



A PLAN TO ADVANCE THE PROSPERITY OF THE AMES AREA THROUGH THE TALENTS AND STRENGTHS OF PEOPLE WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE BETTERMENT OF OUR COMMUNITY LEAD BY THE AMES ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

**A Five-Year
Economic Development Strategy
2007 – 2011**

Ames, Iowa

BACKGROUND

Economic development is a process that takes great vision, teamwork and follow-through by a vast array of community leaders. The Ames Economic Development Commission (herein referred to as the AEDC) has proven again and again that it is committed to the economic advancement of the Ames and Story County area. The AEDC's very existence is dedicated to continually provide extraordinary growth opportunities in a fiercely competitive environment that has long eclipsed competing against our neighbors; rather, we are competing in a global arena for new jobs and capital investment.

The area the AEDC serves has tremendous potential for economic prosperity. With our close proximity to Iowa's largest metropolitan area (Des Moines) and the presence of a world-class research institution in Iowa State University located in our midst, the AEDC must increase its level of intensity to attract and retain the jobs and capital investment that are necessary to maintain and enhance the quality of life the people of Ames and Story County have come to expect. While the Ames community will see the greatest impact of an increased effort, the ripple effect of this plan will create and provide increases in local sales, new housing opportunities and the attraction of new services that will be felt well beyond the borders of the Ames community. This collective impact touches and improves quality of life issues enriching the lives of all citizens in the Ames area.

IMPRESSIVE RECENT RESULTS

In recent history the AEDC has produced some impressive results:

- The AEDC has been intricately involved in the recruitment of companies like, Barilla, Ball Corporation, Syngenta, Caremoli, and others to the market that have created meaningful employment opportunities and invested large amounts of capital in the community.
- The Ames Seed Capital Fund has emerged as a model for other cities around the Midwest to model for their efforts.
- The AEDC, along with the ASCF, has helped numerous companies locate in the Iowa State University Research Park such as NewLink Genetics, Advanced Analytical, Palisade Systems, Inc., and others.
- Most recently, the AEDC provided timely assistance to Sauer-Danfoss, helping them with their \$8 million expansion and their pledged creation of 206 jobs.

The AEDC has served the community well. Past and present leadership can be proud of many accomplishments that have been made possible, in part, by the efforts of the AEDC. Today, the competition for economic development is steeper than ever. Recognizing the intense competition for economic development, the AEDC board has overwhelmingly endorsed this plan as a course of action for the next 5 years.

This plan will place the Ames community and the AEDC at the forefront of what the best economic development groups in the country are putting into practice. The shining examples of the most-admired development groups share many common characteristics. They are innovative, responsive to the needs of business, well funded and staffed at a level that allows them to carry out an aggressive plan of work.

FIVE-YEAR GOALS (2007-2011)

The reason this plan was adopted is to provide a proactive and aggressive business retention/expansion and recruitment program, workforce development initiatives that will improve the economic performance and vitality of the Ames area and its business community. This will allow our community to better compete for job creation and capital investment.

The goals by which the Ames Economic Development Commission will be measured are as follows:

- **1,000** jobs retained/created 2007-2011.
- Attract **\$500 million** in capital investment.
- Touch all major Ames employers annually through a comprehensive Existing Industry Program.
- Call on all parent company locations 2007-2011.
- Contact/interface with 500 companies and site selectors annually.
- Report regularly to our stakeholders – both investors and community at-large.
- AEDC will play an active and supportive role in the community in creating a unified vision for growth in the Ames community.
- The AEDC will advocate for the development of large tract industrial sites to give Ames the chance to compete for capital intense, large job creation projects.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

1) Existing Business Retention and Expansion

- Annually, conduct existing industry interviews with all major employers and targeted industry sector companies in the Ames area.
- Every 18 months, provide area-wide business reports and usable data using aggregated information from interviews. Periodically, provide specific industry or areas of interest (e.g. Workforce) executive summaries from existing companies' data.
- Provide economic impact analysis on all existing industry expansion projects, with plausible recommendations for use.
- Annually, visit out-of-state headquarters of at least 5 existing Ames businesses.
- Convene quarterly industry roundtable meetings for the sharing of best practices by major manufacturing firms.
- Convene quarterly meetings with research and biotechnology related businesses for the sharing of information and best practices.
- Establish an annual, ongoing, existing industry recognition program with our economic development partners, such as the City of Ames, to recognize major developments and accomplishments of our local employers.

