

# The Center Holds

**From Houston to Chicago, communities in Middle America rank among top-performing economic development groups.**

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Willis Group Holdings recently signed a long-term lease at Chicago's signature skyscraper, the Sears Tower. As part of the deal, the building is being renamed the Willis Tower. Willis will move some 500 employees into about 140,000 sq. ft. (13,006 sq. m.) of the 36-year-old building.

If you want to know where the jobs of the future are headed, look no further than Middle America.

From Houston to Chicago, communities in the central part of the U.S. are setting the pace in job creation and capital investment generated by corporate facility projects, according to the Conway Data New Plant Database. These top-performing cities are doing the best job at landing the real estate deals that drive economic growth.

Each year, *Site Selection* selects the previous year's Top Economic Development Groups based upon the following criteria: total capital investment; investment per capita; total jobs created; jobs created per capita; the contributions of the local or regional economic development organization toward the attainment of these numbers; overall economic vitality; depth and breadth of economic strength; diversity of industry; ability to generate breakthrough deals; and the ability to provide documentation for all projects.

To be included in the projects database, a corporate facility deal must meet one of three minimum criteria: it must represent at least \$1 million in capital investment; it must create 50 new jobs or more; or it must result in the creation of at least 20,000 sq. ft. (1,858 sq. m.) of new space.

The database tracks corporate and industrial space including headquarters, manufacturing plants, distribution warehouses, service centers, data centers, call centers and other related facilities. Hospitals, schools, restaurants, retail stores, churches, government buildings and other institutional projects are omitted.

Based upon the criteria outlined above, the organizations doing the best job of economic development can be found in places far from the traditional seats of influence. In fact, the farther you travel from Washington, Hollywood and Wall Street, it seems, the more you find the conditions ripe for business growth and innovation.

Consider the stories of these winning groups for 2008, listed in alphabetical order by city:

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## World Business Chicago

Chicago, Illinois

Rita Athas, Exec. Dir.

[www.worldbusinesschicago.com](http://www.worldbusinesschicago.com)

There is a reason why Chicago was ranked as the No. 1 metro in the U.S. in corporate project activity by *Site Selection* for three years in a row and six years out of seven. Few economic development organizations do their job any better than World Business Chicago.

While Chicago ranked third among all large metros with 138 in projects in 2008, [the Windy City continued to set records in capital investment and job creation](#). WBC reported more than \$2.25 billion in investment and more than 4,500 new jobs stemming from corporate real estate deals last year.

In the decade of the 2000s, no metro area in the country has produced more corporate facility expansions, more jobs or more capital investment, according to the Conway Data New Plant Database.

"We have one of the best products in the world to market and sell," says Rita Athas, executive director of WBC. "The city's location and work force speak for itself. We are always ranked as one of the most diverse economies among major cities, and we have a vibrant, 24-7 urban core. People are still moving downtown, and it is a great place for two-career couples."

**MillerCoors** chose Chicago for its corporate headquarters in 2008. The company signed a 15-year lease for nearly 130,000 sq. ft. (12,077 sq. m.) of office space at 250 S. Wacker Drive, where the firm will employ up to 400 people in executive and management positions.

**Veolia Environnement**, the world's largest environmental services company, selected Chicago as its new North American headquarters. The firm signed a 34,500-sq.-ft. (3,205-sq.-m.) lease in the Aon Center, where Veolia will employ 60 executives and other administrative workers.

Other big deals of the year in Chicago came from **Aviva**, **Tempel Steel** and **Barry Callebaut**. And in a signature move, **Willis Group Holdings** announced in early 2009 that it would become a tenant in the Sears Tower. As part of the deal, the Chicago landmark and tallest building in the Western Hemisphere will be renamed the Willis Tower.

"Willis Insurance is the fifth largest insurance company in the world, and we are seeing a lot of other activity already in 2009," adds Athas. "A lot of entrepreneurial companies are still growing right here in Chicago. Ultimately, they are going to be the job producers of tomorrow."

## Cincinnati USA Partnership

Cincinnati, Ohio

Neil Hensley, Sr. Econ. Dev. Dir.

