

# ANNUAL REVIEW

2023



**GrowBuchanan**  
Economic Development



### Connection

We identify and link people and groups to resources for shared goals.



### Collaboration

We engage our communities in dynamic collaborative ways that support success.



### Vision

We drive momentum for the future by communicating and advocating for economic development.



### Sustainability

We maximize potential for our investors now and for generations to follow.

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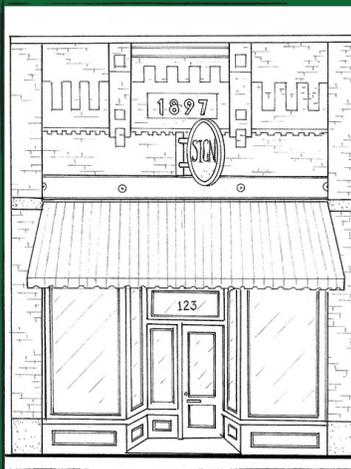
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# INITIATIVES, MISSION AND VISION

## BUCHANAN COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES



NEW JESUP SPLASH PAD



RENDERING OF WELSH BUILDING IN FAIRBANK



DOWNTOWN INDEPENDENCE

1. Focus on retention and expansion of businesses and workforce recruitment in all forms to support long-term sustainability of our country.
2. Actively seek applicants for revolving loan fund and key business grants and support small and new business development.
3. Access resources with Small Business Development Center and our Buchanan County Business Lab to support all and new business in Buchanan County.
4. Seek and connect relationships between state, regional, city and county resources to support economic development initiatives.
5. Identify and assist in key components and initiatives potential workforce and current residents find important including housing, childcare, recreational opportunities and all around quality of life.
6. Communicate and share resources from the Cedar Valley Regional Partnership to maximize local efforts and offer more tools for our businesses.

## MISSION

The primary mission of the Buchanan County Economic Development Commission (BCEDC) is to foster a strong economic environment which supports business, nurtures growth and new investment while attracting sustainable businesses and a quality labor force to the communities of Buchanan County. BCEDC relies on its trusted relationships that unite our communities and businesses. Their investment in BCEDC provides essential services that facilitate Economic Development throughout the county.

## VISION

BCEDC will improve the quality of life in our area and foster relationships for the economic advancement of businesses and their employees and support a high quality of life in our communities.

# CATALYST, CHILDCARE, KEY BUSINESS, & CONT. EDUCATION



Before



During

## CATALYST GRANTS

Buchanan County was the recipient of two Catalyst grants in 2023! The purpose of the catalyst grant is to take a vacant or underutilized building and revitalize it both inside and out, and ultimately bringing in an appropriate business. BCEDC wrote the grants for the City of Fairbank and the City of Independence to apply for the \$100,000 catalyst grant for a building in each of these communities. In Fairbank a third generation stepped up to save and refurbish the iconic Welsh Building which when completed will be the home of a trendy new restaurant bar and grill. In Independence, the new owners will be refurbishing the building to become the home to the new Gedney Bakery & Coffeehouse. In addition they will continue the trend in downtown Independence or revitalizing the upstairs and will be adding three high end upper story apartments. Once all are completed, this will bring the number of new upper story housing opportunities to 21 making downtown Independence a highly desirable location to live and visit.



Gedney Bakery & Coffeehouse



Nick's Family Grocery

## KEY BUSINESS GRANT

The BCEDC Key Business Grant is exclusive to potential start up or key businesses within Buchanan County that meet the criteria. Funds for the Key Business Grant are provided through the sale of property donated to the BCEDC by Independence Enterprises Development. In 2023 two businesses received this grant, Nick's Family Grocery in Winthrop and The Gedney Bakery and Coffeehouse. Nick's Family Grocery is a great example of collaboration by key businesses. The owners of Fat Chef Catering and the Winthrop Locker partnered to re-open this key business in Winthrop. They reopened the grocery store, which houses the catering business out of the building and provide fresh cuts of meat for the meat counter. The other grant was received by Gedney Bakery and Coffeehouse bringing a downtown bakery back to Buchanan County. This unique business has been missing from the Buchanan County landscape for many years and will fill a niche that will provide regional draw to the area. The grant provided much needed funds for a new POS system for Nick's and specialty ovens for the Gedney.



