



Mid-America Economic Development  
Council  
400 W. Wilson Bridge Rd., Suite 120  
Worthington, OH 43085  
Phone: 866.439.9172  
Fax: 614-221-1989  
Email: [tracey@assnoffices.com](mailto:tracey@assnoffices.com)  
[www.midamericaedc.org](http://www.midamericaedc.org)

# News Release

Contact: Tracey Hogan

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## MID-AMERICA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL PRESENTS 2023 ANNUAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AWARDS

INDIANAPOLIS, IN, DECEMBER 1, 2023: The Mid-America Economic Development Council presented its annual Economic Development awards at the 2023 Mid-America Competitiveness Conference, held November 29-December 1 at the Indianapolis Marriott Downtown.

Award entries were accepted in up to three markets per category – large division (community population over 25,000), medium division (community population between 10,001-25,000), and small division (community population less than 10,000).

Recognition was presented to:

### **Entrepreneurial Award**

*A program that offers a unique approach to enhancing the Entrepreneurial culture in your city or region and/or a unique approach for assisting young companies through the start-up/early stage of a business life cycle.*

### ➤ **Kosciusko MedTech Accelerator - KEDCO Warsaw, Indiana (Large Division)**

**KEDCO and venture studio form, NEXT Studios, launched a medical technology-focused business accelerator program to develop a robust pipeline of startup companies to complement and advance the existing product development and manufacturing capabilities in Warsaw, The Orthopedic Capital**

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of the World®. Although the program is geared toward the medtech space, programming and tools are applicable to businesses across industries. The program has added a layer of support for entrepreneurs navigating different stages of business.

## **Marketing Program**

*An overall comprehensive marketing program to market a community, county, state, or region to a prospect; an Annual Report or Newsletter; Online Programs, and/or a Specific Program or Event.*

### **➤ Greater Manhattan Economic Partnership Content Marketing Manhattan, Kansas (Large Division)**

The Greater Manhattan Economic Partnership ran a content marketing campaign to showcase our region’s unique capabilities to serve several major industries: biosecurity, agriculture, animal health and grain science. The goals of the campaign were to build regional and national awareness of the Greater Manhattan region’s expertise in these areas and to highlight their talented workforce, training, infrastructure, community engagement and high quality of life.

### **➤ The Best Online Presence for “The Best Town on Earth” Upton, Wyoming (Small Division)**

In December 2022, the Upton Economic Development Board (UEDB) and Golden Shovel Agency (GSA) joined forces in completing a website redesign to bring new life into the efforts of promoting Upton, WY as the “Best Town on Earth.” In a collaborative effort with the teachings of Weston County School District #7 (WCSD #7) in Upton, the UEDB developed and implemented two (2) redesigned websites that boast a range of vital features for the community, such as compelling graphics, immersive videos, and interactive elements that facilitate meaningful engagement with existing businesses. The involvement of local students in the ongoing creation and promotion of these websites emerged as a pivotal aspect, greatly contributing to the success of the EDB and Chamber, not to mention workforce development in students preparing to enter the career force. Together, the website redesign projects breathed new life into the efforts of promoting Upton as the “Best Town on Earth.”

## **Placemaking**

*Projects or programs to make a community a better place to live, work, and play by transforming underutilized public spaces into vibrant community places.*

### **➤ Revitalizing a Historic Downtown for Today’s Watertown, Wisconsin (Large Division)**

Watertown, Wisconsin (population 23,018) has always been proud of its historic commercial district, laying the groundwork for downtown revitalization with its establishment of a historic district in the early 1990s and the decision to join the Wisconsin Main Street Program in 2000. However, it wasn’t until the adoption of the Riverfront and Downtown Redevelopment Initiative in 2014 that a true

public-private partnership emerged to drive impactful and lasting change. As a result of this collaborative effort, overall property value in the historic district increased by 180% and foot traffic grew by one-third, including more than 58,000 unique new visitors. However, perhaps most notably, the sense of community pride has grown. Where residents previously took for granted that their historic district was functional, they now see the district as a shining example of the vitality of their community.

### ➤ **Revitalizing the Fort Madison Marina Fort Madison, Iowa (Medium Division)**

In 2020, Fort Madison, Iowa, confronted a pivotal moment as its marina faced deterioration. Under the leadership of Mayor Matt Mohrfeld, the city initiated the transformative \$11 million Fort Madison Marina Project. Fueled by a strategic mix of public and private investments, this endeavor revitalized the marina with resilient infrastructure and forthcoming phases set to include a world-class hospitality center and restaurant, boating convenience store, and a reimagined riverfront park. Beyond the riverfront's rejuvenation, the project has served as a catalyst for expansive placemaking initiatives, underscoring the community's unwavering commitment to a vibrant future.

