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2022 WEDA Community and Economic Development Award Winners Announced

La Crosse, WI – The Wisconsin Economic Development Association (WEDA) today announced the four winners of its annual Community and Economic Development Awards (CEDA). The CEDA Awards were established by WEDA to recognize and celebrate businesses, projects, and organizations that are making significant contributions to Wisconsin’s economy. Winners were unveiled and celebrated at the 2022 CEDA Awards Ceremony, which was held on Sept. 29 as part of WEDA’s Fall Best Practices Conference in La Crosse, WI.

“From exciting redevelopment projects to creative workforce development initiatives and comprehensive business expansion efforts, economic developers and their partners play a critical role in the Wisconsin economy. Unfortunately, they are often unsung heroes who are rarely acknowledged for their tremendous work to promote growth and prosperity,” said Mary Perry, WEDA President and CEO. “Thankfully, the CEDA awards offers a great opportunity to shine a spotlight on economic development and the forward-thinking programs, projects, and businesses that strengthen communities across Wisconsin. WEDA is thrilled to congratulate both the winners and finalists.”

Earlier this month, three outstanding economic development projects were nominated in each of the four following CEDA categories: **Business Retention and Expansion**; **Economic Development Initiative**; **Real Estate Redevelopment and Reuse**; and **Talent Attraction, Development, and Retention**. Today, the following winners were announced in each category:

- **Business Retention and Expansion** – This award honors innovative economic development projects where communities have successfully mobilized to help retain and potentially expand the operations of an existing business critical to the economic vitality of the community.
 - **CEDA AWARD WINNER:**

Mason Companies – *The family-owned Mason Companies began making boots and shoes in the early 1900s in Chippewa Falls, WI. The company launched their first website in 1999 and since then the company has expanded beyond shoes into apparel, household goods, and beauty products, becoming one of the top 250 e-commerce companies in the United States, employing more than 500 people. To accommodate the growth and need for future expansion, Mason Companies worked with local governments and economic development partners to find a home in the Lake Wissota Business Park for a new \$60 million, 425,000 square foot fulfillment center, with plans for the building to eventually grow to 975,000 square feet and include a new corporate office building.*

- **Economic Development Initiative** – This award honors innovative community and economic development efforts that successfully promote growth and prosperity in Wisconsin communities.
 - **CEDA AWARD WINNER:**

Jackson County Child Care Network – *The lack of quality childcare in Jackson County was a growing concern, creating a significant barrier to employment and negatively impacting economic growth in the region. Families were struggling to find quality care, often being*

placed on multiple year waiting lists, and employers were faced with over \$2.5 million in lost productivity. To address this problem, the Jackson County Childcare Network was formed in 2019 as a 501c3 business-led organization dedicated increasing the availability of quality childcare in the county. Using local American Recovery Plan Act funds, the Network offers childcare provider retention bonuses, and plans are being developed to create 500 additional childcare slots in the community.

- **Real Estate Redevelopment and Reuse** – This award honors innovative real estate redevelopment or reuse projects that have had a positive impact on a community’s economy, including job growth and increased tax base.

- **CEDA AWARD WINNER:**

Waterfront Hotel – *In 2004, the City of Prairie du Chien adopted its Downtown Development Master Plan and worked together with the Redevelopment Authority and Prairie du Chien Main Street to acquire and remediate a contaminated property that was identified as a prime a location for redevelopment. The site attracted local entrepreneurs who brought to life their vision for the Waterfront Hotel and Backwater Bar & Grill . The 57-room, three-story hotel of approximately 30,000 square feet is positioned as a community hotel, serving local businesses and residents, as well as visitors. The project has resulted in over \$2.3 million of new assessed value as well as 8 full-time and 37 part-time jobs. This project was supported by a WEDC Community Development Investment Grant.*

- **Talent Attraction, Development, and Retention** – This award honors initiatives or programs that have driven successful talent development efforts to strengthen the Wisconsin workforce.

- **CEDA AWARD WINNER:**

Chippewa Valley Technical College RESTORE Program – *Recognizing the need to assist local employers struggling to hire qualified manufacturing workers, the Chippewa Valley Technical College, Chippewa Economic Development Corporation, and other local organizations collaborated to develop the Restoring Employment through Support, Training, Outreach, Recruitment, and Education project. The RESTORE project uses a multi-pronged approach to address the continuing need for skilled workers across the Chippewa Valley’s manufacturing sector by focusing on outreach, short-term training, and contextualized and work-based learning opportunities. The program has secured financial support from over 20 manufacturing companies and was awarded a \$10 million Workforce Innovation Grant. Site work has begun on a 20,000 square foot facility that will house the RESTORE program, with construction slated to be completed by February 2023.*

2022 CEDA nominated projects were screened and the winners selected by an impartial panel of judges comprised of WEDA members and partners.

2022 CEDA Award sponsors included the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC); Xcel Energy; Madison Gas & Electric; U.S. Bank; Dairyland Power Cooperative; First-Ring Industrial Redevelopment Enterprise (FIRE); WE Energies; and Wisconsin Public Service.

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