

Annual Report

2025



**THE
BIG
TABLE**
GREATER PEORIA

The logo for 'The Big Table' event in Greater Peoria. It consists of the words 'THE BIG TABLE' in a large, bold, white sans-serif font, with 'GREATER PEORIA' in a smaller, white sans-serif font below it. The text is set against a dark background.



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.

2025 HIGHLIGHTS



215+
NEW JOBS CREATED
ACROSS ADVANCED
MANUFACTURING &
CLEAN ENERGY



\$24M
VIRIDIS CHEMICAL
INVESTMENT
ADVANCING THE
REGIONAL BIOECONOMY



15
COUNTRIES ENGAGED
(BRAZIL ACE)



80+
COMPANIES VISITED
THROUGH BUSINESS
RETENTION & EXPANSION
EFFORTS



4K+
STUDENTS
PARTICIPATE IN
CAREER SPARK™



250
ATTENDEES AT BIG
TABLE



298,551
SOCIAL MEDIA
IMPRESSIONS (+27%)

2

MAJOR INTERNATIONAL
COMPANIES SELECTED
GREATER PEORIA FOR
FIRST U.S./NORTH
AMERICAN OPERATIONS

\$1.6M

IN CDBG GRANTS
SECURED FOR
BUSINESS EXPANSIONS

3-Year

EDA GRANT SECURED

17

BUSINESSES ENGAGED
VIA BUSINESS WALKS IN
LOGAN COUNTY

62

SCHOOLS
PARTICIPATED ACROSS
THE REGION

14

SCHOOL DISTRICTS
ENGAGED THROUGH
AGTECH CONNECT

10,001

FOLLOWERS

16

RESPONSES
SUBMITTED TO SITE
SELECTION INQUIRIES

90+

JOBS IN ELECTRIC
TRANSIT
MANUFACTURING

\$28M

FEDERAL FUNDING
ATTRACTED (10 YRS)

\$4.5M

EXPANSION SUPPORTED
FOR CRANE EQUIPMENT
& SERVICE

700+

VOLUNTEERS
SUPPORTED HANDS-ON
CAREER EXPLORATION

120+

ATTENDEES AT RURAL
BIG TABLES

6.8%

ENGAGEMENT RATE



Of all my “routine” tasks, working with staff to produce our Annual Report is amongst the most fun and also most challenging. A new year is like turning a page, but it’s also a chance to look at the prior page. And what a page 2025 turned out to be! That’s the fun part: thinking of all the success Greater Peoria EDC and our region had over the past twelve months. The challenge? Trying to winnow our broad and expansive work into a format that people will actually read. For every success story featured, there are many more moments of teamwork that helped move Greater Peoria forward.

We are pleased to share highlights from 2025—an outcomes-driven year that strengthened the region’s competitiveness in advanced manufacturing, clean energy, bioprocessing, and innovation. Global companies selected Greater Peoria for major new manufacturing operations. Thousands of students explored real careers through hands-on experiences. Communities gained access to new tools and federal partnerships to address housing, infrastructure, and small-business growth. And GPEDC secured long-term federal support to keep the region’s strategy work moving from planning to investable projects.

Economic Development is truly a team sport, and none of our success is ours alone.. These wins reflect shared work with investors, local governments, employers, education partners, state agencies, and countless collaborators across the region.

Thank you for helping build a Greater Peoria that is ready to compete—and ready to grow.

Best Regards

Christopher Setti

Business Attraction

Epic Medical Chooses Pekin to Build Medical Equipment

A major business attraction success headlined the year as Epic Medical, a Singapore-based medical device innovator, announced plans to establish its first North American manufacturing center in Pekin. The \$25 million investment is expected to create approximately 100 new jobs and expand domestic production capacity for critical medical supplies, strengthening supply chains while creating new opportunities for regional workers.

Damera Group Selects Greater Peoria for First U.S. Manufacturing Operation

Greater Peoria secured another significant win as Damera Corporation, a Canadian manufacturer of the all-electric eJest public transit bus, selected the region for its first U.S. manufacturing facility. The company plans to invest more than \$30 million and create at least 90 new jobs. This decision reinforces Greater Peoria's growing reputation as a hub for clean energy and advanced manufacturing—and shows how strategic relationship-building can turn a single connection into a major project announcement.



Celebrating Green Innovation: Viridis Comes to Peoria

Viridis Chemical officially opened its new facility in Peoria, representing a \$24 million investment and advancing Greater Peoria's momentum in the bioeconomy. The company converts ethanol sourced from neighboring BioUrja into ethyl acetate, a high-demand solvent used in products ranging from paints to pharmaceuticals. Once fully operational, the plant is expected to employ 25 people—another milestone in the region's commitment to sustainable industry and economic diversification.