## CHILDCARE

Childcare continues to be a hot topic for both communities and businesses. BCEDC worked with the City of Independence to apply for and receive the Rural Childcare Market Study grant for the City of Independence. Using our existing childcare task force made up of major players in the community including industries, businesses, childcare providers, school and city officials, created a head start for this grant. The overall survey and study has been completed in force will begin creating a strategic plan to address ways to increase childcare in the area. Fairbank has completed the expansion of the Little Island Childcare Facility which received a Future Ready Iowa Childcare Grant in 2022. BCEDC continues to work towards childcare solutions for the entire county.



## CONTINUING EDUCATION

BCEDC wrote and received a Rural Leadership Grant for the Iowa Economic Development Authority. A six person task force attended the Leadership Exchange and the Rural Leadership Bootcamp. BCEDC and Hawkeye Community College partner on a Business Leadership Program that has been incredibly successful. The BCEDC Leadership Taskforce will be creating an additional program we feel will be just as successful focused not only on leadership, but leadership within our communities. The plan is to launch this new program in 2025.

# PAWS, REVOLVING LOAN FUND, RURAL IDEAS NETWORK, HOUSING STUDY GRANTS & BLUE BUFFALO SALE



## PREMIER ANIMAL WELLNESS & SURGERY

The final lot that BCEDC had available was sold to Premier Animal Wellness & Surgery, (PAWS) for the development and building of their new clinic. This is a great use of this property that will draw many to Buchanan County for their services.



## REVOLVING LOAN FUND

Part of the initiatives in 2023 included increasing the use of the BCEDC Revolving Loan Fund. BCEDC provides a \$25,000 loan over 5 years at 3% interest to start up and expanding businesses that meet the criteria. This initiative was fulfilled with 3 new RLF being issued to assist the start-up businesses. Premier Animal Wellness & Surgery (PAWS) and Gedney Bakery and Coffeehouse in Independence and Nick's Family Grocery in Winthrop all applied for and received RLF's to move there businesses forward.



## RURAL IDEAS NETWORK GRANT

BCEDC received a grant from the Rural Ideas Network to develop the Buchanan County Business Lab. This is a link on our webpage that provides potential and existing businesses one on one assistance in the areas of Startup Coaching, Business Management Coaching, Succession Plan Coaching, Website Evaluations and Design, Peer Learning Roundtable and Forums as well as a library of workshops and podcast on relevant topics. BCEDC continues to work with many potential small business startups throughout the year as well as assisting existing businesses both large and small as they continue to grow their business in Buchanan County.



## HOUSING STUDY GRANT

BCEDC continues to work towards housing in Buchanan County. BCEDC working with INRCOG is in the process of completing a county wide housing study that will identify the housing needs in each community and the county. To assist with the cost of the housing grant, BCEDC received grants from the USDA, Mid-American Energy and the City of Independence. In the past year BCEDC assisted with Work Force Development Housing Projects applications in several communities.



## INDEPENDENCE PREMIUM FOODS

What could have been a difficult challenge to Buchanan County with the closing of a pet food plant employing over 200 in Independence became an opportunity for the community and county. Upon the announcement of the closing of the plant in May to be effective the end of the calendar year, BCEDC immediately went to work with the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) to identify a potential new buyer. From there through luck, hard work and BCEDC's collaboration with the IEDA, the City of Independence and the new company a match was made. It is exciting to see this hard work come to fruition with the development and commitment of Independence Premium Foods (IPF) to locate in Independence. In addition, IPF is expected to create 229 High Quality Jobs over the next few years which makes it another quality industry right here in Buchanan County. BCEDC is excited to welcome Independence Premium Foods as the newest manufacturer in Buchanan County!

# GROWING LEADERS, CAREER FAIRS, WORKING TOGETHER & LUNCH N LEARNS

## BUCHANAN COUNTY CAREER FAIRS



BCEDC in cooperation with the Chamber and ISU Extension held our annual Job Fair with 14 participating businesses and industries in May. BCEDC also partnered with Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) to hold a Buchanan County only Job Fair at Blue Buffalo a day prior to the general job fair that was held. In addition, we were participants in both the Independence and East Buchanan Community School Districts Career Fairs.



