

WAUKESHA COUNTY



Green Bay

Madison

WAUKESHA

Milwaukee

Chicago

A STEADY PATH FORWARD



Therese Thill
Executive Director

I'm delighted to join an agency so strongly committed to customer service and organizational excellence. The Waukesha County Center for Growth (WCCG) has been the fulcrum of economic development services in the county since 2016.

Our partnership with the Waukesha County Business

Alliance has allowed WCCG to provide continuous business support resources through leadership changes in 2023.

It has been my privilege to get to know county stakeholders, business leaders and municipal partners during the brief time I've been at the helm. I'm thrilled to find the Waukesha County community is cooperative, dedicated to problem-solving and committed to advancing economic opportunities for all of Waukesha

County's businesses and residents. I've learned through 25 years of experience in economic development that these are the qualities that hallmark thriving communities.

Our strong partnerships with the Alliance, Waukesha County, the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and our municipal investors play a large role in the successes you'll see highlighted in subsequent pages of this report.

As we look forward to 2024, the Waukesha County Center for Growth's plans include building our business retention and expansion program, expanding the use of the GROW Fund to aid business growth and affordable housing options, and implementing metrics and goals to guide our work. WCCG will also update the Business Growth Strategy for 2025-2027 to set the stage for future direction.

Come aboard as we chart a new course to a bright horizon. •

Therese Thill

IMPACT SINCE INCEPTION IN 2016:



153

direct expansion projects
in Waukesha County.



\$359.3MM

of capital infusion into
Waukesha County.



3,284

jobs created in
Waukesha County.

MISSION

To connect businesses and communities with the resources they need to grow in Waukesha County.

VISION

A vibrant economy where businesses and citizens thrive.

WHO WE ARE

The Waukesha County Center for Growth is a nonprofit serving as the lead economic development organization for Waukesha County, Wisconsin. Created in 2016, we are focused on expanding the County's economic base by ensuring our businesses and communities have access to the resources they need to grow.

Strategic partnerships are critical to our economic development efforts. Through our deep relationships with the Waukesha County Business Alliance, Small Business Development Center (SBDC), Waukesha County, and our municipal partners, the Center for Growth is able to leverage significant resources and expertise to serve existing and prospective businesses.

The key areas of our work include:



**BUSINESS ATTRACTION,
RETENTION & EXPANSION**



SMALL BUSINESS CONSULTING



TALENT PIPELINE



**FINANCE & INCENTIVE
PROGRAMS**



A REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

On Economic Development

As the regional economic development organization, the Waukesha County Center for Growth (WCCG) plays an important role in the sustained prosperity for Waukesha County residents. WCCG is responsible for business retention and attraction, talent solutions and managing the GROW Fund. A regional perspective for this work is critical to continued business growth.

Through business retention visits, WCCG uncovers the challenges that employers face. The most prevalent issues are worker retention, training and attracting talent. We understand that reliable workers need access to transportation, childcare and affordable housing. Attracting talent new to the region requires these elements and assurance that there is a robust job market offering opportunities for career advancement.

These factors impact where employers decide to expand or locate. WCCG's business attraction work consistently demonstrates that access to workforce is the top priority when choosing a site for a new facility. Companies focus on the number of potential employees within a

60-minute drive time radius, training options and the upcoming talent pipeline.

The benefits of a county-wide economic development effort are regional as well. For example, income generated by workers in Butler will be spent on housing, groceries and entertainment in Butler, Waukesha, Pewaukee, and other communities. The taxes generated from the new real property of a corporate headquarters that selected a site in Sussex will benefit Sussex schools, police, fire and parks, while the new jobs will generate new wages for residents of Oconomowoc, Elm Grove and Mukwonago.

Finally, solutions to the challenges faced by current and prospective employers often can only be found regionally. These problems are too big for one municipality to handle on its own. We are all interconnected. Talent attraction, transportation, housing, and childcare solutions require us to work together to develop solutions that fit our region. Collaboration is critical to the continued economic prosperity of Waukesha County. •



GROW FUND EXCEEDS \$11 MILLION



Currently exceeding \$11 million, the GROW Fund is Waukesha County's economic development fund that supports business expansion and innovative housing solutions in the County.

As a revolving loan fund, the GROW Fund has two core purposes – the first is to support businesses with the gap financing they need to grow, and the second is to support residential housing to meet workforce needs. The Fund also provides federal Community Reinvestment Act credits to banks that contribute to the Fund to help meet community credit needs for economic development.

