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News Release

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MID-AMERICA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL PRESENTS 2024 ANNUAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AWARDS

COLUMBUS, OH, DECEMBER 5, 2024: The Mid-America Economic Development Council presented its annual Economic Development awards at the 2024 Mid-America Competitiveness Conference, held December 4 – December 6 at the Columbus Hyatt 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).

“The success of our Mid America Economic Development awards highlights the incredibly deep impact that innovative projects can have on communities. These awards recognize collective efforts creating vibrant, dynamic communities where opportunities flourish and innovation thrives. We have tremendous momentum for the future.” Matt Marshall, President, Mid America EDC

Recognition was presented to:

Economic Development Impact Award

Recognizes a project and individual that has had significant and measurable impact on a City, County, and Region. The measurable impact can include capital investment, jobs, supplier network, economic impact or new partnership initiatives that positively improved the community.

➤ **Dean Dziedzic, VP of Economic Development – Sioux Falls Development Foundation**

Dean Dziedzic has been an integral part of the Sioux Falls Development Foundation for 15 years, serving as Vice President of Economic Development. Throughout his tenure, Dean has been instrumental in shaping the economic landscape of Sioux Falls, successfully attracting numerous businesses and fostering growth across the region. This nomination highlights his exceptional contributions between January 2023 and July 2024, a period during which his

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leadership led to significant economic development achievements. Dean is also a past president of Mid-America EDC, and served the membership well.

Entrepreneurial Award

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

➤ **Spark DSM Business Incubator Program (Large Division)** **Des Moines, Iowa**

This year's Entrepreneurial award large community award goes to The Spark DSM Business Incubator, operated by the Greater Des Moines Partnership, uplifts local startups and small businesses by connecting them with major community events, including the Downtown Farmers' Market and the World Food & Music Festival. Since its 2022 launch, the program has fostered economic growth and inclusivity, helping over 70 entrepreneurs gain exposure and business support through technical assistance, financial aid and personalized marketing opportunities. Spark DSM has become a model for community-driven growth, with notable participants transitioning to full-time market vendors and even opening storefronts.

➤ **HATCH – An Idea Pitch Competition (Medium Division)** **Chippewa, Wisconsin**

This year's Entrepreneurial award medium community award goes to HATCH, Chippewa. All annual HATCH competitions are open to the public, held at a local venue, and feature entrepreneur pitches, "Shark Tank" style. A unique aspect is the involvement of community entrepreneur organizations nominating and submitting contestants, alongside public submissions. In 2023, submitting organizations were UW-Eau Claire, Red Letter Grant, and Chippewa Valley Technical College. Prizes include a Grand Prize awarded by judges who are local business leaders and investors, and an Audience Choice award decided by votes from attendees.

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 Des Moines Partnership (Large Division)** **Des Moines, Iowa**

The Greater Des Moines Partnership is this year's Large Community Marketing award winner for the "Do Something Greater" campaign. The campaign is a multifaceted initiative designed to attract talent and drive economic growth in Greater Des Moines. This campaign promotes DSM as a place for both personal and business growth, supporting talent recruitment through storytelling, digital ads, and resources like a branded website and relocation guide. Since its 2023 launch, the campaign has garnered over 285,000 users on its talent website, with visitors from all 50 states and over 190 countries, and it continues to bolster Greater Des Moines' reputation as a top growth destination.

➤ **Collaborative Marketing to Address a Housing Crisis (Small Division)** **Western Iowa Region**

This year's Marketing Program Small Community award goes to Western Iowa Advantage and The Region XII Council of Governments as managing partner and fiscal agent for the 7-county regional marketing group that created a marketing and recruitment piece to attract housing developers to the region. This project included the collection and inventory of available housing areas in the 7-county region. With the assistance of Golden Shovel Agency, Western Iowa Advantage developed a world-class digital and print brochure to use for marketing and attracting various housing investments and developers to the area.

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.

➤ **Riverfront Development Project (Large Division)** **Norfolk, Nebraska**

This year's Placemaking award for a Large community goes to the community of Norfolk, in Northeast Nebraska, who recently completed the riverfront development project — a three-mile whitewater park near the downtown district featuring seven engineered rapids, including one suitable for river surfing. The project also included the revitalization of Johnson Park, upgrades to a main corridor bridge, and the renovation of two pedestrian bridges, one being a historic train bridge. This initiative has already spurred a \$25 million private development on nearby land and sparked interest in further redevelopment opportunities in the area. Made possible through local and state funding, grants, and strong community support, the North Fork Whitewater Park now provides vibrant community spaces that align with the Northeast Nebraska Growing Together workforce initiative, helping to attract and retain young talent and those seeking a place to call home.

