Advance Pottawatomie 2030

Pottawatomie County Economic Development Corporation

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Executive Summary

Introduction
Pottawatomie County Economic Development Corporation's strategic plan, *Advance Pottawatomie 2030*, presents a comprehensive approach to driving economic growth, enhancing infrastructure, fostering regional collaboration, supporting small businesses, and developing the workforce. The plan centers on the organization's five key objectives, with activities and performance metrics aligned to each goal. It also integrates insights from key partner documents, such as *Plan Pottawatomie 2040* and the regional *Economic Growth Plan* recently completed by the Manhattan Chamber of Commerce.

Vision
Our vision is to create a thriving, connected community where innovation and collaboration drive economic success for all.

Strategic Objectives

1. **Business Attraction and Retention**
    - **Attract and retain businesses** in key sectors through strategic marketing, proactive lead generation, and collaborative investment initiatives, while promoting a growth-focused mindset in local government and fostering intergovernmental planning.
    - **Enhance investor and business engagement** with regular meetings, feedback surveys, and tailored support, and connect them with resources and opportunities.
2. **Infrastructure Enhancement**
    - **Lead growth initiatives** in Blue Township and along the Highway 24 corridor by organizing community forums, providing public information resources, and taking an active role in guiding development in these areas.
    - **Maximize infrastructure funding** by creating a "Grant Opportunity Calendar" that aligns projects with economic priorities, coordinating with grant writers and municipalities to secure targeted grants for county-wide enhancements, such as industrial park improvements.
3. **Regional and Organizational Cooperation**
    - **Launch and promote** the **"Buy Build Grow Pott. Co." initiative** as a county-wide call to action, driving community engagement through events, social media, and media outreach, and highlighting small community-led projects to foster local pride and active participation in regional development.
    - **Strengthen regional cooperation** through partnerships with neighboring counties, quarterly collaboration councils, and cross-county planning for projects like the Highway 24 Corridor. Foster ongoing communication via events, scorecard updates, and resources, while spotlighting communities and residents across the county to build unity and shared goals.
4. **Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support**

- **Strengthen small business support** through partnerships with SBDC and Innovate 24, promoting entrepreneurial programs, and facilitating new and existing e-community loans with targeted outreach.
- **Measure and enhance impact** by setting performance metrics for e-community loans, tracking job creation and business growth, and providing semi-annual reports to optimize support for local businesses.

5. **Workforce Development**
    - **Support housing and childcare accessibility** through collaboration on diverse housing projects, community-specific housing assessments, case studies of successful developments, and initiatives to expand affordable childcare options, including a proposed childcare stipend benefit for employees.
    - **Enhance workforce development** by supporting WorkKeys testing, educational sponsorships, and partnerships with schools and local organizations, fostering career readiness and growth opportunities for youth and community members across the county.

Financial Overview

The organization's budget is strategically aligned with our objectives, ensuring efficient use of resources to maximize impact. Funding is allocated to key initiatives, supporting our mission to drive economic prosperity.

Conclusion

By working together with our partners and leveraging our strengths, we aim to create a prosperous future for all residents.

PCEDC Mission, Vision, Values

In the fall of 2023, the PCEDC board of directors worked to revise and polish the vision and mission of the organization, drawing upon original values and goals to create focus for the future. At that time, a vision was selected, reading, “County-wide economic prosperity through partnerships.”

Proposed Revised Vision Statement

A thriving, connected community where innovation and collaboration fuel economic prosperity for all.

This revised vision statement:

1. Evokes a Sense of Community: It emphasizes the importance of a connected and thriving community, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose.
2. Highlights Innovation: It leverages the R&D engine of Kansas State University and partnership with Manhattan Area Technology Center, suggesting that innovation is key to economic prosperity.
3. Fosters Collaboration: It underscores the importance of partnerships and collaborative growth, aligning with the mission statement.
4. Inspires Prosperity: It moves beyond the technical aspects of partnerships to focus on the broader, aspirational goal of economic prosperity for all, making it more inclusive and motivational.

This statement aligns with the strategic objectives, creating a cohesive narrative that connects day-to-day actions with a larger, inspiring purpose.

Revised Vision: A thriving, connected community where innovation and collaboration fuel economic prosperity for all.

Mission Statement: To achieve county-wide economic prosperity through strategic partnerships and collaborative growth.

The strategic plan is built around five key objectives:

1. **Attract and retain businesses** through the creation of a pro-business climate that draws upon the R&D engine of Kansas State University and brings together private and public sectors for this purpose.
2. **Support the enhancement of infrastructure** to business and industrial parks but also roads, bridges, utilities, housing and core redevelopment that will be needed to accomplish the first objective.
3. **Promote organizational and regional cooperation** through enhanced communication, coordination and marketing with the Greater Manhattan Economic Partnership (GMEP) as well as enhanced cooperation between Pottawatomie County and City Governments

of Pottawatomie County for private and public funding of projects that will improve the county as a whole.
4. **Aid in the development of small business and entrepreneurship** that is recognized as the lifeblood of small rural communities by guiding them to best practices training, mentorship and low interest loans for startups.
5. **Assist in the development of a workforce** through enhanced vocational and technical training that will put into action the purpose of these business endeavors.

Situation Overview

Current Situation

Pottawatomie County's population has been steadily growing and is on track to meet projected numbers—provided there is sufficient housing available. However, over the past decade, the Riley County side of the greater Manhattan area has seen minimal economic growth. The recent *Economic Growth Plan* indicates that this stagnation is edging toward decline. This presents an opportunity to focus regional growth in Pottawatomie County, but it will require partnership, collaboration, and a mindset shift at the local government level.

The strategic planning process included:

1. Discovery
    a. Organization Mission, Vision, and Objectives
    b. Resources Available/ Budget (Pottawatomie County operating budget plus Advance Pottawatomie funds)
    c. Stakeholder Input
        i. Investor Survey
        ii. Stakeholder Conversations
    d. Assessment
        i. SWOT Analysis
        ii. Plan Pottawatomie County 2040
        iii. Economic Growth Plan (Manhattan Area Chamber of Commerce, October 2024)
2. Strategic Development and Implementation Planning
    a. Key Objectives and Strategies
    b. Performance Metrics

SWOT Analysis

Identified strengths include partnerships like the Greater Manhattan Economic Partnership (GMEP), while weaknesses involve potential focus issues due to competing priorities. Opportunities lie in bridging stakeholder gaps and educating the public, while threats include political tensions and economic shifts. High-priority strategies include building relationships with new county commissioners, positioning PCEDC as a thought leader, facilitating collaboration across communities, and building relationships and collaborative opportunities to help expand and attract businesses.

