



# Introduction



## What is this all about?

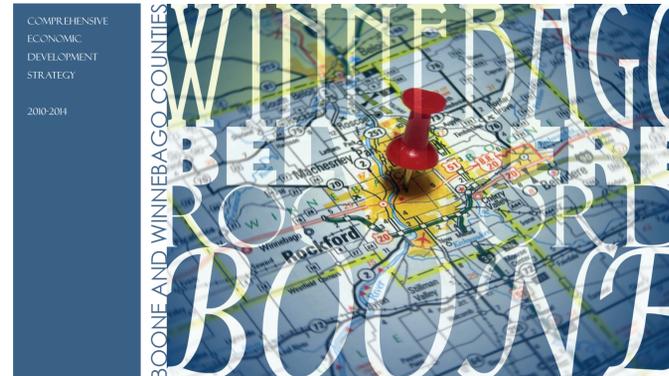
Boone, McHenry, and Winnebago counties are partnering on a plan that will help our area develop a stronger, more diverse regional economy, creating a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).

## How we got here?

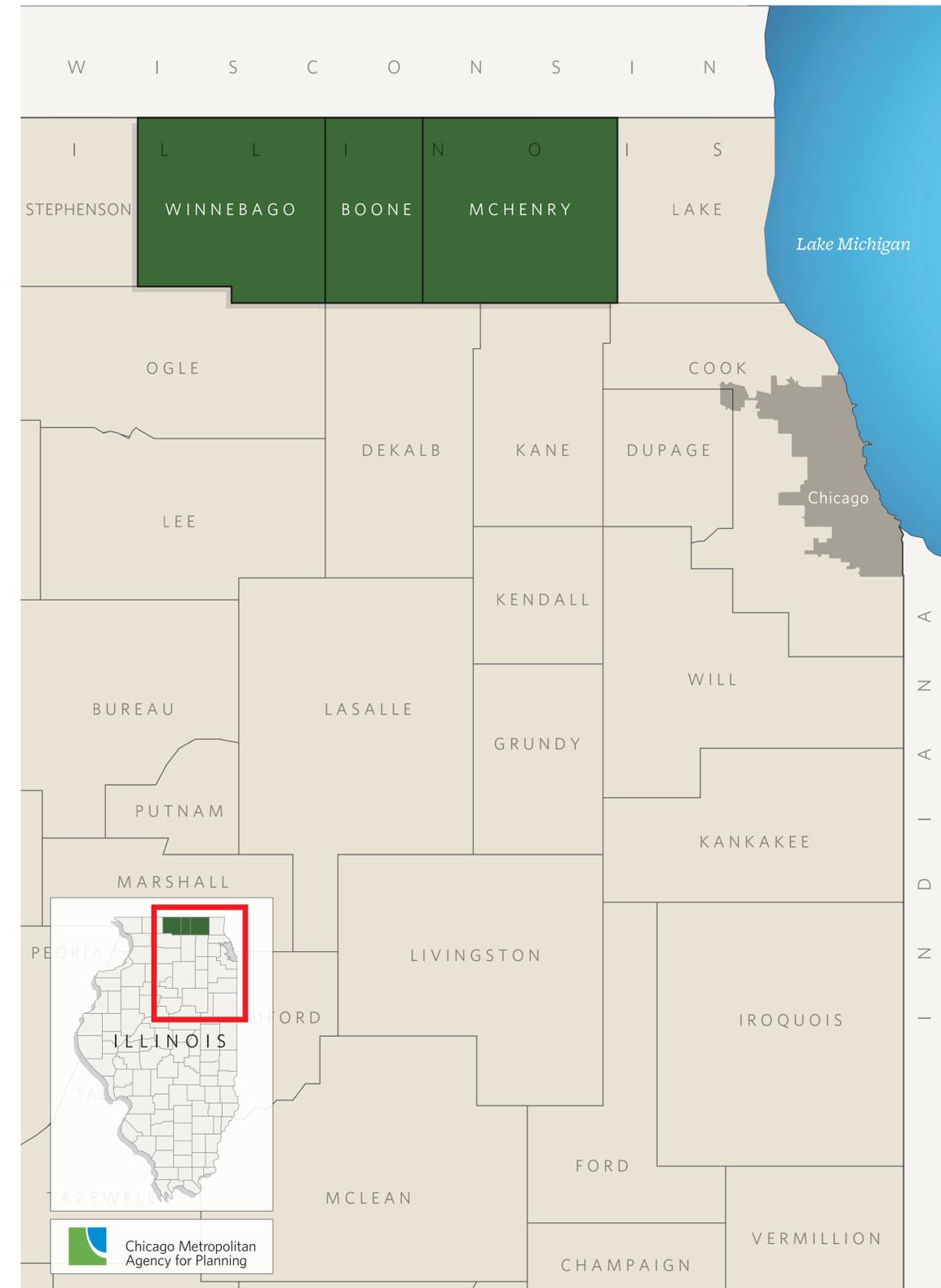
Winnebago and Boone counties created the region's first CEDS in 2010. While preparing to update the plan, Winnebago and Boone counties began working with McHenry County more closely on collaboration to advance the shared manufacturing industries in the wider region. As McHenry County did not have a CEDS, it was agreed that the three counties would work together on the new plan.

