



2024 Community and Economic Development Awards Finalists

Please find below an overview of the 2024 CEDA Award finalists (three finalists in each category) across the four CEDA categories:

- **Business Retention and Expansion**

This award recognizes a single economic development project in which a community successfully mobilized to retain and/or expand an existing business of great importance to the community. Nominations should demonstrate extensive cross-community collaboration, innovation, and responsiveness to the business in bringing the project to fruition.

- ***Encompass Early Education and Care***

Encompass Early Education and Care is leading a transformative project in Oconto Falls, addressing the critical shortage of childcare in collaboration with TEDCOR and Oconto County Public Health. Their innovative funding approach includes a generous \$250,000 reduction in the building purchase price by committed owners, \$250,000 in COVID Relief Funds from Oconto County, and a pending \$250,000 Community Development Investment grant from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation. Additionally, the Encompass Foundation contributed a substantial \$1,000,000, and other local partnerships, including a \$10,000 investment from HSHS St. Clare Memorial Hospital, further supported the initiative. The new center, which opened in June 2024, provides 140 childcare slots, and employs 18 teachers and aides. This facility is more than just a building; it serves as a lifeline for working families. Over half of Oconto County's labor force leaves the area daily due to childcare constraints. Encompass's holistic family care approach ensures that parents can work confidently, knowing their children are in capable hands. This project exemplifies the power of vision and collaboration. Encompass's legacy extends beyond bricks and mortar, standing as a testament to community resilience and commitment.

- ***STI Holdings Inc. – Stoughton Trailers***

Stoughton Trailers (STI) plans to develop a 182-acre mixed-use project on the northwestern side of Stoughton. The development includes an impressive state-of-the-art 50,000 sq. ft. corporate headquarters for STI, designed for 200 employees. The site will also feature a 30-acre public park and 40 acres for stormwater management. The project includes diverse residential options with flexible zoning to meet market demands. Phase 1 will see the construction of the headquarters and potentially some single-family and duplex residential units. Future phases will develop the remaining 182 acres, including more housing, office, and commercial spaces, plus a large community park. The full build-out aims for 50-60 single-family/duplex lots and 400-500 multi-family units, with 30

acres for business development. Key stakeholders include Stoughton Trailers, the City of Stoughton, Stoughton Utilities, St. Marie Law, LLC (project manager), and Strang, Inc. (architect). The city committed \$22.6 million in Tax Increment Financing (TIF) assistance, which was instrumental in bridging the financial gap, addressing stormwater management, wastewater infrastructure, increased interest rates, and site preparation. This project is expected to add 1,000 new residents and \$139 million in taxable value.

- ***BOH Electronics***

BOH Electronics, a premier manufacturer of cable and wire harnesses for various industries, was established in 2005 by Ben Hanke. Due to continued growth, BOH decided to relocate from their historic 17,000 sq. ft. facility in North Hudson to a larger site in River Falls, Wisconsin. The new location in the River Falls Whitetail Business Park offered high visibility and proximity for their workforce. Key partners in this project included the City of River Falls, St. Croix Economic Development Corporation, and WEDC, among others. While BOH considered moving the company out of Western Wisconsin, with assistance provided by the City of River Falls and other partners, including a \$300,000 contribution in TIF-related land cost reductions and an electrical transformer, the company decided to build a 50,000 sq. ft. pre-cast concrete facility in the Whitetail Business Park. The nearly 6-million-dollar project, completed in July 2003 with support from Derrick Building Solutions, retained 56 full-time positions and strives to create new jobs. BOH Electronics, now with nearly 100 full-time employees, has become a significant private-sector employer in River Falls, positively impacting the local economy and employment.

- **Community Impact**

This award recognizes innovation in community development that promotes and advances health and economic prosperity in Wisconsin communities. Nominations should demonstrate how a program, project, or initiative meet at least one of the following: Development or expansion of the community's entrepreneurial ecosystem; development of quality placemaking or place keeping initiatives; redevelopment of blighted buildings into a project that has revitalized the community; or development of downtown or main street workforce housing.

- ***City of Monona***

The City of Monona's decades-long tax incremental financing (TIF) strategy, implemented with the assistance of the Monona Community Development Authority and Becker Professional Services, has transformed Monona from a city in population decline into a thriving, growing community. Through the creative use of TIF financing, Monona has redeveloped blighted, underutilized properties into vibrant commercial and residential spaces that has resulted in over \$223 million in property value growth across multiple TIF districts. As a landlocked urban community, Monona must focus on redevelopment rather than new greenfield development, making creative TIF strategy essential to its growth strategy. This strategy has enabled the development of much needed multi-family housing projects, essential medical facilities, and commercial projects that have sparked economic activity throughout the city. The Current mixed-use development and Heritage Monona senior housing highlight the successful integration of new housing options to address the city's long-standing population decline. By capturing new incremental tax revenue, Monona has also been able to enhance public infrastructure and placemaking without burdening taxpayers. Their approach not only promotes economic prosperity, but also positions Monona as a leader in sustainable community development.

