30 Years

Greater

Greater Dubuque
Development Corp.
FROM THE BEGINNING

30 Years ago our community chose not to succumb to economic hard times. We faced daunting challenges and divergent views, but we came together and implemented a comprehensive plan to move this city and our neighboring communities forward.

In 1984 a group of Dubuque businesses financed an analysis of community economic development opportunities and organizational needs. The study resulted in the Dubuque Plan, which recognized that no single activity or program could address both our needs and our opportunities. We had to cooperate; we had to work together.

Greater Dubuque was formed...recognizing that ALL segments of the community had to be represented if the Plan was to be successful. We knew this would not be a press conference yielding instant success; no, we knew this was a long road with many bends. Yet, we were convinced it could be done. The first Board of Directors were 25 in number and represented the Chamber of Commerce, city and county government, healthcare, organized labor, State Legislators, the Tri Colleges, Northeast Iowa Technical Institute, regional planning groups and the Dubuque Industrial Development Corp (the forerunner of Greater Dubuque Development).

Our significant goals included: taking cooperative action that would link all important segments of the community; establishing Dubuque as a recognized tourist destination; growing our current economic base; expanding the healthcare industry; improving the transportation system; strengthening the retail sector; enhancing the service industry; and celebrating the treasure of higher education in our community.

And now I ask, “How does our 30-year report card read?” In my view, it has been the most exciting A+ performance in the history of any community. We should be thankful for the foresight of those who have gone before us. I could start to name them, they were my friends, but this letter would expand way beyond the allotted space.

Congratulations Greater Dubuque! I can speak on behalf of those who saw the possibilities from the beginning, and thank those who continue to “stay the course” and make this wonderful region, a Greater Dubuque!

Bruce Meriwether, Chairman of the Board (1986–1988)
Summarizing the activities of Greater Dubuque’s 30th anniversary year on a single page is a difficult task given all that could be shared. The accomplishments over the last 30 years, this year in particular, are testimony to the efforts of our founders, who in 1984 pledged to change the Greater Dubuque area by diversifying our regional economy through growth and prosperity.

Throughout this annual report, we will be describing the then and now of all that we do — complete with a 30 year timeline that tells of past Greater Dubuque stories and our work towards a promising future.

In the past year, new and existing businesses have expanded in the Greater Dubuque area, providing the promising future our founders envisioned. Progressive Processing/Hormel Foods announced its $36 million expansion, creating 91 new jobs; Tri-State Quality Metals broke ground as the first employer in the new Dubuque Industrial Center South; Rockfarm Supply announced its $36 million expansion, creating 91 new jobs; our founders envisioned. Progressive Processing/Hormel Foods in the Greater Dubuque area, providing the promising future of our community with resources provided by Small Business Development Center, Northeast Iowa Community College, Dubuque SCORE Chapter and East Central Intergovernmental Association Business Growth.

In these 30 years, much has been accomplished and so many opportunities still remain. Thanks to your needed investments and valued engagement, we believe that the visions of our founders to make the Dubuque region Greater for generations to come continues to be fulfilled.

Last, and certainly not least, as part of our 30th year, Greater Dubuque has relocated our operations to the Historic Millwork District in the Schmid Innovation Center. This is more than a move of operations. This investment is a reflection of how a community builds on its traditions. Where windows and doors were once manufactured, we have built a progressive and contemporary statement about all that is right about the Greater Dubuque area. From our state-of-the-art boardroom to our high-efficiency automated LED lighting, our new office brings together the resources of Greater Dubuque and small business support through StartUp Dubuque. Located adjacent to our space, StartUp Dubuque is the first one-stop facility for small business support in our community’s history with resources provided by Small Business Development Center, Northeast Iowa Community College, Dubuque SCORE Chapter and East Central Intergovernmental Association Business Growth.

