



“You’re either going forward or going backward. There is no in between,” said author, speaker, and business thought leader Gary Hamel. So, at the Rockford Area Economic Development Council we ask ourselves the question, “Despite tough economic times, are we moving forward?” I say yes! By implementing the five powerful strategies of *Rockforward!*, business and community leaders are committed to wealth generation through the retention and creation of primary jobs. Even in today’s challenging economy, our region’s results for client project bidding and closure are above average in the State of Illinois. And, the number of active client projects has not declined, as the RAEDC and regional partners coordinated 97 confidential client projects in the third quarter that represent over \$440 Million of capital investment and over 3,600 retained and new jobs for the region. In September, we celebrated a groundbreaking for Wanxiang, which kicked-off construction for Phase I of their new photovoltaic solar panel manufacturing facility. Over time, the facility will expand to 160,000 square feet and more than 200 employees.

To help strengthen the Rockford Region’s **Thriving Business Climate**, the RAEDC conducted 27 Voice of the Customer surveys with area employers in the third quarter. To date, over 100 specific action items were addressed, including fulfilling requests for information, connecting people to private and public sector contacts, and forwarding suggestions and concerns to municipalities. Three new client projects were initiated, six local companies have been referred for Trade Adjustment Assistance, and additional companies have been referred for Foreign Trade Zone participation and benefits. In addition, the *Let’s Do Business...Opening Doors to Government Contracts* event was held in September, and 62 local businesses were connected with government contracts representing over \$400 Million of local purchasing.

Targeted Marketing and Recruitment efforts were focused internationally in the third quarter. In September, the RAEDC led a sales trip to China, marketing the Rockford Area to companies interested in investing in the U.S., to Chinese government officials that direct Chinese companies and investments abroad, and to Rockford’s Sister City, Changzhou, with whom we celebrated a ten-year anniversary. Immediate outcomes include a visit in Rockford by three Chinese companies, upcoming visits by two additional companies, interest expressed by a wind power company; and one inquiry about investing through the *Immigration Through Investment Program*. The RAEDC also led a nine-member delegation to attend Bioenergy Days in West Sweden in September, where we conducted business matchmaking and marketed the Rockford Area to Swedish companies.

The RAEDC continues to collaborate regionally to create **World-Class Business Infrastructure** and promote **Workforce Development** strategies. In the third quarter, we submitted the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for Winnebago and Boone counties to the Economic Development Administration (EDA). We also participated in a \$17 Million grant application for entrepreneurship for a six-county “automotive distressed” region.

The *Rockforward!* Leadership Council worked in the third quarter to improve its processes for investing seed money from the **Emerging Opportunities Fund**. \$175,000 has been carved out of the RAEDC’s annual budget as a resource for investing in forward-thinking initiatives that will move and shape public opinion, remove stubborn or difficult barriers to growth, and enhance our quality of life. Each time the Leadership Council meets, we are building a stronger network of community leaders focused on seeding projects that produce a stronger future.

Please plan to attend our Annual Meeting and Dinner, which will be held on Wednesday, December 2 from 5:00-8:00 PM at Giovanni’s in Rockford. At the event, I will provide an in-depth update of *Rockforward!*’s progress and plans for the future. Make your reservation online today at rockfordil.com Thank you for your ongoing support of the RAEDC.

Best Regards,

Janyce Fadden, President, Rockford Area Economic Development Council