Abbreviated SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
● Greater Manhattan Economic Partnership as a coordinated effort with experienced and highly knowledgeable team ● Areas of planned development such as industrial parks and subdivisions ● Established relationships with community partners ● Some engaged communities (within themselves, not necessarily with each other)	● Potential for lack of focus due to competing priorities ● Perception in the county that much of the resources and attention are focused on Hwy 24 ● Silos: City of Manhattan, City of Wamego, Riley County, Pottawatomie County, various chambers, various organizations working without much collaboration
Opportunities	**Threats**
● Bridge building (figuratively) amongst the various stakeholders ● Population growth projections ● Educating and informing the community on topics that could build understanding and unity ● Relationship building throughout the county amongst government entities	● Stagnant growth due to lack of housing ● Manhattan stagnant growth ● Workforce decline with Caterpillar closing ● Jeffrey Energy Center units closing ● Territorial ego clashing

See full Initial Assessment & Priorities as Appendix A on pages 20-23.

Plan Pottawatomie County 2040 Summarized

Plan Pottawatomie County 2040:The Future County Report is a strategic plan developed by Kendig Keast Collaborative and adopted by Pottawatomie County on August 19, 2019. It was intended to guide future development, redevelopment and community enhancement efforts, serving as a framework to 2040. The comprehensive plan resulted from an 18-month planning and citizen involvement process.

Plan Pottawatomie County 2040's goal as stated in the document is to guide future development, redevelopment, and community enhancement preserving history, culture, and quality of life for current and future residents.

Included in the document are population projections that Pottawatomie's 2040 population will fall within a forecast range of 33,860 to 36,081 people (34,971 as a midpoint), an increase of 11,310 residents from 2016 and will require 4,189 additional housing units.

Plan Objectives:

- Balance land uses and services throughout the county.
- Ensure adequate public facilities to meet demands of future development and redevelopment.
- Achieve and maintain a development pattern that reflects the values of the county and which ensures a balanced tax base between residential and non-residential development.
- Enhance perception and image of the County.
- Involve local citizens in the process.

Plan Guiding Principles:

- Quality-Focused
- Collaborative
- Transparent
- Adaptable

See Plan Pottawatomie County 2040 Implementation guide as Appendix B on pages 23-27.

Advance Pottawatomie Investor Input

A fundraising campaign launched last year secured commitments from 65 investors—business leaders and stakeholders from across the county—pledging a total of $1,304,000 over the next four years. These investors have provided valuable input through an online survey, the Annual Investors Meeting, and individual conversations.

Investor Survey Results

Satisfaction and Recommendation

- **Investment Satisfaction**: Respondents generally feel satisfied with their decision to invest in Advance Pottawatomie, with an average score of 81 and a median of 86.
- **Likelihood to Recommend**: Respondents showed high likelihood to recommend investing in PCEDC, with an average score of 87 and a median of 97. One low outlier impacted these averages.

Improvement Suggestions

- Improve engagement with investors and community stakeholders by implementing a quarterly or biannual “Investor and Board Update” meeting. During these meetings, board members and investors will review updates on the strategic plan, discuss ongoing projects, and provide direct feedback to shape PCEDC’s initiatives. This approach not only enhances transparency but also ensures that investor contributions align with county growth objectives. Additionally, an annual report summarizing PCEDC’s impact will be distributed to all investors, keeping them informed and connected to the organization’s progress.

Opportunities for Involvement

- **Opportunities for Involvement**: Respondents were generally satisfied (average score of 84) with their opportunities to get involved in Advance Pottawatomie.
- **Preferred Communication**: The top requests included a regular investor newsletter, in-person investor forums, and updates on social media.

Suggestions for Improvement

- Respondents suggested PCEDC could better serve by supporting fiscal discussions, sharing growth opportunities, promoting infrastructure, and educating the public on the need for increasing the county’s tax base.

Business Outlook

- **2024 Outlook**: Respondents averaged a confidence score of 80 for their business outlook in 2024.

- **2027 Outlook**: The average confidence score remained at 80 for longer-term (2027) outlooks.

Regional Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT)

- **Strengths**: Population growth, availability of land, collaboration, quality workforce, and access to education and K-State resources.
- **Weaknesses**: Lack of central communication, limited housing and workforce, high housing costs, and insufficient cooperation among government entities.
- **Opportunities**: Potential for energy development, business growth, regional expansion, and leveraging assets like K-State and Fort Riley.
- **Threats**: Challenges include apathy, dependence on government institutions (like K-State and Fort Riley), workforce shortages, and limited housing.

Additional Feedback

- Key themes in open feedback were to continue partnering across sectors, maintain strong outreach, and work toward bridging gaps among regional leaders and elected officials.

See the compiled Investor Survey results as Appendix C on pages 27-28.

Pottawatomie County in 50 Years

In the annual investor's meeting that took place on April 12, 2024, the group was asked for their vision for Pottawatomie County in 50 years. The thought process was that while 50 years is almost difficult to imagine, the length of time took emotions and people out of the equation more so than anticipating what Pottawatomie County looks like in five or ten years.

A word cloud was created to represent key themes from responses envisioning Pottawatomie County's future 50 years from now. It highlights key themes like **growth**, **community**, **agriculture**, **housing**, **infrastructure**, **planning**, **sustainability**, **education**, and **jobs**, along with supporting words such as **connectivity**, **rural**, **development**, **solar energy**, **economy**, **recreation**, **schools**, and **environment**. The size of each word reflects its frequency and importance in the envisioned future of the county.