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As an organization grows, expansion of office space is often required. For Greater Dubuque Development Corporation, even though the core purpose of the organization has not changed, activities to support the purpose have grown, requiring the addition of staff, and therefore the search for a new office. In the review of available space in the community, we focused on our investors, customers and board members to ensure our level of professionalism continued to be the priority. As a result, Greater Dubuque Development Corporation is on the leading edge of the redevelopment of the Historic Millwork District. The relocation to the Schmid Innovation Center was the obvious choice.

Today, nine offices and additional workstations welcome our staff, interns and guests. Our versatile boardroom, equipped with cutting-edge technology, can be divided into two separate spaces, allowing multiple meetings to be held simultaneously. We have also collaborated with our partners, Small Business Development Center, Northeast Iowa Community College, Dubuque SCORE Chapter and East Central Intergovernmental Association Business Growth, in the creation of StartUp Dubuque, a one-stop shop for small business support. This space is located adjacent to our office to promote collaboration among various service providers.

Striving to be innovative in all that we do, this space allows us to showcase adaptive reuse. From the initial construction to our daily operations, sustainability is built-in to the design of our new facility. The building’s original wood, now reclaimed and full of character, supports our every step. State-of-the-art automated LED lighting illuminates our plans for the future.

Our new office stands as the perfect metaphor of our mission at Greater Dubuque: taking what was once neglected and nearly forgotten, and transforming it into a cutting-edge, progressive statement about our area and our future.
Dubuque Listed Among “10 Great Places to Live”

Dubuque Named 10th “Best-Performing” Small Metro

Greater Dubuque’s Workforce Solutions Receives Top International Award for Opportunity Dubuque

Sustainable Dubuque

Named a Top 25 Innovation in Government

Greater Dubuque Development Business Retention & Expansion Program Scores Top Honors from the Mid-American Economic Development Council

Dubuque Named One of America’s Best Small Cities To Move To

Dubuque Named One of America’s Most Exciting Small Cities

Dubuque Named One of America’s Most Secure Places to Live in the U.S.

Dubuque’s Economy Fastest-Growing in Iowa Last Year, 27th Fastest in U.S.

Dubuque Soars in Upward Mobility

Forbes

Dubuque Ranked 14th on the “Best Small Places for Business and Career” Listing

Dubuque Wins the Big Muddy Cup for Best Economy on the Mississippi River

Dubuque Scores U.S. Top Metro in 2013 for Business Growth and Expansion

Dubuque Named a “Crown Community”

Dubuque Named One of America’s Best Leading Locations in U.S.

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HARVARD Kennedy School

ASH CENTER

for Democratic Governance and Innovation

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The Greater Dubuque area has experienced 2.18% population growth since 2010, compared to the State of Iowa at 1.4%. That means we’re not only well on our way to reaching our 2017 goal, but it also highlights the area’s status as a leader in Iowa. As released in March 2014, our population of the Greater Dubuque area grew to 95,697.

Greater Dubuque’s goal for 2017 is to reach 60,000 jobs. At the start of this year, Dubuque had climbed to 58,000. As of April 2014, the number had already hit 59,700. This shows promising progress toward our goal.

As of April 2014, employees in Dubuque County earned an average hourly wage of $22.67.

Two years and five months into the NEXT Campaign, the Greater Dubuque area has already achieved $431,757,628 in new construction. We are over halfway to our five-year goal of $700 million.
NOW:
Thanks to today’s workforce solutions, we’re a thriving community.

BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION

Taking action

Prior to 1996, Greater Dubuque had no defined strategy for serving existing businesses. So, Greater Dubuque stepped up to the plate for our employers and began a business retention and expansion program called InfoAction.

Today, we understand that our community’s existing businesses, large and small, are critical to the health of our local economy. Our staff of knowledgeable business professionals dedicate their time and attention across all industries to find the benefits and challenges of operating in the Greater Dubuque area. By meeting face-to-face with executives and owners, we ask what they need to be more successful. Whether it’s a qualified workforce, new facilities or improved infrastructure, we work to find solutions.

