



# MANAGEMENT REPORT

Q3 2025

## President & CEO's Note

Juliet Abdel



Wow! I cannot believe by the time you read this letter I will have been a Cedar Rapiidian for over 100 days. My enthusiasm for this region is palpable. As a newcomer to Iowa, I am dedicated to familiarizing myself quickly with the fabric that resonates with residents all over.

My intentional focus during this time has been two-fold. First, to be dedicated to my team and the mission we are tasked with achieving. Making myself readily available, assessing the work we do day in and day out, while seeking to create pathways for individual empowerment. Taking place simultaneously has been my second priority - a roadshow listening tour to hear directly from stakeholders.

During this time, I have asked tough questions, authentically sought feedback, and most importantly listened to stakeholders. One hundred days have been filled with nearly 300 meetings and gatherings, and I am pleased they have all been distinctively memorable and incredibly informative. My door is open to conversations, continually. As we work to continue driving economic growth for our region, these conversations could not be more pressing.

The space we are in as Economic Development Organizations is relational. Our communities are the product that we ultimately package, and how effective we are at storytelling works in our favor. I have often emphasized just how much of a role we play in convening people together to move toward catalytic change.

After proudly voting in my first local Iowa election, I'm inspired to keep building on our region's progress. Congratulations to Cedar Rapids Mayor Tiffany O'Donnell and City Council Members Marty Hoeger and Ashley Vanorny on their re-election, to newly elected Cedar Rapids School Board Members Laura Zimmerman, Scott Drzycimski, and Ashley Burns, and all others elected across Eastern Iowa communities. Our success depends on strong public and private leadership working together.

I want to encourage all of you reading this first quarterly report to truly take in the content. It is designed to provide you an update on all the spaces we advance, and our team has worked on over a few short months. Timely reports ensure you are kept up to date on the work we do, and provide you an opportunity to engage where you can.

Tomorrow will be led with intention, with passion, and most of all with a bold vision for a future we can all be proud of. I invite you to be *all in* on this journey.

Sincerely,

*Juliet Abdel*

Juliet Abdel, President & CEO

## TALENT ATTRACTION & WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS



The Economic Alliance continues to lead regional efforts that attract new residents, connect displaced workers, and ensure employers have access to top talent. From relocation incentives to rapid response partnerships, our team works to keep skilled professionals living and working right here in the Cedar Rapids Region.

### COLLABORATIVE GROWTH INITIATIVE

Through our remote job attraction initiative, we're drawing new residents to the region by highlighting what makes the Cedar Rapids Region an exceptional place to live and work. The program offers relocation incentives, local connections, and a warm welcome to individuals seeking a strong communi-

ty and affordable lifestyle. Recent national media attention, including *Site Selection Magazine*, has amplified our reach and credibility.

Hunter Baldus, our first mover in August, shared his experience:

"Whether it was places like Chicago or Des Moines, we were already contemplating moving closer to home. This program really put Cedar Rapids over the top. I thought it was too good to be true. With an incentive package like that and us possibly purchasing a home, we were teetering on the edge. We wanted to move closer to our parents and be able to purchase a home. Coming from Denver, the cost of living difference is just huge."

### TRAILING SPOUSE PROGRAM

The Trailing Spouse Program connects partners of new or prospective employees with hiring employers across the Cedar Rapids Region to support smooth family transitions and strengthen workforce retention. Participating employers share the trailing spouse or partner's resume and a brief summary of career goals with the Economic Alliance; we confidentially circulate resumes to participating area employers, who then contact candidates directly if interested. When a hire occurs, employers notify the Economic Alliance so we can measure impact. Benefits include enhanced recruiting and retention, population growth, stronger community connections, and a coordinated, confidential process.

### KEEPING TALENT LOCAL

When layoffs occur in our community, the Economic Alliance acts quickly to help keep talent in our region. We collaborate with member employers to identify open positions that align with the skills of

affected workers and connect the two through targeted job fairs and direct outreach. This partnership provides meaningful opportunities for displaced employees while helping businesses meet critical workforce needs.

If your business anticipates a reduction in force, contact our workforce team to explore how we can help retain valuable talent within our community.

Contact **Jodi Schafer**, *Talent Attraction Director*, at [jschafer@cedarrapids.org](mailto:jschafer@cedarrapids.org) or (319) 730-1409.