### Overcoming Adversity

*A project or best practice that a community, region, or state utilized during a situation of overcoming a challenge – anything from a factory shut-down, to a COVID-19 response plan, or natural disaster.*

### ➤ **Joint Economic Development Initiative of Southern Ohio (JEDISO) Jackson, Ohio (Large Division)**

The JEDISO Partnership was founded in 2013 as a campaign to competitively market a 4-county region of southern Ohio. Since its inception, the Partnership has leveraged grants from the Fluor BWXT Opportunity Fund to capture \$1 Billion in Capital Investment, create 2,510 NEW jobs and RETAIN 8,179. To learn more, visit: [ChooseSouthernOhio.com](http://ChooseSouthernOhio.com)

### ➤ **ECWRPC's Small Community Technical Assistance Program Menasha, Wisconsin (Small Division)**

The Small Community Technical Assistance Program was developed to assist communities with a population less than 12,000 in population. The program provided selected communities with a one-day workshop that facilitated local stakeholder input to provide practical vision for a specific project site or area within their community. Community members and the project teams completed walkabouts within each of the communities and then began developing a drawings and a plan that was presented back to the community later in that afternoon or that evening. Over a three year period, the project team has worked with 16 communities on small community technical assistance projects.

## Workforce & Talent

*Activity and/or innovative program that attracts new talent to a specific area, strengthens the skills of the existing workforce and/or encourages retention of young/new talent.*

### ➤ **Clinton County Workforce Collaborative Wilmington, Ohio (Large Division)**

The Clinton County Workforce Collaborative tackles critical and multi-faceted workforce needs by bringing together business, education, non-profit, government, and economic and community development leaders to create solutions specific to Clinton County. Coming out of an informal roundtable conversation in June 2021, the Collaborative quickly coalesced into three Working Groups – Barriers to Work, Education & Training, and School & Community Connections – that began meeting on a regular basis in the late fall/early winter of 2021/2022 to undertake projects and launch initiatives with rapidity and effectiveness, all of which were brought forward by the Collaborative’s participating members. Between January 2022 and July 2023, the Collaborative: launched the School & Community Connections Resource Guide, representing almost 40 employers in over 30 industries; coordinated Student Immersion Tours for over 350 students from 3 high schools, 5 middle schools, and 1 Head Start program; conducted multiple surveys to understand the needs of the local workforce; hosted a Career Exploration Fair that brought together over 40 employers and over 650 high school students; assisted with the Wilmington City Transit Feasibility Study; hosted a Job & Community Resource Fair, connecting 40 employers and 20 service providers with over 200 job seekers; and launched a Child Care Awareness Campaign.

### ➤ **Greater Chillicothe & Ross Co. Development Workforce Strong! Chillicothe, Ohio (Medium Division)**

The Workforce Strong Video Series was launched in 2022 as a Recruiting & Retention Campaign for local manufacturers. It promotes the “Highly Skilled, Loyal Workforce” that chooses to “Live & Work in southern Ohio”. To learn more about Workforce Strong and industries of southern Ohio, visit: [GCRC.com](http://GCRC.com).

## Project of the Year

*This award recognizes a collaborative project having significant and measurable impact on a City, County and Region.*

### ➤ **LG Energy Solutions Holland, Michigan (Large Division)**

The world is transitioning into the age of electrification, meaning companies are making once-in-a-generation investments to prepare. Winning these investments will develop strong economies and make communities highly valued – not only for future corporate opportunities but to attract people to live and work. Michigan won just such an investment last year with LG Energy Solution, an international battery manufacturer. The company decided to invest \$1.7 billion to expand its location in Holland. LG’s decision to quintuple its current capacity for battery components and create 1,200 jobs only happened thanks to collaboration and planning across state partners, regional economic

developers and local government. The project will strengthen the Holland area and further boost Michigan's leadership in the electric vehicle and high-tech manufacturing industries and have a tremendous positive impact on the state's economy.

### ➤ **Merrill High School Redevelopment Lansing, Michigan (Small Division)**

The old Merrill High School is located in downtown Merrill, a small farming village in Michigan. For years, the building sat vacant and unusable. Built in 1937, the school served the community for over six decades. A few businesses came and went from the space until the building was left empty. The Merrill High School project renovated the building to create a multi-story residential development in the heart of the Village of Merrill. This 17,449-square-foot project redevelopment is the first major rehabilitation in the community. The project saved the full brick façade of the prominent two-story that sits in the center of the business district. Seventeen residential units with 13,251 square feet of habitable space and 4,198 square feet of common area, a new garage with 10 covered sites and 10 additional parking spaces can now bring vibrancy back to the main street in Merrill.

Mid-America EDC members are dedicated economic development professionals who share best practices to add value in their organizations and communities. Mid-America EDC is a multi-state association dedicated to being the leading resource for making contact with site selectors, advancing regional economic development programs, and accessing thought leadership.

For many years, The Mid-America Economic Development Council has sponsored the annual Economic Development Awards competition to recognize and stimulate the creative use of quality marketing by economic development organizations throughout the 13-state Mid-America region in promoting their respective communities. Award winners will also be recognized in the January issue of Site Selection magazine.

To view more information about this year's winning award entries, visit <https://www.midamericaedc.org/events-and-programs/annual-awards>.

For more information about The Mid-America Economic Development Council, visit [www.midamericaedc.org](http://www.midamericaedc.org).

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