



# **GREATER FREEPORT PARTNERSHIP**

**Chamber + Economic Development + Main Street + Tourism**

# **2019 ANNUAL REPORT**

# MISSION

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The Greater Freeport Partnership is the place where organizations and people unite to advocate for the region, drive economic growth and champion a talented, workforce-ready community.

# VALUES

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Freeport & Stephenson County Value:

- Art, Design & Culture
- Diversity in All Forms
- Hard Work and the Entrepreneurial Spirit
- the Outdoor Experience
- Giving Back
- Commitment to Learning

# STRATEGIC GOALS

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The Partnership:

- Assess and align government, non-profit and educational efforts into a cohesive plan of measurable programs and services that address current and future workforce needs.
- Develop and implement a broad-based Stephenson County marketing and promotion plan.
- Captain the development and implementation of a countywide, local business economic educational program to increase their long-term success.
- Improve the aesthetics of the corridor leading into Freeport including wayfinding signage.
- Building the capacity to be the resource of business and economic development information.
- The Partnership board of directors, committees and staff, in its composition and practices, will reflect the diversity of the area it serves.

# STAFF

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**C. Mark Williams**, Executive Director

**Tess Dahm**, Director of Administrative Services

**Bill Clow**, Business Engagement Director

**Nicole Haas**, Brand Director

**Andrea Schultz Winter**, Development Director

**Katie Gentz**, Event Coordinator

**Billy George**, Administrative Coordinator

**Karen Brillhart**, Visitor Center Hostess

**Beth McWhirter**, Visitor Center Hostess

**Erin Stewart**, Visitor Center Hostess

- The chief advocate of Freeport & Stephenson County as a great and safe place to live, work and play.
- Repository for business information and resources for creative solutions to grow business.
- Driver of revitalization and economic development.
- The workforce development leader.

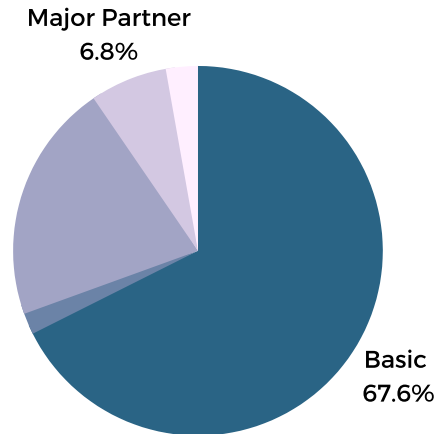


# MEMBERSHIP BASE



Not for profit/Government  
21%

Subsidiary  
1.9%



# BUSINESS EVENTS

**Business After Hours**

12 Events



1480 Attendees

**Rise N' Shine**

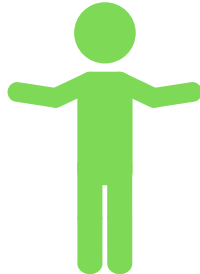
12 Events



320 Attendees

**YPN**

9 Events



180 Attendees

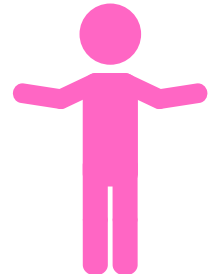
**Entrepreneur Visits**

24 Visits



**WEN\*\***

6 events



46 members

- Young Professionals Network (YPN)
- \*\*Women's Enrichment Network (WEN) was established in July 2019, the professional women's group meets monthly to discuss business and performance topics.

# VISITOR SERVICES

Visitor Center 2019 Attendance - 16,336  
Total Event Attendance (9 events) - 14,000  
Average hotel weekend occupancy rate - 69%



- ✓ Distributed 30,000 community guides to 83 area and 102 statewide locations.
- ✓ Developed new weekly digital event publication, ALL IN Stephenson County Event Guide to promote local events and activities. Sent directly to 6,000 addresses and posted on social media for visitors.
- ✓ Created digital storytelling promotion called "Bikes & Brews". The online campaign was run through Google Ads using Madden Media Group. During the four-month promotion, we generated 10,245 clicks to learn more about Stephenson County from the ad to the Greater Freeport Partnership web pages. The ad reached the most attention from users in Chicago (5,966 clicks), Milwaukee (947), Madison (762) and Cedar Rapids (697) were the top four regions.
- ✓ Additionally, according to analytics data, our website received 7,435 new users, and the average time spent on page was 2:29 minutes.

# GRANT-FUNDED PROGRAMS

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## Beautification

- HomeStart Neighborhood Grant - \$2,500  
Provided 2 new benches & 6 litter receptacles
- Community Foundation of Northern Illinois - \$20,774  
Provided streetscape furniture (6 new benches & 15 litter receptacles) for Downtown Freeport
- Freeport Community Foundation - \$5,796  
Created #FreeportReflections program for vacant window activation.

## Business Support Services

- Census Outreach - Region 1 IDHS Grant - \$9,590  
Reimbursed for advertising to promote 2020 US Census.

# ENTERPRISE ZONE PROJECTS

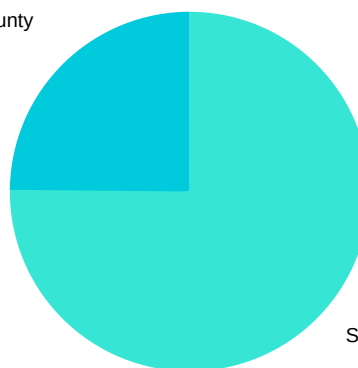
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Enterprise zone incentives are established by state legislation and by local ordinance. An enterprise zone is a specific area designated by the State of Illinois in cooperation with a local government to receive various incentives and other benefits to stimulate economic activity and neighborhood revitalization. Enterprise zones range from a half square mile to fifteen square miles.

The Northwest Illinois Enterprise Zone was certified by the State of Illinois on January 1, 2020. The Northwest Illinois Enterprise Zone termination date has been extended to December 31, 2034.

## Enterprise Zone development between 2015 - 2019: \$165,610,858.63.

Jo Daviess County  
24.8%



Stephenson County  
75.2%

# DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

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- Provided Grant / Funding / Incentive research to over 30 businesses and government partners.
- Continue to connect FSD 145 to the business community as they set-up the Career Academies.
  - Provided and analyzed regional employment data to inform selection of the academies.
  - Connected businesses to the FHS Career Fair.
  - Individually reaching out to businesses to encourage their participation in the academies and to become a 'Founding Partner'.
- Reinvigorated and promoted the Downtown Revitalization Loan Fund. Met with 15 building owners to discuss the loan fund and its uses and had one application continue through the process.
- Created a marketing intern position funded by the Workforce Connection WEX program. Akia Jordan was our intern from July 18-October 25. She worked on a number of promotional materials, blog articles and visitor center shifts.
- The Partnership worked with the Stephenson County Probation Department to invite local employers to interview individuals who are on parole or probation and have difficulties sustaining employment. This course was designed to target soft skills training and give individuals the tools needed to deal with conflict on the job, with the goal of sustaining employment. At the end of the 2019, the Stephenson County Job Readiness Class had completed 4 class cohorts, totaling 17 graduates, sustaining a 71% employee retention rate.
- Other economic development milestones for 2019:
  - 600 new jobs created in Stephenson County
  - \$20 million in building permits for the City of Freeport
  - \$43 million in building permits for Stephenson County