

Welcome

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPERS OF IOWA 2026 FALL CONFERENCE

FLOWING AT THE SPEED OF CHANGE

Economic Development, AI,
& Community Readiness

Burlington, Iowa

September 23-25, 2026



THANK YOU TO OUR CONFERENCE SPONSORS AND HOST



HOST



2026 FALL CONFERENCE | SEPT. 23-25
BURLINGTON, IA

SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

Wednesday, September 23

10:00 AM – 2:00 PM	<u>Annual Golf Outing</u>
1:00 PM – 5:00 PM	<u>Registration & Exhibits Open</u>
2:00 PM – 2:45 PM	<u>Through City Collaboration</u>
2:50 PM – 3:40 PM	<u>The Power of Regional Workforce Collaboration</u>
3:45 PM – 4:20 PM	<u>Ready, Set... Collaborate!</u>
4:30 PM – 5:00 PM	<u>New Member & 1st-Time Attendee Orientation</u>
5:00 PM – 7:00 PM	<u>Welcome Reception at TRAX</u>

Thursday, September 24

8:30 AM – 3:00 PM	<u>Registration & Exhibits Open</u>
8:45 AM – 9:00 AM	<u>Welcome Annual Meeting</u>
9:15 AM – 10:15 AM	<u>Making It Happen</u>
10:15 AM – 10:30 AM	<u>Exhibitor & Networking Break</u>
10:30 AM – 11:30 AM	<u>TIF, Urban Renewal, & Iowa's Evolving Development</u>
11:30 AM – 12:15 PM	<u>Lunch & Awards</u>
12:15 PM – 1:00 PM	<u>PDI Legislative Update</u>
1:00 PM – 1:20 PM	<u>Exhibitor & Networking Dessert Reception</u>
1:20 PM – 2:20 PM	<u>Beyond ChatGPT</u>
2:20 PM – 2:40 PM	<u>Exhibitor & Networking Break</u>
2:40 PM – 3:40 PM	<u>Breakout Sessions</u>
3:40 PM – 5:00 PM	<u>Tours</u>
5:30 PM – 7:30 PM	<u>Evening Social at The Busted Cup Brewery</u>
7:30 PM – 9:00 PM	<u>Dinner on your own or Downtown Bar Crawl</u>

Friday, September 25

8:00 AM – 10:00 AM	<u>Registration & Exhibits Open</u>
8:30 AM – 9:15 AM	<u>IEDA Updates</u>
9:15 AM – 10:00 AM	<u>Child Care Solutions</u>
10:15 AM – 11:45 AM	<u>Data Centers & Community Fit</u>
11:45 AM – 12:00 PM	<u>Closing & Adjournment</u>

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2026

10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. | Burlington Golf Club

PDI Annual Golf Outing

The PDI Annual Golf Outing will be hosted at Burlington Golf Club in Burlington, Iowa. The format is a four-person best shot, where all four players tee off and choose the best shot to continue to play. Pin events and team prizes will also be available to participants.



1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. | Great River Event Center | Location: Prefunction

Registration Desk Open

All sessions held at Great River Event Center

2:00 p.m. - 2:45 p.m. | Location: Hall A

Through City Collaboration: Burlington & West Burlington

Speaker: Chad Bird

A breakout on the importance of collaboration and relationship-building in community and economic development, using the partnership between Burlington and West Burlington as a real-world example. This session will explore how neighboring communities can work together to leverage shared strengths, address common challenges, and create opportunities that benefit the entire region. Attendees will gain practical insights into fostering partnerships that strengthen regional growth and long-term success.

2026 FALL CONFERENCE | SEPT. 23-25

BURLINGTON, IA

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2026, *CONTINUED*

All sessions held at Great River Event Center

2:50 p.m. - 3:40 p.m. | Location: Hall A

The Power of Regional Workforce Collaboration: Connecting Counties, Organizations & Workforce Development

Speakers: Amy O'Brien, Emily Benjamin, & Teli Van Rycke

Moderator: Rachel Lindeen

Workforce challenges don't stop at county lines and neither should our solutions. This panel will explore how economic development, education, employers, and workforce partners can collaborate across communities to address shared workforce challenges. Panelists will share practical strategies and real-world examples for building partnerships, engaging employers, and creating greater regional impact.

2:50 p.m. - 3:40 p.m. | Location: Hall A

Ready, Set... Collaborate!

Speakers: Jason Hutcheson & Dennis Fraise

If collaboration were easy, everyone would do it. Everyone talks about regionalism and collaboration. Making it actually work is another story. For more than 15 years, Jason Hutcheson and Dennis Fraise met over breakfast to talk economic development, regional competition, organizational challenges—and one big question: How do you get communities and organizations with different priorities, personalities, boards, and funders to work together? In this candid and practical session, Jason and Dennis will share the lessons, mistakes, and successes that helped shape regional partnerships in Southeast Iowa—and eventually helped spark the creation of Develop This!, the nation's #1 economic development podcast. Together, they'll build a collaboration roadmap for creating a shared vision, understanding the players, putting the right people in the right seats, building trust, avoiding winners and losers, defining success, and creating partnerships that last. Expect real stories, practical takeaways, and some friendly disagreement from two economic developers who have spent decades turning "we should work together" into "here's how we're going to do it."

