



York County
Development
Corporation
Why York County

BUILDING THE ANSWER TO "WHY YORK COUNTY?"

Reflecting on the 2021-2026 Strategic Period
2021-2026 STRATEGIC IMPACT REPORT





York County
Development
Corporation
Why York County

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A LETTER FROM LISA HURLEY	II
A FIVE-YEAR REFLECTION	III
SECTION 1 - FIVE YEARS AT A GLANCE	01
SECTION 2 - PREPARED FOR OPPORTUNITY	02
SECTION 3 - BUSINESS GROWTH & READINESS	03
SECTION 4 - HOUSING	07
SECTION 5 - WORKFORCE & TALENT	10
SECTION 6 - ENTREPRENEURSHIP, LEADERSHIP & COMMUNITY CAPACITY	14
SECTION 7 - WHY YCDC / BUILDING WHAT'S NEXT	19

VIEW THE BOOKLET ONLINE



SCAN THE QR CODE TO ACCESS
THE INTERACTIVE DIGITAL EDITION.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IS BUILT ON COLLABORATION

A LETTER FROM LISA HURLEY

One of the things I love most about economic development is that every day is different. One day I may be meeting with a manufacturer about an expansion. The next, I may be talking with a housing developer, visiting with students about local careers, helping an entrepreneur think through a business idea, or working with community leaders on a challenge that did not exist a year earlier.

At first glance, those conversations may not seem connected. In practice, they almost always are. A business visit can uncover a housing concern. A housing conversation can lead to infrastructure questions. An employer's workforce challenge can become a partnership with educators. One honest conversation often creates the opening for the next conversation.

That is the work of YCDC. We listen, gather information, bring people together, help identify options, and stay engaged as ideas move from conversation to decision. Sometimes that work leads to a groundbreaking or ribbon cutting. Much of it happens years earlier and not in public view.

Economic development organizations matter in rural communities because no single business, school, utility, local government, developer, nonprofit, or volunteer can carry this work alone. An effective EDO helps connect those parts of the community, keeps long-term priorities moving while immediate needs compete for attention, and brings local knowledge into regional, state, and national conversations.

During this strategic period, YCDC and its partners supported business investment, prepared sites and infrastructure, expanded housing tools, moved a regional workforce development center toward implementation, strengthened talent recruitment and entrepreneurship resources, and increased York County's visibility. Just as important, we built relationships and systems that make it easier to respond when the next opportunity arrives.

Those accomplishments belong to York County. They were possible because businesses, communities, investors, elected officials, educators, utilities, nonprofits, and residents chose to share information, contribute resources, solve problems, and keep coming to the table.

Thank you for the trust you placed in YCDC during these five years. The pages that follow are shorter than the work itself, but they capture what matters most: what changed, how the work moved forward, and why relationships, collaboration, preparation, and being at the table continue to matter for York County's future.

Lisa Hurley

Lisa Hurley
Executive Director
York County Development Corporation



A FIVE-YEAR REFLECTION

Economic development rarely moves in a straight line. A business expansion may begin years before an announcement. A housing project may grow from a workforce conversation. A training resource may take a decade of persistence before the right partners, funding, and timing come together.

That is why this report is not a checklist of completed projects. It is a reflection on how York County Development Corporation, working with businesses, communities, local governments, educators, developers, utilities, nonprofit organizations, investors, and community leaders, helped strengthen York County's ability to respond to opportunity during the 2021–2026 strategic period.

The story is distinctly York County's. It also illustrates something broader about rural economic development. Effective EDOs do more than recruit companies or market land. They listen. They gather information. They build relationships. They connect people with expertise and resources. They help communities prepare before an opportunity is visible, and they stay with long-term work when progress is slow.

A simple idea that runs through this report

Good economic development creates choices. It gives a business more room to grow, a student more reasons to see a future close to home, a developer more confidence to invest, an entrepreneur better information before taking a risk, and a community more ability to decide what kind of growth fits its future.



SECTION 1

FIVE YEARS AT A GLANCE

The numbers below are not the whole story, but they show the scale of activity supported during the strategic period.