2) Marketing – Business Recruitment

- Implement a newly developed targeted industry contact program that articulates the industry sectors best suited to developing successful operations in the Ames area. The Batelle Reports commissioned by the Iowa Department of Economic Development should be used as a basis for this program.
- Utilizing a newly revised AEDC client specific prospect packet system, provide 24 hour response to investor inquiries.
- Communicate, on a monthly basis, via direct-mail postcard, to targeted industries and site location consultants, the business and quality of life benefits that our area offers and recent economic development successes that will illustrate positive developments occurring within the community.
- Maintain and continually update AEDC and Biotech web sites and validate usefulness of the sites with targeted site location consultants and our various economic development partners.
- Maintain Location One Information System (LOIS) web-based building, site and community data, including annual aerial photo updates on area industrial sites and office parks.
- Conduct site location consultant and targeted prospect visits with the Iowa Department of Economic Development, our regional neighbors, and utility partners.
- Partner with the Iowa Department of Economic Development, and others, in the annual International Biotechnology show and other biotechnology related marketing initiatives.
- Participate in CoreNet Global and Industrial Asset Management Council events and conferences to network with corporate real estate executives and develop relationships that result in greater awareness about our market.
- Conduct public relations campaign in targeted markets and to targeted industry sectors.
- Develop additional marketing initiatives to communicate to targeted audiences the positive attributes and relevant assets our area has to offer business and workers.

3) Workforce Development

- Every 18 months, complete the Ames-Story County laborshed and benefit analysis of the area and provide this data to existing and prospective companies upon completion.
- Continue to sponsor, actively promote, and utilize, the Iowa Smart Career Move website and Nation's Job website, and illustrate the benefits of these employee recruitment tools to Ames employers and human resource managers.
- Produce and provide employee recruitment marketing tools that highlight our area to existing companies to assist them with their recruitment of key positions.
- Promote and provide timely assistance to existing employers by showcasing employment opportunities for trailing spouses of key employees they are working to recruit to Ames.
- As needed, develop a protocol and serve as a host to prospective employees on behalf of our existing employers that are working to recruit a key individual (s) to the community.
- Produce and distribute direct mail marketing postcards to alumni of state universities and colleges to attract graduates back to the Ames area.
- In conjunction with our partners such as Iowa State University, co-organize and sponsor a career fair that illustrates the opportunities that employers in Ames have available.
- Collaborate with Iowa State University leadership to identify and promote career and quality of life opportunities in the Ames area to students and faculty.
- Communicate to existing and prospective businesses the array of workforce development services the AEDC and its partners have to offer business and industry.

4) Leveraging our Partnerships for Mutual Benefit

Ames Seed Capital Fund & Community Investment Fund

- Manage all aspects of the Ames Seed Capital Fund (ASCF) and meet with the Board of Managers as deemed appropriate by that board.
- Develop, coordinate, and publicize the annual meeting of the ASCF.
- Develop and foster opportunities for quality investments in early stage companies that will result in positive job creation for the community while spurring positive ROI to the investors in the fund.
- Continue to cultivate relationships with business leaders that are not currently investors in the ASCF.
- Develop and conduct, as needed, Angel Investor meetings to illustrate potential investment opportunities in client companies the AEDC is working to bring to the Ames market.
- Host six Venture Network of Iowa (VNI) meetings and provide timely notice to our ASCF and Angel Investors of the meetings.
- Promote the Community Investment Fund (CIF) to prospective clients (existing and external) as a local matching fund for various state assistance programs.
- Allocate a portion of the annual operating budget of the AEDC to help sustain the Community Investment Fund in addition to what has been pledged by the Ames business community.

Iowa State University, the ISU Research Park and Entrepreneurship

- Collaborate, where necessary, with Iowa State University and the Iowa State University Research Park (ISURP) to provide them with advocacy and assistance to further develop the park and its infrastructure, and the Universities' competitiveness for opportunities that will benefit the institution and the Ames area.
- Actively work with Iowa State University and the ISURP to collaborate in the areas of technology transfer and targeted business relationships to raise our profile amongst similar market/university communities around the country that will result in benefits of mutual interest to the AEDC, the Ames area, ISU and the ISURP.
- Direct appropriate entrepreneurial opportunities to the expertise of the ISU-based John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center.

