



2022 Annual Report

The Eau Claire Area Economic Development Corporation is a non-profit, public and private partnership missioned to advance local prosperity through business and job growth.

Business Recruitment

Business Expansion

Entrepreneurship

Placemaking

about us



Luke Hanson
Executive Director



Becca Coleman
Community Project Manager



Reflections from the Executive Director

It is hard to sum up 2022 in one page but it was one heck of a year! I want to start this article out with a huge thank you to all the individuals and companies that supported the EDC throughout 2022. This organization wouldn't be what it is today without the investment from our local community supporters.

With 2022 in the books, the EDC finished the year working with 48 different companies looking at expanding into or growing within Eau Claire. Eau Claire is one of the few growing cities in Wisconsin and prospects are starting to notice. This local population growth has been a catalyst for expansion of local companies and gaining attention from national and international organizations.

We are hoping to see this growth and opportunities continue into 2023 and beyond!

Economic development can be a long play when recruiting outside organizations, sometimes taking years to convert. A great example of this is the Costco project. The EDC originally proposed that site to Costco back in 2017, 5 years later they decided it was time to build.

Looking back at 2022 the EDC made significant strides to purposefully connect with more stakeholders at a number of EDC hosted events. The 2nd Annual Clay Breaker Classic (EDC's largest fundraiser) was held in April and had the pleasure of welcoming hundreds of business leaders for an afternoon of networking and trap shooting fun. The EDC, again was co-host of River Prairie Festival – Celebration of Art. Organizing this free, community event is important in our efforts to cultivate placemaking as a workforce recruitment/retention strategy.

Thank you for your continued support of your Eau Claire Area Economic Development Corporation, your investment makes real impact in the growth of our community.

Luke Hanson

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Xcel Energy - Past
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2022 Highlights

- 48 RFP's activated for relocating or expanding outside businesses (record number of inquiries!)
- 5 hosted site visits
- 49 businesses assisted with Mainstreet Bounceback Grants funded by ARPA
- 500+ Entrepreneurs supported through events and programming
- Co-hosted successful Placemaking Event to highlight the unique features of living & working here
- 5 local Business Expansions assisted

Message from the Board Chair



Andrew Daniels

Miron Construction
2022 Board Chair

As I reflect on 2022, I am reminded of the opportunity that exists within Eau Claire County for growth and the vital role that the Eau Claire Area Economic Development Corporation (EDC) plays. It is the collaboration of local businesses, municipalities, and community organizations that has made the area successful, and it will be that continued collaboration that ensures future success.

Paired with traditional economic development functions, another major goal of this past year was increasing the EDC's visibility and educating the community about our impact. This was accomplished by focusing on our core mission and finding ways to inform stakeholders of the EDC's long history of assisting with business growth in the area. I truly believe that it is through this collaborative effort that the EDC's impact on intentional business growth can be realized.

A few of the highlights from this past year include

- A 20% annual increase in the number of RFP's that the EDC received and fielded.
- Two Economic Update events were held to inform stakeholders and community of market trends and other available economic development tools.
- Largest year of annual membership investment since 2018.
- Hosted two community and investor networking events connecting people across regional and business sectors.

However, 2022 was not without its challenges. The EDC saw a major business looking to invest \$125+ million, with \$50M guaranteed valuation, into the community, withdraw its development agreement based on a less-than-accurate public perception of the project. Looking back at this pursuit, it reinforces the need to educate the community on the EDC's vital role in economic development and the role that economic development plays in the financial stability of the public government and growth of local prosperity.

With this in mind, the Board has taken the initiative to update its strategic plan in 2023 to ensure the vision is clear and all members can help promote the EDC's goals and value.

In 2023, I want to encourage all investors to make an effort to do at least one of the following.

- Learn more about the EDC's mission and help promote the EDC within the business community.
- Attend one of the multiple events the EDC holds throughout the year to stay connected, educated and support the organization.
- Increase your level of financial support to the EDC through your annual investment or sponsoring an event.