## What were the benefits from the last plan?

- A \$6.1 million State of Ingenuity grant collaboration between Boone/Winnebago counties and Wisconsin counties to promote entrepreneurship and innovation programs.
- A \$2.7 million public works grant to upgrade roads around Chicago Rockford International Airport.
- A \$1.8 million Jobs and Innovation Accelerator Challenge grant (through EDA and other federal agencies) to promote the region's aerospace cluster.



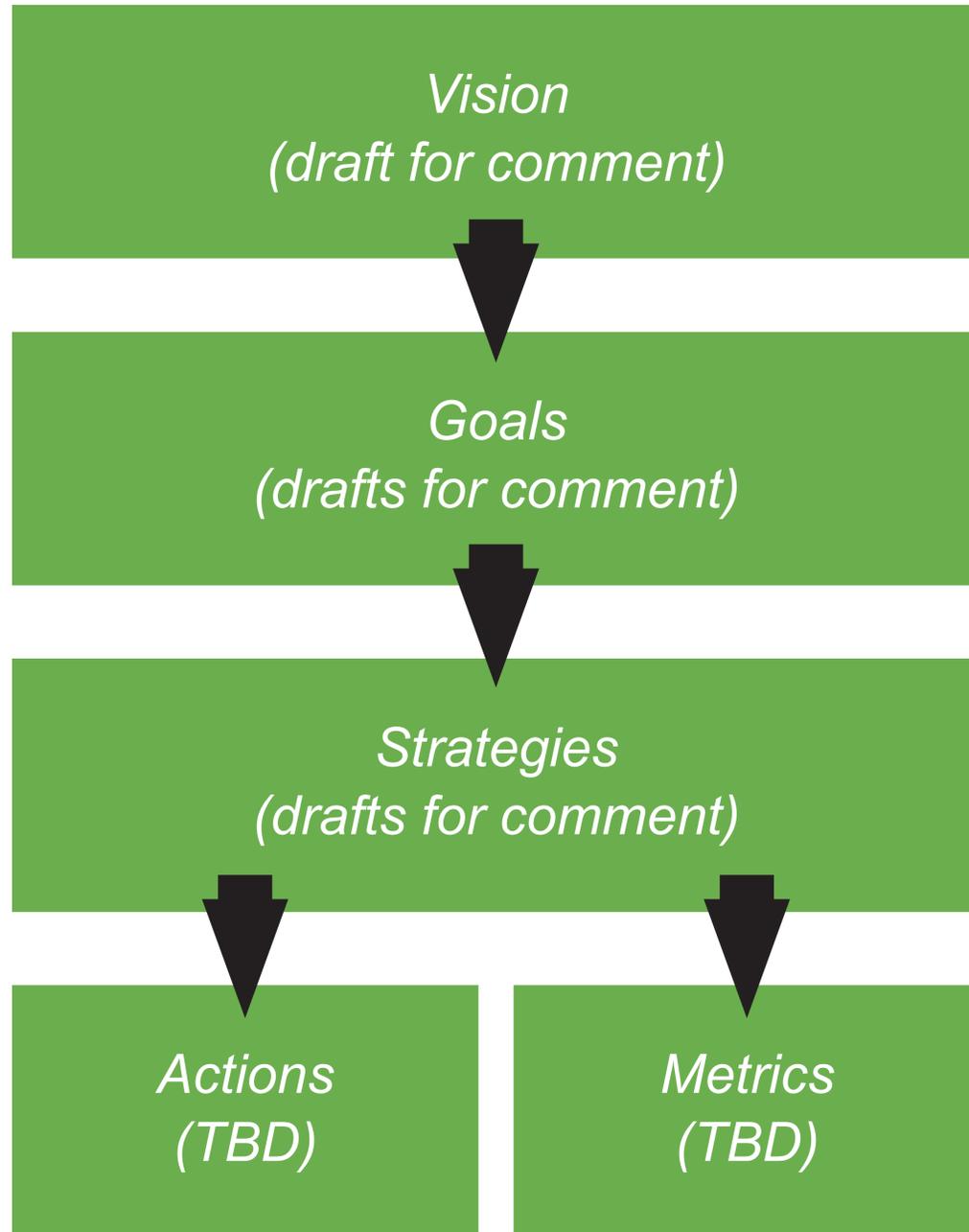
## A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Boone, McHenry, and Winnebago Counties





# The recommendations structure and draft vision

## Recommendations Structure



### **Vision**

*In 2020, the Northern Illinois Region (Boone, McHenry, and Winnebago counties) will be a world-class, prosperous region with a resilient economic base and a superior quality of life that outperforms peer regions in job growth, capital investment, and innovation.*

### **Comments/ notes**



# Preliminary economic development collaboration strategies

## Goal

*A collaborative economic development strategy within the three-county region emphasizing communication, cooperation, alignment of initiatives, shared assets, and promotion of the region for business investment.*

## Strategies

- Develop a framework for regional government and economic development officials to collaborate on regionally significant initiatives and increase communication across county lines.
- Obtain EDA-approved Economic Development District (EDD) status for the Economic Development District of Northern Illinois as the regional economic development planning body and oversee the ongoing CEDS scope of work.
- Establish a regional identity and leverage our location and shared assets to create a marketing strategy for the region.
- Identify and engage stakeholders within the region through the activities of the EDD, including developing targeted industry strategies as well as regional alliances and projects.
- Collaborate with surrounding counties on economic development goals and activities.
- Coordinate with federal and state priorities and “speak with one voice” on seeking funding and legislative priorities.

