



# BEST PRACTICES CONFERENCE



May 13 – 15, 2025  
Stillwater, MN

#MIDAMERICAEDC  
#BESTPRACTICES2025

# CONFERENCE RECAP: BEST PRACTICES CONFERENCE 2025

Hosted by the Mid-America Economic Development Council  
at the JX Venue in Stillwater, Minnesota.

Economic developers, public officials, and industry leaders from  
across 13 Midwest states gathered in Stillwater, MN for the 2025 Best  
Practices Conference.

Over three days, attendees explored cutting-edge strategies in  
economic development, workforce innovation, clean energy, public-  
private partnerships, and placemaking.

With a strong emphasis on collaboration, community engagement,  
and sector-specific growth, the conference offered actionable  
insights, meaningful networking, and immersive learning  
experiences.



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# KEYNOTE SPEAKERS AND FEATURED PANELS



## Opening Keynote – Public-Private Partnerships

- **Speakers:** Mike McShea and Anne Rahm (CBRE)
- Focused on innovative collaboration between government, education, and business to build stronger communities.

## "The Power of Community Engagement"

- Panelists from the St. Paul Port Authority and Bolton & Menk showcased the redevelopment of The Heights, highlighting deep community involvement, stakeholder coordination, and sustainable design.

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# KEYNOTE SPEAKERS AND FEATURED PANELS

## "Building a Healthcare Innovation Hub"

- **Speaker:** Patrick Seeb, Destination Medical Center Rochester, MN's transformation into "America's City for Health" through strategic investment and community partnerships around the Mayo Clinic.

## "Tech-Driven Development"

- Featured a case study on Meta's \$800M data center project in Rosemount, involving the University of Minnesota and Xcel Energy.

## "Tourism Fuels Growth"

- Speakers from Explore Minnesota, USDA Outdoor Recreation, Innovate Marquette, and Wyoming Tourism shared how outdoor recreation is shaping regional economic strategies.



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# CLEAN ENERGY & SUSTAINABILITY

## "Grid Modernization & Clean Energy"

- Speakers from Xcel Energy, Great River Energy, and Minnesota Power addressed the clean energy transition and how utilities are adapting to growing electricity demand.

## "Sustainable Aviation Fuel Innovation"

- Presented by Greater MSP, this panel highlighted the Midwest's leadership in decarbonizing air travel through large-scale SAF (Sustainable Aviation Fuel) initiatives involving Delta, Bank of America, and Ecolab.

# FOOD & AG INNOVATION

## "Leading in Food & Agriculture"

- Founders and leaders from Cry Baby Craig's Hot Sauce, Sailor Mercy, and the MN Department of Agriculture discussed how food entrepreneurs are reshaping rural economies.

# ENTREPRENEURSHIP, MAIN STREETS & MEDTECH

## "Healthcare's Silicon Valley"

- Minnesota's Medical Alley was profiled as a global MedTech hub with strategies for building strong support ecosystems.

## "Developing Main Street"

- Community leaders from Eagle River Revitalization, RETHOS, and others shared ways to enhance small-town economic and cultural vibrancy.

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# CONSULTANT INSIGHTS

## Consultants/Site Selectors

- Duane Poppe, Jessica Mogilka, Justin Erickson, David Hickey, and John Shoffner held a round table discussion on the importance of partnering with companies to understand their business needs, to identify optimal locations to enable growth, and to unlock strategic partnerships to accelerate innovation.

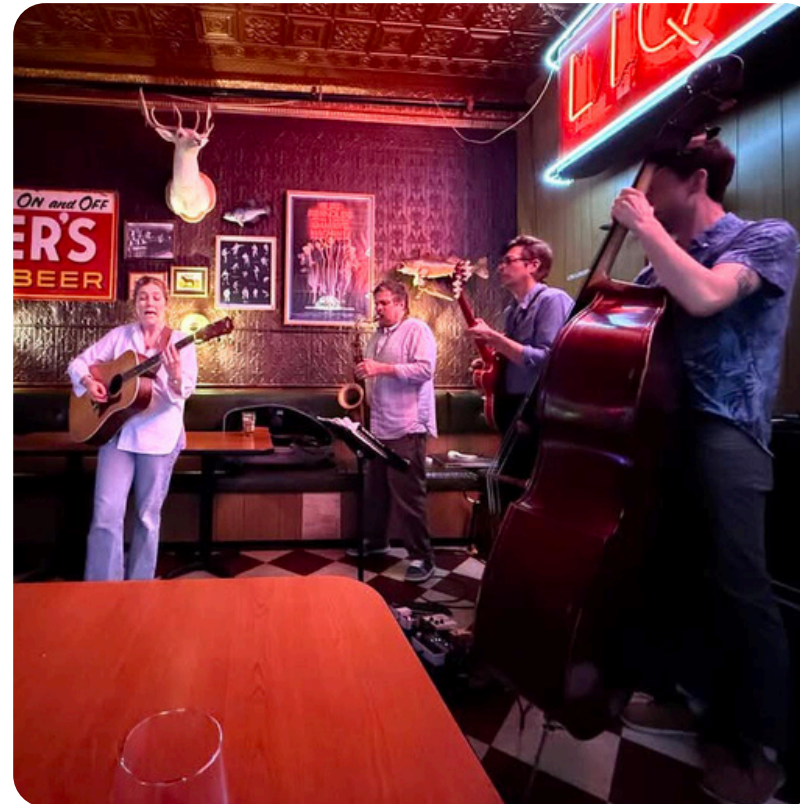


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# TOURS & EXPERIENCES

**Happy Hour at The Lumberjack** with an evening of ping pong, foosball, retro arcade games, skee ball, pinball, shuffleboard, and darts.

**Howard's Bar** This exclusive dinner was a night of food and music as Minnesota-born musician Caroline Smith and her partner Adam To, formerly a chef at a Michelin star LA restaurant, shared why they came home to Minnesota. Sponsors and consultants networked together over cocktails, a dinner thoughtfully crafted by Chef Adam, and live music from Caroline.



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# TOURS & EXPERIENCES

**Stillwater Trolley Tour** Attendees took a trolley ride through historic Stillwater to understand commercial, residential, and industrial development partnerships.





# TOURS & EXPERIENCES

**Tattersall Distillery Tour** Showcased sustainable manufacturing powered by solar energy. Powered by the largest solar array of any distillery in the U.S., where spirits use the finest local ingredients for the best cocktails anywhere.



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# TOURS & EXPERIENCES

**Riverboat Cruise** all attendees went aboard a private charter dinner cruise, which combined fine dining with scenic views of the St. Croix river.



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# 2025 MID AMERICA EDC SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

- **Stephanie Aman (MN)**
- **Courtney Schafer (IN)**
- **Perrica Short (OH)**
- **Melissa Meschke (WI)**
- **Connor Christensen (WY)**



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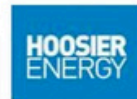
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The Best Practices Conference 2025 embodied the spirit of regional collaboration and forward-thinking innovation.

Stillwater, Minnesota was the perfect host – where history, innovation, community, and growth converge.

Attendees left with new partnerships, practical tools, and renewed commitment to building resilient, future-ready communities across the Midwest. We hope you'll join us next year.

# **STAY TUNED FOR 2026 BEST PRACTICES CONFERENCE DETAILS!**

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