

2026

Q3 MANAGEMENT REPORT

CEDAR RAPIDS METRO
ECONOMIC ALLIANCE



A LETTER FROM PRESIDENT & CEO

One year ago, I stepped into this role with a commitment to listen, learn and build.

What I found was a region with tremendous assets, ambitious people and significant opportunity, but also an opportunity for greater connection. Businesses and communities wanted to better understand not only what the Economic Alliance does, but how our work creates value for them. I also saw an opportunity to bring people together around a shared ambition for where this region can go.

That has shaped our work.

We strengthened the Economic Alliance from the inside out, aligning our team around talent and priorities, strengthening our financial position and significantly expanding how we communicate and connect with our stakeholders.

We also sharpened our focus on economic growth. Our Board adopted data-backed target industries in aerospace, bioeconomy and technology. We reestablished critical economic development services, began developing a long-term prosperity strategy, elevated our region and its opportunities through major national and international news platforms, and expanded public policy programming and engagement across our communities.

Just as important, we built relationships.

One thing I have learned about Iowa is that trust is built by showing up, listening and doing what you say you will do. We have built new relationships, strengthened others and worked intentionally to better connect businesses and communities across this region.

Our region does not need the Economic Alliance to simply continue doing what it has always done. It needs us high performing, innovative, collaborative and focused on exceeding expectations. It needs us bringing people together around economic growth and a shared ambition to be the top region in the country.

Much of this first year has been foundational and intentionally happened behind the scenes.

In the coming months, you will begin to see the results.

We will introduce a regional prosperity plan, advance our targeted industry strategy and bring forward additional work designed to strengthen our competitiveness and create opportunity across the region.

Whether you lead a business, serve a municipality, economic development organization or nonprofit, or invest your time and resources here, I want you to see your community and your opportunity in this work.

We are moving deliberately and intentionally, building an organization that connects communities, strengthens local economic development efforts, leverages the distinct assets across our region and turns shared opportunity into economic growth.

Thank you to our investors, members, partners, volunteers, Board and team for believing in what this region can become. We have spent the past year strengthening the foundation. Now, it is time to show you what we can build on it.



Sincerely,

Juliet Abdel

Juliet Abdel
President & CEO,
Cedar Rapids Metro
Economic Alliance

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR, BOARD OF DIRECTORS

As Chair of the Economic Alliance Board of Directors, I have had the privilege of working closely with Juliet Abdel over the past year and witnessing her thoughtful leadership as she has helped shape a clear vision for the future of our organization and region. The Board is highly supportive of the strategy that has been developed and confident in the direction we are headed. What has been especially encouraging is the momentum that continues to build as communities, businesses, and regional stakeholders align around shared opportunities and a common commitment to long-term growth and prosperity.

A strong and unified regional organization is essential to the success of our employers, our communities, and our economy. The challenges and opportunities before us are larger than any one organization or community, and they are best addressed when we work together with a shared purpose. I am excited about what lies ahead in 2027 and optimistic about the impact this strategy will have across the region. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to sincerely thank our investors, members, partners, volunteers, and Economic Alliance staff for embracing change, believing in this vision, and committing themselves to its success. Together, we are building a stronger foundation for the future, and I believe our best days are still ahead.

James Klein
President & CEO, CRBT

Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance
Board of Directors Chair

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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

LET'S GET DOWN TO BUSINESS PROGRAM SERIES

Business support programming provided practical guidance on resilience and risk management. The August 25 Hiawatha Business Summit focused on future-proofing businesses and drew 25 registrants, while the September 10 Let's Get Down to Business session on cybersecurity engaged 19 attendees.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

THE COLLECTIVE VOICE

ELECTION 2026 CANDIDATE forum series

Public policy efforts in Q3 focused on strengthening the region's business voice, expanding access to policymakers, and shaping future advocacy priorities. The Economic Alliance hosted two U.S. Cabinet-level leaders, connecting regional employers with federal decisionmakers on workforce and education policy while showcasing local workforce solutions and partnerships. Housing advocacy advanced with the 21st Century Road to Housing Act becoming law, addressing affordability and availability priorities raised during the Q2 D.C. Fly-In.

Development of the 2027 **Collective Voice** policy agenda began with input from more than 55 businesses, nonprofits, educational institutions, economic development partners, and community leaders. The Candidate Forum Series further supported informed engagement through three moderated, issue-focused forums connecting Economic Alliance investors with candidates for Governor, U.S. Senate, and Iowa's 2nd Congressional District, with three additional forums scheduled before early voting begins.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

first friends

Workforce development efforts in Q3 focused on strengthening talent retention through newcomer connections, young professional engagement, and employer collaboration. First Friends: An Insider's Experience completed its regional onboarding pilot, helping newcomers build relationships and explore the people, places, and businesses that define the region. Early participant feedback highlighted new friendships, greater familiarity with the region, and a stronger sense of belonging. Evaluation is underway to guide the program's next phase.