Conclusion of the Situation

There are many opportunities ahead, but also challenges. We have a chance to proactively shape a bright future for Pottawatomie County, but it will take a strong, supportive ecosystem to make the most of what we have. Collaboration will be essential, with key partners like MATC, K-State, GMEP, local elected officials, developers, business leaders, school districts, and childcare providers all playing a role.

Pottawatomie County and our stakeholders aren't working in isolation. This strategic plan aligns with goals from partners like Pottawatomie County government and the Manhattan Chamber of Commerce to create a united vision for growth.

To make this plan work, we've set clear, actionable goals, performance metrics, and resources to back them up. Through this plan, Pottawatomie County Economic Development Corporation is doubling down on its commitment to driving economic prosperity county-wide by bringing together public, private, and educational partners for shared growth and long-term success.

Key Objectives and Strategic Priorities

Implementing the Pottawatomie County Economic Development's strategic plan will involve quarterly and biannual milestones (determined on an annual basis) to track progress toward economic prosperity. Each objective, from business retention to infrastructure development will include specific, measurable targets. For example, by Q3, apply for five infrastructure grants, and by Q4, secure three new e-community loans. Regular board reviews ensure proactive adjustments to stay on track.

The plan emphasizes regional collaboration and leveraging community assets, focusing on key sectors like agricultural equipment, animal health, biomanufacturing, and machine fabrication. Partnerships with organizations such as the Greater Manhattan Economic Partnership (GMEP) and Manhattan Chamber of Commerce support a unified marketing and retention strategy, alongside a responsive "Yes, if…" governance approach to foster business growth. The Request for Investment (RFI) initiative targets sector-specific investments to boost regional visibility and activity.

To enhance regional cooperation, intergovernmental discussions align objectives along the Highway 24 corridor, supported by chambers of commerce. The "Buy Build Grow Pott. Co." campaign drives community engagement, while events like the Regional Growth Summit foster collaboration and updates on progress.

Infrastructure development focuses on Blue Township and Highway 24, involving joint planning, grant writing, and partnerships to support industrial growth. Small business development is bolstered by e-community loans, SBDC support, and Innovate 24 partnerships.

Workforce and community development efforts address housing, childcare, and education through initiatives like childcare stipends and WorkKeys assessments, ensuring a skilled, sustainable workforce to support future growth. This cooperative strategy positions PCEDC as a leader in regional economic development.

Additionally, all activities are aligned with the organization's objectives and allocated funding accordingly within the budget. *See 2025 Budget Planning as Appendix D on pages 29-31.*

Implementation Timeline

The implementation timeline will run as follows, with each phase building on the last, and modifications made based on what's creating the most impact.

- Short-Term (Year 1): Initial assessments, stakeholder engagement, and foundational program launches.
- Mid-Term (Years 2-3): Expansion of programs, infrastructure project roll outs, and evaluation of progress.
- Long-Term (Years 4-5): Completion of major initiatives, ongoing program adjustments, and preparation for future growth.

Attract and Retain Businesses

- **Market the region with GMEP for attraction of targeted industries as well as partner for business retention and expansion efforts** (including the strategies outlined in the 2024 Manhattan Chamber of Commerce's Economic Growth Plan).
    - Target sectors: Agricultural Equipment and Technology; Animal Health Products and Science; Biomanufacturing, Biosecurity & Food Safety; Equipment, Machine & Metal Fabrication.
    - Advocate for a "Yes, if…" mindset rather than a "No, because" mindset throughout local government and organizations to embed a sense of urgency into day-to-day operations to cultivate growth.
    - Aid in the development of policies at city and county levels to foster collaboration.
        - **Position Pottawatomie County in a leadership role with the Highway 24 Corridor planning.** Host and/ or facilitate intergovernmental conversations, work to create consensus on what success looks like for all parties: Pottawatomie County, City of Manhattan, and residents/ business owners in that area.
    - Implement a proactive lead generation strategy supporting startup and corporate recruitment in target sectors.
    - Develop a collaborative new initiative - Request for Investment (RFI)- to solicit desired investment in target sectors and gain exposure for the region.
- Support, participate in, and collaborate with Chambers of Commerce throughout the county (Wamego, Kaw Valley, Westmoreland, Onaga).
- Host annual investor meeting plus introduce another investor roundtable so we're touching base and getting input at least twice a year.
- Conduct an annual Investor survey to seek input and feedback.
- Meet with Advance Pottawatomie investors, asking how we can help them grow, connect them with resources.
- Meet with established business owners in the region that aren't yet investors, asking how we can help them grow and connect them with resources.
- Collaborate with the Kansas Department of Commerce to promote businesses via their programs: Made in Kansas, nominations for To The Stars awards.

- Compile and promote grants and resources available via monthly Community and Investor newsletters. Refer individual businesses to specific opportunities that fit their business model.

Enhance Infrastructure

- Invest in activities that can help us guide Blue Township and Highway 24 corridor growth. Take more of a leadership role in growth for that area, starting with a community forum, creating materials for the website to educate and inform the public
- Develop a “Grant Opportunity Calendar” that identifies funding sources aligned with infrastructure projects across the county. The calendar will prioritize projects with high economic impact, such as sewer and water line improvements for Wamego Industrial Park. Regular board reviews of this calendar will ensure that grant applications are strategically aligned with county goals, maximizing funding opportunities and impact. Collaborate with grant writers and local municipalities to apply for at least five targeted grants annually, focusing on infrastructure upgrades and community enhancements.
- Engaging Olsson and others to plan additional sites as they come available (or things such as replatting our St Marys lot in order to sell).

