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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Champions of and Investors in Greater Fergus Falls!

Let's explore the seasons of our four plus years as Greater Fergus Falls (GFF) – the economic development tool for the community for Fergus Falls!

It's the end of December, 2022 as I craft this letter. I've just chaired my last board meeting after serving as president for the past two years – presiding virtually (and larger than life, I might add, in our wonderfully adapted technology savvy Foundry space) after being snowbound elsewhere. The subzero temperatures persist but I am warmed by our celebration this month of all of the things we have accomplished in the past 4 ½ years.

I'm reminded of the Bill Evans jazz tune, "You Must Believe in Spring." I share those words with you here but do listen to a recording of any number of greats (Tony Bennett, Esther Satterfield, Barbra Streisand, Cleo Lane, Michel Legrand); it's a lovely tune and I love the words. They give me hope, especially when I'm embracing winter but looking forward to the gardening season ahead.

In a way, growing an organization like GFF, is a bit like growing a garden. As the years go on, the plantings grow stronger and more mature. You, the gardener, get better at weeding out invasive plants and nurturing the ones you care about most to survive and thrive. Sometimes you can feel alone and uncertain in your efforts, but ultimately there are guidebooks, the internet, and of course other gardeners. Our GFF board and staff continue to cultivate the Economic Development Garden. Like winter, we also understand the challenges, the frigid temperatures, the uncertain future in some cases, but also the promise of spring and new projects and opportunities. We have grown stronger and stronger in our work and it's paying off. I can hardly wait for everyone to continue to celebrate our continued successes out there ahead of us. So, to get us through the seasons and anticipate an always amazing future, I leave you with some of my favorite lyrics. I hope they'll resonate with you as well.

When lonely feelings chill the meadows of your mind, Just think if winter comes, can spring be far behind? Beneath the deepest snows, the secret of a rose, Is that it merely knows, you must believe in spring Just as a tree is sure, its leave will reappear, It knows its emptiness, is just the time of year. The frozen mountain dreams, of April's melting streams How crystal clear it seems, you must believe in spring.

I have LOVED my time on the GFF Board, since its inception in the summer of 2018. To serve as president for the past two years has truly been one of the biggest honors of my time in Fergus Falls. The courage and bravery of all staff and board cannot be diminished. There have been challenges, of course, but we have overcome ALL of these and will continue to do so now and into the future. The make-up of the board, the dedication of the staff, and the support of the community have all given me great comfort in knowing that we will continue to be a powerful economic engine for Fergus Falls.

With Gratitude,

Rebecca Lynn Petersen

ABOUT US



mission

We support and grow our business community.

vision

To champion MN's business community of choice through aggressive advocacy and transformative growth.

values

- Grit. When we face barriers, we find new ways to navigate and move forward.
- Aggressive advocacy. We are unapologetic when we pursue support and growth of our business economy.
- Excellence. We don't believe in good enough, we strive for excellence in all aspects of our work.
- Integrity. We do the right things, and we are honest, even when it is hard or uncomfortable.
- Reliability. We do what we say we are going to do without reminders; if we cannot meet a stated deadline, we communicate with everyone involved.

OUR STAFF



NeTia Bauman, CEcD CEO

Bauman is the CEO of Greater Fergus Falls and holds a Certified Economic Developer (CEcD) designation through the International Economic Development Council (IEDC). Previously, she was the Business Development Coordinator and Executive Assistant for the organization.

In prior years, Bauman held several positions during her time at the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute (UGPTI) at North Dakota State University (NDSU).

Bauman also serves on the Board of Directors for the Fergus Falls Downtown Riverfront Council, Business Development for Fergus Falls, and the Work-Based Learning Advisory Committee through ISD 544.



Patricia Wahl
Administrative Assistant

Wahl is the administrative assistant for Greater Fergus Falls. She comes to the organization with a strong retail background, having managed various retail businesses in Fergus Falls throughout the years.

Currently, she serves on the City of Fergus Falls
Public Arts Commission, the SAGA Youth board, the
Rural Child Care Innovation Program (RCCIP) Core
Team, and previously served on the RTC Master Plan
Advisory Committee. Wahl is also an active Chamber
Ambassador and an art class teacher at the Kaddatz
Galleries.

Wahl completed her Basic Economic Development Course through the Economic Development Association of Minnesota (EDAM) in October 2022.