FLOWING AT THE SPEED OF CHANGE

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AI, & COMMUNITY READINESS

BACK

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2026, *CONTINUED*

4:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. | Location: Hall A

New Member / First-Time Attendees Orientation

Speaker: Lane Till

This session is optional.

Join us for a warm welcome to the Professional Developers of Iowa! This special session is designed to help new members and first-time attendees get the most out of their experience with our organization. Whether you're a seasoned professional or just starting your journey in development, this orientation will provide valuable insights and connections to enhance your participation and professional growth.

5:00 PM – 7:00 PM | TRAX, FunCity Resort

Welcome Reception

On the right **TRAX**

Kick off the conference at TRAX, just steps from your room, inside the FunCity Resort complex. Join fellow attendees for an evening of great food, refreshing drinks, and engaging conversation as we officially launch the conference. Whether you're reconnecting with longtime colleagues or making new connections, this relaxed gathering is the perfect way to settle in.

7:00 p.m. | Dinner On Your Own

Enjoy one of the great places around Burlington to grab a bite for dinner!

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2026

All sessions held at Great River Event Center *(excluding facility tours)*

8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. | Location: Hall A

Breakfast

8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Location: Prefunction
Registration Desk & Exhibitors Open

8:45 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. | Location: Hall A

Welcome & PDI Annual Meeting

9:15 a.m. - 10:15 a.m. | Location: Hall A

Making It Happen: Redevelopment, New Construction, and the Will to Build

Panelists: Jesse Caston, Michael Mohrfeld, Amy Moyner, & Ryan Nagrocki

Moderator: Emily Benjamin

Every project starts with a choice: rehab what's already there or start fresh. Panelists who've led both redevelopment and new construction efforts will unpack the incentives, financing tools, and partnerships that made their projects pencil out, the trade-offs behind each path, and the harder work of getting a community to rally around a shared vision. Whether your community is working with an aging downtown or open ground, you'll leave with practical lessons for building momentum at home.

10:15 - 10:30 a.m. | Location: Prefunction

Exhibitor & Networking Break

Spend time with our fantastic exhibitors and meet some new people.

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2026, *CONTINUED*

All sessions held at Great River Event Center (*excluding facility tours*)

10:30 - 11:30 a.m. | Location: Hall A

TIF, Urban Renewal, and Iowa's Evolving Development

Speakers: Matthew Stoffel and Chip Shultz

A legislative and policy update focused on TIF, urban renewal tools, and Iowa's changing development framework, including how communities should think about project structuring and housing-related objectives. This topic is timely because Iowa's 2026 property tax bill changed key urban renewal/TIF rules, including new limits on TIF duration and recognition of workforce housing as an economic development objective.

11:30 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. | Location: Hall A

Lunch & Awards

12:15 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. | Location: Hall A

Legislative Update

Speakers: Nic Hockenberry, Dave Miller, Jolly Omar, & Josh Laraby

Hear the latest advocacy and policy updates affecting Iowa's economic development industry from the PDI Legislative Committee.

1:00 p.m. - 1:20 p.m. | Location: Prefunction

Exhibitor Reception with Dessert

Hear from the exhibitors and grab a treat!

2026 FALL CONFERENCE | SEPT. 23-25

BURLINGTON, IA

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2026, *CONTINUED*

All sessions held at Great River Event Center (*excluding facility tours*)

1:20 p.m. - 2:20 p.m. | Location: Hall A

Beyond ChatGPT: AI and the New Operating System for Economic Development

Speaker: Katie Milton Jordan

In this keynote, Katie Milton Jordan will help economic-development practitioners move beyond basic AI tool use and understand how artificial intelligence is reshaping the practice of economic development. Drawing from her work as an economic developer, AI educator, and operator of an AI-enabled economic-development organization, Katie will introduce practical thinking lenses for making sense of the AI shift and what it means for communities, businesses, site selectors, and stakeholder expectations. Attendees will leave with a clearer framework for understanding AI's impact on economic development, plus concrete examples of how AI can support the work they already do - from RFI responses and stakeholder communication to inbox management, community positioning, and day-to-day organizational capacity. The session is designed to give practitioners both a strategic view of what is changing and a practical way to recognize where AI can create real capacity inside their own organizations.

2:20 - 2:40 p.m. | Location: Prefunction

Exhibitor & Networking Break

Breakout Session Time!

2:40 p.m. - 3:40 p.m. | Location: Hall B1

Controlled Burn: An Ecologist's Guide to Leading Through Disruption

Speaker: Chris Lee

Ecologists have a word for the fires and floods that reshape a landscape: disturbance. These forces maintain healthy systems, and ecologists use them as management tools. Chris Lee, Organizational Ecologist, brings the principles of land management to the work of leading through change and makes the case that resilience isn't returning to how things were. It's adapting on purpose.