#### JOB ATTRACTION INITIATIVE STATS



**14 Households Relocated**  
25 people, 19 adults & 6 children



**\$130K**  
Average household income with an average of 1.8 people



**States Represented**  
3 Utah  
2 Florida  
2 Arizona  
1 Texas  
1 Georgia  
1 South Dakota  
1 Colorado  
1 Kansas  
1 Wisconsin  
1 Minnesota



**11 have family or friends in our region**  
2 had previously visited  
1 with no connection to the area

## WORKFORCE RETENTION & YOUNG PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT

The Economic Alliance helps employers retain and develop top talent by strengthening community connections and leadership pathways, starting from education and extending through early career engagement. Through programs like ImpactCR, Ignite CR, and partnerships with local schools, colleges, and universities, we're investing in people across the Cedar Rapids Region at every stage of their professional journey.



*ImpactCR* connects young professionals to leadership opportunities, volunteer experiences, and peer networks that help them build roots in the region. By helping interns feel at home in the community, the program ensures that talent not only arrives here but stays and grows. The group currently consists of several hundred young professionals.

This year, ImpactCR will welcome new board members for 2026 and celebrate outstanding young leaders at its annual *Make Your Mark* event. Two awards—Emerging Leader of the Year and Community Catalyst—honor individuals leaving a lasting mark on the Cedar Rapids Region.

Congratulations to Danielle Monthei, named Community Catalyst of the Year, as well as Alyssa James, named Emerging Leader of the Year.



The Economic Alliance proudly supports *Ignite CR* which helps new interns connect with the community, meet local leaders, and experience all the region has to offer. By helping newcomers feel at home, Ignite CR strengthens long-term workforce retention and enhances employer recruitment efforts. This year the program had 195 interns representing 31 different companies.



## COLLEGE COMMUNITY DAYS

As part of the ongoing focus on talent retention and workforce readiness, the Economic Alliance collaborated with the College Community School District to connect educators directly with area employers. Over two days, more than a dozen member businesses opened their doors to K–12 teachers. The experience provided firsthand insight into the skills employers seek and the career pathways available to local students.

By engaging educators as advocates, we're helping build pride in the Cedar Rapids Region and ensuring that the next generation of talent is aware, curious, and excited about the opportunities right here at home.

## BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Through professional development and leadership programs, the Economic Alliance continues to equip business owners, professionals, and emerging leaders with the tools they need to succeed. From workforce strategy discussions to hands-on retreats and networking events, this quarter's programs focused on learning, connection, and growth across every level of our business community.



The *Let's Get Down to Business* sessions continue to offer valuable professional insights for local employers and entrepreneurs.

- **Turning Recruitment Challenges into Opportunities** – Led by Kathy Seidel of MRA: The Management Association, this July session helped 23 attendees rethink hiring and retention strategies.
- **Q4 Marketing Musts** – In August, Sara Kuennen of Informatics guided 28 participants through data-driven marketing tactics to strengthen year-end campaigns.



## LEADERSHIP FOR FIVE SEASONS

The *Leadership for Five Seasons* (LFS) program continues to cultivate business and civic leaders dedicated to the Cedar Rapids Region's growth. This quarter, both the Youth and Adult classes kicked off with immersive two-day retreats focusing on teamwork, self-awareness, and leadership development.

The 2025 Executive Class officially launched in September. This unique program introduces 7-8 selected participants and their partners/spouses to our community's leaders, opportunities, and unique offerings.

Alumni reconnected at the Annual Golf Fundraiser, supporting scholarships for future program participants and celebrating the ongoing spirit of connection that defines the LFS experience.

## BUSINESS PROGRAMS & NETWORKING

The *Hiawatha Business Summit*, focused on workforce and talent attraction, brought together more than 50 attendees to discuss regional solutions. September's Speed Networking event connected 56 business and community leaders for meaningful conversations and new partnerships.

## MEMBERSHIP & ENGAGEMENT

Through networking events and ambassador engagement, we continue to create opportunities for members to build relationships, showcase their businesses, and strengthen the local economy.