Promote Organizational and Regional Cooperation

- **Develop and launch *Buy Build Grow Pott. Co.* initiative as a county-wide call to action.** (Create community ownership/ buy-in and action. Encourage communities to dust off the previous Comprehensive Plans and make plans for the future).
    - Use as a call to action at presentation for Regional Growth Summit
    - Co-host community events (described a few points above)
    - Use as an update and call to action at presentation for annual investor meeting
    - Organic social media
    - Newsletters
    - Include in media interviews
        - Appear on KMAN monthly or bimonthly
        - Seek out relevant media (Pott. Co. Times, Manhattan Mercury, Kansas Business News, Startland News, others?)
    - Include messaging in paid social media ads (paid for by Network KS) to promote new e-community loans.
    - Call to action: small community projects throughout the county proposed and led by community members (such as installing a Little Free Library, starting and/ or maintaining a community garden, painting a mural, etc.).
    - Highlight and promote the small community projects as they’re completed to build interest and momentum.
- Collaborate with GMEP to plan programming for Regional Growth Summit in January event (formerly called Flint Hills Regional Leadership Retreat).
- Foster relationships and collaboration with county commissioners and neighboring counties by establishing a **cross-county collaboration council**. This council will hold

quarterly meetings with representatives from Pottawatomie County and surrounding regions to discuss shared resources, funding opportunities, and strategic projects. The council's agenda will include updates on Highway 24 corridor projects, regional grant applications, and cooperative housing initiatives. This approach ensures ongoing dialogue and collective planning to strengthen regional cohesion.

- Topics to be addressed:
  - Green Valley/ Hwy 24 Corridor Growth: Planning Pott. Co. for the Future (reframe "East Manhattan Gateway conversation to neutralize the adversarial talking points and encourage collaboration amongst the entities)
  - Green Valley/ Hwy 24 Corridor Growth: Do We Need a Bridge? (Share the traffic studies, options, costs, etc…. Basically explain work that's already taken place to help gain consensus amongst the entities)
  - Jeffrey Energy Center Update & Renewable Energy Options
  - State of the County (Intro/ Kickoff to Build, Buy, Grow Pott. Co. campaign)
  - 13 Ways to Kill Your Community (community engagement, partner with chambers like with candidate forums; part of Build, Buy, Grow Pott. Co. campaign)
    - Co-host in each district and encourage ongoing conversations locally: Blue Township, St George,Wamego, St Marys, Westmoreland/ Onaga

- Participate in Vision Wamego group, specifically creating and sharing case studies to utilize as templates to facilitate local incentives.
- Web development for scorecard (to show public-facing KPI metrics).
  - Clear and concise webpage with 5-7 metrics we update monthly or quarterly
  - Use this information for annual report and promotions throughout the community
- Provide financial donations to promote events within the county such as the Pottawatomie County Fair, KAWNsas Festival, and Xmas events. (It is also part of our verbal agreement with the Wamego Chamber to support them with events like OZ & Tulip Festivals, or 4th of July).
- Compile and promote grants and resources available via monthly Community newsletter, sharing community grants such as HEAL, Rural Mural, Rural Champions, etc. Individually refer specific programs to specific organizations.
- Create Community Spotlight posts on our website for communities throughout the county, linking to additional resources within our website.
  - Get to Know Your Community: Blue Township
  - Get to Know Your Community: St George
  - Get to Know Your Community: St Marys
  - Get to Know Your Community: Westmoreland
  - Get to Know Your Community: Onaga
  - Get to Know Your Community: Wamego (completed)
- Create Meet Your Neighbor spotlight posts on our website to promote community. Link to Community Spotlights and other internal links.
  - Get to Know Your Neighbors: Blue Township

    - Get to Know Your Neighbors: St George
    - Get to Know Your Neighbors: St Marys
    - Get to Know Your Neighbors: Westmoreland
    - Get to Know Your Neighbors: Onaga
    - Get to Know Your Neighbors: Wamego (completed)

Support Small Business Development

- Continue partnership with SBDC for support and technical assistance.
- Partner with Innovate 24, promoting programs and entrepreneurial initiatives throughout the county.
- Assist in the ongoing facilitation of current e-community loans.
- Promote and assist in the facilitation of new e-community loans via our newsletters and organic social media, as well as targeted paid social media ad campaigns.
- Enhance support for small business development by setting specific performance metrics for e-community loans. Track and report on metrics such as the number of new jobs created, loan success rates, and the long-term growth of businesses that receive support. Provide the board with semi-annual updates to evaluate the program's impact and make adjustments to meet small business needs more effectively. This data-driven approach will ensure that small business resources are deployed for maximum economic impact.

Assist in Workforce Development

- Promote collaboration for housing projects across a range of price points, helping improve housing accessibility. Increase the number of housing units in the county.
    - Housing assessment for individual communities to include/ qualify for MIH.
    - Build out a project list and monitor/ track timelines and help facilitate forward movement with municipalities and other partnering organizations.
    - Create and promote case studies of successful housing projects.
- Promote collaboration for childcare.
    - Prepare concept and materials for childcare stipend as an employee benefit, working with some key employers to outline options and tax implications for the employers and the employees.
    - Collaborate with the Childcare Business Initiative to help improve the sustainability and profitability of childcare business models.
    - Create and promote case studies of successful childcare projects.
- WorkKeys maintenance and testing at districts throughout the county, partnering with district staff when available. Provide educational support, including Wamego High sponsorships, scholarship banquet, job fairs with KS Works, KSU, Peer Chamber- Rock Creek, Youth Entrepreneurship sponsorship, and Classroom to Careers.

Performance Metrics & Evaluation

There is work that we can do to create value and impact for the region and there are some things that we can influence over time. We'll share community metrics in quarterly reports, in newsletters, and on our website. To enhance public engagement and transparency, we will develop a live "dashboard" on the PCEDC website displaying real-time or quarterly updates on key performance indicators (KPIs). Regular updates will keep the community informed of our progress, while quarterly board reviews of dashboard data will allow for targeted adjustments to maintain alignment with strategic priorities.

Community metrics will serve as snapshots of economic indicators for the region. Tracking both lagging and leading indicators is crucial for understanding the economic health of our region and driving actionable strategies. **Lagging indicators**, such as job growth or housing supply, offer a snapshot of past performance and outcomes. They help us assess the impact of previous initiatives and overall economic trends. However, to stay ahead of challenges and seize opportunities, we must also focus on **leading indicators**—early signals that provide insights into future conditions.

Leading indicators, such as job postings or new housing starts, allow us to anticipate shifts in the economy and adjust our strategies proactively. By monitoring these metrics, we can take timely actions that influence lagging outcomes, ensuring sustained growth and resilience. Together, these community metrics offer a comprehensive view of our region's economic landscape, empowering stakeholders to make informed, forward-thinking decisions.