## 1ST ANNUAL INVESTOR EVENT

BCEDC held its first ever Investor Appreciation Event. Without the support of all of our investors, BCEDC would not be able to work for the betterment of Buchanan County the way that we do. The investor appreciation event provided the opportunity for our staff and board members to let those willing to invest their time and dollars into Buchanan County Economic Development know that we appreciate all they do.



## LUNCH N LEARNS

Providing educational opportunities for our communities and businesses is an important component of what BCEDC does. As part of that we partner with IACC and ISU Buchanan County Extension to offer both relevant topics and needed resources.

Attendees of our 2023 Lunch n Learns gained valuable insights from top notch speakers such as Marcie Van Note, Molly Mackey and Brenda Meeker. Topics included Generational Mindsets, Favoring Feedback, Building an Intentional Life and the Power of Kindness. In addition we offered retailers and home businesses the opportunity to learn how to be a Shop Iowa business. Our communities and non-profit organizations were able to benefit from the Grant Writing 101 Workshop to learn what grants are available to help them move projects forward in their communities.



## GROWING LEADERS IN BUCHANAN COUNTY

The Growing Leaders in Buchanan County continues to provide valuable leadership resources for businesses and others in the community. Partnering with Hawkeye Community College, we hosted our largest Leadership Program to date, with 21 leaders. Topics included: Leading for Impact, Decision Making for Leaders, Giving Feedback Through Difficult Conversations to Resolve Conflict, Emergence – From Individual Contributor to Leader and on to LEAdeRNship, Adulting Your Career and Professional Future, and You, The Leader. The following businesses invested in their leaders by sending them through the Buchanan County Leadership program: Banklora, BCHC, City of Independence, Geater Machining and Manufacturing, Prinsco, QC Plastics and WCF Financial.



# SOCIAL MEDIA & MARKETING

## WEBSITE INFORMATION

The Buchanan County Economic Development Commission's website experienced a slight decrease in overall visits from December 2022 to December 2023, with 567 views in the former and 449 views in the latter. The shift in user interest is evident in the change of top pages, where the main page maintained its prominence, but there was a notable transition in priorities, with "who we are" and "resources" gaining traction in December 2023, reflecting evolving visitor preferences.

## MARKETING & SOCIAL MEDIA

BCEDC's social media and marketing has moved to the next level with our new Communication Manager, Hilary Weber. Hilary has a tremendous background that she is using to promote our Buchanan County businesses and attractions. She is sharing all of the great things happening in Buchanan County. It is our intent to keep our residents informed and letting those outside of Buchanan County know what great things are happening here.

## HILARY'S SUMMARY OF SOCIAL MEDIA & MARKETING

Since August, I've prioritized community engagement at the Buchanan County Economic Development Commission, highlighted by the successful launch of "Manufacturing Appreciation Month" in October. Beyond organizing the inaugural investor appreciation event and updating website content, the revitalization of investor spotlight posts has notably increased engagement. This, along with introducing a Facebook trivia game, has strengthened our connection with the audience, while ongoing efforts, such as the November Lunch n Learn and preparations for the 2023 Annual Review, showcase our commitment to effective community outreach.

## WORKING TOGETHER

The Cedar Valley Regional Partnership (CVRP) made up of the 6-county region of Black Hawk, Bremer, Butler, Buchanan, Chickasaw and Grundy Counties continues to do valuable work for our region and our county. In the last year representatives from the CVRP went to meet with Site Selectors to help identify our region as a great place to locate new industries. A yearly service BCEDC will be providing to local businesses through the CVRP is the Wage and Benefit Survey made available to Buchanan County Businesses. The Regional job board also provides Buchanan County Businesses free job listings and the cost of Living Calculator shows in dollars and cents why this is the region to live in. In addition the Live the Valley website and the Livability Magazine promote living and work right here in Buchanan County and the Cedar Valley Region.



## CATALYST WORKSHOP

Buchanan County Economic Development hosted the IEDA downtown Resource Center for the Regional Catalyst workshop. Jim Thompson, Jim Engle and Nick Sorenson of the IEDA gave an overview of the states Catalyst grant, and how to apply. This created an opportunity for the City of Jesup to connect with the state and invite them back to do a downtown walkaround in Jesup.



**1,817**

+Followers increase (up 12%)

**32,596**

+Reach for 2023

**FACEBOOK**

**2.5K**

Post with highest reach



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