

MEMORANDUM

TO: MAYOR CORY MASON, CITY OF RACINE
CITY OF RACINE COMMON COUNCIL
WALTER WILLIAMS, DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF CITY DEVELOPMENT

FROM: JENNY TRICK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
LAURA MILLION, DEPUTY DIRECTOR

RE: 2025 YEAR-END REPORT RCEDC ACTIVITIES

DATE: JANUARY 22, 2026

The City of Racine contracts with Racine County Economic Development Corporation (RCEDC) to provide economic and community development technical assistance to the City of Racine.

RCEDC's work is guided by RCEDC's 2025 Strategic Plan and with oversight and guidance provided by the Mayor and Director of City Development. In addition to the strategic plan activities, the City leadership assigned a number of special projects to RCEDC to make progress or complete in 2025.

The attached Economic Development Dashboard and presentation summarize RCEDC's activities and outcomes throughout 2025 in Racine and across Racine County. This memo specifically highlights business activities and projects that occurred in the City of Racine.

I. Business Attraction

- A. Highlighted City of Racine opportunities to real estate professionals, developers, and site selectors.
- B. Hosted two special events in coordination with the Wisconsin chapter of National Association of Industrial and Office Parks (NAIOP), a real estate networking organization, to feature Racine County development opportunities, including in the City of Racine. At one of the events, the City served as a panelist highlighting development successes and opportunities.
- C. Engaged with four (4) business recruitment prospects with interest in the City of Racine.
- D. Engaged with six (6) housing developer prospects with interest in the City of Racine.

- E. Worked in partnership with Racine County to identify community models to spur additional housing development with a focus on single-family for-sale housing. Efforts included community visits, hosting community leaders and developers at the RCEDC Leadership Council, preparing and delivering multiple presentations, and coordinated the hosting of two (2) listening sessions with developers, municipal leaders, and financial institutions. RCEDC will continue to work with Racine County leadership on implementation strategies in 2026.

II. Business Expansion and Entrepreneurship. RCEDC focuses on technical and financial assistance to advance the local economy and entrepreneurs in our area.

Business Expansion

- A. We are known for our technical and financial know-how, and in 2025 our staff responded to 285 business inquiries, with 88 occurring in the City of Racine. Assistance included connecting entrepreneurs to start-up resources and business plan support, providing grant and financial program overviews, providing initial site search support, introducing businesses to talent and HR support, and introductions to financial institutions and business partner resources such as WWBIC, SCORE, and SBDC.
- B. To make sure we know our businesses and they are aware of the resources available to them, we completed 386 outreach meetings with businesses and financial partners to learn more about challenges and opportunities and share financial and technical program information. Outreach included business call visits with 40 City of Racine businesses. Staff completed walks in commercial corridors, including Downtown, Uptown, and West Racine.
- C. Provided grants and loans to eight (8) Racine businesses:
 1. DeRango Real Estate Services (Racine County Matching Grant)
 2. The Lacy Collection, LLC (Racine County Matching Grant)
 3. Benitez Automotive Repair (Racine County Matching Grant)
 4. Destroy Iron Fitness (City of Racine Revolving Loan Fund)
 5. Pawstar (Racine County Matching Grant)
 6. Pet University (Racine County Matching Grant)
 7. Sugar Shack Sweet Shop (City of Racine Revolving Loan)
 8. Jackson's Candy Stand (Racine County Matching Grant)
- D. Once a loan is approved, Staff maintains all repayments, collateral, insurance and other required materials. At the end of 2025, RCEDC was managing 32 loans in the City of Racine.
- E. Supporting our existing manufacturing companies is a priority and in 2025 RCEDC facilitated the quarterly Manufacturing Forum in partnership with RAMAC and WMEP. Topics included connected systems and automation, sales diversification strategies, front line supervision, and strategies for evaluating and adopting Artificial Intelligence.
- F. Recognizing the need for more resources for our local manufacturers, RCEDC launched the new Racine County Manufacturing Continuous Improvement Roundtable in partnership with RAMAC and WMEP with 10 Racine County

businesses. The six-month program included facility tours and peer-learning discussions on key topics to initiate and sustain continuous improvement efforts.

Entrepreneurship

- A. Supporting our existing and future small businesses remains a priority for RCEDC. To ensure all partners are aware of resources, events, and financial programs, RCEDC continued to host a quarterly lunch meeting with partners such as SBDC, WWBIC, SCORE, BizStarts Milwaukee, Downtown Racine Corp, Legacy Redevelopment, and the Latino Chamber of Southeast Wisconsin.
- B. The BizStarts Racine program had a banner year with 30 graduates. The year-long program uses an accredited curriculum from the University of Notre Dame and includes 6 weeks of training, mentoring support, and access to a student consultant. The 2025 efforts included:
 - i. Cohort #1: Completed mentoring and Carthage College student consultant support for 12 participants (4 from Racine)
 - ii. Cohort #2: Completed six weeks of training (Spring '25), mentoring and student consultant support for 20 participants (12 from Racine)
 - iii. Cohort #3: Completed six weeks of training (Fall '25) and started mentoring for 10 participants (7 from Racine).
 - iv. Throughout the BizStart Racine program, RCEDC noted what additional training was needed by the entrepreneurs. To meet this need, RCEDC worked with its partners to offer a Small Business Resource Fair (29 attendees), QuickBooks for small businesses by CLA (17 attendees) and Business Plan Canvas facilitated by SCORE (5 attendees).
 - v. Cohort #4 is planned for Fall 2026.
- C. Partnered with Kenosha and Walworth Counties in the development of Pitch Perfect, a new regional business pitch competition, held in November 2025. Planning for 2026 starts soon.