FLOWING AT THE SPEED OF CHANGE

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AI, & COMMUNITY READINESS

BACK

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2026, *CONTINUED*

All sessions held at Great River Event Center (*excluding facility tours*)

2:40 p.m. - 3:40 p.m. | Location: Hall B2

Planning and Preparing for Disaster

Speakers: David Miller, Shalimar Mazetis, & Madeline Strums

When natural disasters strike Iowa communities, economic developers and municipal leaders are forced into high-stakes crisis response overnight. Featuring real-world perspectives from city management, economic development, and state emergency management, this panel shares hard-earned lessons in disaster planning and recovery. Attendees will explore key frameworks, including Incident Command structures, volunteer management, business resilience toolkits, and state/federal financial aid. Discover how to maintain leadership clarity during crisis and leverage recovery efforts to build long-term community resilience using facilitated discussion and robust audience engagement.

2:40 p.m. - 3:40 p.m. | Location: Hall A

AI for Economic Developers — Beyond Brainstorming

Panelists: Andy Sokolovich, Lane Till, Melissa Strovers | Moderator: Katie Milton Jordan

Artificial intelligence is quickly becoming part of the conversation across industries, including economic development. In this moderated panel discussion, Katie Milton Jordan will lead a conversation with Andy Sokolovich, Lane Till, and Melissa Strovers, exploring AI for economic developers beyond basic brainstorming applications. Panelists will share perspectives, experiences, and insights on how AI is being used in the field and what opportunities it may present for economic development professionals. Attendees will gain a practical look at the evolving role of AI and hear diverse viewpoints from industry leaders.

THANK YOU TO OUR HOST!



GREATER BURLINGTON
PARTNERSHIP

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2026, *CONTINUED*

All sessions held at Great River Event Center (*excluding facility tours*)

Let's Explore Burlington!

Choose a Facility Tour from the options below.

Additional Note: Transportation will be provided from tours #2 and #3 to the Evening Social at Busted Cup. Attendees not attending the social will be transported back to the hotel.

4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. | Burlington, Iowa

Tour Option #1: Downtown Burlington

Tour recently updated infrastructure, commercial, and residential developments. This guided walking tour highlights Burlington's downtown improvement projects.

Please note: This tour involves significant walking, and participants will continue on foot to Busted Cup following the tour.

4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. | Burlington, Iowa

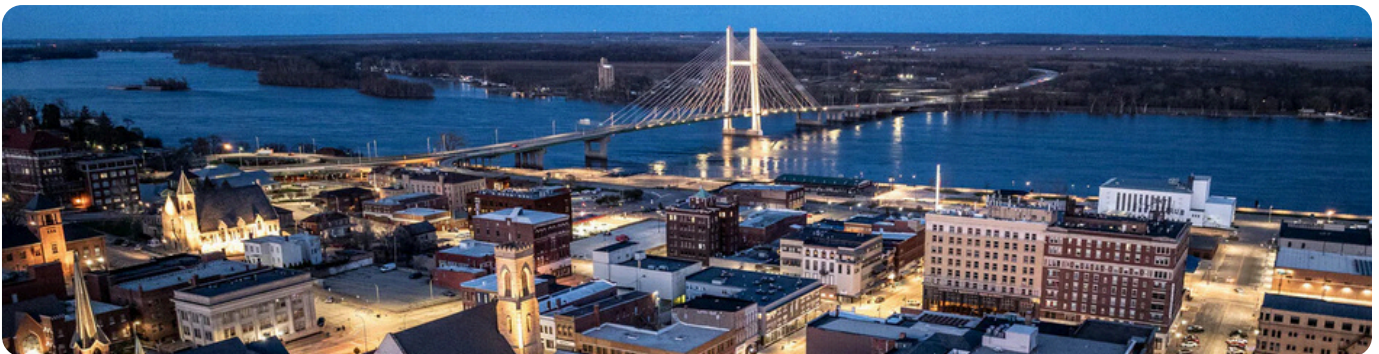
Tour Option #2: Rec Plex / Turf

Enjoy a guided tour of Burlington's Sports & Rec Plex and indoor bubble facility. Followed by a discussion on Recreational Development.

4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. | Burlington, Iowa

Tour Option #3: Business Park

Take a guided tour of the Flint Ridge Business Park to see Burlington's economic development and business growth, and discuss current and future development.



SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2026, *CONTINUED*

5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. | The Busted Cup Brewery

724 Jefferson St, Burlington, IA 52601

EVENING SOCIAL AT THE BUSTED CUP BREWERY



Wrap up the day with an evening social at The Busted Cup Brewery, located in historic downtown Burlington. Enjoy a relaxed atmosphere while connecting with fellow attendees and experiencing one of the community's local restaurant and brewery destinations. It's the perfect opportunity to continue conversations, build new connections, and enjoy an evening in the heart of Burlington.

7:30 p.m. | Dinner On Your Own & Downtown Bar Crawl

Enjoy dinner at one of Burlington's local restaurants, then explore downtown and connect with fellow attendees throughout the evening.