\$390M+ Private investment during the strategic period

\$2.24B Growth in York County taxable valuation

\$8.9M+ Housing investment activity supported

71 Residential lots and home sites supported countywide

\$10M+ Investment in the York Regional Workforce Development Center

200+ Students connected with employers through Regional Career Day

857K+ Good Life Is Calling digital impressions

38K+ 17-County Podcast downloads

4,468 SizeUp Insights reports and sub-reports generated in one year

11 SPARK entrepreneurs supported over two years

Behind those figures are long-term relationships, project development, technical assistance, due diligence, fundraising, data, communication, and hundreds of conversations that rarely show up in a headline.



SECTION 2

PREPARED FOR OPPORTUNITY

What makes a community ready when the next opportunity arrives?

Opportunity rarely arrives on a convenient timeline. By the time a business needs space, a developer begins evaluating a project, or a prospect asks for a site, much of the work that shapes the outcome has already happened.

YCDC's 2021–2026 Strategic Plan recognized that economic development works as a system. The six goals were Talent Development, Retention, & Recruitment; Business Retention, Expansion, & Recruitment; Housing Development; Community Engagement, Impact & Quality of Life; Supporting Infrastructure Development; and Organization Structure. Each had its own objectives, but the work was never separate.

Business growth depends on workforce and infrastructure. Talent attraction depends partly on housing, childcare, education, healthcare, amenities, and connection. Housing requires land, utilities, financing, and developers. New investment requires prepared sites, accurate information, responsive partners, and communities that know both their strengths and their constraints.

The strategic plan gave YCDC and its partners a shared framework for working on those pieces at the same time. Some projects moved quickly. Others changed or did not proceed. The value of the work was not that every opportunity became a project. It was that York County became better prepared to recognize opportunity, evaluate it honestly, and act when the right pieces came together.

THE OPERATING SYSTEM BENEATH THE GOALS

Organization Structure • Collaboration • Leadership • Information • Relationships.

These capacities support every goal and explain how a small rural EDO can coordinate work across business, housing, workforce, infrastructure, entrepreneurship, and community priorities.

SECTION 3

BUSINESS GROWTH & READINESS

What helps businesses choose to invest, expand, and stay?

Economic development is often associated with recruiting new companies, but some of the most important work begins with the businesses already here. Existing employers provide jobs, invest in facilities and equipment, buy goods and services, support local organizations, and shape how York County is viewed by prospective businesses and workers.

Business retention and expansion work is built on relationships and trust. Many conversations remain confidential. Some lead to visible expansions. Others help a company address a workforce concern, evaluate a property, understand an incentive, connect with training resources, or work through an infrastructure issue before it becomes a larger problem.

During the strategic period, businesses across York County continued to invest. Examples included Klute Inc.'s major growth and facility investment; expansion and equipment activity at Preferred Snacks, Agri-Products, York Cold Storage, and other employers; and new planned investment by Nutrition Services in the Northwest York Industrial Park. YCDC's role varied by project, but the common thread was consistent: listen early, connect the right people, provide useful information, and stay engaged as decisions develop.