Expanding Global Networks in Brazil

Greater Peoria continued building international relationships that support long-term growth and innovation. A regional delegation participated in the Americas Competitiveness Exchange (ACE) in Belém, convening ecosystem builders from 15 countries, and then attended the ACATE StartUp Summit in Florianópolis—Brazil's premier startup conference with more than 10,000 participants. These exchanges continue positioning Greater Peoria as a gateway for international collaboration, knowledge sharing, and future investment.



Quick Hits

- Received and analyzed 40 site selector inquiries from Illinois EDC.
- Submitted properties for 16 of those inquiries, resulting in three site visits to date.
- Built and launched a digital marketing campaign to highlight industrial properties in Tazewell County.
- Hosted a two-day visit from the Quebec Government Office in Chicago to explore advanced manufacturing alignment and partnership opportunities.
- Attended the Select USA conference in DC to connect with foreign companies looking to expand to the US
- Joined the Illinois delegation in Mexico City to build relationships with Mexican business and economic institutions.

Business Assistance



Foreign-Trade Zone #114

GPEDC administers Foreign-Trade Zone (FTZ) #114, a powerful tool that helps regional companies compete globally by reducing duties, lowering costs, and improving supply chain efficiency. Serving a 24-county region—and celebrating its 40th anniversary—FTZ #114 remains a meaningful advantage for manufacturers and logistics operations across Central Illinois.

To make FTZ benefits easier to understand, GPEDC finalized a refreshed FTZ marketing one-pager and completed an animated explainer video in partnership with McDaniels Marketing. These tools translate a complex program into clear, accessible information for companies and site selectors.



Crane Equipment & Service Expands Into Morton

Crane Equipment & Service (CES), an Eureka-based designer, builder, and installer of crane lifting solutions, is expanding its regional footprint with a second facility in Morton. CES is investing \$4.5 million in the project, supported by a \$600,000 state economic development grant, enabling the company to grow capacity, serve new customers, and add new jobs. GPEDC supported the effort by helping secure final approval of the Illinois Community Development Block Grant, awarded to the Village of Morton on behalf of CES, an example of how strategic public funding can accelerate private investment and business growth in Greater Peoria.

Illinois River Partnership Summit Strengthens a Regional Economic Asset



GPEDC supported the inaugural Illinois River Partnership Summit in Peoria—three days of programming focused on economic development, environmental sustainability, and transportation along the Illinois River. Each day of the Summit focused on a different initiative: the Illinois Waterway Port Commission and inaugural meetings for the Illinois River Cities and Towns Initiative and the Green Marine Highway Initiative. The event brought together over 100 attendees representing riverfront leadership and port district stakeholders, strengthening relationships around one of the region's most important infrastructure assets and reinforcing shared priorities that support business growth and regional competitiveness.

Business Assistance



GPMN Quarterly Meeting: Learning From Your Peers

The Greater Peoria Manufacturing Network's quarterly meeting highlighted one of the Network's biggest strengths: manufacturers learning directly from one another. Organized by Dick Peplow and dubbed "Learning from Your Peers," the session featured member-led spotlights on real-world strategies that strengthen competitiveness, quality systems, customer development, workforce culture, and supply chain performance. Quality Metal Products shared practices that helped earn recognition as one of Caterpillar's top 25 suppliers. Philippi-Hagenbuch discussed using trade shows and professional associations to build new business. Morton Industries presented on building an employee culture grounded in communication and appreciation. TADA highlighted how technology and software can help manufacturers manage supply chain disruptions. The meeting reinforced the value of the Network as a practical forum where insights translate into stronger operations and better outcomes.



Quick Hits

- The Village of Deer Creek was awarded \$1M in Illinois CDBG funds to help Heartland Food Solutions expand.
- Visited over 80 companies through our expanded Business Retention & Expansion Program.
- Conducted Business Walks with 17 businesses across Mt. Pulaski and Lincoln.
- FTZ #114 marked its 40th anniversary; two new users were identified.
- CDBG and ReBuild Illinois-funded public works projects break ground in Mason City and Creve Coeur.
- Assisted with the completion of a Port Master Plan for the Heart of Illinois Regional Port District.
- Facilitated an industry tour at Alto Ingredients (Pekin) to highlight the region's strength in bioprocessing and specialty ingredient manufacturing.
- Coordinated a National League of Cities session with 17 local leaders, advancing tools for housing and downtown/retail redevelopment.
- Chip's Tool & Machine joined the GP Manufacturing Network.