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2026

All sessions held at Great River Event Center

8:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. | Location: Prefunction

Registration Desk & Exhibitors Open

8:00 a.m. | Location: Hall A

Breakfast

8:30 a.m. | Location: Hall A

IEDA Updates: BIG and Certified Sites Program

Speakers: Anne McMahon & Amy Thompson

In this session, you will get an update from IEDA focusing on the new incentive program Business Incentives for Growth (BIG) and Certified Sites. BIG, IEDA's latest state incentive program, is helping Iowa Businesses Expand, Modernize, and Compete. The BIG program helps qualifying businesses offset some of the costs of locating, expanding, or modernizing a facility in Iowa. BIG supports growth in key industries: advanced manufacturing, bioscience, insurance and finance, and technology. Since 2012, Iowa has helped communities strengthen their competitiveness through the Iowa Certified Site Program. As site selection timelines continue to accelerate and communities face varying levels of resources and development readiness, Iowa is evolving its approach. **SiteReady Iowa** builds on the success of the Iowa Certified Site Program by introducing a flexible, three-tier framework that allows communities to participate at a level that matches their readiness today while creating a clear pathway toward full certification. This session will provide an overview of the enhanced program and how to participate.

9:15 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. | Location: Hall A

Child Care Solutions: Lessons Learned from Leaders & a Futuristic Outlook

Speakers: Sheri Penney, Dan Cornelison, Stephanie Fromm

Moderator: Curt Strouth

Child care is a workforce and economic development issue that requires innovative thinking and collaboration. Moderated by Curt Strouth, President & CEO of the Iowa Lakes Corridor Development Corporation, this panel brings together Dan Cornelison, Sheri Penney, and Stephanie Fromm to share lessons learned and explore practical solutions to today's child care challenges. The discussion will focus on public-private partnerships, employer engagement, community collaboration, and legislative opportunities that can help create sustainable child care solutions. Panelists will share what is working, what needs to change, and how communities can think differently about child care moving forward. Attendees will gain practical insights and a futuristic outlook on how child care can be strengthened to support families, businesses, workforce development, and the economic vitality of Iowa communities.

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2026, *CONTINUED*

All sessions held at Great River Event Center

10:15 a.m. - 11:45 a.m. | Location: Hall A

Data Centers and Community Fit —

Is This the Right Opportunity for Your Community?

Speakers: Nathan Overberg, Andy Sokolovich, Mel Pins, & Chaz Allen

A strategic session on how communities should evaluate data center opportunities, with particular attention to community fit, rural implications, infrastructure readiness, land use, water and energy demand, and long-term value. This is one of the hottest topics in economic development right now as AI-driven data center growth is accelerating, power is becoming the key site-selection variable, and communities are being asked to make increasingly complex decisions under time pressure

11:45 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. | Location: Hall A

Closing & Adjournment

THANK YOU &
Drive Safe!

SPEAKERS

Chaz Allen **Executive Director, Iowa Utility Association**

Chaz Allen is Executive Director of the Iowa Utility Association and a former Iowa State Senator and Mayor of Newton. With experience spanning utilities, economic development, and public service, he helps shape Iowa's energy and infrastructure policy. Chaz lives in Newton with his wife, Teri.



Emily Benjamin **President & CEO, Lee County Economic Development Group (LCEDG)**

Emily Benjamin didn't set out to become an economic development leader. Her path wound through agricultural sales, marketing, nonprofit work, and community development before landing her at the helm of Lee County Economic Development Group (LCEDG), where she now serves as President and CEO. That unconventional route turned out to be good training: she knows how to sell an idea, build a coalition, and see it through to results.

Under her leadership, LCEDG became the first Accredited Economic Development Organization (AEDO) in Iowa through IEDC, and she led the consolidation of three legacy economic development organizations into a single, unified countywide EDO. She also spearheaded a successful capital campaign and launched a workforce development partnership with Grow Greater Burlington that has since expanded into a three-county regional collaboration. Emily's approach centers on getting the right people in a room together, whether that's business owners, city leaders, or longtime residents, and finding where their interests align. That instinct extends well beyond her day job: she serves on the boards of Professional Developers of Iowa, the Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission, Great River Housing Trust Fund, and Lee County Conservation, among others, giving her a wide-angle view of the region she works to grow. Her focus stays practical: bring in opportunity, keep what makes Lee County worth investing in, and keep the momentum going.

Chad Bird **City Manager, City of Burlington**

Chad Bird is the City Manager of Burlington, Iowa, bringing more than two decades of municipal management experience to his work in community and economic development. An ICMA Credentialed Manager with a master's degree in public administration, Chad has led major infrastructure investments, downtown and commercial corridor improvements, housing initiatives, utility projects, and community development efforts throughout his career.

He is particularly passionate about building strong partnerships among local governments, businesses, economic development organizations, and community stakeholders, and is known for an approach grounded in open communication, trust, and collaboration.