The game changer here is actually a simple idea: after we listen to their needs, we act on what we learn. Working with all business sectors and utilizing partnerships both locally and beyond, we provide solutions.

The basis of our nationally recognized program, InfoAction, is to meet annually with over 280 local businesses of all sizes and sectors. Through personal contact we exchange information and deliver advocacy and solutions to the businesses that vitalize and strengthen our community.

Prior to beginning our InfoAction program, too little attention was paid to existing employers.

NOW:
We have a nationally recognized program dedicated to serving existing businesses, which has led to the revitalization of our riverfront, downtown and industrial parks.

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

An innovative approach to talent

In the 1980s, Dubuque was known for its high unemployment rate. Today we are known as a community of opportunity.

As Baby Boomers retire, we must create the tools necessary to recruit, retain and retrain the talent we need. This includes providing services like AccessDubuqueJobs.com to connect talent with opportunity. It means keeping workers in the area by reaching out to students at job fairs and CEO Network events, and by catering to newcomers’ needs through the Distinctively Dubuque course and concierge services.

We joined with community partners to create programs like Opportunity Dubuque and Dubuque Works to assist unemployed and underemployed citizens learn the skills needed for existing, well-paying jobs.

The brutal unemployment rate in the 1980s taught us lessons that we must never forget. Working together to create and implement workforce solutions allowed our area to weather the last recession better than most.

The success of our workforce solutions program is attributable to our partnerships. Collaborating with TH Media and local employers that invest in the site, AccessDubuqueJobs.com successfully connects talent to opportunity in our area.

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National Marketing

A proactive approach

In the early ‘80s, twenty percent of Greater Dubuque’s workforce was employed at our two largest businesses; this resulted in a devastating blow to our economy when FDL Foods closed. We had been blindly confident that the status quo of the previous decades would continue. Of course, it didn’t; it never does without human intervention.

Today we work to secure a diverse business base. We meet with corporate executives and leaders in the community to build relationships assuring them that the Greater Dubuque area is the best place for their business to grow. Our talented workforce—fostered by our multiple higher-education institutions and workforce solutions program—along with our attentiveness to their needs has gained results and national recognition.

In the past year alone, Progressive Processing/Hormel Foods, Nu World Foods and Rockfarm Supply Chain Solutions all announced plans to expand their operations in the Greater Dubuque area. Combined, these projects will create over 150 jobs and bring in a capital investment of over $43 million. These successes, along with the area’s national recognition, show our dedication to making the Greater Dubuque area a global player—helping to build a Greater Dubuque.

Sustainable Innovation

Charting a smart course

In recent years it’s become evident that we, as a global community, need to incorporate sustainability into the core of how we operate. This new priority, spurred by the community’s Sustainable Dubuque initiative, is securing a promising future for our area.

Every successful business begins with a good idea and a lot of elbow grease. Thanks to the generosity of Dick and Carrie Schmid, the Greater Dubuque area now has the resources to encourage, support and promote entrepreneurialism. The creation of StartUp Dubuque, located in the Schmid Innovation Center, brings together key partners like the Small Business Development Center, Northeast Iowa Community College, Dubuque SCORE Chapter and East Central Intergovernmental Association Business Growth to serve aspiring entrepreneurs.

Locating these partners in the same physical space has created a “one-stop shop” for small businesses to access the resources necessary for success. Assisting small startups, as well as existing industry, we provide support through analytics and access to data. Using resources like LinkedIn Recruiter and ESRI®, we can help find potential talent and clients, identify markets and enhance operations. This involvement with the cutting-edge world of big data extends into our partnership with IBM and its Smarter Cities initiative. Acting as the liaison between the City of Dubuque and IBM for this partnership, we help bring sustainable practices to the local business community, serving as a model for the rest of the world.
ACHIEVING GREATNESS

Ground-breaking campaigns

It’s not something that happens overnight. It takes diligent work and impeccable leadership to reach the goals we’ve set for our community. Luckily, we’ve been able to establish a standard for both.

