

TRAILBLAZING  
**MORRIS COUNTY**



**CAMPAIGN  
PROSPECTUS**  
**GREATER MORRIS COUNTY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

*"Blazing new trails for growth in the Flint Hills"*

**2023 - 2027**

**ENDORSED BY THE GMDC BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**APRIL 2022**

## WHERE WE HAVE BEEN

The Greater Morris County Development Corporation was founded in 1958 as a for-profit corporation. In 1987, the GMDC became a non-profit 501c6. The organization has had numerous successes, including facilitating the move of Rex Materials Group (now Unifrax) to Council Grove and assisting US Stone with road development at the Herington Airport to accommodate their operational needs. The GMDC tackled a Revisioning Initiative in 2018 to better define the organization's purpose and become more effective and relevant. Prior to December 2019, the organization's only employee was a part-time contract employee who served as the Executive Director. The GMDC hired a full-time Executive Director in December of 2019 to propel Morris County's economic development efforts. Since hiring the full-time director, GMDC has achieved goals defined by the 2018 Revisioning Initiative, including becoming a NetWork Kansas E-Community, providing gap financing to businesses in the County, and providing workshops to benefit local businesses. Looking to the future, GMDC is set on defining new goals and aggressively pursuing them.

## WHERE WE ARE

Today, it is exciting to look at the possibilities for the Morris County region and its communities. The GMDC has become a more prevalent and relevant organization in Morris County, with a full-time employee expanding the reaches of business support across the County. The GMDC has a robust legislative presence with the current Executive Director serving on the Kansas Economic Development Association (KEDA) Board of Directors and working closely with partners throughout the State of Kansas. The community of Council Grove is strong and seeing growth and improvements being made, such as upgrades to our infrastructure, growth in the downtown business district, and increased enthusiasm for community development. Business is good, and many companies are expanding and growing their capacity. Activity creates activity, and there is a lot of activity to expand on in Morris County.

## WHERE WE ARE GOING

The GMDC recognizes and perceives specific needs to continue growth and development. Affordable housing hinders the recruitment of employees for area industries, businesses, and school districts. Supporting the expansion of existing employers by marketing our community for workforce development, increasing the collaboration and unified approaches between the business community and stakeholders at local, regional, and state levels are critical to helping businesses thrive and grow. Infrastructure upgrades and development will aid business recruitment to the region. Morris County has been blazing trails in the Flint Hills for over 200 years. The same passion that burned the tall grass to deepen its roots and attract prosperity still exists today as GMDC continues to blaze new trails for growth in Morris County.



# HONORARY CAMPAIGN CO-CHAIRS



CHASE & JENNA BROWN



JULIE & JOHN HOWER



DALE & ELAINE JONES



KEVIN & JEAN LEEPER



TOM & GINNY MOXLEY



JAN & LOJEAN OLEEN



MONICA & JAY SIMECKA



SHAWN & NICKY TIFFANY



ELLE & DAKOTA WHITE

## OUR PLAN

Our proposed plan to move forward with our Trailblazing Morris County Initiative may include the following focus areas over the next five years, as determined by our Board of Directors. They are:

- Workforce Development
- Housing
- Business Retention/Expansion/Recruitment
- Community Development and Marketing

*“My decision to move back to Council Grove and raise my family here was one of the best decisions I’ve ever made and I want other people to have that experience and understand why.”*

*-Elle White, Grove Gardens*

# CORE INITIATIVES

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

### GOAL

Through recruitment, training, and retention of talent, create a skilled workforce capable of serving the needs of current and future businesses in Morris County.

### STRATEGIES

- Assess the needs of our major employers via an online standardized BRE interview questionnaire with the option to request an in-person meeting (inquire about internships).
- Collaborate with local businesses and school districts to develop structured internship opportunities for high school students with defined participant expectations from both parties.
- Recruit skilled workers inside and outside our community based on industry needs.
- Host (at minimum) one annual, local job fair in Morris County.
- Build, maintain, and market a collaborative community website alongside a social media platform to serve as a liaison with industries seeking employees to fit their needs.
- Explore the addition of the ACT WorkKeys evaluation program (an assessment that tests students' reading, writing, and mathematical skills that helps employers select, hire, train, develop and retain a high performance workforce) within the school districts.
- Explore partnerships with Morris County employers and scholarship opportunities for Morris County students and recent graduates to attend technical schools in the region (Flint Hills Tech, Emporia, Manhattan, Salina, Butler).
- Facilitate technical assistance for businesses seeking to utilize international talent for workforce development.

### ANNUAL KEY METRICS

- Number of companies supported: 10
- Link GMDC website and social media to industries/employers to facilitate the relocation of skilled workers to the area
- One partnership per year created between business and secondary education
- Monitor website performance analytics
- Direct contacts with potential workforce recruits: 50
- Number of workers/families recruited to/relocated to Morris County.
- Number of potential job candidates referred to businesses



# CORE INITIATIVES

## HOUSING

### GOAL

Increase the availability of an appropriate variety of housing units to meet the demands of the workforce identified by a current housing study.