SPEAKERS

Jesse Caston, CPM **Partner, CDM Real Estate Services**

Jesse is a partner in CDM Real Estate Services with more than 20 years of experience in the real estate industry. His expertise spans commercial and residential real estate, asset management, and construction management, providing him with a well-rounded perspective on the opportunities and challenges associated with each property. Jesse's experience in both brokerage and property management allows him to evaluate properties from all angles.



He has been involved in a wide range of lease, sale, and land transactions and has served on acquisition teams for multi-million-dollar investment transactions. Jesse works with a diverse portfolio of current and prospective clients, ranging from national corporations to local and regional investors and businesses. His broad industry knowledge, transaction experience, and hands-on approach allow him to provide thoughtful guidance and practical solutions tailored to each client's unique goals.

Dan Cornelison **Managing Principal of Inspired Kids Academy**



Dan Cornelison is a fifth-generation Iowan, retired businessman, attorney, and real estate developer dedicated to solving Iowa's child care crisis. After leading the development of a 12,000-square-foot child care center in Van Meter that serves more than 160 children, he became a strong advocate for expanding access to quality child care across Iowa. Drawing on decades of experience in business, law, real estate development, and operations, Cornelison works to advance public-private solutions that strengthen Iowa's workforce, support economic growth, and help communities thrive.

Dennis Fraise **Host, Develop This! Podcast**

Dennis Fraise is the host of the #1 economic development podcast Develop This! and the retired president and CEO of the Lee County (Iowa) Economic Development Group. He is a progressive economic development professional with an eclectic background, including being a business owner who has generated more than \$3 million in sales. Dennis has led not one but two economic development organizations in setting Guinness World Records.



He is a national award-winning marketing professional, public speaker, facilitator, and photographer, and a sought-after thought leader on workforce development issues, strategies to build collaborations in communities, and creating organizational excellence. Dennis is a graduate of the Oklahoma University Economic Development Institute and a Certified Economic Developer. He served on the PDI Board of Directors and is a current member of the IEDC Board of Directors.

SPEAKERS



Stephanie Fromm

Executive Director, Winneshiek County Development and Tourism

Stephanie Fromm leads Winneshiek County Development and Tourism, where she works to strengthen the local economy and advance business, workforce, housing, tourism, and community development throughout Winneshiek County. Since joining the organization in 2015, she has helped lead a variety of innovative community projects and funding initiatives while also representing Decorah Jobs, owner of the 180-acre Decorah Business Park.

Her recent work includes workforce housing development, major community and tourism projects, and the development of the Sunflower Child Development & Discovery Center, a 27,000-square-foot child care and children's museum facility that opened in 2024. Fromm is passionate about demonstrating how strong partnerships, creative funding strategies, and community vision can turn ambitious ideas into projects that create lasting community impact.

Nic Hockenberry

Director of Regional Development, Greater Dubuque Development Corp.

Nic Hockenberry provides strategic leadership for regional initiatives that strengthen regional competitiveness, talent attraction, and community vitality. He supports business retention and expansion efforts alongside Greater Dubuque Development's business services team, and partners with community and regional stakeholders to advance Greater Dubuque Development's strategic priorities through data-informed planning and collaboration, helping create the conditions where YOU can be great here in Dubuque.



Jason Hutcheson

Vice President of Foundation & Legislative Affairs, Great River Health

Jason Hutcheson is a native of Southeast Iowa and currently serves as the Vice President of Foundation & Legislative Affairs for Great River Health. Over the last two decades, he has helped advance economic and community development initiatives across the region, including leadership roles with Louisa Development Group and the Greater Burlington Partnership.

He remains actively engaged in the profession as a volunteer board member of the Lee County Economic Development Group. Jason was an original co-host of the nationally recognized Develop This! podcast and has served as President of both Professional Developers of Iowa and the Iowa Chamber Alliance.

SPEAKERS

Chris Lee

**Founder & Host, Parks & Restoration Podcast
Executive Director, Des Moines County Conservation**

Chris Lee is an expert in organizational culture. He is a sought after speaker, leadership consultant, host of the Parks and Restoration Podcast, and a regular columnist for newspapers in Des Moines County, Iowa. In addition to his leadership consulting, he has served as the Executive Director for Des Moines County Conservation since 2013, and is a recognized leader and award-winning business person known for his unique, nature-inspired approach to cultivating healthy organizational ecosystems.



Rachel Lindeen

Executive Vice President, Mount Pleasant Area Chamber Alliance

Rachel Lindeen is Executive Vice President for the Mount Pleasant Area Chamber Alliance. With experience with both Chambers and Economic Development, she is tasked with leading the Mount Pleasant and Henry County community. In her tenure in the Chamber and Economic Development field, she has managed workforce and talent recruitment, led government relations activities, worked on regional workforce initiatives, and led numerous events and volunteers.

Shalimar Mazetis

Economic Development Specialist, Bureau of Indian Affairs

If there is a rural community with potential, Shalimar Mazetis is already figuring out how to help it thrive. As an Economic Development Specialist for the Bureau of Indian Affairs Division of Energy and Mineral Development, she works alongside Tribal nations to turn resources into long-term economic strength. Her path to federal work grew out of years spent on the ground as the Manager of Rural Development for Advance Southwest Iowa.