III. Talent Attraction

- A. Promoted Racine County, including the City of Racine, through GreaterRacineCounty.com and social media messaging.
- B. Created eight (8) new social media reels promoting Greater Racine County quality-of-life amenities and community assets.

Young Talent Focus

- C. Based on feedback sought from college student and young professional focus groups, RCEDC created the Early Career Hub on GreaterRacineCounty.com with content targeted to support young talent considering locating in the local community.
- D. RCEDC and the Kenosha Area Business Alliance hosted 61 participants at the Racine/Kenosha Intern Mixer Event to increase connections for young talent interning in the community in summer 2025.
- E. Piloted a College Student Racine & Kenosha tour with 16 students from Gateway, Carthage, and UW-Parkside. Participating students are ambassadors and leaders on campus who can share their experiences with other students.

- F. Provided 250 graduating students from Carthage College with Greater Racine County promotional postcards, promoting local career and living options in Racine County.

IV. City of Racine Assigned Special Projects

- A. Engage with multi-family housing development prospects, providing site selection assistance and supporting analysis review for requested incentives.
- B. Developed template for Request for Qualifications to be used for priority developable sites in the City of Racine.
- C. Conducted outreach to City of Racine businesses through commercial corridor walks, business park mailings and engagement with local lenders and real estate professionals.
- D. Provided technical assistance in support of priority redevelopment projects.
- E. Coordination with City staff on future project priorities for deployment of the City of Racine Brownfield Clean Up Revolving Loan Fund (BC-RLF). RCEDC is responsible for processing, closing and servicing loans in partnership with the City's Brownfield consultants and staff. Ongoing servicing of loan for J. Jeffers Project.
- F. Monitor compliance of four (4) City of Racine development agreements to ensure capital expenditures and/or job retention and creation activities are documented. Agreements include:
 1. Vista Dental (final report in 2025)
 2. Fischer USA (ends in 2027)
 3. Marlo (ends in 2026 with payment of taxes and reporting)
 4. Summit Packaging TID Agreement (ends in 2034) and DOT Railcars Report (ongoing)
- G. Identify opportunities to bolster and coordinate marketing efforts of successful projects, program resources, events and other activities that further economic development goals for the City.

2025 RCEDC Strategic Plan Dashboard

Goal: All speciality areas will review existing programs, activities, communications, etc. to determine if programs and activities align with RCEDC priorities.

Mission: Ensuring the economic vitality of Racine County by working with our partners to support innovation and creativity that leads to business investment.

	Measure	2025 Annual Goals (Total)	2025 Year End Actuals	2025 % of Target	2025 Status
Summary Totals					
	Total Businesses Assisted	73	84	115%	
	Total Private Investment	\$125,309,700	\$157,981,974	126%	
	Total Construction Investment	\$72,112,201	\$116,293,272	161%	
	Total Jobs Created/Retained	330	235	71%	
	Number of DBE businesses supported	40	63	158%	
1	Priority: Business Attraction				
a.	Number of outreach meetings and events completed.	90	93	103%	
b.	Number of RFIs received and submitted	15	22	147%	
c.	Number of Active Prospects	70	71	101%	
d.	Number of industrial and residential developments approved.	5	2	40%	
e.	Total Private Investment of Approved Projects	\$100,000,000	\$93,000,000	93%	
f.	Total Construction Value of Approved Projects	\$60,000,000	\$85,230,000	142%	
g.	Total Jobs Created/Retained	200	40	20%	
2	Priority: Business Expansion and Entrepreneurship				
a.	Number of outreach meetings and events	359	386	108%	
b.	Number of technical assistance actions	241	285	118%	
c.	Number of Active Prospects	40	143	358%	
d.	Number of Loans, Grants, and Incentives approved	56	52	93%	
e.	Total Value of Loans, Grants, and Incentives approved	\$17,809,700	\$22,065,215	124%	
f.	Total Private Investment of Approved Projects	\$25,309,700	\$64,981,974	257%	
g.	Total Construction Value of Approved Projects	\$12,112,201	\$31,063,272	256%	
h.	Total Jobs Created/Retained	130	195	150%	
i.	Number of Loans and grants closed/\$ Value	41/ \$18,533,900	56/ \$17,921,671	115%/ 81%	
j.	Number of BizStarts Graduates	12	30	250%	

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3	Priority: Talent Attraction				
a.	Number of talent focused events hosted or co-hosted	4	4	100%	Green
b.	Lead employer participation in 3 or more GRC activities	50%	66%	132%	Green
c.	Number of events/presentations with area colleges/universities, high schools and employers.	8	6	75%	Yellow
4	Priority: Grow our Relationships and Explore New Opportunities				
a.	Explore opportunities to increase engagement of RCEDC's Leadership Council	75% attendance at 4 Council Meetings	66%	75%	Green
b.	Seek and secure diverse volunteers for RCEDC's committees, boards and councils	25%	89%	356%	Green
c.	Maintain active engagement with area chambers of commerce and nonprofit partners	15 presentations/ 40 referrals	16 presentations/ 95 referrals	106%/ 238%	Green
Status Key:					
Red: Not yet started or below 50% of goal expected for the period					
Yellow: Started, below periods goal					
Green: Underway, meeting or exceeding periods goal					