OUR VISION
Thrive Economic Development will lead the change necessary to support economic growth in Jefferson and Dodge counties that results in healthy, thriving and growing communities.

OUR MISSION
Thrive Economic Development will engage the public and private sectors in actions focused on attracting and supporting business growth that benefit the residents and communities of Jefferson and Dodge counties.

Thrive Economic Development extends its thanks to the Board and Working Committees of ThriveED and to the Board of the Jefferson County Economic Development Consortium for their insights and feedback that contributed to the strategic plan review.

Their expertise expanded our understanding of the business growth challenges in Jefferson and Dodge counties, along with the opportunities ahead. Their knowledge and valuable insight is reflected in the strategies and actions throughout the plan.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE THRIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN, 2019 EDITION

2018 marks the third revision of the 5-year plan that was originally prepared to kick-start the new 501c3 organization known as the Glacial Heritage Development Partnership (GHDP). In January 2018, the GHDP Board officially adopted Thrive Economic Development (ThriveED) as its operating name.

This plan was derived from a strategic initiative developed in the Spring of 2016 as a precursor to forming the GHDP, which was established in July of that year. The founding board was established on October 7th, 2016.

Several key decisions were made in late 2016 that underlie the work in the Strategic Plan. First, it was determined that public and private dollars be kept separately. Second, a determination was made to retain staff working for the Jefferson County Economic Development Consortium (JCEDC) as Jefferson County employees and have the public-private partnership, the GHDP, contract with the JCEDC for staff time to execute the 5-year plan. Third, the Boards of both the GHDP and the JCEDC agreed to hire a consulting firm to manage a fundraising campaign to run February through September 2017, and to use the Strategic Plan as its platform to raise private sector dollars. To this end, both Boards adopted the original Strategic Plan prior to the launch of the 2017 campaign.

To ensure investor confidence, the ThriveED Board maintains an active role in keeping the work in this Strategic Plan on task, on time and on budget and provides high levels of transparency, communications and accountability. Oversight of the work in this plan is vested in the Board of Directors of ThriveED, all of whom commit financial and leadership support to the program’s success.
The 2017 campaign was successful; however, pledged funds were 30% less than the premise of the original Strategic Plan. Therefore, the plan was revised at the end of 2017 to better align ThriveED’s work with reduced funding.

The 2017-2021 Strategic Plan was written as a living document, to be reviewed and revised as needed on an annual basis. It is important to note as well that this revised plan remains solely focused on economic development practices and outcomes.

We remain committed to this work and to our Vision and Mission Statements.

Our Vision Statement is:
ThriveED will lead change necessary to support economic growth in Jefferson and Dodge counties that results in healthy, thriving and growing communities.

Our Mission Statement is:
ThriveED will engage the public and private sectors in actions focused on attracting and supporting business growth that benefit the residents and communities of Jefferson and Dodge counties.

The goals in the revised plan are grouped into distinct areas of focus:

Business: Grow businesses, capital investment and employment opportunities
Workforce: Attract, develop and align talent
Marketing: Raise awareness of the area’s assets to attract business investment and talent

The goals are accompanied by Projected Outcomes, and in most cases, are aligned with a quantifiable measure of success. Each goal listed has corresponding strategies. The staff, under contract, develops plans of work on an annual basis, based upon the outcomes from the Annual Plan Review sessions. As always, economic conditions, availability of funding and leadership will impact the successful execution of the strategies in the multi-year plan.

Students learning about careers in manufacturing for Manufacturing Month, 2018. From top to bottom: Fisher Barton in Watertown, CNC Solutions in Johnson Creek and Diversey, Inc. in Watertown. (photo credit: Watertown Area Chamber of Commerce)
THREE AREAS OF FOCUS
Elevating economic development in Jefferson and Dodge counties

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
Grow businesses, capital investment and employment opportunities

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
Attract, develop and align talent

BRANDING & MARKETING
Raise awareness of the area’s assets and the organization to attract business investments and talent

A NOTE:
Successful economic development depends upon several factors, and many are beyond the reach or control of local economic development efforts. Such factors include, but are not limited to:

- Costs of doing business – impacted by many variables, including federal and state regulations, cost of living indicators, climate impacts, worker demands, insurance costs, transportation costs, etc.
- Market volatility – which can neither be predicted nor controlled
- Currency fluctuations/political unrest – increasingly important in a global economy
- Global competitiveness – and the reality of the continued decline of purchasing power in North American countries against the growth of a middle-class on the Asian and African continents
GOAL 1: BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Work to achieve this goal will include a variety of activities designed to spur business investment to the area that will:

- Increase employment opportunities
- Increase the tax base
- Build the area’s capacity to retain businesses
- Build the area’s ability to attract business

Projected Outcomes/Measures of Success:

- Visit at least 50 businesses annually
- Provide expansion assistance to at least 3 businesses each year, or 15 existing businesses over 5 years
- Provide assistance to support at least $20 million of new business investment each year, or $100 million in new business investment over 5 years
- Provide assistance to attract 3 new primary employer businesses within 5 years
- Provide assistance that impacts at least 1,000 jobs over 5 years
- Build and maintain the area’s most robust industrial & commercial site and building website
- Build the area’s ability to compete for and win new business investment
- Increase new investment projects in pipeline by 20% at the end of year 5
- Increase online site and building searches by 30% over 5 years
- Host at least 5 economic development summits focused on helping municipalities prepare for business growth and compete for new business investment opportunities

2018 was an exciting year for economic development in Jefferson and Dodge counties. Left: Ab E Manufacturing broke ground in Waterloo for its headquarters and production. Lt Governor Rebecca Kleefisch was on hand to help celebrate.
GOAL ONE: STRATEGY ONE

Business Retention & Expansion: Meet with existing business in Dodge and Jefferson counties to identify challenges and opportunities and work to deliver solutions. Facilitate access to resources inside and outside the two-county area.

- Retention & Expansion Visits: Visit at least 50 major employers annually
- Provide annual reports to investors that aggregate data from existing business visits
- Direct Expansion Assistance: Provide direct and indirect support to existing businesses making capital investments to include:
  - Confidential site/building search assistance
  - Access to financing for property acquisition or rehabilitation
  - Access to available incentives needed to support new investment
  - Access to other services as needed
- Coordination of business surveying activities across agencies in both counties to collectively document business challenges and growth opportunities and communicate aggregate results to area partners.
- Partner with area Chambers of Commerce, school districts, adult education institutions and tech-ed instructors to deliver training programs that address issues raised by business leaders in BRE visits.
- Work to expand locally controlled incentives. For example, expand Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) options to include creation of a bank supported or public/private partnership two-county Loan Fund.
- As funding allows, partner with regional economic development organizations (MadREP and M7) to expand access to services that assist existing businesses.
- Business-to-Government Affairs: In collaboration with area Chambers of Commerce and other local CDA/RDAs, and as funding allows, host annual meetings with state and federal representatives focused on economic development issues raised by existing businesses.

GOAL ONE: STRATEGY TWO

Recruit/Attract New Driver Industry Businesses: Aggressively seek opportunities to attract businesses in primary employer industry sectors to make new investments in Jefferson and Dodge counties. New business attraction outreach efforts will initially focus on opportunities to collaborate with regional economic partners to attract businesses nationally and internationally.

- As funding allows, partner with MadREP and M7 to attend specific outreach activities that include meeting with corporate decision makers to promote the business assets of the two-county area.
- Build relationships with decision-influencers in the Madison and Milwaukee area to promote doing business in Jefferson and Dodge counties. These may include Corporation Counsel, CFO membership groups, commercial & industrial broker groups, commercial lenders, CPA’s, and other firms engaged in providing advice and counsel to corporate decision-makers.
- Enhance the website and develop targeted sector marketing materials as funding allows to implement an attraction campaign focused on these industry sectors:
  - Agribusiness
  - Food Processing
  - Advanced Manufacturing
- As funding allows, execute a prospect development strategy designed to build awareness of local assets, for primary sector businesses:
  - Within a 3-hour drive radius
  - Identified as key suppliers or customers of existing businesses
  - Identified through networking activities as prime prospects for future capital investment potential in Dodge or Jefferson counties
- As funding allows, develop and maintain robust relationships with regional, national and global site selectors, developers and commercial/industrial realtors, including familiarization tours of area assets and opportunities.
- Develop and maintain an accurate demographic and site and buildings database for community leaders, business executives and site selectors searching for information.
GOAL ONE: STRATEGY THREE

