



CASE FOR INVESTMENT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For the past decade, through the highly successful Partnering for The Future and Partnering for The Future II campaigns, the Greater Burlington Partnership (the Partnership) has an impressive track record of economic development activity through securing over 2,000 new and retained jobs and more than \$300 million in private capital investment as well as providing leadership to a variety of catalytic community projects.

In addition, Greater Burlington has been repeatedly recognized as a Top 20 Micropolitan in the US and the community has twice secured Site Selection Magazine's Governor's Cup for corporate investment on the Mississippi River in 2016 and 2017, earning the "Big Muddy Cup" award.



Despite the accolades and recent success, national and international competition for businesses, jobs, and talent is fierce, and we must continually "muscle up" our efforts if we are to compete and succeed in the global economy.

To maintain Greater Burlington's regional economic leadership position, the Partnership has spent the last few months developing a new, comprehensive five-year strategic initiative with emphasis on:

- Transforming the Talent Pipeline
- Economic Development
- Community Enhancement
- Visitor Attraction
- Downtown Development

The Partnership Board of Directors engaged Convergent Nonprofit Solutions (Convergent) of Atlanta, Georgia, to conduct a feasibility analysis with Greater Burlington area stakeholders to determine the level of support for the proposed *Partnering for the Future III* (2019-2023) initiative.

The feasibility analysis found almost 90% of stakeholders interviewed believe they and the community benefit from the Partnerships' efforts, that the Partnership has a strong leadership team and is a major contributor to downtown Burlington's resurgence.

The analysis revealed area stakeholders want the Partnership to increase its focus on the workforce and talent attraction shortage impacting Des Moines County. With local and national unemployment at its lowest levels since 1969, area businesses are having a difficult time finding qualified employees, which is impacting their ability to increase capacity.

Upon receiving the information regarding workforce concerns uncovered during the analysis, the **Partnership immediately convened roundtable meetings with area plant managers** to understand their specific needs and discuss possible immediate, short-term and long-term resolutions.

An aggressive and solid plan has now been assembled with a campaign goal of \$2 million.

BACKGROUND - A TRACK RECORD OF SUCCESS

As SE Iowa's largest convener of business leadership, the Partnership includes the Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development, Convention and Visitors Bureau and Downtown Partners, Inc. Each division has a separate mission, but **all share one vision**: to ensure Greater Burlington is a growing regional center of commerce, industry, education, health care, entertainment and culture.

Under the leadership of the Partnership, the extremely successful Partnering for the Future (2009-2013) and Partnering for The Future II (2014-2018) campaigns resulted in:

- Over 2,000 new and retained jobs
- \$300 million in capital investment
- \$900 million + in tourism expenditures
- 43 economic development projects
- Regional and National recognition - #1 for Business Projects on the Mississippi River, 2016 & 2017 ~ *Site Selection Magazine*; Top 20 Micropolitan in the U.S., 2015, 2016, & 2017 ~ *Site Selection Magazine*
- Transformative projects in Downtown's redevelopment
- Securing additional miles in the US Highway 61 expansion north of Burlington
- Exposing nearly 3,900 area students to local job opportunities through career events



"Silgan Containers has a new state-of-the-art facility in Burlington. The decision to build in Burlington was largely dependent on the professionalism and helpfulness of the Partnership. They were there for us every step of the way."

~ Tom Peterson, Plant Manager
Silgan Containers

OUR KEY CHALLENGES

Greater Burlington is fortunate to have a strong economic base with advanced manufacturing, agriculture and health care at the heart of our economy. At the same time, **there are significant challenges to future success and prosperity**, including:

- **Intense Competition for businesses, jobs and talent** – Greater Burlington faces the competitive reality that other communities are also hard at work pursuing the same companies, jobs, and workers we want here. They have strong public-private partnerships in place and well-funded economic growth plans. They are hard at work improving their competitive posture and chasing the same opportunities we seek.
- **Too many open jobs** – We have approximately 1,000 open positions requiring individuals with entry-level skills to advanced degrees. These positions are open due to:
 - o Inadequate skills – Employers can't find enough qualified workers, especially entry level and STEM skilled workers.
 - o Aging workforce transitioning to fixed incomes – with 77 million Baby Boomers in the process of retiring by 2030, Greater Burlington will feel the impact and this challenge will worsen before it improves.
 - o Sluggish population growth – The county's population, which peaked at 46,982, has continuously declined and now is at 40,325. The Burlington School District's enrollment in 1991 was 5,625 and is 3,716 today.
- **Constrained Municipal Budgets** – A declining population and a distressed tax base puts a financial strain on the public sector pushing the burden to non-profit and private sector organizations.
- **Fragile Neighborhoods and Criminal Activity** – Neighborhoods with substandard housing, increased poverty and family issues could lead to further reliance on social welfare programs, an additional tax burden for Greater Burlington residents and a continued deterioration of our neighborhoods.