SECTION 3

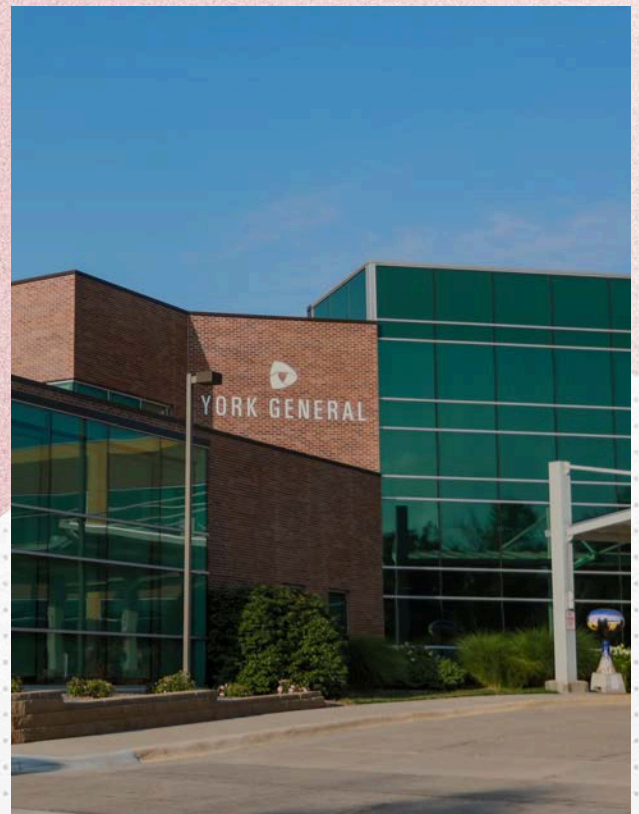
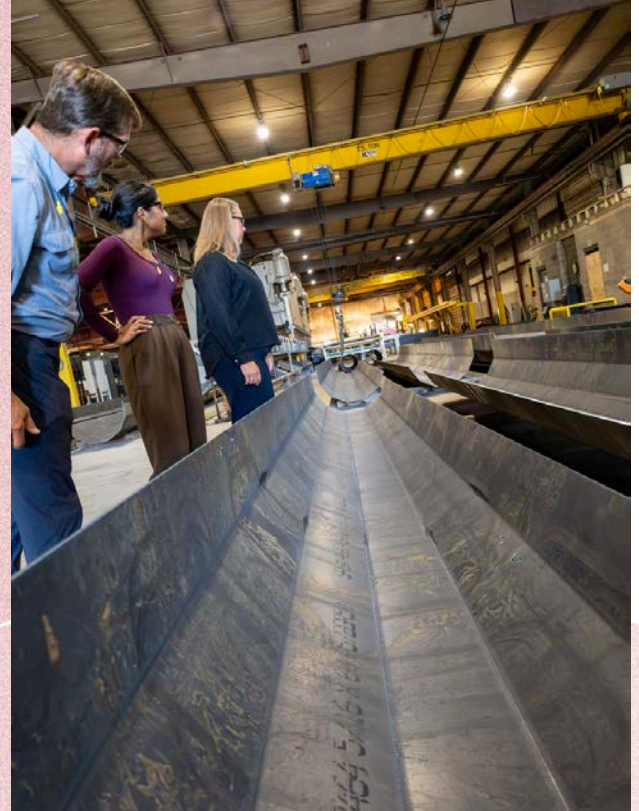
BUSINESS GROWTH & READINESS

Preparing for New Investment

Recruitment begins long before a prospect contacts the community. Companies and site selectors expect accurate information, prepared sites, realistic utility data, responsive partners, and a clear understanding of what a community can support.

During the strategic period, YCDC refined its target industries to focus on opportunities that align with York County's existing business base, transportation access, workforce, infrastructure capacity, potential for higher-wage employment, and long-term community value. That meant being realistic about electrical demand, natural gas availability, water and wastewater needs, transportation, drainage, broadband, development timelines, and land requirements.

Being honest about constraints does not weaken York County's position. It improves decision-making and allows YCDC and its partners to focus time and resources on projects more likely to succeed. Strong economic development work is not measured only by how often a community says yes. It is also measured by whether businesses, prospects, and local leaders have the information needed to make responsible decisions.