City of Ames, Story County and Regional Partners

- Work more closely with the City of Ames and private developers to increase the local inventory of industrial sites in our community.
- Collaborate with the City of Ames, Story County, and our regional neighbors like Story City, Nevada, Boone, and others to develop projects that are mutually beneficial to their community as well as the enhancement of economic development regionally.

5) Communications

- Revise the annual Executive Call Program to serve as an annual thank you program delivered to AEDC investors by members of the board of directors.
- Produce the AEDC Annual Report and hold the Annual Meeting of the AEDC to communicate to investors and the public progress of the previous year.
- Produce a quarterly newsletter to inform investors and partners of recent accomplishments/developments and upcoming plans.
- Host Quarterly Luncheons for our investors to communicate topics of interest, (i.e. - inviting a speaker to talk on a current event or relevant issue of importance to economic development in the community). These luncheons will also serve as a forum for our investors to provide guidance/input to the AEDC.
- Publish, every 18 months, a report to our investors on the ROI for their commitment to the AEDC.
- Develop and publish a Quarterly Economic Report, which will highlight key data on cost of living comparisons to similar size cities, retail sales, total employment, unemployment, local building permits, real estate data, and other relevant data that will inform our investors and client database on the state of the Story County economy
- Annually, meet with leadership of the Iowa Department of Economic Development, our utility partners, and other allies to discuss ways to collaborate and share programming for mutual benefit.
- Annually, meet with the Ames City Council and Story County Board of Supervisors to communicate activities and receive input on our efforts.
- Annually, meet with the editorial board of the Ames Tribune and other Ames media outlets to communicate our efforts from the previous year and discuss our plans for the coming year, which will be implemented to foster an on-going positive relationship with the local media. It may also be appropriate to meet with the editorial board of the Des Moines Register.
- Annually, develop a marketing piece to be distributed to our investors, the Ames community, and our client database various demographic data points such as school enrollment, general business climate data such as the current property tax levy, workforce, population, and current list of major Ames employers.
- With the assistance of the Responsible Growth Committee (comprised of past board chair leadership of the AEDC and the Ames Chamber) deploy quarterly editorials and speaking engagements within the community to articulate the importance of a progressive economic development program and illustrate the importance of Ames being viewed as a pro-active and progressive community that welcomes new investment to the community.
- Provide all AEDC investors and assisted companies with communication, such as news releases, news conferences invitations and general public relations on AEDC projects and activities.
- Maintain and enhance AEDC web site as a central communication tool for investors, the media and the general public.

THE BUDGET – FUNDING THE PLAN – REALIZING OUR COMMUNITY POTENTIAL

The future of the Ames area necessitates that the private and public sector be willing to set a strong pattern for underwriting this aggressive initiative. A budget of nearly \$500,000 is what the AEDC board of directors believes it will take to properly implement this plan.

Currently, the AEDC raises roughly \$265,000 annually for operations. With a proposed budget of \$475,000, the board of directors must raise another \$210,000.

Part and parcel with this plan is the need to deploy a comprehensive fund raising strategy that will focus on increasing the investment level from various stakeholders of the AEDC.

The plan is ambitious and the board of directors and staff of the AEDC are committed to seeing all aspects of the plan fully implemented so that our community collectively realizes:

- The creation and/or retention of **1,000** jobs between today and 2011.
- The attraction of **\$500 million** in capital investment.
- The development of a comprehensive Existing Industry Program that when properly implemented will connect the AEDC with all major employers on an annual basis.
- The AEDC calling on all parent company locations between today and the completion of 2011.
- The AEDC connecting via direct contact, email, and various other correspondence with 500 companies and site selectors annually.
- The AEDC reporting regularly to its stakeholders – both investors and the community at-large.
- The AEDC playing an active and supportive role in the community in creating a unified vision for growth in Ames.
- The AEDC advocating for the development of large tract industrial sites to give Ames the chance to compete for capital intense, large job creation project.