



# IOWA LAKES CORRIDOR

DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

BUENA VISTA, CLAY, DICKINSON & EMMET COUNTIES

November 6, 2017

## ***'Growth Through Planning'—Annual report of the CEO***

Dear Corridor Investor:

On behalf of the board of directors, staff members and investors of the Iowa Lakes Corridor Development Corporation (Corridor), thank you for your support of regional economic development.

Benjamin Franklin famously said, "By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail." To that, Dwight D. Eisenhower could add, "...I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable." And who could forget Col. Hannibal Smith of the A-Team: "I love it when a plan comes together."

In 2016, investors in the Corridor, who number more than 100, set out four emphatic goals for the organization's next four years:

- Create jobs by supporting current businesses and recruiting new businesses
- Maintain and enhance the local entrepreneurial environment, already one of the best in Iowa
- Respond to the talent concerns of area businesses by increasing the population in our region
- Share the Corridor story with frequency and clarity

As the calendar flips to Fiscal Year 2018, plans truly are coming together.

### **Growing Our Own (and adding a few others)**

From protein to power, growth was frequent across the region last year. The Corridor had 57 large business project leads, closing nine. Those projects created or retained an estimated 111 to 126 jobs and yielded tens of millions in capital investment. A brief sampling of local

Corridor projects have helped create and retain more than 1,000 jobs since 2012.

construction might include Tyson Pork's \$30 million investment in Storm Lake, Dakota Pack's addition in Estherville, the new US Powertrain facility in Spirit Lake, completion of Spencer Ag Company's new location, Iowa Lakes Community College's multiple improvements across five counties, and the soon-to-be-complete shell building in East Lake Industrial Park, a collaborative effort of Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative, Corn Belt Power Cooperative and the Corridor. Sincere apologies to the many other worthwhile projects not listed.

Tempering the good news was the disappointment of Eaton's shutdown in Spencer and a reduction of employment at Polaris in Milford.

Looking ahead, the wind—both literally and metaphorically—is at the region's back. Three advancing wind power projects, North Star Wind, Red Rock Wind, and Upland Prairie Wind, are expected to generate \$1.2 billion in investment, 800 MW of power, and several million dollars in property taxes.

The Corridor is enjoying a corresponding spike in new business prospects from the alternative energy sector even as we work with several large manufacturing and ag clients. We project more than 200 new jobs and several hundred million dollars in committed investment in the region in FY 2018.

The Corridor assisted 44 entrepreneurial clients in FY 2017, resulting in 37 new jobs for our region.

### **Growing Leaders**

A priority of the Corridor is to foster a supportive environment for entrepreneurs and business owners. Since coming to the region seven years ago, Brian Dalziel, the Corridor's "start-up guy," has helped 162 clients launch 75 businesses from scratch. In FY 2017 alone, Brian's clients created 37 jobs and raised \$900,000.

Spencer High School this spring graduated a second group of students from its entrepreneurship career experience. The program, based on Dalziel's "Prepare to Launch" curriculum, empowers students to drill deep into market evaluation, financing and other fundamental skills, all while earning credit from Iowa Lakes Community College.

On the other end of the career spectrum, presidents and senior executives from more than 30 companies in and around the region have now benefitted from the Aileron business leadership training program. Okoboji remains the only location to offer Aileron instruction outside Ohio.

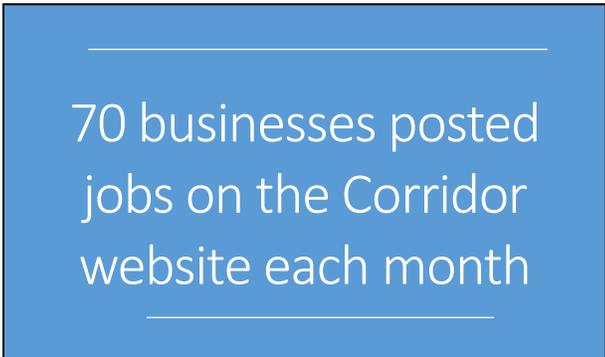
Estherville cut the ribbon on the gorgeous Studio 12 coworking space in FY 2017. Formerly JCPenney, Studio 12 features retail on the ground floor, with offices and an open meeting and collaboration space above. Through a grant from the United States Department of Agriculture and a generous match from the Emmet County Board of Supervisors, Brian Dalziel provides entrepreneurial coaching at Studio 12 one day a week.