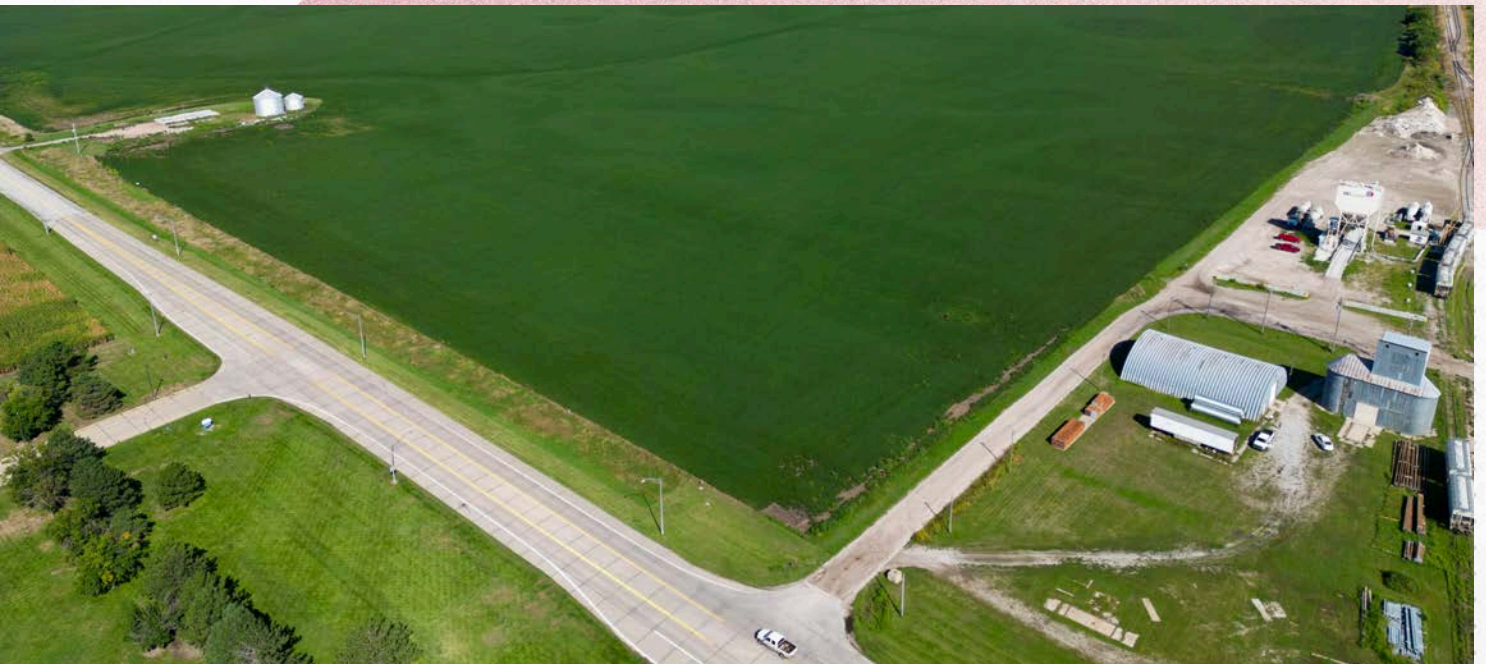
SECTION 3

BUSINESS GROWTH & READINESS

Preparing for New Investment

CAPACITY IN ACTION | Northwest York Industrial Park

The City of York's ownership of and long-term investment in the Northwest York Industrial Park created an opportunity to prepare land before a prospect was at the table. YCDC worked with the City, engineers, NPPD, BNSF and other utility and development partners on due diligence, master planning, utility coordination, and site positioning. YCDC secured an NPPD grant to help fund portions of due diligence and invested in marketing, including a 360-degree virtual site video. The work improved understanding of what the site can support, strengthened information available to prospects and site selectors, and contributed to the sale of the park's first lot. The adjacent rail spur connects to the BNSF mainline, and BNSF has been part of discussions about future buildout. The park is also adjacent to York Municipal Airport. The value of the work is not simply available land. It is a community that is better prepared when the right opportunity appears.



SECTION 3

BUSINESS GROWTH & READINESS

Preparing for New Investment



Specialized Expertise Without Duplicating It

The City of York's partnership with The Retail Coach is another example of YCDC's operating model. Rather than building a separate retail recruitment program, YCDC helps connect local knowledge, property information, market data, prospective franchise owners, retailers, and developers with specialized expertise. The same principle applies across the work: recognizing a need does not always mean YCDC should own the solution.

The objective is not growth at any cost. It is business growth that creates lasting value for York County.

SECTION 4

HOUSING

How do rural communities create more housing when one solution does not fit every place?