LEADERSHIP

2022 Greater Fergus Falls Board of Directors



Pictured Left to Right, Top to Bottom:

Rebecca Petersen (Chair), Andrew Yaggie (Vice-Chair), Steve Schoeneck (Treasurer), Jasmine Sonmor (Secretary), Lee Rogness, Tara Kempfer, Ben Schierer, Dr. Carrie Brimhall, Mike Thorson, Stephen Rufer, Jason Vaughn, Allison Stock, Kellen Shebeck, Elise Heifort, Chad Landmann, Kent Mattson

INVESTORS

Our work would not be possible without our investors. We appreciate you investing in the future of our community!

Ahlgren Law

Allison Stock

American Federal Bank*

Andrew Yaggie

Anonymous

Anonymous

Aura Fabricators

Balance Gymnastics Center

Bell Bank

Bremer Bank

Bonnie (Larson) Ingraham (FFHS Class of 1968)

Bruce Fuhrman

City of Fergus Falls*

Cornerstone Cabinets & Countertops

Companion Animal Hospital

Communicating for America

Daily Journal

David Stock Farm Services, Inc.

Dr. Carrie Brimhall

Edward Jones - Financial Advisor, Justin Arneson

Farmers State Bank

Fergus Falls Monument Company

Green Plains

InVision Eve Care*

Jasmine Sonmor

Lake Region Healthcare*

Lee Rogness

Marco*

Midwest Bevel Edge

M State Community and Technical College

Multi Business Solutions

Nelson Ford*

Otto Bremer Trust*

Otter Tail Power Company*

OTXteriors*

Park Region*

Pat Hanley*

Pemberton Law

Perks Coffee & Tea

Pickett & Demuth, LTD

Rebecca Petersen

Service Food Market*

ShoreMaster*

Shoretex Products

Steve and Sandy Rufer

Steve and Shelley Schoeneck

Stumbeano's Coffee Roasters*

Taco John's

Thomas Kingston

US Bank*

INVESTORS

Banks
Businesses
Grants
Individuals
City of Fergus Falls
Misc.

2021 INVESTTMENT

20	ZI IINVESTIMENT	
	15%	
	29%	
	10%	
	6%	
	20%	
	20%	

2022 INVESTIMENT

2022 INVESTIMENT
7.5%
29%
39%
6.5%
12.5%
5.5%

^{*}a special thank you to those who invest \$3,000+/annually to our organization

OUR PILLARS

Cultivating a diverse business climate, growing businesses, and helping entrepreneurs thrive are essential to our economic prosperity. GFF strives to meet our mission and vision through these three primary pillars.



BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION

We retain and expand existing businesses by building intentional relationships, offering meaningful programs, and providing technical and informational support.



BUSINESS ATTRACTION & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

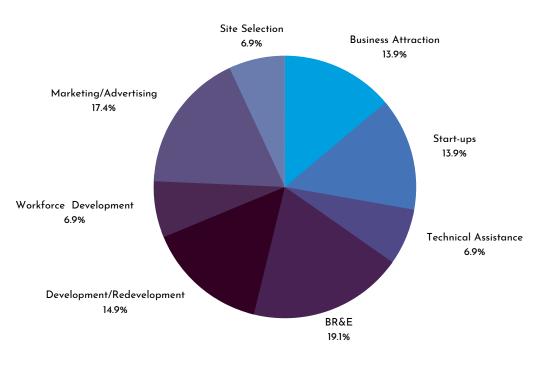
We attract and recruit businesses and entrepreneurs by strengthening partnerships, expanding access to resources, and fostering opportunity for all.



ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS

We engage stakeholders by boosting our community's economic advantage and improving our local economy by staying clear, yet adaptable.

ASSISTANCE PROVIDED

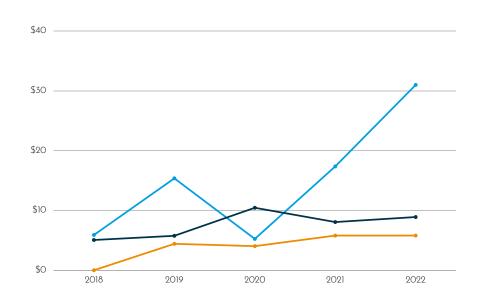


In 2022, we our continued to assist both existing businesses and start-ups through a variety of programming and technical assistance.