Community metrics (Lagging indicators with corresponding leading indicators):

- **Jobs in targeted industries**
    - **Leading Indicator**: Number of job postings and hires in targeted industries.
- **Jobs in targeted sectors as a percent of total jobs**
    - **Leading Indicator**: Growth rate of business formations and expansions in targeted sectors.
- **Months of housing supply on the market**
    - **Leading Indicator**: Number of new housing starts and building permits issued.
- **Average annual wage**
    - **Leading Indicator**: Changes in job openings and salary offers in high-demand sectors.
- **Commercial investment building permits**
    - **Leading Indicator**: Volume of commercial real estate inquiries and proposals submitted.
- **Total labor force**
    - **Leading Indicator**: Participation rate in workforce development and vocational training programs.
- **Number of employed people/ percentage of unemployment**
    - **Leading Indicator**: Number of new job postings and initial unemployment claims.

- **Net migration**
    - **Leading Indicator**: Inquiries about residential relocation, enrollment in local schools, and housing demand trends.
- **Cost of living**
    - **Leading Indicator**: Trends in housing prices, rental rates, and consumer price index (CPI) changes for local goods and services.
- **Total marketable industrial acres and sites**
    - **Leading Indicator**: Number of infrastructure projects initiated and inquiries from potential industrial tenants.

These leading indicators provide early signals of future trends and help guide proactive decision-making to influence desired outcomes.

Organizational Metrics/ Key Performance Indicators will be a direct result of our efforts.

KPIs per organizational priority are listed below and how we'll share progress on the public-facing dashboard and annual reports.

Attract and Retain Businesses

- *These initiatives are funded as "Business Retention, Expansion, and Attraction" on the Advance Pottawatomie Budget*
- Number of GMEP (unqualified) leads, pursuits, actionable leads
- Number of Advance Pottawatomie Investors
- Amount of Advance Pottawatomie investments pledged and received
- Event attendance of annual investor meeting and investor roundtable
- Investor survey satisfaction/ net promoter score
- Number of connections made between programs/ grants and businesses that can benefit (such as HPIP, PEAK, HEAL, Agritourism grant, Heartland Business grant, etc.)

Enhance Infrastructure

- *These initiatives are funded as as "Infrastructure Development" on Advance Pottawatomie Budget*
- Number of grants identified, applied for, and won
- Number of infrastructure bottlenecks identified and addressed

Promote Organizational and Regional Cooperation

- *These initiatives are funded as "Organizational & Community Collaboration" on the Advance Pottawatomie Budget*
- Community events attendance we host such as legislative or topic forums that help build cooperation and collaboration with public officials and communities across the county

- Community engagement with *Buy Build Grow Pott. Co.* initiative as a county-wide call to action: number of community events, attendance at community events, number of community-led initiatives
- Visibility metrics: informative and educational content pieces on website, media mentions or interviews, newsletter subscription and open rates, and web traffic

Support Small Business Development

- *These initiatives are funded as "Small Business & Entrepreneurship" on the Advance Pottawatomie Budget*
- Attendance and program participation of SBDC and Innovate 24 initiatives (including number of new startups, number of startups engaged in programming and activities, number of FTE jobs created, amount of capital for startups to access)
- Number of e-community loans

Assist in Workforce Development

- *Reads as "Workforce Development" on Advance Pottawatomie Budget*
- Number of housing projects facilitated
- Number of childcare projects facilitated
- Youth entrepreneurship participation
- Classroom to Careers participation

Working the Plan (Ongoing Modification)

Nineteenth-century Prussian commander Helmuth von Moltke famously said, "No battle plan survives contact with the enemy," and the same applies here. Unexpected challenges will arise, requiring us to reassess and adapt our priorities. This strategic plan is not a static blueprint but a dynamic, evolving guide that allows for continuous improvement and modification.

To ensure continuity and adaptability in leadership, we will develop a comprehensive succession plan for both board members and executive staff. This plan will identify potential future leaders and implement mentorship or shadowing programs, allowing them to gain experience and prepare for key roles. Regular succession planning updates to the board will ensure that leadership remains aligned with strategic priorities, even during transitions, maintaining stability and focus on long-term objectives.

We will conduct an annual risk assessment to identify and mitigate economic, political, and funding risks that may impact strategic goals. This assessment will guide the board in prioritizing high-impact projects and adjusting to funding changes, ensuring the strategic plan remains adaptable and resilient.

Appendices

- Initial Assessment & Priorities
- Investor Survey Results
- 2025 Budget Planning (in accordance with this strategic plan)

Appendix A: Initial Assessment & Priorities

(Shared with the Board of Directors May of 2024). My approach for an initial assessment follows the four "S" model with the intention of thoughtfully understanding challenges at their source to create effective, long-term solutions.

4 "S" Model

- Identify the **s**ituation
- Understand the **s**ymptoms presenting themselves
- Uncover the **s**ource of the issues
- Plan and execute an appropriate **s**olution

Identified strengths include partnerships like the Greater Manhattan Economic Partnership, while weaknesses involve potential focus issues due to competing priorities. Opportunities lie in bridging stakeholder gaps and educating the public, while threats include political tensions and economic shifts. High-priority strategies include building relationships with county commissioners, positioning PCEDC as a thought leader, facilitating collaboration across communities, and building relationships and collaborative opportunities to help attract and expand businesses.