## AMBASSADORS: A FRESH LOOK FOR A FAMILIAR TEAM



Our Ambassadors are always a welcoming presence at ribbon cuttings, BizMix events, and community celebrations. You'll see that they have recently been sporting a new look. The traditional red jackets have been retired, replaced by professional business-casual attire paired with updated ambassador lanyards. This modernized appearance reflects the continued evolution of our organization while maintaining the same enthusiasm and commitment our Ambassadors bring to every event. We're deeply grateful for the energy, time, and positivity they share as the face of the Economic Alliance at events throughout the year.



*BizMix* remains one of the Economic Alliance's most popular networking events, offering professionals the chance to connect while exploring a different local business each month. Guests enjoy casual networking, complimentary hors d'oeuvres and beverages,

and a behind-the-scenes look at host businesses. Whether they're celebrating a new location, expansion, merger, or product launch, a BizMix is the perfect networking experience for many celebratory occasions.

BizMix is held monthly from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m., bringing together an average of 150 attendees for casual networking, local business tours, and community connection. Each event offers a fresh, engaging setting to build meaningful relationships and highlight the host business. Companies interested in hosting a 2026 BizMix are encouraged to contact our membership team.



## MARKET YOUR BUSINESS 2026

As we look ahead to 2026, the Economic Alliance will offer new sponsorship opportunities that allow members to elevate their visibility and connect directly with key audiences. Contact our team to learn more.

Over the course of the last three months, we added 27 new members to our strong membership base. Of those, we're pleased to welcome three new Large Investors: Hills Bank, ITC Midwest, and Fehr Graham. These partners join 52 of the region's leading businesses committed to driving growth and prosperity.

## MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS FOR YOU

If your employer is a member of the Economic Alliance, you're part of this powerful network too. That means access to events, professional development, community impact initiatives, and members-only resources designed to help you grow and succeed.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



The Economic Alliance continues to work closely with local partners to attract investment, support business expansion, and strengthen the region's economic base. From major data center developments to workforce housing and aviation industry opportunities, the Cedar Rapids Region remains a hub of activity and growth.

## DATA CENTER DEVELOPMENT BOOM

Two of the region's largest ongoing projects — QTS and Google — continue to transform the local landscape. Building permits are being issued at a record pace as multiple facilities rise simultaneously. At peak construction, more than 75 pieces of heavy equipment can be seen on site, a testament to the scale of development underway. When complete, these data centers will represent nearly 10 million square feet of new space, the equivalent of 171 football fields, making them among the most significant projects in Iowa's history.

## EXPANDING WORKFORCE HOUSING

The demand for workforce housing remains strong as the region's population grows. The State of Iowa recently awarded four Linn County projects workforce housing grants, further expanding access to

attainable housing for residents. Cedar Rapids and Linn County continue to perform exceptionally well in securing state support for these efforts. One previously funded project, Loftus in NewBo, is now nearing completion, adding modern housing options in a vibrant, walkable district.

## LOCAL PROGRESS ON THE CEDAR CROSSING CASINO



The long-awaited Cedar Crossing Casino is taking shape — its outer walls now visible from Interstate 380. Ryan Companies serves as the general contractor, with over 96% of the work performed by local or Iowa-based companies. This \$275 million project is fueling local employment and maximizing regional economic impact through the use of homegrown talent and suppliers.

## \$50M INGREDION EXPANSION



Ingredion is deepening its commitment to the region with a \$50 million expansion of its Cedar Rapids plant. The investment will modernize production of industrial starches and increase plant capacity by up to 50%. The groundbreaking ceremony, held Au-

gust 6, 2025, marks a major milestone for the plant, and is expected to create four new jobs paying a qualifying wage of \$32.64 per hour. The expansion leverages 100% Iowa-sourced corn and reinforces the region's role in advanced manufacturing and global supply chains.

## CEDAR RAPIDS AIRPORT & AVIATION GROWTH



The Cedar Rapids Airport (CID) continues to advance its strategic focus on aerospace and aviation-related business development. Earlier this year, the community competed for a major aerospace project. While the project ultimately selected another location, the process opened doors for future aviation attraction efforts. With strong partnerships among CID, Collins Aerospace, BAE Systems, Kirkwood Community College, and the Center of Excellence (COE), the region is well-positioned for continued growth in this high-tech industry.