We processed a total of 721 individual inquiries from businesses, developers, investors and realtors.

The number of unique inquiries increased by 14% from 2021. The chart to the left depicts the types of inquiries received.

BUILDING PERMIT ACTIVITY



Data provided by the City of Fergus Falls Building Department and includes new construction and renovation, (in millions of dollars).

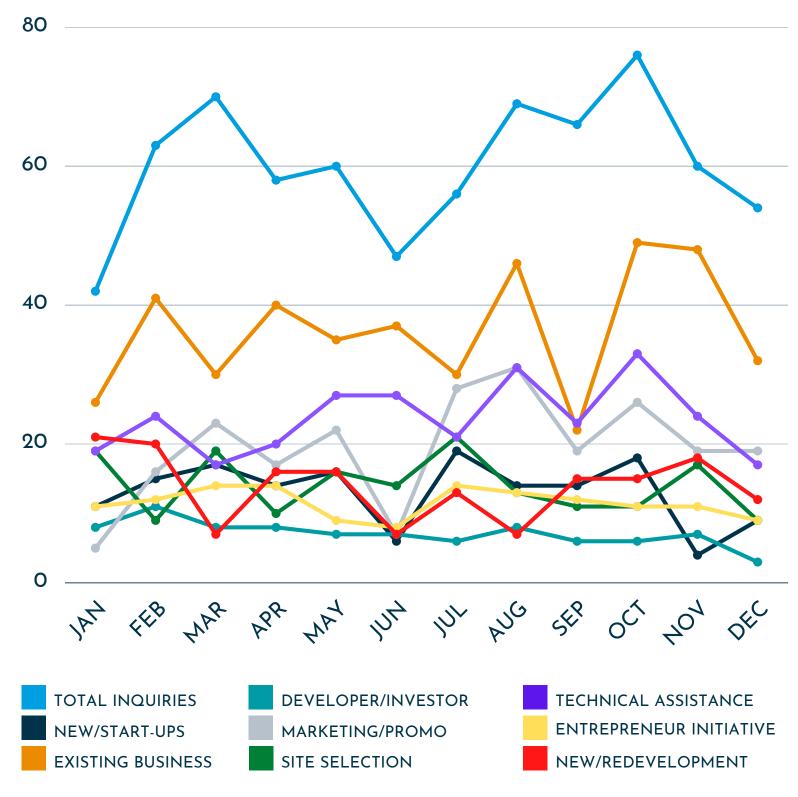
This indicates a 79% increase in commercial permits from 2021 to 2022.



METRICS

The scatter chart below represents a month-by-month account of inquiries by type.

This chart only includes our top 8 types of technical assistance.



FRAMEWORK GOALS

ACTION		
Assist 12-14 startups per year		
24 business touch-points per year		
Meet w/ 12 development professionals		
Host general programming events		
Publish press releases		
Present to public organizations		
Promote resources w/ unique radio ads		
Workforce development touchpoints		
Increase total unique inquiries		

GOALS	ACTUALS
12-14	81
24	119
12	16
12	22
24	28
24	24
52	52
48	69
10%	14%

There are endless components to economic development and community sustainability. Below are other notable accomplishments in 2022:

- Attended and participated in multiple MNDEED & Launch MN Roundtables focused on growing entrepreneurship in rural communities and expanding investment opportunities for underrepresented entrepreneurs.
- Selected as a feature community/organization to present adaptive reuse of big-box efforts at the AIA Conference in November 2022.
- GFF's CEO earned a Certified Economic Developer (CEcD) designation from the International Economic Development Council (IEDC), joining 1,100 others worldwide.
- Coordinated MN Manufacturing Month tours that included MNDEED reps., city leaders, and other community stakeholders. The groups visited TC Chocolate, Vector Windows, Cornerstone Cabinets & Countertops, and Midwest Bevel Edge.
- Hosted the first school-based student startup cohort with over 200 ISD 544 9th graders along with ILT Academy.
- Strengthened partnerships with comprehensive campaigns to support local businesses.
- Assisted with the reduction of commercial vacancies by 51% through site selection, marketing and advertising, and technical assistance.
- Received significant grant funding to launch and operate a hybrid coworking and entrepreneur center in downtown Fergus Falls. GFF celebrated the grand opening in October 2022.

BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION

All types of industries benefit from our BR&E services, including small and mid-size specialty manufacturers, small locally-owned retailers, and more. *Business expansion* examples from 2022 are highlighted below.



Sugar High Bakery & Confections Retail

Expanded from in-home Cottage Food operation to a brick-and-mortar downtown storefront for retail and consulting.

Created over 12 jobs with more in the future.



Sewer Skewer

Small Manufacturer

Expanded into 2,000 sf warehouse for assembly, marking 3 locations (2 located in Fergus Falls).

Created 6 jobs with 8-12 in the future.



TC Chocolate

Mid-Size Manufacturer

Expanded from home operation to a 7,000 sf facility, expanding product lines and national accounts.

Retained over 21 jobs and created several new positions.

"They were more than cheerleaders. They were the ones that said, 'This seems really doable, and here's how you're going to go about it."

BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION

Part of our BR&E strategy includes Succession Planning to streamline business ownership transfers and retain businesses and jobs in our community. *Business retention* examples from 2022 are highlighted below.

The Fabled Farmer Retail - Food

This farm-to-table restaurant closed mid-2021 and through our technical assistance service, a former employee purchased and re-opened in January 2022 retaining this business, 12+ jobs, and the opportunity for additional job creation.



Lake Cabin Meat & Deli Co. Retail - Service

Formerly the Fergus Locker, this meat processing and deli business transferred ownership and re-opened in April 2022. The retention of this business sustains a valuable service and retained several jobs.



Toast & Union Pizza & Brewing Co. Retail - Food

Two local restaurants were purchased in December 2022. Toast will operate as is with slight menu changes while the former Union Pizza & Brewing Co. will undergo renovations and re-open as Union Avenue Bar & Eatery in early 2023. The majority of the staff will remain intact, retaining 20+ jobs .



"I literally could not have done this without the assistance that GFF provided me."

Phyllis Tysver, Small Business Owner

REDEVELOPMENT - DENTAL SPECIALISTS

Dental Specialists of Fergus Falls, LLC broke ground on their reconstruction of a new dental facility located at 215 N. Tower Rd (the former Hedahl's) in the spring of 2022.

The group purchased The former auto parts store in September 2021 with plans to convert it to a large-scale multi-specialty dental clinic, expanding orthodontic, pediatric dentistry, and oral surgery operations to the region.

The redevelopment of this site will result in a state-of-the-art dental facility that provides care to a wide demographic, retain a minimum of 10 jobs, create 15 higher-paying jobs, and attract additional medical professionals to serve in Fergus Falls.

GFF worked with the City of Fergus Falls and Otter Tail County in addition to FM Bank to access a tax abatement incentive to offset the infrastructure development costs unique to this site. This project exemplifies the positive effect of public-private partnerships on community economic development.

The economic impact of this project includes a \$3 million capital investment, blight removal, higher-paying job creation and retention, and a significant increase to our local tax base.

The clinic anticipates opening in early 2023.





REDEVELOPMENT - ADAPTIVE REUSE

As the redevelopment of the former Sunmart property continues, GFF worked with Wayne Enterprises, LLC to secure a deal with Amazon to open a 17,000 sf last mile delivery center.

Opening in 2023, this facility will bring faster and more efficient package delivery to residents and businesses in the region. Additionally, this business will create up to 150 new jobs.

Retrofitting an existing building to fit the function of the Amazon delivery center was intentional. The adaptive reuse efforts and recent zoning amendments by the forward-thinking City Council, which created a pathway for light manufacturing to locate in the shopping district, fast-tracked the process.

It's planning, zoning, and responsiveness like this that enhance our community's competitive advantage.

In 2021, Wayne Enterprises, LLC purchased the property to redevelop the shuttered big-box store into a multi-business facility.





The 54,000 sf building was repurposed to accommodate two light manufacturers, Cornerstone Cabinets & Countertops and Midwest Bevel Edge in late 2021.

With the addition of Amazon, there is approximately 16,000 sf of leasable space remaining. For more information, contact GFF at 218-321-2079.



BUSINESS ATTRACTION

Our well-rounded Business Attraction Strategy includes prospecting new and existing businesses to start, expand or relocate to Fergus Falls. Notable business attraction and start-ups from 2022 are highlighted below.



NORWAYintheUSA Retail - Wholesale

GFF worked with Sarah to relocate her wholesale and e-commerce business to Fergus Falls. Her business provides fine quality Scandinavian products and hosts the occasional pop-up.