In 2023, the GROW Fund initiated eight loans totaling over \$4.3 million to businesses. Businesses have used the loans for a variety of purposes - the primary being real estate - and across multiple communities throughout Waukesha County.

In both 2023 and 2024, Waukesha County contributed a historic \$4.5 million to the GROW Fund. The Fund has also received donations from other contributors including the We Energies Foundation which contributed \$100,000 in 2023. Administered by MEDC-Wisconsin, founding members include Bank Five Nine, BMO Harris Bank, Johnson Bank and Town Bank.

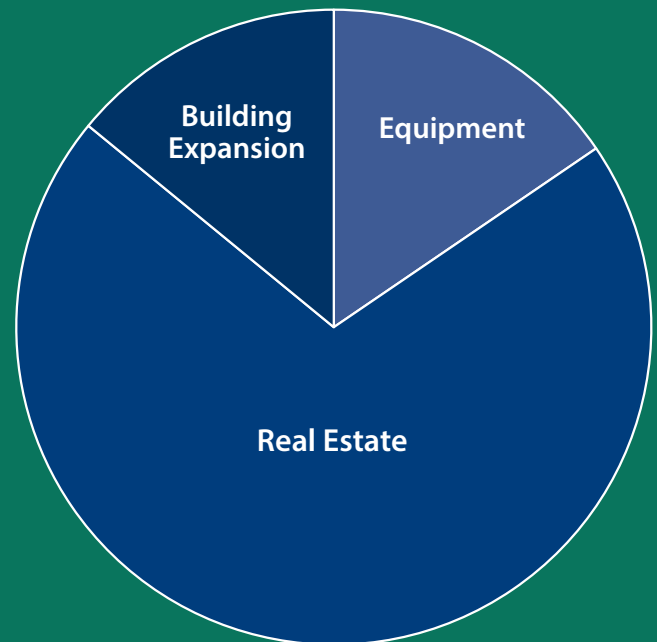
"The GROW Fund continues to prove impactful in supporting business growth throughout Waukesha County," states Waukesha County Center for Growth Executive Director Therese Thill. "We're thrilled with the additional contributions to the Fund over the last two years as they truly support its mission. The impact of these contributions will be seen for years to come."

To learn more about the GROW Fund, visit www.waukeshagrowth.org.

WAUKESHA COUNTY LOANS PER COMMUNITY

Brookfield - 3
Elm Grove - 1
Hartland - 1
Menomonee Falls - 2
Muskego - 1
New Berlin - 2
Pewaukee - 2
Waukesha - 2

LOAN PURPOSE



COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS

DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

The **City of Oconomowoc** approved a 99,500-square-foot cold storage and logistics facility for Winnesota which will provide 25 full-time positions. (5)

Jax Inc. completed construction of its \$17 million headquarters in the **Village of Menomonee Falls**. The new building encompasses 120,000 square feet of dedicated space for office operations, production facilities, and efficient distribution operations. (1)

The **Village of Pewaukee** broke ground for the Westerly Pewaukee senior living development with 138 units. The development is a partnership of Matter Development, ICAP Development and Koru Health.

A 20,000-square-foot expansion of Flexo-Graphics was completed in the **Village of Butler**.

GE HealthCare announced it will move its 1,000 Wauwatosa employees to the 561-acre campus in the **City of Waukesha**.

Various small to mid-sized commercial developments are underway in the **City of Brookfield**, including a rehabilitation center, childcare center, brewery and multiple restaurants.

A four-story two building commercial development known as The Grain is under construction in the **City of Delafield**. Synthetica will occupy the top two floors of one of the buildings and will employ 45 employees with anticipated future growth.

Construction on Zero Zone's 183,000-square-foot distribution center in the **Village of Mukwonago** was completed in record time by Briohn Building Corp. The construction kicked off in September of 2022 and was finished in February of 2023. (2)

A 150,000-square-foot industrial building was completed in the Highlands Business Park in the **Village of Sussex**. (4)

Sawall Development received occupancy on its final building of the Rock Pointe Village Apartment complex - a 270-unit workforce housing project in the **Village of Lannon** that was constructed in three phases.

COMMUNITY IMPACT & ACCOLADES

Anthony Brown was welcomed as City Administrator in the **City of Waukesha**.

Areavibes.com ranked the **Village of Menomonee Falls** as the safest city in Wisconsin with over 25,000 residents.

