

## GPEDC MAKING INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS

In May, Lenora Fisher had the opportunity to attend a reception hosted by the Illinois Economic Development Association for Consul Generals based in Chicago. There, she highlighted the potential of Natural Fiber Welding and the advantages the Greater Peoria region offers to businesses within the "Circular Economy." This engagement led to a fruitful interaction with a Director of the Economic and Cultural Office of an Asian country, who introduced her to two companies that aim to extend their footprint in the US. One of these companies, an electric vehicle manufacturer, has since visited Peoria twice and has shortlisted it for their inaugural US manufacturing facility. While we are contending with locations in other states, the progression of this relationship has been promising. All this was set in motion by a simple cocktail party.



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## QUARTERLY REPORT

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## GPEDC CONNECTS WITH THE DEFENSE INDUSTRY

In May, Sally Hanley and Linda Krendick attended the annual National Defense Industry Association's Government Contracting Symposium at the Rock Island Arsenal on behalf of the Illinois Defense Manufacturing Consortium (ILDMC). The event focused on modernizing the US military and its supply chain through technology, digitization, cyber security, and cloud computing. Sally and Linda also aided in a "matchmaking session" between potential suppliers and the Department of Defense and manufacturers. Alongside partners from Chicago, Quad Cities, and Peoria, they staffed an information booth to spread awareness about the ILDMC's mission to bolster regional defense manufacturing.



## GREATER PEORIA MANUFACTURING NETWORK GROWS

Two new members have joined the Greater Peoria Manufacturing Network: Hardin Industries (Lacon) produces containers for generators and other power-related equipment, and Lozier Oil (Farmington) manufactures specialized lubricants and chemicals. Both these industries serve a national clientele, extending the reach of the Network. Dick Peplow, Sally Hanley, and other partners also conducted numerous site visits to member organizations such as Trigo, Morton Industries, Cast Technologies, and Inland Tool. These visits were instrumental in understanding the ongoing issues and challenges and celebrating our manufacturing members' triumphs and achievements.



## GPEDC AND DISTILLERY LABS DRIVING SMART CITY INNOVATION

The Central Illinois Living Lab (CILL), a Distillery Labs program funded by Illinois DOT, Peoria County, and the City of Peoria, serves as the innovation engine for smart cities and connected communities. Two early wins occurred this quarter: GridMatrix, a New York-based startup, launched a pilot of their AI technology in Peoria. Their tool provides comprehensive traffic insights such as congestion, emissions, and performance, enabling city engineers to ensure traffic flow and safety. Additionally, local Peoria startup Drizzl, a gBeta Distillery Labs graduate, received \$25,000 in funding to pilot their innovative smart device technology within the city. CILL is eager to extend its focus into healthcare and the intersection of agriculture and technology and to foster a smarter, safer, and more connected future.

## CHOOSE GREATER PEORIA LAUNCHES

On the heels of an exciting kickoff event in April, the Choose Greater Peoria initiative got underway in May. GPEDC is proud to be one of the core business partners working behind the scenes on this important program, providing technical assistance, guidance, and content while also managing the region's online job board. Under the leadership of the Gilmore Foundation, the business community has rallied to invest in the future of our region and we are already seeing significant movement in the campaign. The first big event is on its way: On August 14th, the only preseason tailgate party for the Chicago Bears Radio Network is happening on the Peoria Riverfront. You can visit [www.choosegreaterpeoria.org](http://www.choosegreaterpeoria.org) for more information and RSVP to celebrate with us.



## REGIONAL PARTNERS WORK TO ACCELERATE AGTECH

In May, the National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research in Peoria (the "Ag Lab") hosted a convergence of over 40 organizations and startups to foster agribusiness innovation. The Ag Lab's expert staff collaborated with various regional economic development resources, including GPEDC, the Morton Economic Development Council, Bradley University Small Business Development Center, and others, each bringing unique resources to nurture an entrepreneurial ecosystem. A prime focus has been the support for small business development, providing technical aid for startups. Critical connections were established with a range of organizations, like the American Society of Farm Managers & Rural Appraisers, Greene Farm Management, and UIUC Food Sciences Department, to bolster their business planning.