Gunpowder Retail - Bar/Restaurant

GFF worked with Blue to relocate her successful whiskey bar model from Iowa to Fergus Falls. Located at the former 'The Spot', the bar opened in October 2022 and created 4+ new jobs with more in the future.



Stephanie Hoff Consulting & Public Speaking

In addition to her position as a utility executive, Hoff started a small consulting business that provides coaching, public speaking, and digital curriculum in 2022. GFF assisted her through the Entrepreneur Initiative.

NEW BUSINESSES

In 2022, GFF provided direct support through their Entrepreneur Initiative, resulting in the creation of over 14 new businesses in Fergus Falls.



River Walk Counseling
Lash Lounge Co.
Otter B. Fresh Odor Control & Sanitizing
Little Author Arrow Box
NORWAYintheUSA
Harbor Freight Tools
Revive Athletics
Gunpowder
The Dragonfly Children's Boutique
Elevate
Christine Lawson Pottery
The Foxtail Fern
Amazon
And More!







ENTREPRENEUR INITIATIVE

Launched in 2020, our Entrepreneur Initiative serves emerging and early-stage entrepreneurs as well as existing businesses owners looking to expand, scale, or exit and transfer.

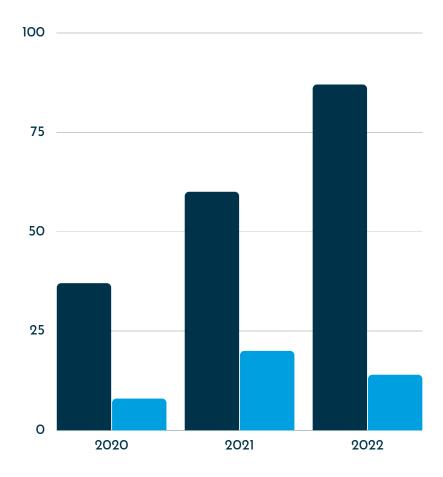
Through free and confidential 1:1 coaching, GFF provides a range of coaching and technical assistance customized to meet entrepreneurs where they are at!

For some, we provide assistance start-to-finish, for others they may only require site selection, technical assistance with incentives, business planning or financial preparedness.

The programming has grown from 1:1 coaching to include virtual coaching, small and large group training sessions, peer-to-peer mentoring, and more!



Pictured from R to L: Ruby Dowden, Patricia Wahl, Emily Reno, and Nancy X. Valentine receiving our "Welcoming Communities" awards in Entrepreneurship.



The chart at the above represents our year-over-year program growth:

- 2020: 37 participants | 8 new businesses
- 2021: 60 participants | 27 new businesses
- 2022: 87 participants | 14 new businesses

To date, our program has served 184 entrepreneurs resulting over 65 startups, retentions, or expansions resulting in the creation of over 230 new jobs.

Additionally, over 50% of our entrepreneurs our female, which mirrors the trend, nationally.

If interested in learning more, visit greaterfergusfalls.com/elab.

ENTREPRENEUR MASTERMIND SERIES



In April 2022, we launched our Entrepreneur MasterMind series, a free peer-to-peer mentoring series for innovators, entrepreneurs, and existing business owners to share lessons learned. These monthly sessions for entrepreneurs, by entrepreneurs with specifically curated content ranging from startup fundamentals and financial basics to marketing, and more.

Content is presented by fellow entrepreneurs, business owners, and coaches through panel Q&A, roundtable, and keynote variations.

Starting in 2023, the series will be held the second Monday of the month from 5:00 pm - 6:30 pm at 101 W. Lincoln Ave. All entrepreneurs and business owners are welcomed to attend.

"Like most entrepreneurs, we are guilty of working "IN" our businesses and not spending as much time working "ON" our businesses. We really enjoy working with GFF because we are learning first-hand experiences of other entrepreneurs who have "been there, done that." At MasterMinds, we are able to ask questions of other entrepreneurs who share their knowledge, and in turn, we can overcome these obstacles quicker using their advice. These educational opportunities have become critical to running, growing, and succeeding in our businesses."