The **City of Oconomowoc's** downtown is at full occupancy, and has become a destination for shopping, dining and events, establishing the Oconomowoc area as the heart of Lake Country! (3)

The **City of Waukesha** created a loan program to upgrade storefronts, install fire protection and new commercial kitchens in downtown Waukesha with nearly \$1 million loaned in 2023.

Multiple employers in the **Village of Butler** and **Village of Menomonee Falls** continued utilizing the FlexRide program which provides free or significantly discounted on-demand rides for workers coming from Milwaukee.

HOUSING

The **Village of Menomonee Falls** has approved 70 single family homes, 14 duplex units, and 173 market rate apartment units with new construction value exceeding \$100 million for the 10th consecutive year.

Two new single-family residential developments are underway in the **City of Delafield** adjacent to the St. John's Northwestern Military Academy campus. These developments include trail and sidewalk systems that provide pedestrian connectivity to downtown and Cushing Memorial Park.

Riverside Preserve subdivision development with 36 single-family lots is nearing infrastructure construction completion in the **Village of Pewaukee**. This completes the redevelopment of the former River Hills Nursing Home which closed several years ago.

The **City of Waukesha** provided over \$3 million in funds to improve affordable housing and increase the number of affordable housing units across the City.

The **City of Brookfield** approved its first workforce housing project - The Flats at Bishops Woods - consisting of over 200 apartment units.



BUSINESS GROWTH AND BIOHEALTH



According to a recent business survey conducted by the Waukesha County Business Alliance, the business community in Waukesha County continues its pattern of growth, as 68.97 percent of businesses are planning to expand in the next two years and 80 percent plan to expand their workforce in the next two years. Waukesha County's employment increased by 5,080 jobs (2.2 percent) across all industries from 2020 to 2021, but remains 3.3 percent below 2019 (pre-pandemic) levels.

Manufacturing, education & health services, and trade, transportation & utilities remain the three largest industries in terms of employment share, making up over half of total employment (Source: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development). Wisconsin is known for its strong manufacturing industry, and the industry pays well, particularly in Waukesha County. The average annual wage for manufacturing employees in Waukesha County is \$77,383, compared to \$53,681 for all employment.



Building on the strong manufacturing base and concentration of biohealth technology, Wisconsin obtained federal Regional Technology and Innovation Hub designation in 2023. The Tech Hub designation from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) clears the way for Wisconsin to compete for up to \$75 million in funding under the federal CHIPS and Science Act of 2022. Wisconsin also received a \$350,000 strategic development grant as part of the designation.

The Wisconsin Biohealth Tech Hub Consortium worked to obtain the designation, which brings together key players in the Dane, Waukesha and Milwaukee counties corridor. Home to GE HealthCare, Waukesha County is poised to continue leading in the area of biohealth and personalized medicine. •

Supporting Growth Through

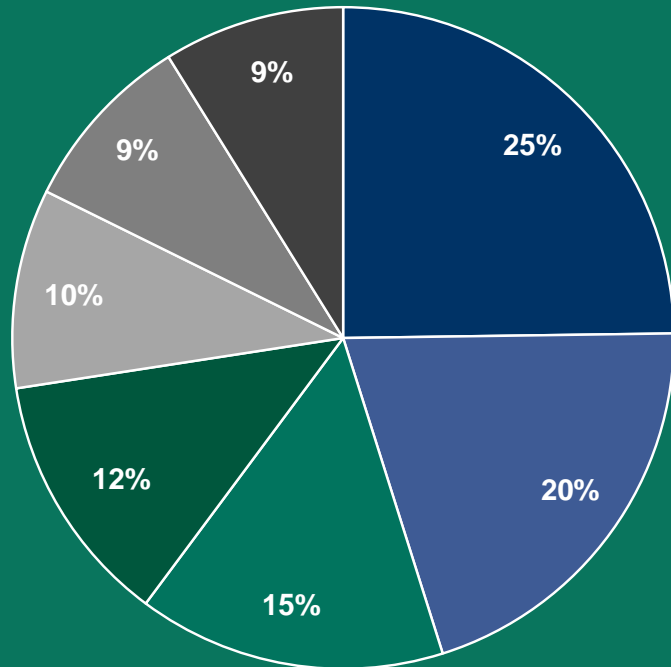
SMALL BUSINESS CONSULTING

Through our partnership with the Wisconsin Small Business Development Center (SBDC), the Center for Growth is able to provide no-cost counseling for small businesses and entrepreneurs in Waukesha County. This counseling can include services such as help writing a business plan, accessing financing and capital, and developing financial projections.