Abbreviated SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Greater Manhattan Economic Partnership as a coordinated effort with experienced and highly knowledgeable team
- Areas of planned development such as industrial parks and subdivisions
- Established relationships with community partners
- Some engaged communities (within themselves, not necessarily with each other)

Weaknesses

- Potential for lack of focus due to competing priorities

- Perception in the county that much of the resources and attention are focused on Hwy 24
- Silos: City of Manhattan, City of Wamego, Riley County, Pott County, various chambers, various organizations working without much collaboration

Opportunities

- Bridge building (figuratively) amongst the various stakeholders
- Population growth projections
- Educating and informing the community on topics that could build understanding and unity
- Relationship building throughout the county amongst government entities

Threats

- Some county commissioners feel like a few board members are actively campaigning against them being reelected in the fall
- Territorial ego clashing due to lack of trust
- Jeffrey Energy Center closing and the county losing those revenues

High Priority Opportunities and Proposed Strategies (Next 9-12 Months)

- Build relationships and collaborative opportunities with county commissioners
    - Collaborate with city and county officials to *schedule and promote five county candidate forums this summer to provide candidates with a platform* to share their vision for Pottawatomie County
    - *Co-host county candidate forums* with Chambers and municipalities
    - *Inform and educate the public on topics related to the election*: roles and responsibilities of county commissioners, moving from a three-member district to five-member district, when and where to vote in the primaries and on election day
    - Host a celebration reception for new elected county commissioners in November
    - Assist in *onboarding the new county commissioners* and how we can help them be successful
    - Develop opportunities to *work in concert in an ongoing basis with county commissioners*, such as stepping in during a disaster like the Westmoreland tornado and regularly updating them with progress
    - Create *a public-facing scorecard* on our website to showcase organizational strategies and milestones

- Position the organization as a community thought-leader and influencer
    - Develop *content strategy* collaborating with experts and community partners *to educate and inform the public* on topics not well understood but important to long-term economic development

    - Create and administer a *county-wide survey to gauge if people understand local government issues* and how it pertains to them, such as what county and city commissioners do as far as roles and responsibilities, who is in charge of what, how they work together, who they are, election happening this fall, moving from three member district to five member district, etc.
    - Coordinate and facilitate a *housing conversation with regional subject matter experts with the goal to gain a collective understanding* of what's going on, what's been tried, what was successful (or not) and why, as well as next steps to create more housing
    - Develop and share *quarterly reports of economic indicators* and what it means for the community and businesses

- Help facilitate collaboration with communities across the county
    - Attend *intergovernmental meetings to represent and advocate for the Pottawatomie County perspective* (such as Intergovernmental Lunches at K-State, East Manhattan Gateway Plan technical committee, GMEP Economic Development Strategy technical committee, etc.)
    - *Co-host county candidate forums* with communities across the county
    - Attend legislative forums and look for ways to *interact with (and provide value to) regional law makers*
    - Follow up on *comprehensive plans* completed (St George, Onaga, and Westmoreland) and *facilitate forward movement*
    - Work with *community leaders to identify and collaborate on grant opportunities* such as HEAL and Kansas Commerce Rural Champions
    - *Promote programs and resources for communities* on our website, on Facebook, and in our Community Update Newsletter
    - Create *case studies to use as framework and precedent for future deals* to enable better communication amongst various stakeholders
    - Coordinate and facilitate *guest speakers at our board meetings to provide value and build relationships* (could include Flint Hills Regional Council, Interim City Manager of Manhattan, Network KS, SBDC, city managers, county officials, etc)

- Build relationships and promote collaboration with expanding and newly attracted businesses
    - Coordinate and facilitate *partnership resources amongst businesses and partners* (such as Caterpillar and MATC, Axiota and MATC, Hydrograph and Kansas Department of Commerce) to grow business
    - Work closely with GMEP to promote region and specific *sites to attract new businesses*
    - Reinstate *Small Business Action Team of partners to discuss projects* and what's going on in the region (all Chambers of Commerce, superintendents, Network KS, etc)
    - Plan and administer a *Workforce Development roundtable* to check in with employers and school districts on needs and trends

- Promote *sites and commercial properties on our website, on Facebook, and in our Investor Newsletter*
- Work with *commercial realtors to promote their properties on our channels* (website, Facebook, Investor Newsletter)
- Collaborate with investors and e-community loan recipients to create a regular *Business Spotlig*ht for our website, on Facebook, and in our Investor newsletter
- *Promote businesses* through various programs such as *To the Stars Kansas Business Awards* and *Made in Kansas*

Appendix B: Investor Survey Results

17 respondents, March 2024

Q1: How happy are you with your decision to invest in Advance Pottawatomie (with 0 being deeply unsatisfied and 100 being highly satisfied)?
Average: 81
Median: 86

Q2: What is the likelihood you would recommend investing in PCEDC to another business or professional (with 0 being highly unlikely and 100 being highly likely)?
Average: 87
Median: 97
Note: The same person answered "0" on the first and second questions, skewing the average down significantly, particularly on this question.

Q3: If your above answers are not a 5, what could we do to increase your satisfaction and/ or the likelihood you'd recommend PCEDC?

- Inform city commissions and townships of resources and grants when possible
- Looking forward to how new leadership will take the direction of PCEDC It has done good things so far and looking forward to learning about what is next in the transition.
- Help your investors to see benefits in their contribution to PCEDC.
- There are (or will be) multiple new leaders in the region. I'd like to see how that transition plays out (PT Co. Commissioners, PCEDC new director, City of Manhattan City Manager).
- I think PCEDC does a good job from what I know. But I am not the only one telling the story. I think we need to do a better job as PCEDC sharing our goals to our regional partners and share the successes as they come. Most people don't know what the organization does, successes, or failures.
- We have to get more involved with decision making at the political level. We need to start taking official positions on development projects that stand to benefit the entire county.
- Allow more decision making by the entire board rather than concentrated with the executive committee.
- Depends upon if the business needs to market in Pottawatomie County.

- Support sales tax. Actually help businesses and don't only talk about workforce.
- *Note: The detractor from Q1 and Q2 did not provide an answer for this question.*

Q4: How satisfied are you with the opportunities you have to get involved in Advance Pottawatomie (with 0 being deeply unsatisfied and 100 being highly satisfied)?
Average: 84

Q5: How can we make it easier for you to know what's going on with our implementation plans? Please rank in the order of importance. (If you have ideas that are not listed here, please add in the final open-ended question at the end of the survey).

- Option 1 with 4.6 score: Provide a regular (monthly or quarterly) Investor newsletter with activity updates
- Option 2 with 3.6 score: Facilitate annual or semi-annual in-person forums only for investors
- Option 3 with 2.7 score: Regular (quarterly or semi annual) in-person one-on-one meetings with PCEDC Executive Director (for top 10 investors)
- Option 4 with 2.5 score: Share regular (and general public-facing) updates and investor spotlights on Facebook
- Option 5 with 1.6 score: Semi- annual surveys to ask for investor feedback.