Partnering for The Future III is the Partnership's plan to address these and other challenges and opportunities facing Greater Burlington with well-conceived strategies and clear metrics.



THE FIVE-YEAR PLAN

Partnering for The Future III will continue to build on our success in business development, downtown redevelopment, community enhancement and visitor attraction while tackling the workforce attraction and development issues facing Greater Burlington.

Initiative 1: Transforming the Talent Pipeline

Launch a series of strategies aimed at closing the gap between the available positions and talent necessary to fill them resulting in a reduction of Des Moines County's **unfilled positions by 25% by 2023.**

Address the Urgent Need of Filling Open Positions of Area Employers

- Immediately connect graduating high school seniors seeking work opportunities through targeted, on-site career events with employers
- Partner with local industry to establish signing day events (similar to athlete signings) for local high school students signing letters of intent to immediately enroll in a technical training program at SCC, join an apprenticeship program, or even direct hire at a local employer
- Develop and implement a tracking system and marketing program to entice local high school graduates to return and work in Greater Burlington beginning with the class of 2019
- Target military members separating from service by partnering with firms specializing in military placement and enhancing the Home Base Iowa initiative
- Extend personal invitations to graduating students each semester from Southeastern Community College and Iowa Wesleyan University to begin their careers in Greater Burlington



Build a Robust Talent Pipeline Focused On the Next Three to Five Years

- Paint the picture of the financial realities when students choose local skills training that leads to great paying local jobs in a low cost-of-living community in contrast to the burden of student loan debt associated with empty degrees with no real career opportunity
- Implement a student loan repayment pilot program in conjunction with Iowa Student Loan Liquidity Corporation to recruit hard-to-fill positions in the private sector
- Recruit talent from smaller neighboring markets that have limited career opportunities

Did you know?

It is estimated that there are between 1,000 - 1,500 unfilled positions in the laborshed region. Filling each of those positions would generate between \$35 - \$53 million in annual payroll and operational inefficiencies.

- Create first class tours and events for students, parents, teachers, counselors, principals and school board members – to **correct the perception** of what true, modern, advanced manufacturing entails and the rewarding careers offered
- Commission a laborshed study every other year to properly identify the competitive wage scale
- Offer educators an accredited program to earn recertification credits by spending time in local business environments

Prepare Area Youth to be our Workforce of Tomorrow

- Lead the charge to redirect scholarship resources to homegrown talent that chooses to live here, work here, and earn an education locally
- Facilitate regional career events exposing 5,000 students to available career opportunities
- Capitalize on success of local STEM festivals with a goal of reaching 7,500 students and parents through these events

Initiative 2: Economic Development

Facilitate the **creation of 500 new jobs and \$150 million** in capital investment.

Enhance Opportunities with Existing Companies

- Convene the local plant managers group and establish a major employer roundtable to address common challenges and capitalize on opportunities to grow and succeed locally
- Conduct 25 personal visits each year with primary sector companies
- Call on an additional 75 local service and retail companies annually

Develop, Enhance, and Market Local Real Estate Assets

- Focus energy on the acquisition and development of smaller, infrastructure-ready industrial parcels throughout our communities
- Pursue cleanup programs by the EPA/DNR for redevelopment of brownfield sites
- Aggressively market the IAAAP and BNSF certified sites as logistics and transit hubs
- Implement a dynamic marketing campaign to attract talent and business to the region with the economic development partners in Lee and Henry Counties



Conduct Site Selector Outreach to Ensure Greater Burlington is ‘On the Map’

- Use targeted marketing campaigns and personal visits to engage with site selectors
- Every other year, engage a site selector to tour the community, evaluate its assets, and make recommendations for specific company recruitment

Diversify the Area Economy by Facilitating a Culture of Entrepreneurial Development

- Enhance the resources and coaching available to guide entrepreneurial startups
- Establish a personal mentoring program and a mastermind group to fuel the energy behind idea development, business creation, and product/service launch

Initiative 3: Community Enhancement

Lead the next generation of community visioning to propel Greater Burlington into 2030.

Drive Consumer Traffic to Greater Burlington

- Ensure the community is capturing its share of consumer discretionary spending
- Launch a multi-faceted drip marketing strategy to consumers within a 90 mile radius
- Improve the online connectivity/visibility of specialty merchants and venues

Build a Robust Pool of Endowed Assets for the Future

- Integrate the Community Foundation of Des Moines County into the Partnership structure
- Reduce the wealth transfer out of the county by utilizing the Endow Iowa Tax Credit
- Enhance the endowed fund pool from \$1.5 million to \$10 million by 2025

Enhance the Leadership Development Pipeline

- Expand the reach and engagement of the Young Professionals network
- Continue the strong influence of the Greater Burlington Leadership Program and its alumni
- Add specific components of civic engagement and public office to the leadership pipeline

Strengthen the Future Opportunities of Neighborhoods

- Convene a non-profit organization roundtable to 'fill the gap' of serving youth most in need
- Implement the Crime Task Force recommendations for neighborhood improvement
- Conduct a housing market study every five years to encourage investment and guide public policy

Take Community Branding and Messaging to a Whole New Level

- Launch a strategy aimed at online reputation management similar to efforts of the private sector
- Capitalize on the Big Muddy and Top Micropolitan Rankings to earn appropriate regional media to improve the community's image
- Engage heavily on social media platforms using high quality video to share the community's story



Initiative 4: Visitor Attraction

Capitalize on new visitor trends to expand destination market share.