[www.cincinnatiusa.org](http://www.cincinnatiusa.org)

Long-suffering fans of the Cincinnati Bengals could use a dose of good news at this time of year, and they are getting it thanks to the efforts of Cincinnati USA. With 124 corporate facility projects in 2008, the greater Cincinnati metro area ranked fourth among all large cities in the U.S. and was a big reason behind Ohio capturing its third consecutive Governor's Cup from *Site Selection* in March.

The partnership reported more than \$1.35 billion in capital investment and 7,185 jobs created by corporate expansions last year. Headline grabbers included **American Financial Group**, which expanded by \$322 million and 530,000 sq. ft. (49,237 sq. m.) in Cincinnati, and **U.S. Playing Card Co.**, which grew by \$70 million and 500 jobs in Boone County, **Ky. Cincinnati Bell** added a \$56-million, 100-job data center in Lebanon, Ohio.

"The recent tax changes enacted by Ohio affirm our message," says Doug Moormann, vice president of economic development for the Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber. "We are a low-cost environment for growing businesses. We compete well with big cities around the country. We still offer 90 direct flights to other U.S. cities, plus a number of direct



The Banks, an \$800-million mixed-use project on Cincinnati's central riverfront, is under construction. The project will include some 2.8 million sq. ft. (260,120 sq. m.) of new space, including up to 1 million sq. ft. (92,900 sq. m.) of office space, up to 1,800 housing units, up to 200 hotel rooms, up to 300,000 sq. ft. (27,870 sq. m.) of retail space, and a 45-acre (18-hectare) park.

flights to destinations in Europe."

Other factors driving business growth in the region, says Moormann, are a knowledgeable work force; colleges and universities that produce about 100,000 graduates a year; a historic base in consumer product manufacturing and marketing; and a healthy mix of high-tech companies such as GE Aerospace and Amylin Pharmaceuticals.

"Companies locate here to work with Macy's, Kroger and Procter & Gamble. For example, the people who process all of the data from the Kroger Plus Cards are based here," adds Moormann. "They are doing work with Home Depot too. They use the information gleaned from product sales, and they try to improve sales performance through improved customer intelligence."

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## Dallas Regional Chamber

Dallas, Texas

Mike Rosa, VP of Econ. Dev.

[www.dallaschamber.org](http://www.dallaschamber.org)

With 156 corporate facility deals in 2008, the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington metro area finished second among all large cities in America, according to the Conway Data New Plant Database. Anchoring the marketing efforts for the region is the Dallas Regional Chamber.

"Our industries are holding up well. Our banks and our financial services sector are doing very well in terms of jobs," says Mike Rosa, vice president of economic development for the Dallas Regional Chamber. "The DFW market is pretty affordable. We hold up very well during times of economic downturn and don't experience the same amount of job cuts as other places do. We are a bit insulated because of our business climate."

The DRC reported more than \$1.3 billion in capital investment and 11,858 new jobs from corporate expansion projects in 2008. Rosa says space availability helped DRC close a bevy of deals.

"We have a huge base of real estate and it is very sophisticated," Rosa says. "Our ability to provide spec space is unmatched anywhere else in the country. As a result, our projects are pretty diverse."

Big deals in Big D came from **AT&T**, which moved its headquarters and 700 jobs from San Antonio, and **Interstate Bakeries**, which is relocating its headquarters from Kansas City.

"Especially in turbulent times, there are reset buttons that companies are trying to hit. Places like DFW will pop up and make sense for a lot of corporate reasons," notes Rosa. "For companies that are fractured between eastern and western outposts, they will be looking at places where they can consolidate operations, and the best place to do that right now is DFW."

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## Dayton Development Coalition

Dayton, Ohio

Jim Leftwich, President and CEO

[www.getmidwest.com](http://www.getmidwest.com)

The Dayton Flyers weren't the only team making noise in Southwest Ohio this past year. While the mid-major college basketball program was knocking off powerhouses and earning a bid to the NCAA Tournament, the Dayton Development Coalition was chalking up an impressive haul of its own.