### STRATEGIES

- Solicit a county-wide housing study to identify and implement strategies throughout Morris County.
- Pursue incentives for advisable housing & rehabilitation programs utilizing State and Federal Tax Credits.
- Market and communicate the results of the housing study to local government and business leaders.
- Work with cities and Morris County to identify potential development areas and improve infrastructure.
- Encourage the County and Cities to adopt incentive programs for housing development (i.e. Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, Rural Housing Incentive Districts, etc.).
- Develop an inventory of available housing sites and vacant properties within the county.
- Develop strategies and incentives targeted at rehabilitating existing properties throughout the county.
- Work to increase the capacity of the local residential construction sector.
- Assess and address the availability of geographically advantageous short-term and temporary housing options.
- Involve regional partners such as Alta Vista in housing discussions.
- Consider modifications to licensing requirements for residential construction.
- Encourage the formation of more residential construction partnerships.

### ANNUAL KEY METRICS

- Conduct comprehensive county-wide housing study
- Housing units created or rehabilitated and available county-wide: Average of 25
- Public/Private partnerships established for developments that utilize the pre-existing infrastructure and enhance the tax base
- Creation of housing incentives (i.e. Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, Rural Housing Incentive Districts, etc)
- Increase in Morris County net population over a five-year period: 100

*“Housing is the necessary piece to convince people and businesses to come to the area”*

*-Kevin Leeper, Morris County Hospital*

# CORE INITIATIVES

## BUSINESS RETENTION/EXPANSION/RECRUITMENT

### GOAL

Support the growth of existing primary employers in Morris County by providing project assistance, developing close relationships, developing the GMDC owned land to facilitate relocation/expansion of business, and providing training and workshops to suit the business needs of the County.

### STRATEGIES

- Conduct regular Business Retention & Expansion (BRE) interviews with local industry to determine development opportunities and capture other relevant data such as workforce, facility, capital, and infrastructure challenges.
- Assist with expansion projects by providing gap financing through low-interest loans/grants.
- Form a task force comprised of public and private representation to prepare and enact an immediate development plan for Commerce Park (utilities, roads, zoning, phasing, benefit district, etc.).
- Develop a master plan for the development of Commerce Park.
- Work cooperatively within Morris County with the Council Grove Chamber, Dwight Community Development Corporation, county government, city governments, and school districts to foster a more business-friendly public policy environment.
- Identify additional value-added processing opportunities related to agriculture (i.e. Wing It).
- Serve as a liaison to outside sources to assist business needs.
- Continue to provide business education opportunities.

### ANNUAL KEY METRICS

- Company visits/contacts per year: 12
- Meaningful company follow-ups per year: 4
- Companies provided assistance per year: 10
- Jobs created or retained per year: 20
- Annual capital investment in building and equipment: \$2 million
- Business education opportunities per year: 4 (quarterly)



*"I can't hire new employees because there's no housing!"*

*-Jan Sciacca, Council Grove Republican Newspaper*

# CORE INITIATIVES

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING

### GOAL

Identify and address the community factors that would enhance economic growth by working closely with the Chamber and the Cities to promote quality of life and opportunities for the regional tourism industry.

### STRATEGIES

- Support the Council Grove/Morris County Chamber of Commerce & Tourism and the local cities' efforts to attract tourism to the region.
- Increase website presence and marketing efforts outside of Morris County through promoting resources and activities connected to the County.
- Utilize ex-officio board membership between GMDC and the Council Grove Chamber.

### ANNUAL KEY METRICS

- Collaborative marketing with the Chamber and Cities
- Increased media releases and advertising

## IMPLEMENTATION

### OVERSIGHT OF INVESTMENTS

The funds needed to implement the "Revisioned" program will be sought from those with a vested interest in Morris County's economic future – businesses, organizations, community leaders, and individual stakeholders. The GMDC Board of Directors, along with major campaign investors, will provide oversight of invested funds and program implementation through an investor relations advisory board.

### ACCOUNTABILITY

In order to track its progress, implement strategic activities, and demonstrate tangible returns to its investors, the GMDC will strategically pursue meaningful goals using performance-based metrics to be achieved by the end of the five-year cycle. The GMDC Board and staff will be held accountable to its investors and the community.