As I conclude my term, I want to say thank you to the EDC's investors for your continued support, to the staff for their daily effort to improve the organization, and to the Board for your guidance and vision. I am confident the organization is in good hands and will continue to grow its impact in the region.

Thank you!

2023 Goals

Business Growth & Expansion

Broadband Initiatives Collaborate on expanding broadband services to more rural parts of Eau Claire County.

Business Recruitment Mobilize outreach efforts to actively recruit expanding businesses to visit and move into Eau Claire County.

Recruitment Resource Guide Use the EDC's own Preferred Service Provider Guide to streamline marketing materials for site selectors and other interested parties.

Placemaking

Identify Needs Work with community partners to continue to identify and work towards talent attraction.

Destination Development Intentionally recruit business that supports the goal of making Eau Claire County a place for tourism and recreation.

Business Retention

Business Retention & Expansion Calls Increase business growth calls to foster and assist with expanding existing businesses.

Regional Collaboration Events Host community-connecting events to develop collaboration between private and public entities, all with a focus to elevate business in the County.

Economic Excellence Recognition Present the Paragon Economic Impact Award, an annual award used to recognize and celebrate a local business who advances local economic impact.

Entrepreneurship

Connector in the Startup Community Organize, host or support entrepreneur focused local events including; The Idea Challenge, Startup 48, 1 Million Cups VentureHome EC and Startup Chippewa Valley Week.

Second Stage Funding for Entrepreneurs Develop a fund to provide second stage seed funding for local entrepreneurs to assist with growth in the County.

Board Advisors

Aaron White
City of Eau Claire

David Minor
Eau Claire Area
Chamber of Commerce

Benny Anderson
Visit Eau Claire

Jeff Halloin
Gateway Corporation

Jacob Haupt
Western Dairyland



RFI Projects

In 2022, the EDC fielded 48 Request for Information (RFI) queries from expanding business prospects.

These prospects were looking at growing or expanding in Eau Claire County. The EDC assisted companies ranging from locations in California to New York, internationally from the UK, Germany, and Asia, and also local entities looking for expansion opportunities at home.

If the EDC were to calculate how much we bid out for development work just for 2022, it was over \$2.75B, if it were all to take place here! In reality, not all projects are converted; however the EDC assisted companies develop over 380,000 sq ft of new, local facilities and a total investment over \$37,000,000 into our community. Having these expansion conversations and showcasing the advantages of growing a business here is at the heart of the value of the Eau Claire Area EDC.

Overall, Eau Claire is getting noticed as a place of growth and opportunity throughout the region, state, and nationally. Companies are seeing that we have a strong workforce and pipeline, safe communities, geographically well-positioned and a great sense of place.

Additionally, the EDC has put an emphasis on Placemaking over the past 18 months and we see it as a key economic driver for business and workforce recruitment. We all know, there are wonderful and unique reasons to make the Chippewa Valley a home for business and employees, especially when being compared to other mid-size, mid-west communities.

This is the part of the Eau Claire value that the EDC will continue to build off of for years to come.



Paragon

Economic Impact Award

Huebsch has been awarded the 2022 Paragon Economic Impact Award to recognize their positive impact on the economy in Eau Claire County.

Huebsch was established in 1891 to meet the laundry needs of a growing lumber industry in West Central Wisconsin. The Huebsch Laundry business took many forms through the years. Throughout this time, the business has remained flexible and innovative to support the needs of their customers. **Serving Western Wisconsin and the Twin Cities, Huebsch is your local independent service provider for work uniforms, floor mats, towels and aprons, restroom services, corporate apparel, clean room, and first aid service.**

Their leadership team has been extremely intentional with plans for growth and expansion, investing heavily in state-of-the-art equipment to allow for greater capacity as their demand increases. This includes recently installing a garment auto-sort system, a new cloth roll towel cleaning machine, and installing a new soil-sort system. These changes reduce the physical demands placed on their employees by using technology to take some of the labor off their team members, keeping their employees wellness top of mind. Huebsch also built two large additions onto their Eau Claire plant to allow room for their physical upgrades.