Building Business Investment Capacity: The following activities are designed to support and grow the area’s competitiveness and stature as a prime location for business and industry. Many of these activities are aspirational, and can only be achieved if adequate funding and staffing levels are also achieved. The work in Strategy Three is heavily influenced by the Product Improvement Committee of the Board of ThriveED:

- Complete a business-focused asset inventory. This includes documenting all the assets in Jefferson and Dodge counties that are important to business, and quantifying the value of these assets.
- Build and promote area assets & infrastructure. Work with area municipalities to continue development of the infrastructure (connectivity/bandwidth, processes and timelines impacting expansion plans, available sites and building for commercial/industrial businesses) necessary for economic growth.
- Create and continuously update marketing/promotion strategy to promote the area’s assets that is aligned with available resources. (See Branding/Marketing/Communications portion of this plan.)
- As resources allow and in collaboration with local municipalities, create a playbook/blueprint for businesses seeking to expand, that clarifies the steps necessary to attain appropriate permits, along with timelines and cost estimates. (Aspirational)
- Build competitiveness along primary transportation networks through creation of Development Corridors, proposed as along I-94, WI-26 and WI 151, in collaboration with affected municipalities’ leaders, planning and zoning staff and boards, WI DOT and others to create corridor development plans focused on identifying development barriers and developing strategies to promote more business investments. This aspirational work may include:
  - Developing a shared zoning language across each corridor;
  - Developing a standard permitting process for each corridor
  - Ensuring that all Comprehensive Land Use Plans are aligned with proposed corridor development plans
- Work with municipalities to promote world-class ‘Development Readiness’ across the two-county area. (Aspirational)
- Brownfield Redevelopment: As resources are available, develop and grow the area’s brownfields program to add to inventory of shovel-ready key properties for economic development. (Aspirational)
- Execute a Labor Availability Analysis specific to the manufacturing sector, (Completed 2018). Use the documentation from this analysis to promote Jefferson and Dodge counties for new manufacturing investment. (See Goal 3.)
- Continue participation in the Wisconsin River Rail Transit Commission to ensure access to short line rail services.
- Amenities/Community Development: Support municipal efforts, as resources are available, to identify and develop amenities necessary to attract worker/residents, which may include housing and mixed-use living developments.
GOAL 2: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Working to develop and align the pipeline of talent necessary to meet the needs of business and industry is key to the area’s economic vitality. Many organizations are engaged in workforce development initiatives and ThriveED does not intend to replicate existing efforts, nor will it directly engage in talent attraction efforts. ThriveED will work with existing training and education providers on behalf of the needs of business and industry to ensure that the region is capable of providing the labor necessary for current and future business growth.

Projected Outcomes/Measures of Success:

- Reduce time to hire for the area’s primary industry businesses by 50% over 5 years (initial information will come from BRE visits; changes will be documented through annual surveys)
- Increase the quantity of qualified applicants for positions with area’s primary employers
- Decrease out-commutation of workers by 25% (documentation will come from BLS)
- Complete annual surveys in conjunction with area Chambers of Commerce, designed to Increase area employer use of interns by 25%, and use of youth apprentices by 25%
- Complete a labor availability study (done 2018) and possibly other studies to assess employer demands and develop strategies to help area employers compete for out-commuting resident employees.