Tap into the One-of-a-Kind Visitor Experience Trend

- Lead efforts to create specialty visitor packages featuring hard-to-find experiences
- Develop a marketing plan and visitor package that emphasizes the area's natural resources including the river, hunting, fishing, and all outdoor activities

Enhance the Appeal of Existing Destinations

- Conduct secret shopper programs to provide valuable feedback on visitor experiences
- Create a series of short 'things-to-do' videos to share on social media and engage potential visitors
- Expand the mini-grant program to fuel new activity at the arts and entertainment venues



Initiative 5: Downtown Redevelopment

Continue the transformation of downtown Burlington.

Encourage and Further Enhance the Uniqueness and Sense of Place of Downtown

- Lead in the creation and marketing of distinct districts within the urban core
- Continue appearance enhancements through plantings, blade signs and place making efforts
- Explore the possibility of a second façade grant to enhance the remaining storefronts
- Ensure brand awareness and the promotion of high-quality events



Ensure a Robust Business and Property Development Pipeline

- Continue the acquire, stabilize, and turn model for redeveloping buildings and available lots
- Collaborate with developers to layer funding streams and maximize upper story utilization

Provide Leadership and Strategic Support to Major Initiatives

- Provide guidance and direction on the implantation of the TIGER and EPA planning grants to minimize business disruption and maximize long-term curb appeal
- Further implement the parking study recommendations for long-term parking solutions
- Continually adapt as an organization to ensure relevance and stakeholder satisfaction
- Adopt best practices from cities around the nation in regard to the Main Street Four Points

PROPOSED FIVE-YEAR BUDGET

	Financial Target
Transforming the Talent Pipeline	\$620,000
Economic Development	\$690,000
Community Enhancement	\$310,000
Visitor Attraction	\$ 95,000
Downtown Redevelopment	<u>\$285,000</u>
Total Projected Five-Year Budget	\$2,000,000

DESIRED OUTCOMES FOR GREATER BURLINGTON

How will we know if these efforts are successful? Beyond the metrics outlined within the specific initiatives, there are major outcomes we hope to achieve as a community.

A) Increased Economic Development Activity Due to a Strong Quality Workforce

Workforce is a key factor in nearly every business location decision. We must effectively recruit, develop and retain a workforce that is aligned with the needs of current and future employers. Today, we are losing opportunities because of our talent shortage. Let's build a talent pipeline that wins us projects!

B) A Robust Consumer Economy That Grows Every Year

The shopping, dining, and entertainment options for our community continue to expand. With a robust tourism industry and strong marketing campaign, we should have every expectation that our consumer economy, measured by taxable retail sales, continues to grow above the state average and the rate of inflation. As a community, we deserve the amenities we have, and there is every reason to expect an ever-increasing share of consumer discretionary spending here.

C) Neighborhoods in which Individuals and Families are Choosing to Relocate

Today, there are reports of people choosing to locate elsewhere due to concerns over neighborhoods, schools, and crime. None of those reasons is acceptable. While no single economic development strategy can solve complex societal issues, developing a robust and productive talent pipeline combined with a strategic effort to improve our neighborhoods will result in a housing market in which people are attracted to buying and investing.



LEADERSHIP

Partnering for the Future III's success will require business and community leaders with an interest in the prosperity of Greater Burlington to step forward, engage within this initiative, and exercise financial leadership through substantial private investment. Recruitment of the leadership team and the critical partners necessary to drive this effort forward is underway.

OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

As with any initiative, it must be monitored for success and accountability measures must be established. The Burlington/West Burlington Area Development Foundation will be the custodian of the *Partnering for the Future III* funds and will guide and direct the deployment of those funds for maximum impact. In addition, the Partnership will publish a report each quarter in the organization's newsletter tracking the progress on the initiatives. An annual State of the Economy Luncheon will continue each September to share the success stories, discuss the obstacles and challenges, and report on the established metrics.

CONCLUSION

Just like those before us, it is our time to lead. We must have the vision to propel these initiatives forward, and we hope you will join this effort. For more information, please contact Jason Hutcheson at 319-208-0043 or jhutcheson@greaterburlington.com.



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