Workforce Solutions



Career Spark: 9 Years of Impact and Growing

Career Spark returned to the Peoria Civic Center for its 9th year, hosting approximately 4,000 eighth-grade students from 62 schools across the region. Over two days, students rotated through hands-on career experiences across diverse sectors, giving them real, memorable exposure to career pathways right here in Central Illinois. With more than 700 volunteers powering the event, Career Spark is truly a community-wide workforce effort.

This year's standout additions included a flight simulator and baggage-handling exhibit from Peoria International Airport, giving students firsthand insight into aviation careers. From medical simulations and robot dogs to utility line maintenance practice and CPR training, Career Spark continued to show students that "future career" can feel real right now.



Career Spark Recognized as a Statewide Best Practice

Career Spark was named a best practice by Education Systems (EdSystems) at Northern Illinois University, reinforcing its value as a leading workforce development model in Illinois. The recognition validates what Greater Peoria has built through strong employer engagement, hands-on learning, and sustained partnership.

Career Summit Explores Career Opportunities for Youth with Disabilities

GPEDC, along with several other local nonprofit organizations, hosted the annual Career Summit Expo for more than 200 students with disabilities from across the Greater Peoria Area. For the first time, Career Summit offered hands-on demonstrations that let students explore different career pathways. Some popular examples included Emergency Rescue, Welding Simulation, Dog Grooming, and Hairstylist/Beautician. In total, the summit had 28 schools in attendance, over 30 employers at the job fair, and over 20 employers across the Greater Peoria Area who provided hands-on demonstrations for students.



Quick Hits

- Co-hosted the Emerging Workforce Alliance summer retreat.
- Partnered with Birth to Five Illinois to host a "lunch and learn" focused on expanding access, quality, and reliability to childcare in the region.
- Developed a standalone website for the Regional Workforce Alliance.
- Revamped the Getro job search site to reflect investor alignment.
- Strategic Manufacturing Group held the 17th annual Manufacturing Expo with over 350 students in attendance.
- CareerSpark You're Hired received updates to video content, vendor booths, and its overall visual appearance. 1,206 students participated in Fall 2024/Spring 2025 CareerSpark You're Hired.
- Supported the DIGIM College Fair at the University of Illinois Chicago, coordinating planning and day-of logistics and facilitating student-facing career sessions for 600+ high school students from Central Illinois.
- Hosted workshop with Jobs for the Future to explore work-based learning and apprenticeship programs for casting, forging and foundry companies.

Rural Development & Outreach

AgTech Connect Strengthens the Region's Rural Innovation Economy

AgTech Connect continued to grow as a platform connecting educators, entrepreneurs, and industry leaders around agricultural innovation—one of Greater Peoria's most important rural economic engines. Events hosted at the USDA's National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research and Beck's Hybrids showcased how research, seed innovation, and data-driven tools are shaping the future of farming and bioprocessing. AgTech Connect also expanded into educator-focused programming, introducing agriculture teachers from 14 school districts to tools and strategies for teaching entrepreneurship and business development. The ripple effect reaches classrooms across Central Illinois and helps prepare students for careers in the modern ag economy.



Federal Partnership Grows with USDA Rural Development

GPEDC advanced federal relationships through a meeting with Jesus Ortega, Illinois State Director for USDA Rural Development. The conversation focused on aligning USDA's suite of housing, infrastructure, and business development programs with the needs of Greater Peoria's rural communities. Priority topics included broadband expansion, access to capital for small businesses, and affordable housing—core building blocks for rural prosperity and quality of life.

Thousands to Be Connected to High Speed Internet

Over the past few years and in partnership with our county governments and the Just Transition Fund, GPEDC has been working to expand access to high speed internet in our rural communities. The hard work of planning and feasibility studies has paid off. In late 2025 the Illinois Office of Broadband announced provisional grants to internet service providers via the federal BEAD program that will extend broadband access to 10,036 unserved locations.



Quick Hits

- Developed a set of recommendations around housing development via participation in NACo's "Building Resilient Economies in Coal Communities" program.
- Helped develop economic strategies in Comprehensive Plans for Creve Coeur, Bartonville and Chillicothe.
- Assisted Metamora, Mason City, and Creve Coeur in their exploration of Business Development Districts.
- Supported local governments in applying for Energy Transition Communities funding.
- Organized and hosted three workshops for public officials on addressing aging infrastructure and rising energy costs.
- Completed a study on the economic impact of Renewable Energy in the region.
- Co-organized the Illinois Soybean Association's Springboard Challenge conference in Peoria.
- Secured a \$2,500 grant from Compeer Financial's Fund for Rural America to strengthen the AgTech Connect programming partnership.
- Kathie Brown was celebrated as "Small Business Advocate of the Year" by Bradley's SBDC for supporting rural entrepreneurship.