Backed by a Master's degree in Industrial/Organizational Psychology from Seattle Pacific University and top-tier credentials from the OU Economic Development Institute, Shalimar combines the psychology of business with hands-on strategy. Her expertise keeps her in high demand. She serves on the Board of Directors for the National Rural Economic Development Association, the Professional Developers of Iowa, and the Governor's Empower Rural Iowa Initiative. Deeply rooted in Iowa's rural mission, she is now bringing that same momentum to Tribal economic development across the country. Outside the office, Shalimar spends her time exploring new places with her favorite travel companions: her daughter, Jaeger, and her dog, Topsy.

SPEAKERS



Anne McMahon
Business Development Manager, IEDA

Anne McMahon joined the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) in 2024 as a Business Development Manager on the Global Business Team. In her role, Anne works closely with businesses and communities across western, central, and northwest Iowa to support economic growth and expansion. She helps connect companies with the resources and opportunities they need to grow in Iowa while also supporting efforts to attract new domestic and international investment to the state.

Anne is passionate about building strong relationships with businesses and community partners and helping with positioning Iowa as a competitive place to invest, grow, and create jobs. Through her work with existing industries, business prospects, and economic development initiatives, she plays an important role in advancing opportunities for communities and companies across the state.

David Miller
Executive Director, Homes for Iowa

David Miller is the Executive Director of Homes for Iowa, a statewide nonprofit addressing Iowa's housing shortage through innovative public-private partnerships that expand attainable homeownership while creating workforce training and second-chance employment opportunities for incarcerated individuals. In his role, David works with developers, communities, nonprofits, and state leaders to advance housing solutions that strengthen Iowa's workforce and local economies.



With more than 20 years of experience in business, entrepreneurship, housing, economic development, and community leadership, David is recognized as one of Iowa's leading voices on workforce housing, rural development, and disaster recovery. Prior to joining Homes for Iowa, he served as Community & Development Director for the City of Rock Valley, where he helped lead the development of more than 400 housing units, including workforce housing, senior housing, assisted living, and greenfield residential developments, while guiding long-term recovery efforts following multiple federally declared flood disasters. David serves as Treasurer of the Professional Developers of Iowa (PDI), is a member of the PDI Legislative Committee, serves on the Iowa Housing Partnership (IHP) Board of Directors and Legislative Committee, and is a gubernatorial appointee to the Empower Rural Iowa (ERI) Task Force. He is also co-host of the Storm Tested Leadership podcast, where he explores leadership, resilience, and lessons learned from leaders who have navigated significant challenges.



Katie Milton Jordan, MBA, CBI, CEPA
Founder, SimpleEDO.ai

Katie Milton Jordan is the Founder of SimpleEDO.ai and an AI execution strategist for economic development organizations and business leaders. A former economic development executive and business intermediary, she helps teams move beyond fragmented AI experiments into accountable, AI-enabled execution without adding staff or sacrificing human judgment. Katie speaks nationwide on AI, leadership, and execution under constraint.

SPEAKERS

Michael Mohrfeld **Owner & President, Mohrfeld Electric Inc.**

Michael Mohrfeld is an entrepreneur, contractor, and real estate developer with nearly two decades of experience building businesses and developing projects throughout Southeast Iowa. Michael began his career in 2006 at age 23, founding Mohrfeld Electric and growing the company from a small electrical contracting operation into an established regional contractor that now employs 65 people. In 2014, he founded Green Oak Development, initially focusing on single-family residential construction within a 50-lot subdivision in Fort Madison.



Green Oak Development has since expanded into a diverse portfolio of residential and community development projects, including higher-end condominium development and the build-out of an existing residential development in West Point. Over the last three years, the company has significantly expanded into multifamily construction, redevelopment, and property management, with projects throughout Keokuk, Fort Madison, and Burlington. A key strength of Michael's development approach is the team's extensive in-house capabilities. Significant portions of project design and construction are performed internally, including site development, carpentry, plumbing, and electrical work. This integrated approach provides greater control over design, costs, scheduling, and overall project execution. From 2020 through 2022, Michael's team led the development of the Fort Madison Marina, a unique public-private project requiring the coordination of public and private funding, design, permitting, and construction. Today, Michael continues to focus on creating new housing, redeveloping underutilized properties, and pursuing projects that contribute to the long-term growth and revitalization of Southeast Iowa.



Amy Moyner **Executive Director, Downtown Partners, Inc.**

Amy Moyner is the Executive Director of Downtown Partners, Inc., Burlington's Main Street organization, where she leads efforts in downtown revitalization, placemaking, tourism, community engagement, and small business support. A Burlington native, Amy earned degrees from Southeastern Community College and the University of Iowa in Communications and Business.

Before returning home, she built her career in retail and operations management in the Chicago area with companies including Sears, Bloomingdale's, The Bon-Ton, and Empire Today. Today, Amy is passionate about creating vibrant spaces and experiences that build community pride, strengthen connections, and make Downtown Burlington a place people want to visit, invest in, and call home.