By landing 41 corporate facility projects in 2008, Dayton beat out all metro areas in the population category of 200,000 to 1 million people. Big deals came from companies like **DMAX**, which announced a \$64-million diesel-engine plant investment in Moraine, and **Cornerstone Research Group**, which announced a \$17-million, 130-job materials R&D plant in Xenia.

"A tremendous manufacturing services base is located here," says Jim Leftwich, president and CEO of the Dayton Development Coalition. "Companies can roll in and find a great base to support their operation. One reason for that is the fact that this region got out in front of the work-force challenge. We made a focused effort to take the time to understand the needs of the employers in the area. We make sure that our work-force training providers are structuring their programs

to meet the needs of our employers in a very timely fashion."

The success of 2008 is spilling over into 2009, adds Leftwich. "We have about 20 active projects that are in the mix right now," he says, some of which will close very soon. "Together, they represent about 3,200 jobs. They include both U.S. and international businesses."

Communities throughout the Dayton area benefit from this windfall, notes Leftwich. "Economic development in this region is truly a team sport. We work very closely with everyone in the region. Our view is that if one entity succeeds, everyone succeeds."

## Greater Houston Partnership

Houston, Texas

Jeff Moseley, President and CEO

[www.houston.org](http://www.houston.org)

When [Site Selection ranked Houston as the No. 1 large metro](#) in the U.S. for corporate project activity in 2008, the news surprised some. It didn't surprise Jeff Moseley, president and CEO of the Greater Houston Partnership.

"When we put together Opportunity Houston, it was designed to be a five-year initiative that our business community felt was critical to marketing the area," Moseley says. "We raised and committed \$32 million for showcasing and marketing the area, and that program will be measured on its ability to bring in leads and prospects."

The program, encompassing 36 regional economic development allies in the 10-county region, includes an \$800,000 GIS mapping application that provides real-time data on specific sites.

Based upon 2008's performance, it appears as though the marketing efforts are paying off. The GHP reported more than \$6.2 billion in capital investment from projects creating 9,925 new jobs last year.

One of the biggest deals came from **Hewlett-Packard Co.**, which announced in October that it would build a \$250-million facility on 97 acres (39 hectares) it acquired near the small town of Hockley, about 18 miles (29 km.) from the company's main campus in Houston.

The Palo Alto, Calif.-based HP has had a major presence in Houston since acquiring Compaq Computer Corp. in 2002, and that presence could grow even larger. HP has an option to buy another 100 acres (40.5 hectares) in the new industrial park northwest of Houston.

"The heavy lifting of putting Opportunity Houston together has been done," notes Moseley. "We are suited up and on the field. A lot of other communities are still in the locker room."

## Indy Partnership

Indianapolis, Indiana

Ron Gifford, President and CEO

[www.indypartnership.com](http://www.indypartnership.com)



The new \$1.1-billion terminal opened at Indianapolis Airport in November to much fanfare. The project is one of several big-ticket items sprucing up the Indianapolis region.

When you work as hard as the people of Central Indiana do every year to host one of the world's biggest sporting spectacles – the Indianapolis 500 – you learn a thing or two about putting your best foot forward.

The Indy region did a lot of that in 2008 as the region tallied 58 corporate facility projects and reported \$928 million in capital investment and 8,320 jobs generated by these deals.

"We are consistently ranked as having one of the most productive work forces in the country," says Ron Gifford,

president and CEO of the Indy Partnership. "We have also been ranked as the most affordable housing market in the U.S. for 13 quarters in a row."

Infrastructure projects are paying off too, says Gifford. "When a business person sees a community investing in itself, that sends a strong signal that the company should invest here," he notes. "We just opened our new \$1-billion airport. We opened the \$800-million Lucas Oil Field last year. We are expanding our downtown convention center, and new hotel complexes are coming on board. This city has committed almost \$3 billion in investment into public assets at a time when a lot of other communities are retrenching."

Companies are taking note. **EnerDel Inc.**, a lithium ion battery company that came out of General Motors,



announced a \$120-million manufacturing plant expansion last year in Indianapolis, creating 855 jobs. **Nestlé USA** announced a \$200-million, 135-job expansion of its beverage plant in Anderson.