Huebsch is dedicated to being a sustainable company and continues to seek ways to improve their efforts including using solar energy from their rooftop solar panels and protecting the environment by installing a stormwater treatment system underneath their parking lot.

Huebsch is actively involved with the Boys and Girls Club of the Chippewa Valley, United Way, and Special Olympics of Wisconsin. Giving back to the community has always been an integral part of who Huebsch. They often send their team members to volunteer at events, hold employee fundraisers, and sponsor events for these organizations.

Huebsch has cared passionately for their employees in Eau Claire since 1891.

Often promoting employees from within, they invest often in their next generation of leaders. Huebsch provides routine opportunities for their staff to attend professional development trainings, plan internal trainings to benefit employees lives in and outside of the workplace, and their company CEO knows every one of their 170+ employees by name. Huebsch is excited to position the company for their next 132 years of success by remaining independent and family owned.



Rural Broadband

In 2019, the Eau Claire County Board approved a resolution that created the Special Broadband Committee. The committee consists of eleven members, including the Eau Claire Area EDC, with diverse broadband expertise and backgrounds, have built strong relationships with Internet Service Providers (ISPs) that serve the geographical areas of the county, Townships, and other partners.

At the beginning, the Committee spent time connecting with ISPs, analyzing Federal Communication Commission (FCC) data, understanding where coverage gaps existed, and developing its goals.

Since then, it was determined that the Committee's principal goal was to support the expansion of high-speed internet infrastructure across the County, with their gold standard being fiber to the premise.

Some Accomplishments

- Advocate for the expansion of broadband infrastructure access to residences and businesses by writing seven letters of support where ISPs received Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) broadband expansion grants. These projects include 2,210 locations and approximately 305 miles of fiber installed
- Recipient of the PSC Broadband Forward Community designation. This designation required the adoption of an ordinance that streamlined the permitting process for broadband infrastructure expansion projects in the rural parts of the county.
- Developed an online broadband survey with a speed test to collect more accurate data for use in PSC broadband grant applications.
- Partnered with the PSC to secure a Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) grant to fund the Space X Starlink pilot project. The grant was used to purchase the satellite receiver and associated equipment for 50 participants.

Current and Future Projects

- Partnered with United Way of the Greater Chippewa Valley to develop a Digital Equity & Inclusion Initiative program that is available to all county citizens.
- Continue supporting ISPs with grant applications to expand high-speed broadband services in eastern Eau Claire County.





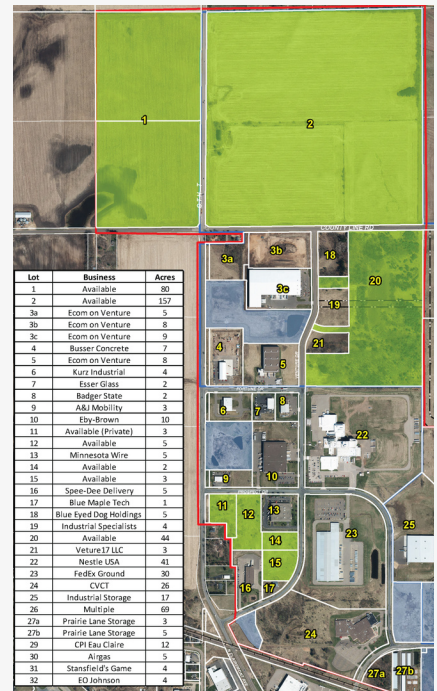
Gateway Industrial Park

The Gateway Industrial Park is Eau Claire's premier industrial property in the County.