➤ **Piqua Lock 9 Park (Medium Division)** **Piqua, Ohio**

This year's Placemaking Medium Community award to the City of Piqua (Ohio) and the Lock 9 Park, a vibrant destination overlooking the Great Miami River. The park improvements connect downtown with the trails and the waterway and serve as a hub for outdoor recreation and entertainment activities. More importantly, this incredible public space is inspiring new investments and development activity in downtown Piqua and having a positive impact on the local economy and quality of life.

➤ **Community Spirit & Innovation Revitalize Ripon's Main Street (Small Division)** **Ripon, Wisconsin**

This year's Placemaking Small Community award is awarded to Ripon, a city of 8,000 in East Central Wisconsin, that has always taken pride in its downtown, but decades of neglect had led to a 24% vacancy rate. The community had been part of the Wisconsin Main Street Program since 1988, and after overcoming some tax issues in the early '90s, by 2011 earned recognition as one of the "Coolest Small Towns in America." A 2013 fire and a major development project that fell through—taking \$6 million in public investment along with it—have also challenged the community's downtown revitalization efforts, but through a combination of strong community partnerships, dedicated volunteer efforts, and innovative ideas, Ripon has taken total property values in the historic district from \$7.3 million in 1988 to \$19.6 million in 2023, and annual foot traffic has doubled since 2019. Ripon's journey illustrates a resilient approach to downtown revitalization, offering a valuable case study for other communities aiming to become destinations worth visiting.

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.

➤ **A Prototype for Teacher Housing-Rebuilding KCMO's East Side (Large Division)** **Kansas City, KS**

This year's Overcoming Adversity Large Community award goes to Lamar Johnson Collaborative who partnered with Teachers Like Me who partnered to realize sustainable teacher housing in Kansas City's historically divided

neighborhoods, east of Troost Avenue. Located on infill lots between Tracy and Virginia Avenue, these cost-effective duplex prototypes foster community and connect teachers with their surroundings. Utilizing modular wood structures and passive design strategies, the project enhances housing while promoting sustainability and future expansion within the Teacher's Village initiative.

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.

➤ **Northeast Nebraska - Growing Together (Large Division)** **Norfolk, Nebraska**

Our Workforce & Talent large community category award this year goes to Northeast Nebraska Growing Together is an innovative workforce initiative centered on downtown Norfolk that leverages placemaking and density to foster connections among young people. Created and funded by local collaborators, in partnership with the Nebraska Aksarben Foundation, the plan outlines a transformation of Northeast Nebraska's regional economy with a focus on population growth and youth retention. Alongside a Wayne State College cooperative scholarship program, which accelerates college learning in the first three years and includes cooperative experience in the fourth, the initiative also supports entrepreneurial ecosystem building, arts and culture, job retraining, and early childhood education.

Project of the Year

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

➤ **Factory Yards Revitalization Project (Large Division)** **Grand Rapids, Michigan**

The Project of the Year – Large category award is awarded to a Michigan project that will bring \$146M investment in southwest Grand Rapids, revitalizing more than 15 acres and creating up to 467 residential units. The Factory Yards is exactly the type of big-impact community development project that Transformational Brownfield was intended to support, revitalizing a key urban core with new housing, spaces for business growth and gathering places for residents. The site has remained mostly vacant since the 1980s and will address a critical housing shortage in the city of Grand Rapids while including 94 units of affordable housing.

➤ **Kikkoman: Strengthening Global Ties, Local Futures (Medium Division)** **Jefferson, Wisconsin**

The Project of the Year – Medium category award is awarded to the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation in partnership with Kikkoman. Kikkoman's history in Wisconsin dates back to 1973, when the company established one of the first Japanese production facilities in the U.S. When the company announced plans to expand its production facilities somewhere in the Midwest, Wisconsin made the case for being the location where that would happen. Kikkoman ultimately announced plans to invest \$800 million on a new facility and the expansion of the existing one. To encourage the company to stay and grow in Wisconsin, state and local partners offered up a package of performance-based tax credits along with a Tax Increment District and public infrastructure improvements—on top of Wisconsin's already-appealing quality of life and our food and beverage sector where innovation thrives.

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.

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