"We find that if we get folks to our community, they are blown away by all of the great things going on here," Gifford adds. "Our mission is to stop being the best-kept secret around."

## Pittsburgh Regional Alliance

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Dewitt Peart, President

[www.pittsburghregion.org](http://www.pittsburghregion.org)



Philips Respironics is expanding its operations in the Pittsburgh area with a 165,000-sq.-ft. (15,329-sq.-m.) manufacturing plant for sleep therapy devices.

Fresh off another NFL Super Bowl title courtesy of the Pittsburgh Steelers, the Steel City is basking in the glory of another sort – a banner year of economic development.

The 10-county region of southwestern Pennsylvania reported more than \$4.2 billion in capital investments generated by 290 economic development deals. Those projects are expected to create, over time, 13,208 new jobs in the Pittsburgh region and retain another 17,047 jobs, according to the Pittsburgh Regional Alliance.

"Pittsburgh has a very balanced economy," says Dennis Yablonsky, the former Pennsylvania Secretary of Community and Economic Development and Pittsburgh native who was

appointed CEO of the Allegheny Conference on Community Development in March 2009. "It still has a reasonable amount of advanced manufacturing, and we've had a lot of technical growth and innovation coming out of Carnegie Mellon and the University of Pittsburgh. Plus, we have invested a lot of money into infrastructure in the last 10 years, particularly in site prep work. We had a lot of brownfields that were not prepared for pad-ready development. We now have those."

As a result, the Pittsburgh region has been raking in a bevy of projects over the past two years. "Having the real estate available and the sites ready to go in the growth corridors of this region has made Pittsburgh an easier place to do business," says Dewitt Peart, president of the Pittsburgh Regional Alliance. "And we are seeing the pipeline of project activity continue to grow."

Big wins for the region include **Flabeg Corp.** building a 220,000-sq.-ft. (20,438-sq.-m.) solar mirror production facility, its first in the U.S., on 19 acres (7.7 hectares) in Clinton Commerce Park near the Pittsburgh International Airport in Allegheny County, and **Philips Respironics** expanding its operations in southwestern Pennsylvania with a 165,000-sq.-ft. (15,329-sq.-m.) manufacturing plant for sleep therapy devices.

Flabeg is investing about \$30 million in its facility, while Philips is investing \$32 million, according to the PRA.

## The Siouxland Initiative

Sioux City, Iowa

Debi Durham, President

[www.siuoxlandchamber.com](http://www.siuoxlandchamber.com)

Adversity can be a great teacher. No one knows that better than the folks in Sioux City, Iowa, a tri-state metro area that has seen big industries and big employers come and go over the years.

"We went through our own recession when Gateway began to struggle," says Chris McGowan, executive vice president of economic development for The Siouxland Initiative, the economic development arm of the Siouxland Chamber. "At one point, the computer company employed more than 6,000 people in our community. Now, they employ less than 100. We know what it is to go through major job losses. We can certainly relate to the pain that other communities are experiencing. More than anything, that is what drives us more every day. When we are successful, it puts our friends and our neighbors to work in good jobs."

Lately, those good jobs are multiplying in the Sioux City area. For each of the past two years, Sioux City has been ranked the No. 1 small metro in the U.S. by *Site Selection* for having more corporate facility projects than any other city of less than 200,000 people. In 2008, the Siouxland region had 20 expansion deals that generated more than 2,500 jobs for the community of 143,000 residents.

Debi Durham, president of both the Initiative and the Chamber, says it's the power of regional alliances that propel

the area. "You have to have someone who is the keeper of the regional vision, and that is The Siouland Initiative," she says. "Our strength is the region. We meet with six U.S. senators and three U.S. House members. The alliance we have here is very powerful, and everything we do is about economic growth."

That growth may soon accelerate if **Hyperion Resources** gains approval to begin work on a \$10-billion oil refinery in Elk Point, S.D. So far, the project has passed all key regulatory hurdles. "A final decision is expected in July," says McGowan.

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## Greater Statesville Development Corp.

Statesville, N.C.