Q7: In alignment with our mission, how can we better serve your business?

- Collaborate in the fiscal discussion/ impact of the east gateway to long term impact of "prosperous county"
- Looking for opportunities to be involved with initiatives.
- Share opportunities that help bring commercial growth to Pott. Co.
- Support our infrastructure enhancements through the County when needed.
- We invest in PCEDC because we know it is a benefit to the region.
- Continue to promote the need for growth in the growth areas of the county. More education on decision makers about the need to increase the tax base.
- Keep us informed on new opportunities to assist in growth.
- More exposure of business/ services provided.
- Promote infrastructure.
- Just keep growing the private business sector, population, housing stock, community amenities, and our talented labor pool
- Help get construction projects approved and out to bid so the tax dollars can get put to use

Q9: How is your outlook for your business for 2024 (with 0 being deeply concerned and 100 being highly confident)?
Average: 80

Q10: How is your outlook for your business through 2027 (with 0 being deeply concerned and 100 being highly confident)?

Average: 80

Q11: What are the strengths of the region?

- Population growth
- Rural setting, reasonable county taxes
- Collaboration and land in Pott Co
- Opportunity for growth and great location
- The opportunity to start businesses and grow at a pace that is reasonable for all.
- Land availability in Pott. Co/ cooperation among communities (we need to get ALL commissioners on board with teamwork)
- Lots of land to expand and grow, central location
- K-State assets, quality workforce, excellent schools
- Population growth and business opportunity
- Collaboration between communities
- Growth, taxes, KS. Good schools, hospital, and parks.
- Construction, railroad, Evergy plant, academia (K-State, Washburn), For Riley
- Quality of life
- Location
- Attractive mix of community sizes and rural landscape. Youthful talent pool. Committed, forward thinking business leaders.
- Desirable location to live due to Manhattan shopping, KSU, and safe place to raise families.

Q12: What are the weaknesses of the region?

- No central communication/ newspaper
- Willingness to act
- Housing, workforce quantity
- Lack of cooperation and relationships between government entities
- Unwillingness of county commissioners to partner with Manhattan
- Not enough people with specific training
- High housing costs, lack of large pieces of land for development
- Lack of housing and lack of government cooperation with businesses
- Lack of growth especially in business in the Manhattan region, elected officials not partnering with each other
- Regions that do not want to share information and growth, workforce
- Need lower priced housing, more in the workforce
- Growth locked along 24, high taxes
- Poor government participation
- Challenging landscape that hinders expansive development
- Lack of more organized outdoor recreation opportunities, lack of governmental cooperation between the county and cities

Q13: What are the opportunities of the region?

- Energy development
- Housing, new businesses (medium to large)
- Rural growth of small businesses
- To add new industry and manufacturing businesses to grow
- We can grow! Pott County needs to be visionary and willing to spend the cash they have piled up in the bank.
- Lots of land available
- Pott Co has to be the area where MHK grows
- We have land and opportunities to grow, a strong core with KSU, Ft. Riley, Dept. Agriculture, NBAF, Evergy, and Cat. We are diversified and strong as a region.
- St Marys population growth, being in the animal health corridor
- Animal health
- Great location, businesses are growing
- Agriculture, NBAF, young workforce
- Fostering an awareness of the positives the Flint HIlls offer
- KSU, military, strong work ethic
- Kansas has experienced a pretty low bar when it's come to ED, so we're prime for expanding our businesses
- Outdoor recreation, increased partnerships, strong tax funding, RHID

Q14: What are the threats of the region?

- Apathy and misinformation
- Housing, lack of attraction of medium to large businesses
- Regional politics and self interest groups
- Downsizing of Fort Riley and K-State. Very government dependent.
- Narrow minded county commissioners
- Not being willing to take risk
- Troop downsizing at Ft Riley
- Lack of action when change is needed. We should have addressed some of the housing and infrastructure needs when we had 50 year historic low rates
- Lack of funding to support Ft Riley, decrease in student population at K-State, high taxes in Manhattan and a lack of promotion of development
- Workforce, lack of childcare
- Can't provide the workforce
- Under-developed energy grid, behavioral health and drug/ alcohol use, failing public schools
- Not retaining our graduates
- Government regulations
- Dominance of online shopping, challenging times for ag producers
- Declining KSU/ Ft Riley populations, closing Jeffrey Energy Center

Q15: What additional feedback or suggestions do you have for us?

- Persist!

- Partner, partner, partner
- Keep reaching out and bringing people together. The change at the county is a real opportunity to pull the region together for good change.
- Find ways to bridge the gaps from our elected officials
- Will need to find land in the Wamego area for Industrial Park
- For a small privately owned business we must be on the front lines always, an umbrella organization such as PCEDC does not focus at our level
- Just keep up the good work!

Appendix C: Pottawatomie County 2040 Implementation Plan

Land Use and Development Action Items:
Encourage the development of a diversity of housing types and sizes within areas of existing development and growth (working with the County and developers).

Transportation and Mobility Action Items:
Increase marketing and awareness of the County's natural resources to increase active transportation (working with the County).

Build partnerships with developers to coordinate land use and transportation investment to promote shared, equitable contributions to implementing the transportation system (working with the County).

Growth Capacity Action Items:
Prioritize investment in infrastructure to support economic development. Identify areas in which county infrastructure is currently limiting economic development (working with the County).

Economic Opportunity Action Items:
Prioritize investment in infrastructure to support economic development. Identify areas in which County infrastructure is currently limiting economic development. Work to secure funding for these infrastructure projects, whether through County funds, partnerships, or creation of special financing districts or development of impact fees (working with the County and private partners).

Continue to support business development activities to retain, expand, and recruit businesses (working with the County).

Expand programs to promote and sustain entrepreneurship (working with the County).

Provide a range of affordable housing options for a diverse and expanding workforce (working with the County and local jurisdictions).

Develop a "Buy Pottawatomie" campaign for Pottawatomie County (working with the County).

Establish a local business network to capitalize on strategic growth and investment opportunities (working with the County).

Continue active participation in the Greater Manhattan Economic Partnership to advance, secure, and execute initiatives aimed at improving the quality of life and economic well-being of residents within the County (working with the County).

