

WOMEN IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FORUM

Sofitel Chicago Magnificent Mile, October 8-10, 2025

Area Development would like to acknowledge this year's Host Sponsor:



MICHIGAN ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

OPENING — WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 8

5:30 – 8:30 pm **Registration**
Grand Ballroom Foyer (3rd Floor)

6:00 – 7:00 pm **Speaker and Sponsor Private Reception**
Bordeaux Room (3rd Floor)

Sponsor:



7:00 – 9:00 pm **Welcome Reception and Dinner**
Grand Ballroom (3rd Floor)

Reception Sponsor:



Dinner Sponsor:



DAY ONE — THURSDAY, OCTOBER 9

7:15 – 8:15 am **Opening Breakfast**
Ballroom Foyer

Sponsor:



8:30 – 8:45 am **Opening Remarks**
Grand Ballroom

Amy Gerber (Moderator)
Executive Managing Director, Business Incentives Practice
Cushman & Wakefield

Susan Proctor
Senior Site Selector Engagement Director
Michigan Economic Development Corporation

8:50 – 9:20 am **The Economic Developers Bill of Rights**
In this session, we will explore the rights that economic developers should hold in working with both site selectors and end-users to bring opportunities to the local level. We will discuss what economic developers are owed, what they owe, what they are not owed, and what they owe themselves in the process. This review will aid economic developers in positioning optimally for industrial development success.

Speaker:

Courtney Dunbar
Director, Site Selection
Burns & McDonnell

9:25 – 9:55 am **Inside the Capital: Innovative Ideas for the Future of Business, Labor, and Redevelopment**
In this unique fireside chat, we will explore the future of the office sector, the evolving labor market, and the role of redevelopment in shaping communities. The conversation will offer practical insights into how cities can position themselves for investment and navigate the shifting dynamics of economic development.

Speakers:

Nina Albert
Deputy Mayor for Planning & Economic Development
District of Columbia

Olivia Byrne
Partner
K&L Gates LLP

10:00 – 10:20 am **Networking Refreshment Break**
Ballroom Foyer

Sponsor:



**SOUTH CAROLINA
I-77ALLIANCE**

10:25 – 10:50 am **Beyond the Plan: How Economic Development Organizations Can Stay Strategic Amid Uncertainty**
Traditional strategic plans often struggle to keep pace with today's rapidly shifting realities. This session will focus on how economic developers can remain truly strategic even when certainty is elusive. The speaker will explore practical methods to identify and prioritize community needs, engage stakeholders in meaningful ways, and implement initiatives that create real impact.

Speaker:

Jennifer Vernon
Strategic Consultant
Fortif Advisors

10:55 – 11:25 am **Your Questions, Answered... Site Selectors Take the Hot Seat**
Bring your most pressing economic development thoughts to the experts. In this interactive session, the panel will field audience-submitted questions on today's shifting economic landscape and evolving site selection factors. Get candid insights you can take back to your staff, leadership, and community partners.

Panelists:

Amy Gerber
Executive Managing Director, Business Incentives Process
Cushman & Wakefield

Kathy Mussio
Managing Partner
Atlas Insight

Paulina San Millan (Moderator)
Senior Vice President, Business Development
Illinois Economic Development Corporation

11:30 am – 12:05 pm **Site Readiness in an Era of Speed-to-Market**
Speed-to-market is reshaping corporate location decisions, making site readiness more critical than ever. Our consultants will share what today's companies expect, how the definition of "ready" is evolving, and what economic development professionals can do to accelerate timelines and win projects.

Panelists:

Angela Carrier
Executive Vice President, Location Economics
JLL

Dianne Jones
Managing Director, Business & Economic Incentives
JLL

Carrie Zethmayr
Managing Director, Location Advisory, Global Strategy
Newmark

12:15 – 1:15 pm **Networking Lunch**
Ballroom Foyer

Sponsor:



1:30 –
2:05 pm

**Economic Development Feud –
The Fan Favorite Returns!**

Back by popular demand, this high-energy, interactive session brings the thrill of Family Feud to economic development. Compete with your peers, guess the top survey answers, and discover practical strategies, best practices, and collaboration tips all while having a blast. Don't miss the session everyone's been asking for fun, insight, and friendly competition rolled into one!

Hosts:

Ann Harts

Senior Vice President, Site Selection & Incentives
Cresa

Alicia Janesko Hutchings

Director, Site Selection & Incentives
Cresa

2:10 –
2:45 pm

What the Incentives Toolbox is Currently Missing

Incentives remain one of the most discussed—and scrutinized—tools in economic development, but are they truly aligned with what companies need today? In this session, our panelists will examine the gaps in the current incentives landscape and highlight what's missing from the traditional toolbox. The conversation will equip economic development professionals with a clearer view of how to adapt, refine, and re-imagine their incentives strategies to stay competitive in the next wave of corporate investment.