## PUBLIC POLICY

The Economic Alliance's public policy work ensures that the Cedar Rapids Region has a strong, unified voice in local, state, and federal decision-making. Through collaboration with business, civic, and government leaders, we advocate for policies that strengthen our economy, support employers, and enhance quality of life.

## 2025 STATE LEGISLATIVE WINS

This year's state session delivered several important wins that align with our policy priorities and directly benefit our members and workforce.

- **Workforce Development:** Expanded funding for career and technical education and work-based learning programs to help build a more skilled workforce.
- **Community Investment:** Continued funding for community attraction, tourism, water quality, and state park initiatives that make Iowa communities great places to live and visit.
- **Economic Growth:** Overhaul and modernization of Iowa's tax credit programs to spur future development and business expansion.
- **Business Competitiveness:** Reform to Iowa's unemployment insurance program, cutting the taxable wage base for employers by half and aligning Iowa with neighboring states.
- **Child Care Support:** New grants to assist pre-school and child care providers with wraparound transportation services for working parents.

Members and stakeholders were engaged for input on what the upcoming priorities will be. The 2026 State Policy Priorities will be released later in the year.



More than 40 regional business, nonprofit, education, and government leaders joined the Economic Alliance in Washington, D.C., to advocate for federal policies supporting workforce, housing, infrastructure, and tax reform. During the visit, leaders met with the U.S. Department of Transportation to discuss funding for Tower Terrace Road, a critical east-west connector in Linn County.

Following the trip, two key policies we advocated for became law:

- The Small Business Tax Relief Package, preserving the pass-through income deduction and reinstating R&D expense deductions to help businesses grow, hire, and invest locally.
- The Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act, expanding 529 savings eligibility for exam fees, prep courses, and certifications across industries.

## TRADE AND TARIFF ADVOCACY

Given the importance of manufacturing and agriculture in our regional economy, the Economic Alliance continues to work closely with Iowa's congressional delegation and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to advocate for trade policies that protect Iowa businesses while keeping them globally competitive. We're committed to advancing trade policies that protect Iowa businesses while keeping them globally competitive.

## SMALL BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE



In August, the Economic Alliance hosted U.S. Small Business Administration Administrator Kelly Loeffler, Senator Joni Ernst, and Congresswoman Ashley Hinson for a roundtable discussion with local business leaders. The conversation focused on federal tax provisions benefiting small businesses, including retroactive R&D expensing and preservation of the pass-through income deduction. This event gave members direct access to top decision-makers and a platform to share real-world experiences shaping future policy.

While the Cedar Rapids Community School District bond did not pass, the Economic Alliance remains committed to supporting efforts that strengthen education and community investment across our region. We're grateful to the many residents who showed up, made their voices heard, and engaged in an important conversation about the future of our schools. Our belief in creating safe, accessible, and modern learning environments for every student remains as strong as ever. Great schools are essential to attracting new businesses, supporting workforce growth, and building the next generation of talent in the Cedar Rapids Region. We'll continue working with local partners and elected officials to move these priorities forward and ensure our community remains a place where families and businesses want to work, live and grow.



The Economic Alliance has partnered with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation to bring the Civics Bee to Eastern Iowa.

This competition encourages middle school students to explore civic engagement by writing essays and competing in live quiz rounds that test their understanding of democracy, community problem-solving, and respectful dialogue. The initiative comes at an important time as the nation prepares to celebrate its 250th anniversary in 2026. By helping amplify civic awareness among youth, the Civics Bee supports the Economic Alliance’s mission to promote collaboration, respect, and engagement in shaping the region’s future.

## MedQUARTER

Regional Medical District.

This summer marked a season of progress in the Cedar Rapids MedQuarter Regional Medical District, with several major infrastructure and beautification projects completed or nearing completion. Each improvement contributes to a more accessible, welcoming, and visually vibrant district for patients, employees, and visitors alike. Recent enhancements include:

- **8th Avenue / 10th Street / Mt. Vernon Road SE Roundabout** – Completed, improving traffic flow and safety at one of the district’s busiest intersections.
- **5th Avenue SE Repaving (6th Street to 14th Street)** – Finished, providing smoother travel for employees, residents, and visitors.