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development efforts in Q3 focused on attracting investment, supporting existing employers, and strengthening the region's readiness for growth. The Economic Alliance managed an active pipeline of projects across advanced manufacturing, biotechnology, agriculture, technology, and distribution, coordinating with regional partners on site readiness, utility capacity, and permitting.

Business retention and expansion outreach provided insight into employer growth opportunities and challenges, with talent attraction and workforce housing remaining priorities for long-term competitiveness. The Alliance also continued working with partners to strengthen the region's aerospace and aviation industries and participated in industry tours for political candidates, highlighting established employers, recent expansions, and new investment to build understanding of the region's economic strengths and opportunities.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community development efforts in Q3 focused on activating public spaces, supporting local businesses, and strengthening connections across business districts. Despite rain affecting some markets, the Farmers Market season concluded with total attendance of nearly 100K. Market After Dark drew more than 32,000 attendees on August 29, featuring 128 vendors, live entertainment, and interactive attractions. Season review and planning for next year's enhancements are underway.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Regional and business **advocacy** in Q3 focused on supporting economic growth and strengthening connections across the region. The Economic Alliance represented the business community at three formal public hearings, advocating for economic development and infrastructure projects that support reliable and affordable energy, private investment, and long-term business growth.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ImpactCR

ImpactCR continued to support leadership development, civic engagement, and professional connections through its inaugural **mentorship** program, which established mentor-mentee pairs—more than double its original goal. The Workforce Innovation Council is also reconvening to identify regional workforce priorities, with a focus on retention and collaborative responses to talent shortages, industry shifts, emerging technologies, changing skill requirements, and workforce transitions. These efforts support earlier identification of workforce changes and stronger coordination among regional partners.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

District Dish

The inaugural District Dish gathering on September 22 attracted 28 registrants for downtown updates, input on district needs, and networking. The August–September Back to School Buy319 Gift Card promotion generated $4,775 in sales, with 107 gift cards used at local businesses.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

CEDAR RAPIDS METRO ECONOMIC ALLIANCE

Membership and investor relations efforts in Q3 focused on expanding the Economic Alliance network, strengthening member connections, and improving access to membership resources. The Economic Alliance welcomed 28 new members and conducted in-person meetings with 229 member businesses. Three BizMix networking events and 18 business milestone celebrations engaged 55 Ambassadors and drew 522 total attendees, supporting relationship-building and business visibility. The transition to our new CRM introduced an upgraded Member Portal with easier access to account information, payments, directory listings, and other membership benefits.

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DOWNTOWN CEDAR RAPIDS

Downtown Cedar Rapids efforts in Q3 focused on renewing the Self-Supported Municipal Improvement District (**SSMID**) to sustain maintenance, beautification, and community development for the next decade. Data from September 2025 through August 2026 underscores downtown's role as an employment center, with an average daytime population of 9,066, including 8,183 workplace employees—approximately 90% of that population.

The downtown maintenance team continued daily upkeep of streets, sidewalks, and public spaces to maintain a clean, welcoming environment. Renewal would support continued investment in beautification, placemaking, and activities that bring people downtown, while providing ongoing support to property owners and businesses to strengthen downtown as a place to work, invest, and grow.

THE MEDQUARTER REGIONAL MEDICAL DISTRICT

MedQuarter efforts in Q3 focused on maintenance and beautification, economic development, and construction activity to strengthen the district's appearance, safety, and vitality. At its September meeting, the Medical SSMID Commission approved an 18% reduction in the district's commercial property **tax levy** for fiscal year 2028. The reduction will provide relief to owners of for-profit commercial properties within the district while maintaining sufficient funding to support MedQuarter's goals and ongoing services.

ECONOMIC ALLIANCE

The Economic Alliance's digital channels expanded visibility in Q3, with Facebook generating 375,699 views and Instagram delivering 210,388 views, both exceeding Q2 totals. LinkedIn impressions increased to 55,564, while the website recorded 73,866 unique users. Constant Contact campaigns generated 29,384 email opens, maintaining a direct connection with members and stakeholders.

YouTube contributed an additional 595 views and 39.9 hours of watch time, with three subscribers added during the quarter. Video thumbnails generated 3,437 impressions and a 3.4% click-through rate, supporting continued engagement with the Alliance's video content.

Sign up for our newest communication platform by texting "Join" to +1 (319) 500-7803.

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