Products
SMF
Terracon
TMW, Inc.
Trajectory Energy Partners
TRIGO - SCS
Village of Germantown Hills

A special appreciation to the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) for their continuous support and investments in us and the region.



U.S. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION



GREATER PEORIA
Economic Development Council

WORK WITH US

The Greater Peoria EDC is both a regional economic development planning organization and a traditional public-private partnership charged with executing on the region's plan. The organization is funded by investments from our counties and cities, our partners at the US Economic Development Administration and other state and federal entities, as well as the leading businesses located in Greater Peoria. Together, we're a catalyst for creating a vibrant economy that is sustainable, diverse, and globally competitive. Together, we are more effective at sharing our story, taking advantage of opportunities and voicing issues of a collective concern

Together, we maximize our chances of success.



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