- ***Gays Mills Uptown Development***

The Village of Gays Mills has been plagued by floods since its founding in 1847. Fifteen years ago, the Village attempted to develop "New Town" or "Uptown" on higher ground, but progress stalled and essentially came to a halt after the devastating flood of 2018. Ultimately, the community tapped into the resources and tools provided by the WEDC

Connect Communities Program, and the Connect Communities Gays Mills (CCGM) was formed to help residents and local businesses to “Rise Above the Flood Waters” to encourage new downtown development and revitalization of the community. The approach has been multifaceted, including community game nights to foster engagement, Community Clean-Up Days to enhance local spaces, a revitalized Apple Fest to attract tourists, and a bike share program. Additionally, CCGM revitalized the Mercantile Center by introducing Driftless Made, a collective for local vendors, and is working to begin bus tours to increase village traffic. The crowning achievement was CCGM’s selection for the THRIVE Rural Wisconsin Project to help transform “uptown” Gays Mills with new community amenities, housing, and eco-friendly features. This project signifies a hopeful future for the village, showcasing the impact of dedicated community efforts in overcoming adversity and fostering growth.

- **Green County Home Construction Cooperative**

The Green County Development Corporation (GCDC) Home Construction Cooperative was created to address two critical issues in the Green County area – the shortage of skilled trades workers and the lack of affordable family housing. The program, kick-started through the donation of a vacant home from SSM Health Monroe, engaged 16 students from Monroe High School in the renovation of the donated home. Working together with local contractors in one-hour blocks three days per week, students gained trades skills experience that will last a lifetime, including exposure to general construction, plumbing, HVAC, electrical, masonry, and landscaping. The project, which received financial support from various businesses and civic groups, as well as WHEDA, illustrates the importance of creative partnerships to tackle rural economic development challenges. The Home Construction Cooperative is boosting affordable housing stock and developing the next generation of skilled trades professionals one house at a time and is positioned to make an impact well into the future. The renovated home will be sold to fund future projects, and the City of Monroe has donated two lots for new home construction, which will help ensure the program’s long-term sustainability and success.

- **Real Estate Redevelopment and Reuse**

This award recognizes innovative real estate redevelopment or reuse projects that demonstrate measurable and quantitative impact on employment and tax base, as well as sustainability measures, such as conservation of energy and water. Nominations should provide details as to why the project will/has served as a catalyst for economic and community development efforts. It should also demonstrate an innovative approach to development.

- **Brooke Street Lofts**

Brooke Street Lofts is a historic adaptive reuse preservation of The Northern Casket Company building and Winnebago Cheese Factory in Fond du Lac. These three-story brick buildings have been converted into 62 affordable housing units. The Northern Casket Company property also houses a community room, business center, fitness room, onsite property management office, and outdoor playground. The project focused on preserving as much historic detail and integrity as possible in these National Historic Register buildings, and created much-needed, affordable homes for the community. The Casket school building was originally built in 1892 and underwent five additions between 1910-1950. At one time the property hosted thriving casket and cheese businesses and supplied jobs to hundreds of Fond du Lac residents. Eventually the buildings were abandoned, continued to deteriorate, and became a rundown eyesore for the neighborhood. Through successful partnerships with Wisconsin Partnership for Housing Development, the City of Fond du Lac, numerous funders and lenders, and Historic Tax Credits and Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, Commonwealth Construction was able to purchase and successfully preserve the local assets. The \$19.9M project was completed in October 2023.

- ***The District – West Bend***
 Located on the corner of North Main Street and West Washington Street, this riverfront property was formerly the site of the West Bend Brewing Company, which operated from the late 1800s to the 1970s. For more than 50 years, the site was underutilized and deteriorated to a point of blight and disrepair. It served as an eyesore and deterrent in Downtown West Bend, rather than an economic development catalyst. HKS Holdings, LLC has redeveloped the blighted 3-acre site in downtown West Bend into 177 market-rate apartment units and 6,500 SF commercial space for 1840 Brewing Company's new taproom – paying homage to the site's legacy as a brewery. The District is comprised of seven townhouses and two, four-story buildings. It offers modern, spacious apartment units with beautiful views of the Milwaukee River and historic downtown, access to the Riverwalk, kayak landing, and more. This \$42 million investment is expected to generate over \$34 million in new tax base. Tax increment financing has been used to catalyze public investments in the adjacent Downtown Riverwalk.