Mike Smith, Exec. Dir., GSDC

[www.greaterstatesville.org](http://www.greaterstatesville.org)

## Mooresville-South Iredell

Economic Development Corp.

Mooresville, N.C.

Russell Rogerson, Exec. Dir., MSIEDC

[www.edcmooresville.org](http://www.edcmooresville.org)

How does one micropolitan area get ranked first or second in the nation by *Site Selection* for corporate project activity 10 years out of 11? In the case of Statesville-Mooresville, N.C., it helps to have two economic development organizations that rank among the best in the country.

In 2008, the Iredell County micro area beat out all others by registering 17 corporate facility expansions. Altogether, these projects accounted for \$366 million in capital investment and generated 362 new jobs for the area.

"When company executives come here, they know that this is a good place for their family and their business for the long term," says Mike Smith, executive director of the Greater Statesville Development Corp. "Our educational system helps us stand out. The North Carolina school superintendent of the year is located here. This is the quintessential American small town."

Russell Rogerson, executive director of the Mooresville-South Iredell Economic Development Corp., concurs. "It takes a complete package to be successful in economic development," he says. "You must have strong regional efforts and strong local and state efforts. It is about product and total attraction efforts as well."

Key investments in Iredell County last year came from **Aerodyne Wind Tunnel**, which announced a \$1-million expansion of its engine-testing facility, and **Frito-Lay**, which announced a \$1-million expansion of its warehouse. Both are in Mooresville.

The year's largest deal for the county came from **Companhia Providencia**, a Brazilian company that announced a \$133-million investment in a nonwoven fabrics plant in the West Industrial Park in Statesville. The project creates 90 jobs for the area.

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## Community Development Foundation

Tupelo, Mississippi

David Rumbarger, President and CEO

[www.cdfms.org](http://www.cdfms.org)

When Toyota announced that it would build its next-generation model of the hybrid Prius at the company's new plant in Blue Springs, Miss., David Rumbarger said it represented "the coming of age" for the Tupelo area.

"The impact of having a high-tech vehicle like the Prius being built right here is huge," says the president and CEO of the Community Development Foundation. "It has changed a lot of the mindset for young people in this area in terms of their access to 21st-century type jobs. This truly represents the birth of the eco-centric mindset in Tupelo."

Building an earth-friendly car that gets 50 miles per gallon has a way of doing that. "The 2010 Prius, which is the first model that will be assembled here, will have over 1,000 new worldwide patents," says Rumbarger. "It will feature a more fuel-efficient engine of 1.8 liters, larger interior capacity and improved drag co-efficiency. It will even have an option package that includes photovoltaic cells as part of the rooftop panels."

(According to early April news reports, the Toyota plant in Tupelo will be idled upon completion and the company will rely on its Japan-based Prius plant until global demand makes a comeback.)

Large investments in 2008 in Tupelo came from **Toyota Auto Body**, a supplier that announced an \$84-million

expansion in Baldwyn, and **ForeFront Group Inc.**, a golf accessories company that's building a 200,000-sq.-ft. (18,580-sq.-m.) distribution center in Lee County.

"It's been a really good year for our area, thanks to the diversification of the marketplace," adds Rumbarger. "This has all been the result of a dream that started way back in the 1990s. For those who have the patience with economic development, it really does work."

Landing 12 corporate expansions, totaling 557 jobs and \$142 million in capital investment in 2008, attests to the value of that patience.

## Honorable Mention Groups of 2008

### Greater Akron Chamber

Ohio [www.greaterakronchamber.org](http://www.greaterakronchamber.org)

The Rubber Capital of the World lived up to its nickname in 2008, thanks to Bridgestone Firestone's \$102-million investment into 240,000 sq. ft. (22,296 sq. m.) of R&D space in Akron. But the Greater Akron area also showed robust expansion activity in a variety of industry sectors.

Sizable deals occurred in metal, steel and aluminum fabrication, as well as the polymer sciences. With more than 16,000 plastics industry employees in the area, Akron has earned a new nickname: Polymer Center of the Americas.

With 39 corporate facility projects in 2008, Akron trailed only Dayton among all U.S. tier-two metros (cities with populations of between 200,000 and 1 million people). Leading the effort to attract investment and jobs is the Greater Akron Chamber of Commerce.