Turning south, the Harold Walter Siebens School of Business at Buena Vista University has invited the Corridor to participate in strengthening and modernizing its entrepreneurship program. The aim is to ensure entrepreneurship coaching is readily available to students across disciplines and to enhance BVU's already solid position as an entrepreneurial hub.

Finally, the Okoboji Entrepreneurial Institute has now brought a dozen groups of high-achieving college students from across the state to our region for training and networking. Corridor Administrative Specialist Tim Weideman coordinates the weeklong event, handling everything from raising funds to arranging van rides. Helping him and the rest of the Corridor team are innumerable wonderfully generous volunteers from the local business community. To them, and to all Corridor volunteers, thank you.

### **Growing the Team**

Five years ago, the Corridor expanded its strategic objectives to include workforce and housing. Several impactful initiatives followed, all undertaken in support of and partnership with area schools, workforce development professionals, and the business community. High school career experiences, Manufacturing 101, and promotion of the National Career Readiness Certificate testing are just a few.



70 businesses posted  
jobs on the Corridor  
website each month

The Corridor has also become a de facto leader in the quest for better and more affordable housing. From administering the Spencer Quality Housing Initiative, which has awarded more than \$1 million to new home buyers, to recruiting multifamily housing developers, our efforts have been dynamic and effective if often behind the scenes. As just one indicator, apartment builders supported by the Corridor opened or announced more than 150 new units last year.

And thanks to the hard work of Joanne Follon, Business Retention and Workforce Partnership Coordinator, the number of open jobs posted to the Corridor website nearly doubled in FY 2017, with an average of 70 businesses sharing opportunities each month. Joanne directly helped 34 job seekers share their resumes across the four counties. On multiple occasions, the connections she made led to jobs offered and accepted.

### **The Growth Ahead**

As the days shorten, the Corridor looks forward to the Clay County Fair and a brand new undertaking, the Northwest Iowa Opportunities Hub. An estimated 300,000 people are expected at this, the 100<sup>th</sup> annual, fair. Guided by Follon's vision and determination, the Corridor has secured use of a massive job training simulator owned by one of the state's community colleges. Visitors who try their hand at the simulator will also learn about the many great jobs and wonderful life available in our region. Twenty-five businesses and organizations are already advantage of this unique and powerful sponsorship opportunity.

The Opportunities Hub coincides with the launch of 5x5, an intentional approach to increasing the population of the four counties in the Corridor five percent in five years. Two years in planning and

development, 5x5 combines the power of personal connections and modern technology to spread the good word about our region. Interest in the program has exceeded even the most optimistic projections, with more than \$60,000 in grant money flowing in from across the state.

Among several other exciting initiatives for FY 2018, one bears special mention. Corridor staff members are in preliminary conversations with public affairs firms to determine the affordability and potential efficacy of a professional lobbying presence in Des Moines. This inquiry was borne out of comments from investors who feel it is imperative that Northwest Iowa approach lawmakers and government agencies with a collective voice articulating a coherent vision for rural growth.

The principal concern for the Corridor remains financial sustainability. We enter FY 2018 with a budget of \$618,000, down 9 percent from four years ago. To accommodate reduced revenue, we have cut beneficial but non-core programs and reduced weekly staff hours. Despite the lessened capacity, we continue to administer the programs referenced above and several others, all while being available at a moment's notice to assist businesses from within or outside the region interested in local expansion. That is not an infrequent obligation; in one recent week, we hosted three large business prospects.

Three years into my tenure as CEO, I am more convinced than ever that the Iowa Lakes Corridor Development Corporation is the preeminent economic development organization in rural Iowa offering the best value proposition. FY 2018 is going to be incredible. We will have an empowered Corridor with a louder voice. We will have a richer entrepreneurial environment. We will have new industrial jobs and new service jobs. And we will move toward a sustainable tax base thanks to investments in alternative energy. All the credit goes to local business and community leaders. You are the ones who make the growth happen.

Sincerely,



Kiley Miller  
President & CEO

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**“In a time sensitive world, it is extremely helpful to have a readily available resource like the Iowa Lakes Corridor. Not only can I get information in a timely manner; the quality of the help and contacts are exceptional. Iowa Lakes Corridor is often our first phone call when looking for information and resources.”**

***Rob Hach, Trusted Energy***

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