Erin & Randy Halvorson, Owners Lake Shore Services & Protection Pros Disinfecting Services



LEAN CANVAS START-UP EDUCATION



GFF continues to build an expansive network of resources and technical assistance support to provide full-scale services to the Fergus Falls business community. As entrepreneurial start-ups continue to trend upwards, our team has been diligently strengthening partnerships and expanding our network of resources. Through the Launch Minnesota network, GFF became an early adopter and strong supporter of the ILT Academy, a lean start-up program that improves access to underestimated entrepreneurs and assists them in creating high-impact ventures in rural areas.

In 2022, GFF partnered with the Launch Minnesota network and ILT Academy to co-host or participate in 8 different events in 4 communities, engaging with over 550 participants. Over half of our audience this year were high school students, including 200 Freshman from the Fergus Falls Public School District!

Events: 8 | Cities: 4 | Participants: 550 | Cohort Founders: 4





THE FOUNDRY



In 2022, GFF realized a long-term goal to establish a hybrid coworking and entrepreneurial center that doubles as a pop-up retail space, and start-up accelerator in downtown Fergus Falls! The space offers 24/7 access to remote workers, entrepreneurs, and professionals who need a workspace for a few hours, a day here and there, or full-time. Additionally, the space can be utilized for education and training.

Thanks to sponsors, GFF provides free WIFI from Park Region, free printing from Marco Technologies, free coffee from Stumbeano's, and much more.

The goal of The Foundry is to create a hub of economic activity that is centrally located in Fergus Falls by paving a path for modern coworking and expanding access to quality and in-demand resources to better support all entrepreneurs and business owners in rural MN.

GFF celebrated the grand opening of The Foundry on October 12th, 2022 and ended the year with the following metrics:

Events: 6 | Pop-Ups: 5 | Members: 63 | Active Coworkers: 6





DEDICATED POP-UP RETAIL

The Rise of the "Pop-up" continued into in Fergus Falls throughout 2022. Many brick-and-mortars maximized the benefit of the pop-up model and invited pop-ups into their own brick-and-mortar retail spaces as it has proven to be a highly successful business model for several early-stage entrepreneurs in our area.

GFF's new hybrid coworking and entrepreneurial center includes a dedicated pop-up space to improve access to a high-profile downtown storefront for both emerging and growth stage entrepreneurs. Whether a business owner is popping up to introduce their business to a new market or they're test driving a new product line, our pop-up space provides opportunity for business owners to have their own downtown storefront for a day (or as often as they'd like) until they're ready to take the next step!

The space opened for pop-up reservations in November 2022 and hosted 11 unique entrepreneurs!





Sami Jo Photos | NORWAYintheUSA | With all my heart | The Foxtail Fern

Cecelia Designs Jewelry | Very That Vibe Vintage | Patricia Ann Artist | A Wife Like Me |

farmGLAM | Christine Lawson Pottery | Wildflower + Co

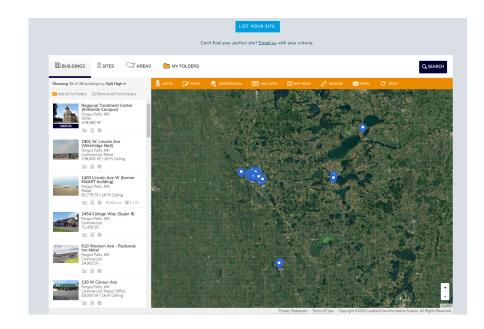


"The Foundry was the perfect space in downtown Fergus Falls to showcase our products to the community. We had very good traffic and not only our existing customers shopped our Holiday Pop-Up, but new customers as well."

Amanda Davison, Owner

A Wife Like Me

SITE SELECTION



Site Selection Database

This site is a free service provided to site selectors, realtors and commercial/industrial property owners.

In 2022, we had 797 unique visitors with over 1,900 page views which means the number of returning visitors increased from the previous year!

Visit greaterfergusfalls.com/properties to view current inventory or add your site.

Buildings Sites 27 38 Buildings On the Market 86 Buildings Off the Market 23 Sites Off the Market

This represents the total number of buildings and sites listed since GFF established a sites database in June 2019 through December 2022.

Looking for Available Sites

Promoting available development opportunities is a primary goal, and we're pleased to see year-over-year increases in site inquiries.

In 2022, we received 169 unique site selection inquiries.

Since 2019, there has been an overall decline in commercial site vacancy:

- Buildings | 69%
- Sites | 46%

ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS

As we continue to grow our organization, it's vital we continue to be proactive to strengthen the impact and sustainability of our organization.