Last year, the chamber played a role in generating \$291 million in corporate facility investments and the creation of 1,261 jobs. While Bridgestone Firestone represented the largest investment, S&P Data LLC brought in the most jobs, 400, at a new call center in Summit County. Portage and Medina counties are also served by the chamber.

"I think the key is teamwork – the power of our relationships is really what filters down to our prospects," says Richard Rebadow, executive vice president of economic development for the Greater Akron Chamber. "We have seasoned professionals who can be quite creative in addressing the concerns of companies and who can deliver highly creative incentive packages to meet the needs of private industry. This is also a very cost-effective location. Your investment can go a long way here."

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### Albuquerque Economic Development

New Mexico [www.abq.org](http://www.abq.org)

The power of the sun captured the lion's share of the headlines in New Mexico last year. Nowhere did the sun shine brighter on industry expansions than in Albuquerque, where 10 corporate facility projects generated \$1.07 billion in capital investment and created 3,685 jobs in 2008.

The largest deals came from Signet Solar Inc., which announced a two-phase, \$840-million expansion of a solar-cell manufacturing operation in Belen in Valencia County. The moves create 600 jobs for the Albuquerque area.

Earlier this year, Solar Array Ventures Inc. announced a \$210-million investment at Cordero Mesa in Bernalillo County. Up to 1,000 jobs will be added over five years at the company's 225,000-sq.-ft. (20,903-sq.-m.) plant on a 25-acre (10-hectare) site north of Interstate 40.

"Our area continues to outperform during these difficult times," said Don Power, chairman of Albuquerque Economic Development Inc.

Other big deals in 2008 came from General Mills (\$100 million) and Schott Solar (\$100 million). Schott is adding 350 jobs and 200,000 sq. ft. (18,580 sq. m.) at its new solar-panel plant in Albuquerque.

More companies are discovering the Albuquerque metro area's growing and highly educated population within a low-cost operating environment," says Gary Tonjes, president of Albuquerque Economic Development. "That, coupled with private and public sector leadership working in a collaborative manner, sets the foundation for a location that welcomes capital and treats it well through continued support and pro-business policies."

## Baldwin Economic Development Alliance

Baldwin County, Alabama [www.baldwineda.com](http://www.baldwineda.com)

Robert Ingram, president and CEO of the Baldwin County Economic Development Alliance in Alabama, says there are several reasons why corporate site selectors keep choosing the Daphne-Fairhope micropolitan area for their facility projects.

"For three straight years, Baldwin County has been ranked in the top four of all micropolitan areas for new and expanding corporate locations by *Site Selection*," Ingram says. "Our county lies between the Mobile and Pensacola MSAs, is dissected by north-south and east-west interstate highways, enjoys a moderate coastal climate, shares a large and diverse labor force with our metropolitan neighbors, and has a very high quality of life, including outstanding public education."

In 2008, those assets added up to produce a banner year, as the Baldwin EDA secured 12 corporate expansion projects totaling \$38 million in capital investment and 352 new jobs for a county of 174,000 people.

With an area work force of 4,000 people trained in the aerospace industry, Baldwin continues to attract investors in various high-tech industries. The largest investor in 2008 was **Segers Aerospace**, which announced a \$7-million maintenance and repair operation in Fairhope. The 130,000-sq.-ft. (12,077-sq.-m.) plant will employ 100 workers.



Segers Aerospace announced a \$7-million maintenance and repair operation in Fairhope, Ala., that will employ 100 workers.

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## Chattanooga Area Chamber

Tennessee [www.chattanoogachamber.com](http://www.chattanoogachamber.com)

Landing a Top Deal of the Year did more than firmly entrench Chattanooga on the radar screen of corporate site selectors. It solidified the Southern Tennessee city as a force to be reckoned with in years to come.

By beating out all contenders to secure the \$1-billion, 2,000-job automotive assembly plant for **Volkswagen Group of America Inc.**, Chattanooga bucked the tide of global auto industry downsizing and catapulted the Hamilton County area to new heights of economic development.