In 2023, the SBDC served 214 small businesses and entrepreneurs in Waukesha County and provided more than 905 hours of support. This assistance resulted in Waukesha County small businesses securing over \$7.1 million in financing to support their growth. •

2023 SMALL BUSINESS CLIENTS BY INDUSTRY

- Professional
- Manufacturing
- Healthcare
- Retail Trade
- Accommodation/Food
- Construction
- Arts/Entertainment



Tackling Barriers to

HOUSING & TRANSPORTATION

Workforce continues to be the top business issue and the Waukesha County Center for Growth, in partnership with the Waukesha County Business Alliance, is working to address two barriers: housing and transportation.

In 2023, FlexRide Milwaukee celebrated two important milestones – first was the launch of FlexRide for Working Parents, a partnership with Employ Milwaukee connecting Milwaukeeans with rides to daycare, work, and back, for free and second was expansion of the service area to serve employers in New Berlin and Oak Creek. The on-demand, flexible transportation solution connects employees from Milwaukee with jobs in the suburbs. The program was highlighted at the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation’s (WEDC) Economic Summit in 2023.

Workforce housing continues to be top of mind in the workforce conversation, and 2023 saw the release of the

Wisconsin Policy Forum’s Waukesha County Housing Study. The report examined affordability of housing in Waukesha County, barriers to continued workforce housing, and potential solutions. Featured communities included the City of Brookfield, City of Oconomowoc, City of Waukesha and Village of Sussex. The Policy Forum partnered with several organizations to complete the study, including the Waukesha County Center for Growth and the Waukesha County Business Alliance.

The Center for Growth’s GROW Fund received large contributions in 2023 and is currently exceeding \$11 million. In addition to supporting business growth, the GROW Fund also benefits developers with projects that improve available housing stock to meet the housing needs of existing and projected workforce growth. •



FUELING THE TALENT PIPELINE

Waukesha County understands the importance of workforce development solutions. For over a decade, county stakeholders have invested time and talent into developing the future workforce by hosting successful business education solutions and working the talent pipeline to make school districts the most valuable workforce centers in the county. This work has launched Waukesha County as a leader in talent development offerings across the state.

"Oconomowoc School District's CTE programs have thrived due to the business partners and authentic learning opportunities that have stemmed from our relationship with the Alliance and Center for Growth. Hosting local employers and our school has opened up so many opportunities for our teachers and in turn our students. Our students also continue to benefit from the opportunities they have to connect directly with employers and explore career opportunities."

- Kyla Stefan, Oconomowoc High School

Hundreds of partnerships are made each year through connections and programs hosted by the Waukesha County Business Alliance and Waukesha County Center for Growth. Students are moving through industry pipelines career-ready and faster each year. In the 2022-2023 school year, over 22 percent of high school students participated in Dual Enrollment, and over 30 percent took advanced courses exceeding the state average.

This past year, over 1,200 students received industry-recognized credentials before graduation. Talent Development Pipeline work remains a top priority in supporting economic development. As companies continue to expand and innovate, they can rest assured the future workforce is available locally and ready to work. •

23 Schools2Skills™

We hosted 23 Schools2Skills™ programs which expose students to the manufacturing industry by offering behind-the-scenes tours of businesses.



3 Careers Uncovered™

In total, three Careers Uncovered™ programs brought 31 educators from 14 schools inside the doors of businesses to understand the career pathways available to students.

4 Industry Expos

Four industry expos were hosted for K-12 students to meet local employers and participate in hands-on demonstrations of career pathways in healthcare, manufacturing and construction.



4 Industries In Schools

New this year, four Industries In Schools tours took place for business leaders to visit local schools and learn about the programs being offered, and to connect with students.

PARTNERS



City of Brookfield
City of Delafield
City of Oconomowoc
City of Waukesha

Village of Big Bend
Village of Butler
Village of Eagle
Village of Elm Grove
Village of Lannon

Village of Menomonee Falls
Village of Mukwonago
Village of Pewaukee
Village of Sussex

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Village of Sussex

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Thank you to the 2023 outgoing board members:

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Sikich

Tom Finco
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Jay Mack
Town Bank

Nate Zastrow
Bank Five Nine

Ex-Officio | **Suzanne Kelley**
Waukesha County Business Alliance