Utilize the Comprehensive Plan to advance economic development priorities at a regional level. Upon completion of the plan, set-up meeting with GMEP, Flint Hills Regional Council, Flint Hills Economic Development District to discuss how to advance regional priorities and plug into existing programs (working with the County, GMEP, and FHEDD).

Actively pursue public/ private partnerships and work with local jurisdictions as they make investments in their infrastructure (such as roads, storm drainage, etc) to coordinate with potential expansions and investments of PCEDC, particularly for industrial parks (working with the County and local jurisdictions).

Actively pursue opportunities for research facilities and partnerships with KSU in advance of the NBAF arrival (working with the County).

Preservation and Open Space Action Items:

“Buy Pottawatomie” branding strategy to increase awareness of the power of the buy-local and eat-local movements (working with the County).

Develop a county-specific map that highlights the recreational and open space opportunities in Pottawatomie County (working with the County).

Develop a strategic agricultural plan for the County (working with the County).

Develop an eco-tourism and agri-tourism action plan (working with the County).

Appendix D: 2025 Budget Planning

Notes

- Review with board and **vote for approval at November board meeting**
- Advanced Pottawatomie Budget for **2024 was $141,250**
- Rolling CDs created a **revenue stream this year ($33,335.93** as of mid October) and could increase in 2025 by employing the strategy with additional funds in the Advance Pottawatomie money market account
- A small revenue stream from NetWork KS should begin in early 2025 for e-community loan administration and support **($6,600 to $13,200 income annually**), which will offset our "Support Small Business Development" category (currently funded at $25,000)

Notable Differences from 2024 Budget

- **Proposed 2025 budget is $144,250**
- **Rolled various outdated line items into categories for our five objectives to align resources with goals**. (Line items rolled into categories include "Workforce TF Organization Support/ Roundtable," "Business to Business Events," "Tourism Asset Development and Promotion," and "Community Enhancement/ Grant Writing").
- **GMEP funding was reduced from $50,000 to $35,000** this year as we work to implement the recent Economic Growth Plan from Manhattan Area Chamber of Commerce. This amount will likely go back to $50,000 in 2026.
- **KBED no longer exists,** so that removes a $19,000 expense from the budget.
- **Added funding for Innovate 24** as an efficient way to invest in small business and entrepreneurship at $15,000, plus that group provides some of the same networks and connections as KBED because of who leads it.
- **Reduced website and domain line item of $5,000 to $1,500** because the majority of the expense for the website will be in content creation, which is covered in the Operating Budget as "Interns and Freelancers."

Attract and Retain Businesses ($50,000)

- *Reads as "Business Retention, Expansion, and Attraction" on Advance Pottawatomie Budget*
- Marketing the region with GMEP and partnering for BRE efforts ($35,000 rather than $50,000 this year as we put the recently developed Economic Growth Plan into action).
- Wamego Chamber agreement and investment, Kaw Valley Chamber of Commerce, Westmoreland Chamber, Onaga Chamber.
- Annual investor meeting plus introduce another investor roundtable so we're touching base and getting input at least twice a year.
- Business meetings for one-on-one conversations with local established businesses.

Enhance Infrastructure ($20,000)

- *Reads as "Infrastructure Development" on Advance Pottawatomie Budget*
- Grant writing collaboratively with individual municipalities, the county and the community for mutually beneficial projects. Work with each community to create wish lists and priorities, then work with a grant writing consultant to apply for grants that cover needs. (Costs will include hourly rates to do the planning and fees for writing and submitting specific grants. Projects could include repairing culverts and addressing sewer infrastructure problems in Onaga, sidewalk improvement in Westmoreland, fixing drainage issues, etc depending on specific community needs and access to resources).
- Engaging Olson and others to plan additional sites (or things such as replatting St Marys lot in order to sell).

Promote Organizational and Regional Cooperation ($20,000)

- *Reads as "Organizational & Community Collaboration" on Advance Pottawatomie Budget*
- Marketing the region with GMEP (funded in the previous category).
- Community events such as legislative or topic forums that help build cooperation and collaboration with public officials and communities across the county. (This would include candidate forums in election years).
- Develop and launch *Buy Build Grow Pott. Co.* initiative as a county-wide call to action. Create community ownership/ buy-in and action. Encourage communities to dust off the previous Comprehensive Plans and make plans for the future.
- Web development for scorecard (public-facing KPI metrics).
- Regional leadership retreat registration for PCEDC board members and county commissioners.
- This area normally includes any financial donations we give to events or promotions within the county such as the Pottawatomie County Fair, KAWNsas Festival, and Xmas events. It is also part of our verbal agreement with the Wamego Chamber to support them with events like OZ & Tulip Festivals, or 4th of July.
- Includes some content creation for website, newsletter, and social media (primarily covered by Operating Budget in "Interns/ freelancers" category).

Support Small Business Development ($25,000)

- *Reads as "Small Business & Entrepreneurship" on Advance Pottawatomie Budget*
- Maintain SBDC ($8,000) support for technical assistance and invest in Innovate 24 ($15,000).
- Promotion of and assistance in facilitating e-community loans, partnering with Network KS. Includes sponsoring events, and possible additional contracts on a need basis. (Network Kansas offers up to $6,000 reimbursement that we'll use for e-community loan promotion).

- Small revenue stream to begin in early 2025 from Network Kansas for e-community admin and loan support at about $10-$20 per loan per month, yielding potentially $6,600 to $13,200 annually. (We'll have confirmation and numbers in January or February; that money is NOT from the borrowers and does not diminish program funds available). This income helps offset the cost of this category.

Assist in Workforce Development ($7,000)

- *Reads as "Workforce Development" on Advance Pottawatomie Budget*
- Includes all activity involved with housing and childcare. Could include matching funds or partnering with FHRC to update housing assessment (required for upcoming MIH and RHID applications).
- ACT and WorkKeys maintenance as well as WorkKeys testing. Educational support to include Wamego High sponsorships, scholarship banquet, job fairs with KS Works, KSU, Peer Chamber- Rock Creek, Youth Entrepreneurship sponsorship, and Classroom to Careers.