"Chattanooga's success in 2008 is the result of years of preparation and excellent teamwork among public and private partners," says Tom Edd Wilson, president and CEO of the Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce. "Thanks to a comprehensive approach to economic development, we were able to offer a shovel-ready mega-site, a large well-qualified labor pool, and excellent work-force preparation within a city that several national publications have called one of the top-ten places to live in America."

Chattanooga lured a train of other employers as well last year. Among them were **Westinghouse Nuclear Services**, which announced a \$9-million, 50-job facility investment, and **Adaptive Methods**, which announced a \$4-million, 100-job plant for making high-tech shelters.

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## Greater Des Moines Partnership

Iowa [www.desmoinesmetro.com](http://www.desmoinesmetro.com)

The Greater Des Moines Partnership, in cooperation with other community groups, launched a campaign titled "I Believe" in late April. The campaign is designed to celebrate the Greater Des Moines area, its economic opportunities and the people who are pushing the city forward.

Judging from the Partnership's economic development results in 2008, a lot of companies already believe in Greater Des



Moines. Last year, 28 companies announced expansion projects in the area, good for fifth-best among all tier-two metros in the U.S. These deals brought \$886 million in capital investment and 1,767 new jobs to the area.

"The individual reasons for growing here vary by company, but we repeatedly hear that locating in Greater Des Moines allows companies to increase their profit margins while offering great quality of life for workers," says Martha Willits, president and CEO of the Greater Des Moines Partnership.

The quality-of-life credential was bolstered in April when *Forbes* magazine ranked Des Moines third on the list of America's most livable cities. The ranking was based upon such factors as unemployment, crime rate and cost of living.

**Microsoft** led all corporate investors in 2008 by announcing a \$500-million data center project in West Des Moines. The new plant in Dallas County will create 75 jobs.

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## Duluth Economic Development Authority

Minnesota [www.duluthmn.gov/planning/deda/](http://www.duluthmn.gov/planning/deda/)

The Duluth Economic Development Authority produced a record-setting year for the Duluth-Superior metro area of Minnesota, registering an impressive tally of \$1.2 billion in corporate project activity and 1,104 new jobs for the MSA of 275,000 people.

Topping the charts was Duluth Metals, which announced a \$916-million expansion of its copper and nickel plant in Ely in Saint Louis County. The deal creates 1,000 jobs.

Mesabi Nugget, meanwhile, announced a new iron nuggets manufacturing plant that generates 50 jobs and costs \$220 million. The facility is being built in Hoyt Lakes in Saint Louis County.

Duluth also secured an \$18-million data center from VISI, a \$15-million biomass fuel plant from Cleveland-Cliffs Inc., and a \$10-million plant expansion from Tundra Particle Technologies. Tundra makes electro-metallurgical products.

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## Fort Worth Chamber

Texas [www.fortworthchamber.com](http://www.fortworthchamber.com)

"We have built an infrastructure over two generations of leaders in four prime industrial parks," says David Berzina, executive vice president of economic development for the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce. "In this economy, if you don't have a location that's ready to go, you're not going to win the battle."

He should know. As the top economic development official for the city that is the fastest growing among the nation's 20 largest, Berzina knows all about competition. "When we went after the data center from Blue Cross Blue Shield last year, we competed with Jacksonville, Denver, Phoenix and Richardson, Texas," notes Berzina. "They asked for a competitive incentives package, and they found that Fort Worth has the labor force with the technical savvy they were looking for."

As a result, BCBS selected Fort Worth for the \$175-million project that creates 130 jobs and adds 220,000 sq. ft. (20,438 sq. m.) of high-tech space to the market. Later in 2008, Fort Worth landed an even larger data center – a \$232-million facility investment from Health Care Services Corp.

The 24 corporate expansions in Fort Worth last year brought in more than \$500 million in capital investment and generated more than 2,000 jobs for the area.

"We have been on a torrid pace," adds Berzina. "Since November, we have worked on more than 30 projects. Labor force issues are going to be looked at closely in a tough economic environment, and that is one area where we compete extremely well."