Amy O'Brien **President & CEO, Greater Burlington Partnership**

Amy O'Brien has been President & CEO of Greater Burlington Partnership for the past 2 years. She brings a diverse professional background in executive leadership positions in healthcare administration, higher education, hospitality management, and economic development. Throughout her career, she has developed a strong foundation in organizational leadership and community engagement. She is passionate about building partnerships and creating opportunities that position the community for long-term success.



SPEAKERS

Ryan Nagrocki **President, Midwest Realty Group**

Ryan Nagrocki is an Iowa real estate developer, investor, broker, and entrepreneur with experience spanning commercial lending, construction, property management, brokerage, and redevelopment. Before expanding his work in real estate development and investment, Ryan spent 15 years as a commercial lender, providing him with a strong foundation in project finance, credit analysis, deal structure, and the financial realities behind successful development.



As an owner of Midwest Realty Group, a vertically integrated real estate company, Ryan is involved across multiple aspects of the real estate lifecycle, including development, construction, brokerage, property management, investment, and operations. Through Midwest and affiliated companies, he has been involved in projects ranging from residential construction and multifamily housing to commercial properties, adaptive reuse, and redevelopment opportunities throughout Southeast Iowa. Based in Burlington, Ryan brings a hands-on, owner-operator perspective to development. His experience combines acquisition, financing, construction, leasing, brokerage, property operations, and long-term investment strategy. He is particularly interested in finding creative ways to reposition underutilized properties, revitalize downtown areas, and create projects that strengthen communities.



Nathan Overberg **Government Law Practice Area, Ahlers & Cooney, PC**

Nathan is a member of the Government Law Practice Area at the law firm of Ahlers & Cooney, PC and focuses his practice on Urban Renewal & Economic Development. Nathan advises public entities as they work to creatively renew and develop their municipalities and create new jobs through the use of tax incentives. He works frequently with other attorneys on financings related to economic development projects.

His work often involves a variety of public and private sector constituencies and it requires an appreciation for the perspective of each player with a stake in his clients' projects. It also requires the ability to work tenaciously and expediently to bring a project to fruition.

Mel Pins **Business Assistance Coordinator, Iowa Department of Natural Resources**

Mel Pins has over 35 years of career experience in environmental regulatory compliance, including his employment with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources for the last 30 years. During his tenure at the DNR Mel has managed a number of solid waste, recycling and contaminated site cleanup programs and initiatives. Mel's DNR duties include assisting businesses and industry with environmental permitting questions prior to new project development.



Mel has also served the City of Des Moines for the last 19 years as a member of the Zoning Board of Adjustment, and he has been the Board chair for the last 14 years. Mel's education includes a degree in Urban Planning from Iowa State University, with an emphasis in environmental law and policy.

SPEAKERS

Sheri Penney **Child Care Economic Leader**

Sheri Penney is a child care economic leader who brings experience across the full spectrum of the child care field, including direct service, program administration, and systems-level work. Sheri has supported national initiatives and senior leaders through executive operations, project management, and stakeholder engagement, helping to translate policy and strategy into effective implementation.



She has also contributed to policy research, including work with the Common Sense Institute focused on child care challenges and economic solutions. This groundbreaking report led to the Iowa Child Care Solutions Fund. In addition to her professional work, Sheri is engaged in education, governance, and community leadership. She serves as Director for District 3 with the Iowa Association of School Boards, serves as a member of the Unified Board Alliance Advisory Committee under COSSBA, serves on her local public-school board, and is a member of the Head Start Policy Council in North Iowa.



Andy Sokolovich **President & CEO, Grow Clinton**

Andy Sokolovich is the dynamic President & CEO of Grow Clinton, a nonprofit that's like a superhero for economic development, business support, and tourism in the vibrant Greater Clinton Region of Iowa and Illinois. As a proud U.S. Air Force veteran and former air traffic controller, Andy brings a unique flair to his mission.

He's all about forging exciting partnerships, cheering on entrepreneurs, and sprinkling a little magic into community development and placemaking to enhance everyone's quality of life. Since landing in Clinton in 2012, he's been on a thrilling quest to attract new industries, breathe life into Downtown, and boost regional tourism, all while rallying the community around a shared vision for a bright and collaborative future.

Matthew Stoffel, CFA **Director, PFM Financial Advisors LLC**

Matt joined PFM in 2012 after spending six years at Pella Corporation in manufacturing and supply chain management and then two years teaching at Murray State University in Murray, Kentucky. He is a director serving municipal clients ranging in size and complexity from small local governments to large state departments and regional water/wastewater authorities.



Recognized as a leading expert in sewer and water utilities, Matt brings deep expertise and practical insight that consistently benefits both colleagues and clients. Matt is known for his outstanding customer service and his ability to anticipate client needs and deliver meaningful solutions.