## Comments/ notes

## Goal

*Efficient business development, expansion, diversification, job growth, and innovation throughout the region.*

## Strategies

- Strengthen existing industry clusters within the region, while developing selected emerging clusters.
- Build upon existing business retention programs by developing a regional program that shares best practices.
- Recruit new business to the region by using targeted business attraction efforts aimed at key industries and geographic markets.
- Nurture entrepreneurial activity within the region, particularly within potential high-growth industries.
- Identify, create, and promote programs, activities and policies fostering innovation in emerging and existing businesses, aiding them in the creation of viable business operation and economic development practices.
- Promote agribusiness and local food industries as a growth area for rural parts of the region.
- Continued communication from economic development organizations on their efforts for recruitment and retention activities to area stakeholders.
- Promote and make efficient use of business incentives and programs from government, utilities, not-for-profits, and other partners.

## Comments/ notes



# Preliminary workforce strategies

## Goal

*Availability of a skilled and flexible workforce that successfully meets the needs of existing and emerging industries and technologies.*

## Strategies

- Develop a workforce pipeline via stronger connection between employers, students, parents, and the region's P-20 educational systems.
- Align and implement workforce and economic development strategies to strengthen competitiveness among industry associations, workforce boards, economic development agencies, educational partners, and employers.
- Implement strategies to decrease the number of residents commuting/moving outside the region for jobs.

## Comments/ notes



# Preliminary infrastructure strategies

## Goal

*A full range of infrastructure, with emphasis on transportation, utility, and communication systems in order to successfully meet the needs of the region's businesses.*

## Strategies

*Create a unified vision for the region's infrastructure priorities by coordinating across responsible entities to develop and maintain the capacity of the region's transportation system. This will aid in the attraction and retention of businesses, provide greater access to a high quality work force, and ease access to key retail and services by:*

- Working with Chicago Rockford International Airport to continue to expand air cargo, passenger service, and airport-related development in the region.
- Creating a regionally coordinated slate of infrastructure priorities that maintains the current system and seeks key improvements in areas identified for development through local, county, and regional planning efforts.
- Seeking the funding necessary to implement the region's infrastructure priorities, whether from federal, state, local, or private sources.
- Upgrading and extending rail service in key corridors to support both freight service for rail-reliant industrial development and passenger service that links the region to population, employment, and recreational centers.
- Building off of each county's transit service strengths when seeking opportunities to expand.
- Coordinating multiple infrastructure improvements, including utility and roadway improvements, into single projects.
- Enhancing high-speed fiber optic networks by further extending fiber backbones and adding "last mile" connections for businesses.

## Comments/ notes

## Goal

*Sustainable economic development through the redevelopment of underused commercial and industrial properties, including brownfields, and the promotion of land use patterns that allow for growth while protecting natural resources.*

## Strategies

- Ensure that building and development codes within the region promote and facilitate the redevelopment of existing structures and infill development, leveling the playing field with requirements for new construction in greenfields.
- To the extent possible, streamline local permit and review processes for projects in suitable development areas, especially those that rebuild on cleared brownfield sites.
- Continue to assess, remediate, and redevelop brownfield sites throughout the region, taking full advantage of federal and state funding opportunities, both for environmental purposes and for historic preservation of significant properties. Where redevelopment of existing structures on brownfield sites is not feasible, clear any unusable structures for either permanent open space or future development.
- Protect prime farmland and natural areas from encroachment of incompatible development in order to maintain agriculture's key role as a part of the regional economy, continue to reap the economic benefits provided by natural lands, and promote ecological and agricultural tourism in rural areas of the region.
- Emphasize the continued revitalization of the Region's downtowns by creating high amenity areas that increase the number of viable businesses and institutions, promote residential growth, and build off of transit and other services.
- Promote tourism and recreational use of the region's waterways, including appropriate waterfront development in urban areas.

## Comments/ notes



# Preliminary quality of life strategies

## Goal

*Obtain a higher quality of life by supporting and enhancing the region's sense of community identity, community health, natural features, cultural and recreational amenities, and creative industries.*

## Strategies

- Build development strategies on the strengths of anchor institutions such as schools, universities, hospitals, foundations, sports and entertainment complexes, arts and cultural centers, non-profit organizations, and other large employers.
- Support and promote to residents and external markets the region's cultural and natural amenities.
- Promote healthy lifestyles by building upon the region's health care systems, engaging with employers, and increasing awareness of health-related resources.
- Leverage the region's rural and small-town communities as a complement to urban areas.
- Develop concurrent, connected branding initiatives to market the region's communities and assets.

## Comments/ notes