In May of 2018, ThriveED hosted two events, one in Jefferson County and one in Dodge County, to roll out the results from its recently completed Labor Availability Analysis. The study was completed by The Docking Institute.
GOAL TWO: STRATEGY ONE

Workforce/Talent Skill Development and Alignment: Work collaboratively to ensure the skills of the workforce match employers’ needs, and that area employers are informed on competitive wage and benefit packages necessary to attract and retain talent. Tactics may include:

- Creation of a Business – Education Alliance (BEA): Proposed as a two-county initiative to connect the talent acquisition teams of area employers with K-12 tech-ed teachers and career counselors, and with area technical skills-training providers, to:
  - Increase the number of youth apprenticeships and intern placements with area employers;
  - Increase the number of job shadow options for students
  - Increase the number of local workers available to local businesses
  - Reduce the out-commuting of employed residents

- Share information from BRE visits related to workforce needs, with K-12 School Superintendents, members of Dodge MBA and BEA members, to ensure that the area’s tech-ed and work-prep courses are aligned with the needs of Jefferson and Dodge counties primary industry employers.

- Conduct an area-wide labor availability analysis to identify the skills, availability and cost of talent to meet specific industry needs, i.e., identifying the area’s capacity to meet a projected demand of 500 new manufacturing-related workers over the next five years. (Completed 2018)

- Conduct or support others in conducting a wage and benefit survey that compares the current state in manufacturing employers in Dodge and Jefferson counties against the wages and benefits offered by manufacturing employers in Dane, Waukesha, Fond du Lac and Washington counties.

- Conduct or support others in conducting a study to identify current and shorter-term (3-5 years) employer needs and also assess the skills of underemployed and unemployed workers in area as the basis for developing a targeted, focused pathway to employment program.

- Work with Workforce Development Board and other interested parties to support expanded pathways to employment that include offering work-ready training to rejected applicants.

- Report results and findings to investors and broadly communicate to community to encourage financial support and expansion of work-ready development/training options in area K-12 schools.

- Collaborate with area Chambers to produce and implement an area-wide wage and benefit survey to keep employers informed about what it will take to attract and retain workers in specific occupations.

- Ongoing communication with area employers about:
  - Workforce development programs of interest
  - Area educational and training institutions and programs to ensure employer needs for licensed trades’ workers, certified employees and college graduates are met
  - Tech-ed and other skill-focused programs being offered by area high schools

- Promote worker readiness as a path to ensuring that area employers have a pipeline of workers, and that area youth are adequately prepared to work for area-wide employers. This work may include:
  - Using data, build a brand that sets the region apart as a place capable of meeting businesses’ worker needs
  - Support expanded access to interns for area employers by promoting mandatory completion of a minimum of one-semester internship as a pre-requisite to two or four-year degree completion
  - Support Youth Apprenticeship programs and increase the number of companies and high school students utilizing youth apprenticeships

- Collaborations designed to improve and expand soft-skill (financial literacy, etc.) education programs for students and employees.

GOAL TWO: STRATEGY TWO

Talent Attraction: Work with area business leaders, municipal leaders, WEDC, MadREP and others to promote local employment opportunities, and to attract workers from outside Jefferson and Dodge counties. Tactics may include:

- Providing assistance to Chambers of Commerce and municipal leaders on best practices to support talent attraction/resident attraction.

- Share information about issues employers are facing when engaged in outside recruitment with area Chambers and municipal leaders to inform their resident/worker attraction efforts.

- Share data from skill/talent needs survey with State/Regional/Local groups engaged in talent attraction efforts.
GOAL 3: BRANDING, MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Marketing strategies are embedded in all the work of the first two goals of this Strategic Plan. However, branding and marketing for success as a separate goal is an opportunity to develop key indicators to measure marketing success and build the brand of the organization and the territory we represent. As funding allows, ThriveED will focus resources on building a stronger, more nimble organization capable of executing a brand penetration campaign to reach audiences across the upper Midwest, the Great Lakes Region, national and across North America. Communications plans will be developed and delivered to ensure that all critical audiences are reached. Audiences include:

- Existing businesses
- Business attraction targets
- Residents of Jefferson and Dodge counties
- Public sector investors
- Private sector investors
- Business decision-makers & influencers (site selectors, etc.)