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## Economic Futures Group

Spartanburg County, South Carolina [www.spartanburgchamber.com/economicfutures/](http://www.spartanburgchamber.com/economicfutures/)

Spartanburg, S.C., would appear to be the antithesis of Detroit these days. While the Big Three automakers sing the blues, downsize and otherwise drag down the economy of Michigan's largest city, folks in Upstate South Carolina are singing

"Happy Days Are Here Again" after BMW announced a \$750-million plant investment in early 2008.

The 1.5-million-sq.-ft. (139,350-sq.-m.) plant expansion adds 500 jobs to produce three models of BMW automobiles and increases production capacity to 240,000 units by 2012. The investment is the largest ever announced for the Spartanburg County assembly plant and increases the total amount invested by the German company in South Carolina to \$4.2 billion.

BMW was one of 26 corporate facility deals in the county last year, resulting in almost \$1 billion in new plant activity and creating some 2,000 jobs for the Upstate area.

"The projects that committed to our community in 2008 represent significant capital investment and new jobs," says R. Carter Smith, executive vice president of the Economic Futures Group of the Spartanburg Area Chamber of Commerce. "These company's decisions to locate or expand here demonstrate and speak volumes about our pro-business climate and strong public-private partnership efforts used to secure these quality companies to the area."

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## Regional Growth Partnership

Toledo, Ohio [www.rgp.org](http://www.rgp.org)

Spurred by investments in the solar sector, glass manufacturing and other high-tech industries, the greater Toledo region of Northwest Ohio was a big reason why Ohio won the *Site Selection* Governor's Cup award for 2008. With 38 corporate facility projects last year, Toledo placed third among all tier-two metros in the U.S.

In 2008, Toledo landed \$383 million in capital investments and 1,767 new jobs from company facility deals. The largest was Willard & Kelsey Solar Group, which announced a \$105-million investment into a 252,000-sq.-ft. (23,411-sq.-m.) manufacturing plant and headquarters facility in Perrysburg in Wood County. The project generates 400 jobs.

CSX Corp. invested \$80 million into a new rail-hub distribution center in Henry Township, while Libbey Inc. invested \$25 million into expanding its glassware factory in Lucas County.

The area economy was aided by the Regional Growth Partnership's Launch program, which provides business incubation services to entrepreneurs and startups. In its first year, the program netted an economic impact of \$25.5 million, which represented a 103-to-1 return on investment for the state of Ohio. The state government funded the program through a Thomas Edison grant.

"Over the last several years, our region has made great strides in its commitment to transition to a knowledge-based economy," says Steve Weathers, president and CEO of the RGP. "The Regional Growth Partnership, for example, recently started a venture capital fund to jumpstart the creation of new technology businesses. This, combined with our traditional strengths in work force and manufacturing, has contributed to Northwest Ohio's growth and positioned our region for future success in the global economy."

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## Greater Wichita Economic Development Coalition

Kansas [www.gwedc.org](http://www.gwedc.org)

A signature deal, plus a lot of supporting industry announcements, made 2008 a year to remember in Wichita, Kan.

Cessna Aircraft Company announced a \$780-million investment into a 600,000-sq.-ft. (55,740-sq.-m.) manufacturing plant for its new Citation Columbus business jet in Wichita – one of 17 corporate facility projects that brought in \$1.3 billion and generated 3,000 new jobs for the area. About 1,000 of those jobs are coming from Cessna.

"The primary factors behind our outstanding 2008 performance include a truly engaged and multi-faceted team willing to do whatever it takes to get the deal done," says Vicki Pratt Gerbino, president of the Greater Wichita Economic Development Coalition. "The Cessna Citation Columbus project and the Spirit project last year were complex and highly competitive. Wichita won those projects because of the commitment from various sectors, public and private, that were motivated to overcome every hurdle."

Spirit Aerosystems announced the area's second largest project – a \$300-million investment into a 700-job jet fuselage factory. The new plant will cover 375,000 sq. ft. (34,838 sq. m.).

Ranking third in size was a \$148-million investment from FlightSafety International. The firm said it would employ 253 workers in an expansion of its aircraft maintenance operation in Wichita.



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