Communications & Marketing

Industry Profile Launch: Peoria is Plant-Based

GPEDC released a new industry profile—Peoria is Plant-Based—to support site selectors and business leaders exploring bioprocessing, precision fermentation, and bio-renewable product development. The profile captures the region's competitive strengths in a clear, usable format designed to convert interest into investment.

Making Regional Impact Easier to See

GPEDC developed a new “Recent Wins” flyer and a companion webpage highlighting major investments across the region over the past two years, including new businesses and business expansions. These tools help the public, partners, and prospects quickly understand the measurable impact of regional economic development efforts.

Startup Showcase Celebrates Innovation During Economic Development Week

As part of Economic Development Week, GPEDC hosted a Startup Showcase at Distillery Labs to highlight regional innovation. Five early-stage companies—Bear's Bites, HuMod, AgDefense Systems, dotbox, and enterN—delivered live pitches and shared lessons from building a business in Central Illinois. The event was livestreamed and received media coverage, amplifying regional visibility and reinforcing Greater Peoria's growing identity as a place where entrepreneurs can launch and grow.



Quick Hits

- Generated 298,551 social media impressions, a 26.9% increase compared to 2024.
- Grew total followers across platforms to 10,005, a 12.6% year-over-year increase.
- Increased average engagement rate to 6.18% (up from 5.78% in 2024).
- Drove 9,119 link clicks from social posts, strengthening traffic from digital channels.
- Recorded ~16,000 website users, a 22.6% increase compared to 2024.



Economic Development Planning



Big Table Greater Peoria: Advancing Community-Driven Economic Development

In 2025, the Greater Peoria Economic Development Council advanced regional collaboration through an expanded Big Table Greater Peoria initiative designed to elevate community voices and inform long-term economic strategy. The flagship Big Table convened a broad cross-section of residents, business leaders, educators, students, and public officials for action-oriented conversations focused on opportunity, talent, entrepreneurship, and livability. The day included a well-received keynote from national innovation leader Victor W. Hwang. Building on this momentum, GPEDC extended the conversation through a Rural Big Table series across Woodford, Mason, and Tazewell Counties, with a final session planned in Logan County to ensure rural perspectives are fully represented. Insights gathered throughout the series will be synthesized into a comprehensive regional report and used to inform updates to the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), aligning community priorities with future investment, policy, and partnership decisions across Greater Peoria.



GPEDC Secures EDA Grant to Fuel Regional Strategy

GPEDC was awarded a three-year Partnership Planning Grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), securing core operational funding through 2027. This support is foundational to executing the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), maintaining a project pipeline, and facilitating cross-sector initiatives that drive implementation. Over the past decade, GPEDC has helped attract nearly \$28 million in federal funding through its EDA partnership—supporting transformative infrastructure and innovation projects.

Elevating Partnerships at IEDC

GPEDC represented Greater Peoria at the International Economic Development Council's Annual Conference in Detroit, building national connections and strengthening partnership practice. Participation in the Economic Partnership Alliance training provided frameworks for collaboration with community-based partners—an important lever for inclusive economic growth and durable regional alignment. The visit also included a tour with Live6 Alliance, a Detroit nonprofit revitalizing neighborhood corridors through small business support and placemaking—bringing back ideas relevant to community-scale development in Greater Peoria.

THANKS TO OUR 2025 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 Springfield Clinic | West Central Illinois Building and Construction Trades Council | Woodford County

BRONZE LEVEL INVESTORS

Advanced Medical Transport | Bard Optical | Busey Bank | 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
Chips Tools & Machine
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
Envision Insurance
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
Lozier Oil Company

Metamora Industries
Morton EDC
Morton Industries
O'Shea Builders, Inc.
Peoria Production Solutions
Phillipi Hagenbuch
P.J. Hoerr
Quality Metal Products
RWE Clean Energy
SMF
Terracon
Trajectory Energy Partners
TRIGO - SCS
Village of Germantown Hills
Village of Metamora



U.S. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

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

Get In Touch

GP
GREATER PEORIA
Economic Development Council

Thank you



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**Make your
career greater**

**CHOOSE GREATER >
PEORIA**