Projected Outcomes/Measures of Success:

- Increase business investment opportunities
- Strengthen the worker pipeline
- Drive traffic to the ThriveED website
- Promote ThriveED as a key source of economic development information for the region
- Build private sector financial support for economic development efforts
- Triple ThriveED social media and website hits
- Achieve 5% increase year-over-year in site and building searches
- Increase population by at least 2%
- Increased sales taxes collected by at least 5%
- ThriveED recognized as an important player in economic development in WI
- ThriveED recognized as authority on economic development-related issues in Jefferson and Dodge counties
- Increase the number of Board members on ThriveED and/or increase the number of working committee members
- Promote ThriveED Board and Committee membership as a coveted position, to area business leaders
- Ensure that organizational funding grows annually

Left: Outgoing ThriveED Chairman Matt Mauthe kicks off the 2018 ThriveED Annual Meeting and Presentation in Watertown on October 10, 2018. Right: ThriveED President Vicki Pratt, CED moderates a discussion with Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation’s Rebecca Deschane and Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development David Anderson at the 2017 ThriveED Annual Meeting.
GOAL THREE: STRATEGY ONE

Become a ‘Must-See’ business destination/Support Business Development Goals:
As resources allow, develop and implement regional branding and marketing campaigns designed to enhance the area’s image as a prime business location along the Chicago-Minneapolis high-tech/IQ Corridor. Building on the strength of efforts underway by MadREP and Milwaukee7, ThriveED will promote the region’s advantages to businesses in the Agribusiness, Advanced Manufacturing and Food and Beverage industry sector. Tactics may include:

- Completing a detailed asset inventory to quantify the value of the business assets in Dodge and Jefferson counties, and how proximity to the Madison and Milwaukee MSA’s add value to businesses.
- Create and maintain a database of business decision makers at Food & Beverage Processors and Advanced Manufacturers within a 3-hour drive.
- Create and maintain a database of decision influencers (corporate Real Estate executives, site selectors).
- Identify appropriate distribution channels for each target audience.
- Develop high-quality marketing materials for outreach to business decision-makers in key industry sectors. This work includes:
  - Detailed research related to the specific assets existing in the region that are of interest to businesses in key industry sectors
  - Detailed research to quantify the costs of doing business for businesses in these key industry sectors, as compared to the costs of doing business in other areas
- Execute a strategic outreach campaign to site selectors as well as businesses in the Food and Beverage and Advanced Manufacturing sector within a 3-hour drive.
- Evaluate impact of outreach and adjust as necessary.
- Partner with State and Regional organizations to expand the reach of key industry sector-focused marketing materials.
- Ongoing work with the Branding/Marketing/Communications Committee of the ThriveED Board to refine strategies and expand members from Jefferson and Dodge counties.

GOAL THREE: STRATEGY TWO: Build a Brand by Building a Presence

- Build and maintain a high quality ThriveED website to appeal to targeted audiences (i.e., site selectors, business decision-makers, Investors, community leaders, residents, etc.).
- Develop themed ‘micro-sites’ on ThriveED Website, focused on workforce-related content. Topics may include veteran hiring, jobs that do not need a four-year degree, area-wide K-12 tech-ed training programs, women in manufacturing, area-wide health care careers.
- Create social media platforms and update continuously to gain readership from targeted audiences.
- Promote the area with articles and “Did you Know?” factoids, such as:
  - Fact a Week shared on Twitter and LinkedIn
  - One ThriveED article each month posted to social media platforms
  - Staff and Board members share Fact-a-Week or other ThriveED posts on personal LinkedIn or Twitter accounts
- Secure earned media placement through promotion of area successes, in state, regional and national publications.
- Develop and/or strengthen relationships with multiple media outlets to expand earned media opportunities.
- Develop and maintain a database of key Food and Beverage and Advanced Manufacturing trade publications to submit co-authored articles for publication that promote the area’s readiness in conjunction with area business leaders who’ve recently invested in the area.
- Prepare and disseminate e-newsletters highlighting the area’s economic success stories, programs and news.
- Provide updates and/or presentations to area local governments, nonprofits and community organizations. These may include: print materials to disseminate to elected bodies, short video updates to be shared at municipal government meetings, and live presentations.
- Provide up to six education sessions in conjunction with JCEDC Board meetings, to be held in various locations, and promote attendance among Thrive ED Board members, investors and the public at large.
- Coordinate outreach communications and promotional marketing opportunities with partners at WEDC, MadREP and M7.
GOAL THREE: STRATEGY THREE