Below are notable achievements in 2022 that strengthen our impact and support sustainability:

- CEO NeTia Bauman earned a CEcD (Certified Economic Developer) designation joining 1,100 other professionals worldwide.
- Patricia Wahl joined the team as GFF's new Administrative Assistant
- Secured over \$150,000 in grants to launch the Foundry, a hybrid coworking & entrepreneurial center.
- Expanded a network of resources + strengthened collaborative partnerships
- Expanded programming to include peer-to-peer mentoring via our Entrepreneur MasterMind series
- Facilitated a Strategic Planning process to re-imagine GFF's mission, vision and objectives



ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

Our economic growth relies not only on direct impacts but indirect and induced activities resulting from new development, redevelopment, adaptive reuse, and expansions.

MIDMN FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

Purchased a 1 acre lot for new construction to establish a banking presence in Fergus Falls. The facility broke ground in spring 2022.



STRONG SELF

A new mental health collective and private practice purchased, renovated, and opened a new center in Fergus Falls.



VECTOR WINDOWS

Local window manufacturer started construction to expand production operations into am existing 52,000 sf building



PIONEER KIDS

PioneerCare, a skilled nursing facility, opened onsite childcare in 2022. The program opened up 12 childcare slots available for both employees and public.



DUTCHMEN ORGANICS

The former Meadow Farm Foods rebranded, relocated and expanded into a new downtown location. This move allowed them to grow their footprint, add more products, and new services.

TELLING OUR STORY

GFF proactively markets and promotes our organization, resources, and development opportunities to site selectors, investors, developers, and business owners through a strategic approach.

Through our website, social media, digital advertising, audio marketing, and other mediums we continue to see an increase in engagement and awareness on a broad scale.



1.2K followers | 74% female Audience reach: 6,604 Top Performing post: 645 |

Social platforms:

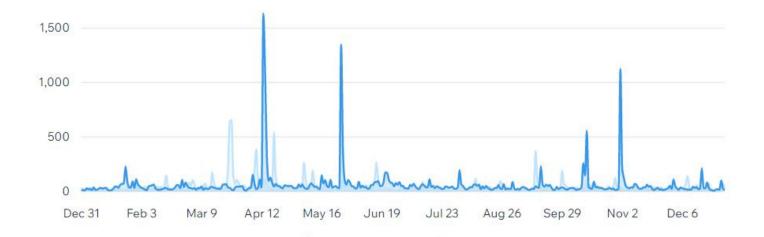
- Facebook @GreaterFFMN
- Instagram @GreaterFFMN
- LinkedIn @GreaterFFMN



Page views up 2,227% Top Locations: Greater Minneapolis St. Paul, 18% Fargo, 13%

Below are the highlights of our 2022 analytics form our branded website, www.greaterfergusfalls.com:

- Unique Visitors: 12,039 (93% new vs. 7% returning)
- Most Visited Page: Press, up 100%
- Top Traffic Sources: Facebook & Google
- See below the 2021 v. 2022 monthly traffic graph indicating steady increases in traffic



OUTREACH & EVENTS

In 2022, we continued partnering with Leighton Broadcasting and the Fergus Falls Daily Journal on traditional advertising mediums. We also added a billboard on the I-94 corridor outside of Rothsay, MN and re-imagined our storytelling methodology by partnering with low writer R.C. Drews for our monthly Positively Fergus Falls blog.

Cumulatively, we hosted and/or participated in 43 outreach events and reached over 1,100 individuals throughout the region.



Launch MN Roundtable Chamber Cafe West Central MN Pitch Competition

Sunrise Rotary Y's Folks Fergus Falls Refresh

Salad Bow Launch MN Summit HS Career Expo Sertoma

Lead for America BarCamp Lending 101 Series

And Many More!

PARTNERSHIPS

































- City of Fergus Falls
- ISD #544
- Otter Tail County
- Fergus Falls Area Chamber of Commerce
- Visit Fergus Falls
- Otter Tail Lakes Country
- West Central Initiative
- Economic Development Assoc. of MN
- FastLane 94

- M State Community & Technical College
- CareerForce
- Leighton Broadcasting
- Launch MN
- ILT Studios & ILT Academy
- Southern Valley EDA
- Fergus Falls Daily Journal
- · Local businesses & much more!

