



Through the Lens of Economic Development



Photo by Heather Overman

Gov. Terry Branstad shares his dynamic plan to bring even more success to the state of Iowa.

by CRYSTAL VILLARREAL

There's no place quite like Iowa. A right-to-work state, with the seventh lowest overall cost of doing business in the nation, Iowa is working towards global recognition. Gov. Terry Branstad was born, raised and educated in Iowa, and has a track record for finding areas of improvement and working to surpass the state's previous successes.

The findings of the Battelle Report outlined a road map

for improvements in economic development and provided the information needed to push the state forward.

Branstad said that Iowa needs to create a statewide energy plan, enforce critical infrastructure improvements and ensure that all of Iowa has access to broadband. And that's only the beginning.

Elevating innovation, spotlighting entrepreneurship, making even more improvements to its already stellar business climate and taking another

stab at passing a renewable chemical production credit are also in the works. The state outshines the nation in job growth and things can only get better as Iowa examines all its efforts through the lens of sustainability and economic development.

What are your top economic development goals for this year?

GOV. TERRY BRANSTAD: We continue to be focused on creating an environment where businesses can grow and succeed in Iowa. Our focus is not solely on creating jobs for Iowans, but also creating better-paying jobs.

How are the findings of the Battelle Report affecting future policy?

GOV. BRANSTAD: Battelle researchers spent 18 months reviewing Iowa's industry drivers and potential growth opportunities, while also looking at how the state had been doing in our efforts to advance innovation and create and retain jobs since the last roadmap was developed in 2005. That data shows where we've come from, but most importantly, it provides us with valuable information on what Iowa needs to do to get where we want to go.

From the report, using the recommendations made by Battelle for strategic priorities that Iowa must embrace if we are to achieve economic success over the next decade, we get a very clear call to action that elected officials, policymakers, economic developers and business leaders can use to make sure Iowa is heading in the right direction.

The Battelle Report was in large part the push we needed to get road

and bridge funding passed this year that will provide for critical transportation infrastructure improvements.

Policy around ensuring that all of Iowa has access to broadband was also part of the Battelle recommendations and was supported by the Legislature.

How will a statewide energy plan impact economic development in Iowa's future?

GOV. BRANSTAD: Creating an energy plan will allow us to set state priorities and provide us with strategic guidance as we look to position Iowa for the future. We are looking to assess our current and future energy supply and demand, examine existing energy policies and programs and identify emerging energy challenges and opportunities. We'll be looking at this through the lens of economic development and sustainability — so our approach will be comprehensive.

As part of the energy plan, we'll dig into topics like assessing our energy workforce needs, leveraging Iowa's biomass resources for development of biofuels and bio-renewable chemicals, and look at alternative fuels and the movement of goods, as well as energy assurance and strategies to lower energy demand. We hold a leadership position now in biofuels, wind energy and more, so we are well-positioned for the future. An energy plan will allow us to be intentional about how we build on the great foundation we have.

What does Iowa do to support innovation and entrepreneurship?

GOV. BRANSTAD: For us, elevating innovation to the forefront of our

economic development conversations is essential. Back in 2011, after I was re-elected, we established a new economic development model for the state to do just that. We created a public-private partnership with the creation of the Iowa Economic Development Authority and the Iowa Innovation Corporation, which is essentially a shared vision of the future business and innovation environment in Iowa.

Shining a spotlight on innovation and entrepreneurship and putting programs in place that encourage both, has been an important part of our efforts. But, it's very important to note that government often plays a limited role in driving innovation — the momentum really comes from the ground up. As I travel across the state, and I do visit all of Iowa's 99 counties every year, I see an

undercurrent of optimism, passion and energy that is spreading across communities, from border to border. The movement is largely organic in nature, and it is igniting startups and unleashing innovative solutions to solve the challenges we see in our world. It is so exciting to watch and be part of — innovation really is the multiplier for successful and growing organizations.

Iowa outshined the nation in growth for middle-skilled jobs and high-skilled jobs. How do you plan to keep that momentum going?

GOV. BRANSTAD: Well, we need to keep working at it. And we have to remain focused on our goals of reforming our education system from pre-school to post-secondary levels and beyond. Learning is a



Gov. Terry Branstad

lifelong proposition — and we have to continue to instill that. We also need to make sure our schools, community colleges and universities are preparing students with the skills they need to be successful in the jobs our businesses are, and will be, creating. That's why I'm very excited about our efforts to expand apprenticeship programs.

Registered apprenticeships are a proven approach to preparing workers for in-demand jobs and meeting the needs of business for a highly skilled workforce that can innovate and adapt. With bi-partisan support, we passed the Iowa Apprenticeship Program recently to increase the number of registered apprentices in Iowa by providing training grants to eligible apprenticeship programs. Apprenticeships allow students to earn while they learn, rather than taking on significant student debt. They provide the apprentice with focused, hands-on training and a paycheck from day one.


Additionally, we're investing in innovative education programs like Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM). Led by Iowa Lt. Gov. Kim Reynolds and Kemin Industries CEO Dr. Chris Nelson, the Governor's STEM Advisory Council is working to expand STEM learning opportunities to ensure that Iowa's leaders of tomorrow are prepared for the highly-skilled careers of the 21st century. Expanding programs like this will allow us to keep moving the needle on increasing workers in the middle and high-skills categories that our business so critically need.

Do you plan to push next year for passage of the renewable chemical production tax credit for qualifying companies?

GOV. BRANSTAD: Absolutely. We remain convinced that the Renewable Chemical Production Tax Credit bill, our first-in-the-nation policy proposal, will add even more value to our already robust bio-fuels industry. The policy was well vetted by industry and environmental groups, it was fiscally sound and would have positioned Iowa to be first-to-market, accelerating the green economy growth and providing good jobs for Iowa families. We will continue to work at showing the legislature how this good policy can move Iowa's economy forward.

Warren County, Iowa...

the California Gold Rush of Des Moines Metro Development

 Warren County has over 800 acres of available, developable land for commercial, residential, industrial and mix-uses. All parcels have immediate access to major highways or interstates, just minutes from downtown Des Moines and the Des Moines International Airport. More than 300 acres are shovel ready. Cities in Warren County offer expedited regulatory processes, competitive incentives, and creative financing. Warren County is the third fastest growing, and second wealthiest county in Iowa.

INDIANOLA, IA | Summercrest Hills Development

160 Acres - Mixed Use



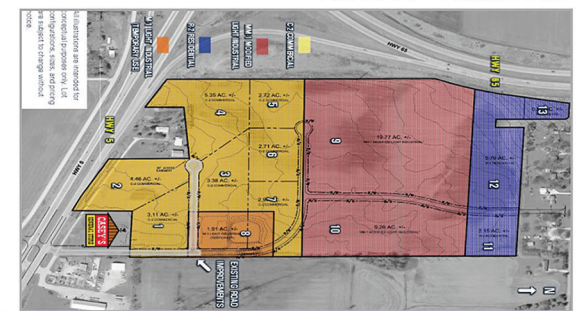
NORWALK, IA | State Certified Site

Acres 60 - Mixed Use



CARLISLE, IA | Scotch Ridge Business Park

Acres 70 - Mixed Use



Find these great sites and more at:
Warren County Economic Development Corp.
www.wcedc.com | 515-961-1067



Where imagination drives innovation. 

SEE WHAT ALL THE BUZZ IS ABOUT AT IOWASCREATIVECORRIDOR.COM