Panelists:

Beth Buckner

Member, Taxation, Economic Development & Incentives
Moore & Van Allen PLLC

Rose Davidson

Senior Vice President, Location Economics
JLL

Shannon O'Hare

Executive Managing Director, Business Incentives Practice
Cushman & Wakefield

Brooklin Salemi

Senior Managing Director, Economic Incentives Advisory
Newmark

2:50 –
3:10 pm

Networking Break

Ballroom Foyer

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS

Grand Ballroom & Foyer

3:15 – 4:30 pm

The Roundtables are meant for casual discussion and to provide an additional platform for speakers and attendees to connect. Please refer to the back of your badge for your assigned table numbers (left to right). Be ready to introduce yourself and help drive the conversation!

ATTENDEE "ON THE TOWN" DINING

Attendees can plan an evening out to enjoy the many restaurant choices both near the hotel or in the surrounding neighborhoods.

SPONSOR AND SPEAKER
PRIVATE DINNER

The
BELLEVUE

CHICAGO - GOLD COAST

6:00 – 8:00 pm

1031 N Rush Street

(five minute walk or shuttle service provided)

Sponsors

VIRGINIA **NOVA**
Economic
Development
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Please wear your badge!

DAY TWO — FRIDAY, OCTOBER 10

NETWORKING BREAKFAST 7:15 AM

Memento Sponsor



Breakfast Sponsor



Wi-Fi Sponsor



BREAKOUT SESSIONS: 8:30-9:10 AM

CHICAGO SALON

Propelling Growth: How to Position Your Region for Aerospace & Defense Success

Learn how to strategically position your region to attract and retain aerospace and defense companies by leveraging key economic development tools. This session will highlight best practices in site readiness, incentive structuring, workforce alignment, and stakeholder collaboration to drive sustainable industry growth. Gain insights into what makes a location competitive in today's evolving aerospace and defense landscape.

Speaker:

Julie Miller
Senior Managing Director
Vista Site Selection

PARIS SALON

Where the Packaging Industry is Headed — and Why It Matters for Your Region

Sustainability, automation, e-commerce, and regionalization are reshaping the packaging industry and driving new location priorities. The session will explore what these trends mean for communities and how economic development organizations can position themselves to compete for investment.

Speaker:

Ramya Gowda
Managing Director, Location Advisory, Global Strategy
Newmark

DAY TWO — FRIDAY, OCTOBER 10

CLOSING BREAK 11:00 AM

Travel Bag Sponsor



Water Service Sponsor



Charging Station Sponsor



BREAKOUT SESSIONS: 9:20-10:00 AM

CHICAGO SALON

Driving Prosperity: Data-Driven Solutions for Local Growth

Communities of all sizes are navigating complex challenges in housing, workforce development, infrastructure planning, and economic opportunity. This session highlights six key issues—ranging from housing market imbalances to infrastructure risk and technological disruption—and offers practical, data-driven strategies for municipalities, economic development organizations, site selectors, and planners to strengthen local economies and support long-term community resilience.

Speaker:

Jolena Presti
Managing Director & Practice Leader,
Development and Community Advisory Consulting
Baker Tilly Advisory Group, LP

PARIS SALON

Inside the Office Occupier Mindset

When companies make office and portfolio decisions, there's rarely a single "right" answer. Some organizations need a strong downtown presence to compete for top talent, while others lean on suburban hubs to reduce commutes and support back-office functions. In this session, our speaker will share an insider's view into the trade-offs companies are navigating, offering insights that can help economic development leaders better understand occupier decision-making.

Speaker:

Marissa Huber
Consulting Director, Total Workplace
Cushman & Wakefield

BREAKOUT SESSIONS: 10:10-10:50 AM

CHICAGO SALON

Why Project Aftercare Needs to be Incorporated Into Your Economic Development Strategy Now

Economic developers are trained to close site selection deals, but are these same teams focused on how to assist new investors in standing up their project on-time and on-budget? As speed-to-market is a critical project driver, projects are not only selecting sites at deal pace, but have aggressive start-of-production goals that must be met. Topics covered in this session will range from project governance structures, utility deployment, permitting, and construction labor.

Speakers:

Haley Samson, Manager, Infrastructure & Projects Advisory
KPMG
Leah Scott, Director, Site Selection & Project Development
KPMG

PARIS SALON

Workforce Dynamics in Site Selection: Trends and Implications for Communities

Delve into the latest labor insights and gain an understanding of the evolving landscape of the U.S.'s industrial workforce. Explore the current trends and challenges, including demographic shifts, skills gaps, technological impacts and the future of work in the industrial sector.

Speaker:

Nicole McBride
Senior Director, Americas Consulting
CBRE