Gateway has been a primary example of a very successful public-private partnership and is a true success story for Eau Claire. The partnership is made up of the City of Eau Claire, Xcel Energy, and the Eau Claire Area Economic Development Corporation. This unique partnership allows Gateway to move quickly in support of economic development efforts, tools, and incentives to entice growth and expansion of businesses to Eau Claire.

The original Gateway Park started on the south side of Eau Claire back in the late 1980's. It was then determined to be best suited for commercial retail and residential properties given its location. It did have its fair amount of success prior to moving to the north side of Eau Claire. The original Gateway now sits on Gateway Drive and is host to 58 different businesses employing over 900 people in our community. Some of those businesses include Target, Kohl's, Walmart, and Sam's Club.

After the sale of the original Gateway Park, Gateway expanded to the west side of Eau Claire along Truax Boulevard and the North Crossing. This transition took place in 1993 and the land was acquired from Eau Claire County for future development. The original 232 acre park is now fully developed and home to 45 businesses employing over 2,300 people. Some of the prominent companies out there are NMC Wollard, Hutchinson Technology Inc, Silver Spring Foods, and Riverside Machine.



With the success of Gateway West, Gateway expanded its park north off of County Highway T to be what are currently marketing today as Gateway Northwest Business Park. The current park is the largest to date at 522 acres, hosting companies such as Nestle USA, Net Health Shops, FedEx, Minnesota Wire, and Eby-Brown. With the 20 companies located in the park they are employing over 2,220 people in our community.

Gateway is a true success story in our community and is used as an example of what can be done in collaboration with a strong public-private partnership throughout the nation. Gateway has successfully developed 569 acres of land, generated a commercial and industrial tax base over \$224M for Eau Claire between the 123 current employers, and generating over 5,400 jobs in our community.

It has been a huge success and we are not close to being done! Gateway will continue to make strides to advance our community forward for decades to come.





The Idea Challenge

On December 8, 2022, The Idea Challenge, a local business idea competition, held the final pitch session for five finalists. Heard by a panel of industry experts, Flawn Flowering Lawn Kit was named the winner and will receive \$5000 to support the new business, thanks to a sponsorship by Northwestern Bank.

According to founder, Anthony Nied, Flawn Flowering Lawn plans to use the prize money to order new custom cut and printed packaging from a Wisconsin based eco conscious company that will allow consumers a completely sustainable, and even easier, way to apply their Flawn Seed Kit and transform their lawn into a Flowering Lawn.

"I am extremely grateful for the support I've received from my family as well as the guidance provided by my mentors helping me to navigate on this journey. Entrepreneurs, such as myself, are indebted to the support and resources made available by organizations like the Eau Claire Area EDC which help make small businesses successful." www.floweringlawn.com



The Idea Challenge 2022 Finalists:

Eau Claire Refillery, Greta Gladitsch- Eau Claire Refillery is a zero-waste, eco-friendly refill store in downtown Eau Claire.

Flawn Seed Kits, Anthony Nied- Flawn Seed Kits allow you to easily transform your grass lawn into a low maintenance flowering lawn that is safe for pets, kids, and the environment. Winner of Grand Prize.

Goatful Games, Eli Bremer- Goatful Games has created an exciting board game, Meet Me At the Creek, an amazing game of race, chase and capture based around the musician Billy Strings.

Peace Tree Child Care Management, Lydia Ekenstedt- Peace Tree Child Care Management Services provides the expertise to open and operate an exceptional child care center by breaking down common barriers to give better pay, fair tuition, and employee benefits. Winner of \$1000 Business Services award.

Cereus, Doug Rhoten- Cereus is a SaaS product that automates auditing all content and network traffic in your website to ensure it complies with US and international privacy laws.

2022 - A Year of Events

Clay Breaker Classic

River Prairie Fest

Startup Chippewa Valley Week

Startup 48

Economic Updates

Thank you to all sponsors and volunteers!



2022 INVESTORS

Thank you!

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