Ensuring Professional Staffing: The goals of this Strategic Plan overall, and this goal specifically, focus on actions the organization should be able to successfully impact with appropriate funding and staff. Like many other industry sectors, economic development is a knowledge-dependent business requiring professional practitioners; i.e., its success relies upon the skills and abilities of its workforce. Therefore, every desired outcome and measure of success in this plan depends upon the quality of the talent of the organization. The effectiveness of this organization to build the economies of Jefferson and Dodge counties over time should include an objective to grow the staff dedicated to professional economic development, to include:

- Business Development Professional
- Housing & Community Development Professional
- Marketing Professional
- Research Professional
- Investor Relations Professional
- Economic Development Specialist
- Administrative Support

GOAL THREE: STRATEGY FOUR

Ensuring Professional and Relevant Governance: Cultivate and motivate Board and Working Committee member participation to ensure that ThriveED and its related groups are governed by business leaders from Jefferson and Dodge counties who are committed to the area’s economic growth.

- Develop and grow a Working Committee Structure that brings local business leaders and rising talent together to drive ThriveED forward in key areas such as:
  - Product Improvement/Asset Development
  - Finance, Audit and Compliance
  - Product Sales/Business Development
  - Investor Relations
  - Branding/Marketing/Communications
  - Projects/Prospect Management
- Develop a sustainable Investor Relations Strategy to ensure fiscal stability for ThriveED over time.
- Develop the capacity of the Board Members over time to enhance their ability to take on leadership roles that impact the area’s overall economic competitiveness.
- Engage in semi-annual economic development general education sessions.
- Conduct semi-annual topic-specific board and municipal leadership education programs that enhance competitiveness, such as:
  - Streamlining the permitting process
  - Consistency in zoning language across municipalities

GOAL THREE: STRATEGY FIVE

Ensure Sustained Funding: Maintain and grow the efforts from the inaugural five-year fundraising campaign to ensure that adequate resources are available to execute the initiatives in this plan. With a goal to reduce public sector financial support and increase private sector support for delivery of economic development programs and services, ThriveED has no employees and instead contracts with the JCEDC for the professional staff necessary to execute this strategy. Fundraising efforts should:

- Raise awareness of the need for professional economic development programming and services.
- Promote the successes of Thrive ED to date.
- Raise awareness of the unique business assets of the Jefferson and Dodge County area, and the organization’s efforts to attract business investment.
- Raise awareness of the role of the organization as the sole entity focused on initiatives designed to increase primary employment options for residents of the two-county area.
PROPOSED BUDGET

The revised budget estimate at the end of the formal campaign assumes access to $2,240,000, over five years, to execute the goals of this multi-year strategy. The budget will be reviewed and vetted by the Finance, Audit & Compliance Committee and the ThriveED Board and adjusted annually as needed. Based upon this number, the annual budget is projected to be $448,000, funded by both the public and private sector.

The revised plan projects use of available funds as follows:

- **Business**
  - $896,000 - Grow Businesses, Jobs and Capital Investment
- **Workforce**
  - $448,000 - Develop and Align Talent
- **Marketing**
  - $896,000 - Brand/Market/Promote/Communicate

ECONOMIC IMPACT/BENEFITS OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The intent of the original fully-funded 2017-2021 (1/1/17 – 12/31/21) plan included impacting a variety of tangible and intangible benefits for the Jefferson and Dodge county region. The most visible of these are new/retained jobs and new/retained capital investment.

The primary economic development outcomes associated with successful execution of the Strategic Plan is dependent upon the strength and timeliness of financial commitments necessary. These desired outcomes include:

- New businesses and expanded existing businesses in Jefferson and Dodge counties
- New commercial and industrial capital investment
- New high-grade jobs (quantity) - these "direct" jobs will trigger additional "indirect" (supplier-type) and "induced" (service sector) jobs
- Increased workforce quality
- Payroll increases associated with direct, indirect and induced jobs
- Increased household/personal income levels (and decrease the number of households at or below poverty)
- Increased deposit potential for area financial institutions
- Increased retail sales and property tax revenues to governments throughout the area
- Improved infrastructure support for future community building and economic development