# ACTIVITY

TOTAL INVESTMENT: \$10,000,000

New Business

Existing Business



25

JOBS RETAINED



75 JOBS CREATED

New Business

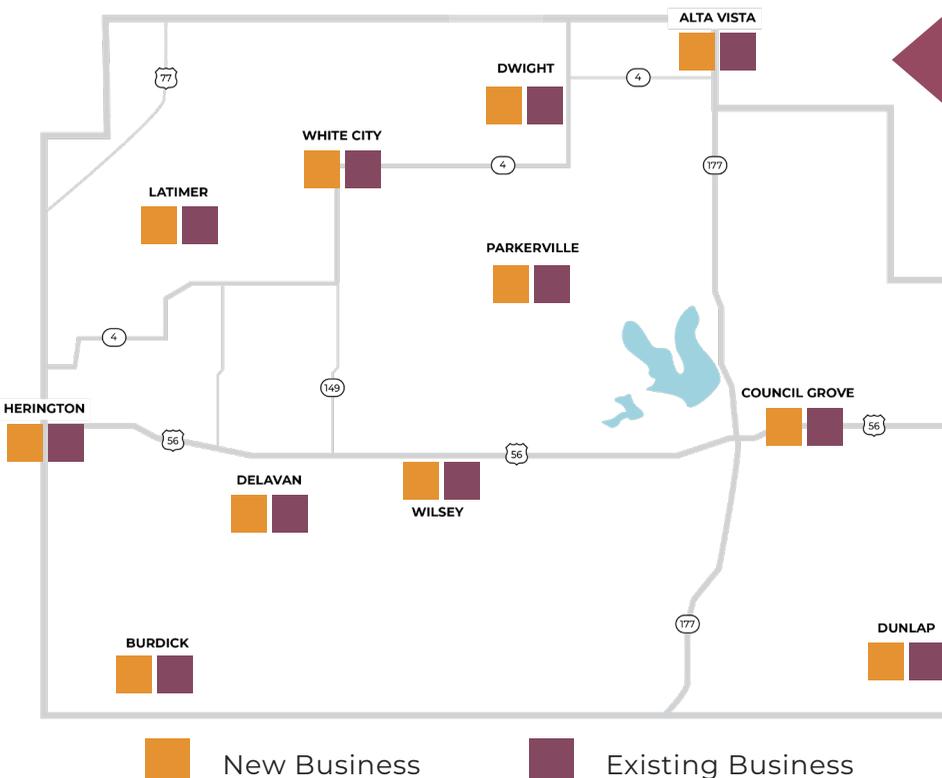
Existing Business



125

UNITS OF NEW OR REHABILITATED HOUSING

## BUSINESSES ASSISTED 2023 - APRIL



TOTAL BUSINESSES ASSISTED

- Publicly Assisted Businesses (Light Orange)
- Entrepreneurship Program (Orange)
- Events (Red-Orange)
- Financing Programs (Red)
- Marketing Projects (Purple-Red)
- Community Projects (Purple)

# BENEFITS

GMDC's economic development program is funded and guided both by the public and private sectors. Recent studies of highly effective economic development programs across America indicate a joint partnership between the public and private sectors is the best model for increased economic growth. In this joint partnership, the private sector provides more leadership and funding. We anticipate the public sector's annual funding will continue and work with the private sector to leverage increased success.

In addition to increased national and regional awareness of the Morris County area, our key economic development goals for 2023 thru 2027 are:

*"Hiring an executive director was a huge accomplishment. They're working with, instead of around, a lot of the other entities in town."*

*-Tim Tyner, Tyner Insurance*



**100 JOBS**

to be created or retained

OVER 5 YEARS



**\$10 MILLION**

in new capital investment generated

OVER 5 YEARS



**125 HOMES**

new or rehabilitated units

OVER 5 YEARS

CREATING DRAMATIC IMPACTS OVER THE NEXT 5 YEARS FOR THE CITIES OF:

Alta Vista  
Burdick  
Council Grove  
Delavan  
Dunlap  
Dwight  
Herington  
Latimer  
Parkerville  
White City  
Wilsey

*And all of Morris County*

# INVESTMENTS

The funds needed to implement the "Revised" program will be sought from those with a vested interest in Morris County's economic future – businesses, organizations, community leaders, and individual stakeholders. The GMDC Board of Directors, along with major campaign investors, will provide oversight of invested funds and program implementation through an investor relations advisory board.

## ESTIMATED INVESTMENT EXAMPLE: \$1 MILLION OVER 5 YEARS

### DRAFT CAMPAIGN BUDGET SUMMARY

FOUR CORE INITIATIVES	ONE YEAR	FIVE YEARS
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT	\$50,000	\$250,000
HOUSING	\$50,000	\$250,000
BUSINESS RETENTION/ EXPANSION/RECRUITMENT	\$75,000	\$375,000
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & MARKETING	\$25,000	\$125,000
TOTAL	\$200,000	\$1,000,000

The five-year cost for Trailblazing Morris County is a minimum of \$1.0 million invested by the private sector and in partnership with the funding by the public sector of Morris County. We will ask the area's businesses, individuals, institutions, civic groups, and foundations to invest in this economic development program. We will base each investment request on the individual investor's stake in the community, Morris County's components, the projected return on investment, and the projected community and economic development enhancements that accrue to the region because of the program. An Investor Advisory Council has been formed for additional guidance and input opportunities to the Board of Directors.

Doug Kinsinger, Campaign Director  
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# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## *BOARD MEMBERS*

MOLLY ALDRICH

STEVE IVERSON

CODY CATLIN

WAYNE KOHLER

DALE JONES

ELLE WHITE

KEVIN LEEPER

STEVE WHITE

DEBI SCHWERDTFEGER

LOGAN ZIMMERMAN

## *EX-OFFICIO BOARD MEMBERS*

USD 481

USD 417

COUNCIL GROVE/MORRIS COUNTY  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND TOURISM

## *EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR*

TRACY HENRY



**GREATER MORRIS COUNTY  
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

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