- **8th Street NE Repaving (1st Avenue to A Avenue)** – Completed, further strengthening connectivity throughout the district.
- **“Threads of Life” Mural** – Installed at 830 1st Avenue NE, celebrating the community’s spirit of care and connection through public art.
- **“Seasons We Enjoy” Mural** – Installed at the southeast corner of 7th Street & A Avenue NE, this vibrant mural celebrating our seasons welcomes all vehicles entering the MedQuarter from I380.
- **Breast Cancer Awareness Banners** – Installed along major MedQuarter roadways in recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, creating an inspiring visual message of hope and support.

Together, these improvements reflect the MedQuarter’s continued commitment to creating a district that not only functions well but also reflects the pride and compassion of the healthcare community it represents.



The heart of our region is thriving once again. Through collaboration with the Downtown Commission, the Economic Alliance continues to focus on driving foot traffic, supporting local businesses, and strengthening downtown’s role as a vibrant destination for commerce, culture, and connection.

## DOWNTOWN DATA INITIATIVE

To provide stakeholders with valuable insight into downtown activity, the Downtown Data Initiative delivers real-time analytics on visitor trends, traffic patterns, and engagement. These numbers tell the story of a district that has fully rebounded to pre-pandemic levels — a powerful sign of vitality and resilience. By equipping businesses, property owners, and investors with up-to-date data, this initiative helps inform decisions and inspire continued growth.

## DOWNTOWN OPPORTUNITIES MAP

The Downtown District is also developing a new Opportunities Map to highlight available commercial properties within the Downtown District. This tool will make it easier for entrepreneurs, developers, and investors to explore downtown’s offerings while showcasing the district’s potential for future business investment. The map will be featured on the Downtown District’s website, ensuring that anyone looking to grow in Cedar Rapids has access to the latest information and opportunities.

Together, these tools strengthen downtown’s position as a data-driven, opportunity-rich district, which is one that continues to attract people, business, and energy to the heart of the Cedar Rapids Region.

## EVENTS & PROGRAMS

The Downtown District in conjunction with the Economic Alliance brought to life these signature events that showcase the energy and pride of the Cedar Rapids Region. This quarter marked major milestones, record-breaking crowds, and creative community moments that reinforce downtown's place as a hub of connection and celebration.

*Celebrating 20 Years!*



**CEDAR RAPIDS  
DOWNTOWN  
FARMERS  
MARKET**

PRESENTED BY



This summer, the *Cedar Rapids Downtown Farmers Market* celebrated its 20th season, drawing tens of thousands of visitors to the heart of downtown. The Market remains one of the largest open-air markets in the Midwest, connecting regional vendors with residents and visitors alike. Its consistent success reflects the Economic Alliance's ongoing commitment to supporting small businesses, local producers, and the vibrancy of downtown.



IS ON, THANKS TO 

The tenth annual *Market After Dark*, presented by ImOn Communications, brought a record-breaking 35,200 attendees to downtown Cedar Rapids: the largest crowd in event history. Beyond its entertainment and nightlife atmosphere, Market After Dark also gave back in meaningful ways: ten local nonprofits benefited directly from beverage station proceeds and tips, collectively raising thousands to support their missions. This milestone year was a powerful reminder of how collaboration between businesses, sponsors, volunteers, and community partners fuels our region's signature events.



## RECORD-SETTING CEREAL BREAKFAST



During the September Downtown Farmers Market, attendees came together for a playful and memorable community achievement — an official world record attempt for the Largest Cereal Breakfast with a number of 2,410. Greene Square filled with participants enjoying bowls of Crunch Berries and milk in a lighthearted effort that perfectly captured the creativity and spirit of Cedar Rapids. The event not only set a new record but also generated national media attention and celebrated the Farmers Market's long-standing impact on community life.

## GATHERED AND GROWN: A FEAST OF FIVE SEASONS

To celebrate the 20th season of the Cedar Rapids Downtown Farmers Market and the 10th Market After Dark, the Economic Alliance hosted Gathered & Grown: A Feast of Five Seasons, a farm-to-table dinner in downtown Cedar Rapids. Eighty guests, including community leaders, enjoyed a locally inspired meal created by Cobble Hill that showcased farm-to-table elegance. Attendees left with custom Farmers Market tumblers, mini cowbells, and memories of an evening celebrating local flavor and connections.