SPEAKERS

Curt Strouth

President & CEO, Iowa Lakes Corridor Development Corporation

Curt Strouth serves as President & CEO of the Iowa Lakes Corridor Development Corporation, where he leads regional economic development efforts across Buena Vista, Clay, Dickinson, and Emmet counties. Since joining the Corridor, Curt has focused on business development, workforce development, housing, child care, entrepreneurship, and strengthening partnerships between businesses, communities, and regional organizations.



Prior to joining the Iowa Lakes Corridor, Curt spent 12 years in Sheldon, Iowa, serving as the Community Development Director, where he was actively involved in community and economic development efforts. His experience in Sheldon provided a strong foundation in working with businesses, community leaders, and local partners to support community growth and development. Curt is passionate about creating opportunities for businesses and communities across Northwest Iowa and believes that strong relationships and regional collaboration are essential to long-term success. Through his work with the Corridor, he has helped lead initiatives including the Build My Future career exploration event, Homegrown Talent Initiative, Okoboji Entrepreneurial Institute, business retention and expansion efforts, and regional economic development projects.



Melissa Strovers

Executive Director, Poweshiek Economic Development Collaborative

Melissa Strovers is Executive Director of the Poweshiek Economic Development Collaborative, leading countywide economic development across nine communities. Her work spans entrepreneurship, housing, workforce, site development, and regional collaboration. Using collective impact, she convenes leaders to identify opportunities, align efforts, and share resources.

Before joining Poweshiek Development, Melissa spent 14 years as Grinnell College's Director of Community Development. She led the nationally recognized Grinnell Education Partnership and facilitated strategic planning for Build a Better Grinnell 2030 and community organizations. She is a founding board member of Prairie Thrift, a nonprofit store created to activate a downtown storefront and reinvest proceeds in revitalization. Melissa has led numerous strategic planning efforts for nonprofit organizations and presented at conferences including the Iowa Nonprofit Summit, International Town & Gown Association, Anchor Institutions Task Force, and countywide nonprofit gatherings on collaboration, productive meetings, partnerships, and grant writing. She holds an MPA from Drake University, a BA in Mass Communications, and is a graduate of Leadership Iowa.

SPEAKERS

Madeline Sturms

**Assistant City Manager/Community Development Director,
City of Pleasant Hill**

Madeline Sturms has served the City of Pleasant Hill since 2013, advancing from Associate Planner/Stormwater Coordinator to Senior Planner, Community Development Director, and, in 2022, Assistant City Manager/Community Development Director. Previously, she was a Regional Planner with the Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission in Burlington.



Sturms holds a B.S. in Community and Regional Planning from Iowa State University and an M.P.A. from Drake University. She is a Certified Public Manager, a Certified Economic Developer (CEcD), and a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP). An active leader in professional and community organizations, Sturms has served as President and now Past President of the American Planning Association Iowa Chapter and participates in numerous regional planning, economic development, and civic organizations. Her recognitions include the Business Record's Forty Under 40 Class of 2020 and the Lynn Jorgensen Chapter Leadership Award from the American Planning Association.



Amy Thompson **Program Manager, IEDA**

Amy Thompson is a Program Manager with the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA), where she oversees the IEDA Certified Site Program, coordinating the industrial site certification process with site consultants and applicants across the state. She also manages Iowa's statewide LOIS building and site database and leads the IASourceLink Program in partnership with the University of Northern Iowa's John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center

(UNI JPEC) to connect entrepreneurs, startups, and small businesses with financial and technical resources throughout Iowa. A native of rural North Iowa, Amy is passionate about supporting community and economic development in rural areas. She serves on the board of the Iowa Rural Development Council and has spent more than 20 years working with economic developers, community leaders, and small businesses to advance economic growth and opportunity across Iowa. Amy holds a Bachelor of Arts in Entrepreneurship from Buena Vista University and a Master of Public Administration from Drake University.

Teli Van Rycke

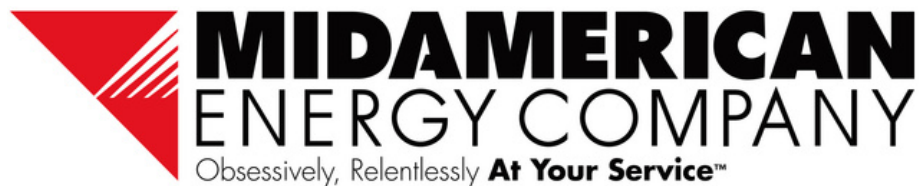
Regional Director of Workforce Innovation, Greater Burlington Partnership

Teli Van Rycke serves as Regional Director of Workforce Innovation for the Greater Burlington Partnership, leading workforce development initiatives across Des Moines County and Southeast Iowa. With experience in workforce development and a decade in public education, she works to strengthen talent pipelines, connect businesses and schools, and develop and retain local talent. Having grown up just across the river, Teli has a deep connection to



the Greater Burlington community and is passionate about creating opportunities that help people build careers and communities thrive. Teli holds an associate degree from Southeastern Community College and bachelor's and master's degrees from Western Illinois University. She is an active community leader, serving with the Burlington Rotary Club, Des Moines County CEO Board, and Eastern Iowa Workforce Development Board

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