The hard work of the leaders of our three capital campaigns has led to unimaginable progress. Before our first multi-year campaign in 2002, Greater Dubuque Development thought small and acted accordingly. Yearly fundraising only allowed us to plan on a small scale, and the true potential of Greater Dubuque wasn’t being met. By changing tactics to long-range funding, we are able to focus on long-range planning and take the steps that have led to our success.

Thanks to the leadership of John Schmidt, Chairman of our first multi-year campaign, River Valley Initiative, we changed the course of our organization. Trailblazing what would become the format for future campaigns, he helped establish the precedent of setting realistic goals and exceeding them.

David Becker, Chair of our second campaign, Destination for Opportunity, continued the legacy of the River Valley Initiative by exceeding our goals of creating thousands of new jobs, raising the county’s average wage, stimulating hundreds of millions of dollars in new construction and growing our population. Meeting and exceeding these goals allowed our area to prevail despite the country’s economic tailspin.

Chairman Chad Chandlee said it best, “In many communities, these achievements would foster complacency, a collective sense that ‘We’ve made it!’ Instead, we ask the questions: ‘Where do we go from here? What’s NEXT?’”

At the core of Greater Dubuque’s success is a community that believes in public/private partnerships, planning, hard work and investment of both treasure and time. That is why, 30 years later, we are a Greater Dubuque.

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— Chad Chandlee, Chair of the NEXT Campaign
Leadership

GREATER DUBUQUE STAFF
(pictured left to right)

Jan Powers  Newcomer Services Consultant
Casey Muhm  Director of Sustainable Innovation
Daniel McDonald  Vice President of Existing Business
Jayne Ervolino  Administrative Assistant
Rick Dickinson  President & CEO
Karen Kluemper  Vice President of Operations
Mark Seckman  Vice President of National Marketing
Sarah Harris  Vice President of Workforce Solutions
Beth Mescher  Director of Communications
Bill Baum  Existing Business Specialist

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Chairperson  Byron Taylor  John Deere Dubuque Works
Vice Chairperson  Doug Horstemann  Dubuque Bank & Trust
Treasurer  Michael Donohue  U.S. Bank
Immediate Past Chairperson  Jesús Avilés  Mystique Casino
Roy Buol  City of Dubuque
David Becker  Cottingham & Butler
Chad Chandlee  Kendall Hunt Publishing
Tim Conlon  Conlon Construction
Dan Hammel  Retired, IEBW Local 4704
Nicholas J. Schnepp  American Trust & Savings Bank
Kurt Strand  McGraw-Hill Education
John Tallent  Medical Associates Clinics, Inc.
Michael Van Milligen  City of Dubuque
Dr. Liang Choe Woo  Northeast Iowa Community College
Tom Woodward  Woodward Communications, Inc.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chairperson  Dave Baker  Retired, Teamsters Local 120
Vice Chairperson  David Brandon  UnityPoint Health – Finley Hospital
Treasurer  Jeff Bullock  University of Dubuque
Immediate Past Chairperson  Sr. Joanne Burrows  Clarke University
Tom Coffas  IBM Dubuque
Dawn Colby  Prudential Retirement
Jim Collins  Loras College
Joyce Connors  City of Dubuque
Wayne Demmer  Dubuque County
Kelley Deutmeyer  East Central Intergovernmental Association
Mark Ernst  Black Hills Energy
Andy Hawkinson  DuTrac Community Credit Union
Joe Hearn  Dupaco Community Credit Union
Tim Hodge  Hodge Company
Chuck Helsenhart  Iowa Legislature
Maurice Jones  City of Dubuque
Russell Knight  Mercy Medical Center
Terry Koubal  Alliant Energy
Kevin Lynch  City of Dubuque
Mike Portzen  Portzen Construction
Jacque Rahe  Dyersville Economic Development Corporation
Stan Rheingans  Dubuque Community School District
Wendy Runde  Diamond Jo Casino
Dennis Shields  University of Wisconsin-Platteville