- ***Market on River***
 Market on River is a project of Wisconsin Farmers Union. The WFU Board, with the help of Greenfire Management Services, Chippewa Economic Development Corporation, Chippewa Falls Main Street Association, and the City of Chippewa Falls worked to identify a location for their expansion, opting to remain in Chippewa Falls due to the organization's deep community roots. Machine Tool Camp was in the process of building a new modern manufacturing facility and looking to sell its historic three-story structure across the street from the new Chippewa Riverfront Park. The building, originally constructed in 1916, was commissioned by the Chippewa Valley Mercantile Company and was later home to several shoe manufacturers. WFU acquired the 45,000-square-foot building and selected Greenfire Management Services and Studio EA to bring the \$10.2 million project to life. Renovations are being finalized and tenants will be moving in October 2024. WFU plans to use the stately brick building on the riverfront for a new state headquarters, retail and conference space, a food hall, community events space, and residential apartments. WEDC, the City of Chippewa Falls, the Regional Business Fund, and several other partners contributed to the success of this project.

- **Talent Attraction, Development, and Retention**

This award recognizes initiatives or programs that can document successful talent attraction, development, and retention outcomes. Nominations should identify how the program or initiative provided a strategic and innovative approach to meet one or more of following goals: Strengthening the skills of the workforce; talent attraction and retention; integration and alignment of economic and workforce development activities; diversity and inclusion; and addressing barriers to employment such as childcare, housing, and transportation.

- ***The New North Talent Campaigns***
 The New North, a regional economic development organization, is committed to advancing creative and effective talent attraction strategies to meet the workforce needs of Northeast Wisconsin. Due to an aging population and a shrinking workforce, New North developed an innovative approach to attract more residents to fill open jobs across all industries. Tapping into a WEDC Talent Marketing Co-op Grant and \$175,000 in private sector investment, New North implemented an extensive digital marketing campaign with multiple programs targeting specific demographic groups, including the “more YOU in NEW” campaign to attract millennials to the region, as well as the “Find your True North” program geared toward young professionals and outdoor enthusiasts using a targeted social media approach to promote the benefits of living in the New North. They also partnered with Mission Wisconsin on a digital campaign promoting the state's veteran benefits that targets U.S. veterans living outside Wisconsin. The successful programs helped make the New North one of the fastest growing regions in

the state, boosting net migration by over 5,000 people and bringing 81 veterans and their families to Northeast Wisconsin.

- ***Growing Lancaster***

Growing Lancaster is a grassroots effort to strengthen the local workforce in the City of Lancaster and help the community welcome newcomers, who can fill open jobs, boost the local economy and advance community growth. Growing Lancaster blossomed from informal conversations between Amcor Packaging, Inc. and Grant Regional Health Center on workforce challenges, but developed into an official organization led by a committee of local businesses, education leaders, health care professionals, and city officials committed to growing and diversifying the city's population to meet the needs of local employers. Using grant funding to build the community's connection to Latino families, Growing Lancaster held focus groups aimed at making Lancaster more welcoming for new residents, offered free English language classes, and developed a plan to attract a Latino grocery store to the community. Growing Lancaster also coordinated Welcoming Week in Lancaster, which included a digital marketing element, to promote community inclusion, and played a key role in the Lancaster Chamber's Night Market to create awareness in the community about community growth. This project has served to change the culture of the community, welcome Latino families, and connect new residents with job opportunities.

- ***Great Pinery Heritage Waterway Trail***

The Great Pinery Heritage Waterway project, a transformative initiative for Central Wisconsin, is a comprehensive water trail that spans three rivers, including the Wisconsin River, that flows into Lake Wausau and offers stunning natural landscapes, wildlife, and recreational opportunities that enhance the local outdoor experience. Made possible through a National Parks Service grant and \$212,000 in private sector funding from key stakeholders, including the Wausau and Marathon County Parks and Recreation Foundation, Greenheck Foundation, and the Merrill Community Foundation, the project highlights the region's outdoor recreation opportunities as a tool for attraction, retention, and placemaking. In addition to attracting Millennials and Zoomers, who prioritize outdoor recreation in their lifestyle choices, to the area to live and work, the project leverages the area's natural beauty to boost tourism and economic development. Economic impact assessments, facilitated by advanced data-driven software tools, illustrated the waterway's role as a catalyst for revitalizing riverfronts and promoting outdoor recreation, and was key in generating strong community support. Ultimately, the Great Pinery Heritage Waterway not only enhances recreational opportunities but also positions Central Wisconsin as an attractive destination for talent, promoting a sustainable and economically vibrant community.