Housing is a quality-of-life issue, a workforce issue, and an economic development issue. Employers need workers, and workers need places to live. Businesses considering expansion want to know whether a community can accommodate additional employees. Families considering York County weigh housing alongside schools, healthcare, employment, and community amenities.

The challenge is that housing development requires more than identifying demand. It requires land, infrastructure, financing, local support, technical assistance, and developers willing to invest. In smaller communities, staff capacity can also be a barrier. YCDC's role has often been to help connect those pieces.

During the strategic period, YCDC and its partners secured more than \$1.5 million in Rural Workforce Housing Funds and local matching resources. Together with repayments from earlier projects, those resources supported nearly \$9 million in housing activity across York County. Because the funds revolve as loans are repaid, they continue to create options for future projects.



SECTION 4

HOUSING

How do rural communities create more housing when one solution does not fit every place?

71 - Residential lots and home sites supported countywide

12 - Countryside Estates Phase One homes in York

7 - Homes relocated to Bradshaw

7 units - Apartment rehabilitation in York

Different Communities, Different Solutions

The strongest lesson from this period is that housing does not move through one model. Countryside Estates required a direct partnership between YCDC and Hillcrest Homes to introduce new housing in York using homes manufactured locally by Champion Homes. That connected housing development with a major local employer and created opportunities for local contractors.

Bradshaw needed a different approach. Seven homes were relocated to the community, with coordination among the Village of Bradshaw, York General, the developer, contractors, utility providers, funding partners, and YCDC. The project showed that meaningful housing growth does not always require a large subdivision. Sometimes the right solution is relocation, rehabilitation, or a smaller number of prepared sites.

Other work included a seven-unit apartment rehabilitation, a purchase-rehabilitation-resale project, technical assistance to communities and housing partners, zoning and development conversations, and lot development in York County communities including Henderson and McCool Junction. Each effort addressed a different barrier, but together they expanded the tools available to communities and developers.

SECTION 4

HOUSING

How do rural communities create more housing when one solution does not fit every place?

What YCDC adds

YCDC's value is often in administering resources, connecting developers and local partners, identifying funding, preparing lots, providing technical assistance, and staying with projects until the right structure comes together.



SECTION 5

WORKFORCE & TALENT

How do we develop, retain, and recruit the people our communities and employers need?

Workforce challenges are rarely solved through one program. Employers need people with the right skills, but they also need employees who can find housing, childcare, education, healthcare, professional growth, and a community where they want to stay. That is why YCDC's strategy addressed all three parts of the talent equation: develop, retain, and recruit.

Developing Talent: A Long-Term Regional Investment

YCDC worked with every high school in York County, other regional schools, York University, Southeast Community College, employers, workforce organizations, and community partners to strengthen career awareness and connections between education and employment. Regional Career Day grew to serve more than 200 students from eight schools, while employer tours, school presentations, career events, work-based learning conversations, and other activities gave students more opportunities to understand the careers available close to home.

These efforts are not about telling every student they must remain in York County. They are about making sure students know that meaningful careers, education, and opportunities for advancement are available here.



SECTION 5

WORKFORCE & TALENT

York Regional Workforce Development Center

FLAGSHIP PROJECT | York Regional Workforce Development Center

For more than a decade, York County employers and leaders identified the need for expanded technical and workforce training. During this strategic period, that long-standing goal moved toward implementation. The 20,000-plus-square-foot, \$10 million-plus facility will be owned and operated by Southeast Community College and will include the SCC York Learning Center, Allied Health Services, and manufacturing and technical training space. It will serve regional high school learners, adult learners, current workers, and employers. YCDC completed early feasibility work, helped connect SCC with the business community, helped communicate the opportunity, and served as a fundraising partner along with YPS. More than \$3.6 million was raised, including a \$500,000 City of York LB357 commitment. The project is a strong example of what relationships and persistence can make possible when the organization best positioned to own and operate a solution is brought to the table.



SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

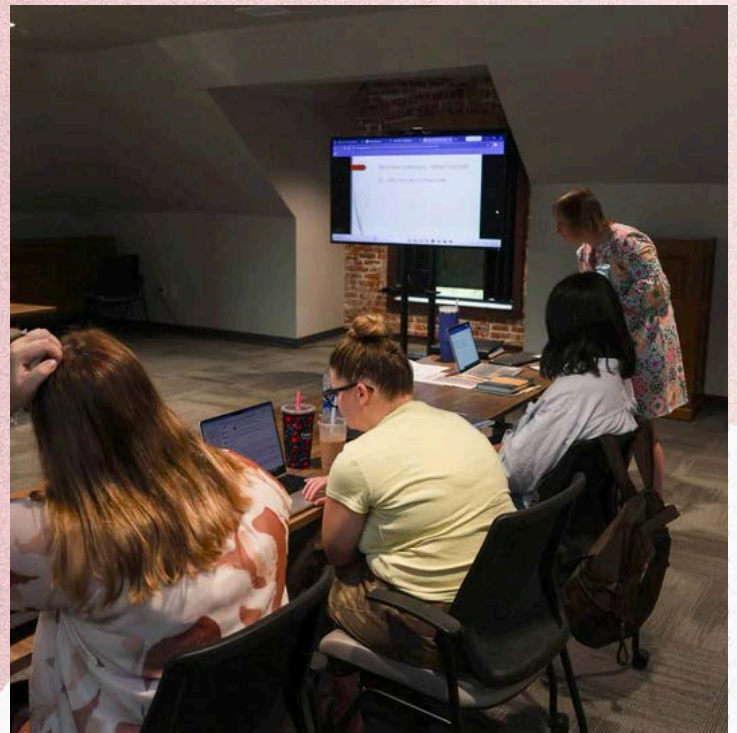
SECTION 5

WORKFORCE & TALENT

Retaining Talent: Growth, Leadership, and Connection

Talent retention is not only about whether someone has a job. People are more likely to stay where they can build a life and continue to grow. YCDC invested in leadership and professional development through 17-County Leadership, Dale Carnegie training brought to York in partnership with Klute, and targeted sessions with connection strategist Ginger Johnson. These programs serve different audiences, but each gives current and emerging leaders practical tools, stronger professional networks, and more reasons to stay connected to the region.

Childcare also remained part of the workforce conversation. YCDC worked with providers, employers, First Five Nebraska, the York County Child Care Alliance, and other partners to better understand needs and connect local conversations with resources and expertise. YCDC did not become a childcare provider; it helped keep an issue affecting families and employers at the economic development table.



SECTION 5

WORKFORCE & TALENT

Retaining Talent: Growth, Leadership, and Connection



Talent recruitment requires more than posting job openings. People considering a move want to understand what life may look like. They want to know about employers, housing, schools, healthcare, recreation, leadership opportunities, and the people who already call the area home.

YCDC and its partners expanded that story through the Good Life Is Calling talent-attraction campaign and the 17-County Podcast. The campaign reached more than 180,000 people, generated more than 857,000 digital impressions, and produced more than 42,000 direct engagements. The podcast reached 150 episodes and more than 38,000 downloads, with listeners across Nebraska, the nation, and internationally. Employers and community organizations have also used podcast episodes directly with candidates.

Together, these tools give York County businesses more ways to recruit and give prospective residents a more complete picture of why they may want to work, live, lead, and build a future here.

SECTION 6

ENTREPRENEURSHIP, LEADERSHIP & COMMUNITY CAPACITY

What does an effective rural EDO make easier for people and organizations to do?

Not every economic development need requires a new YCDC program. Often the strongest role is to make information, expertise, leadership development, and connections easier to access locally. That approach shaped YCDC's entrepreneurship, community engagement, and organizational work during the strategic period.

Helping Local Ideas Make Better Decisions

YCDC expanded entrepreneurial support through coaching, technical assistance, SizeUp York County, SPARK, and referrals to regional and state resources. The philosophy was simple: success is not measured only by the number of businesses opened. Starting or expanding a business involves real personal and financial risk. Helping someone decide to proceed, wait, change an idea, or not move forward can all be valuable outcomes when the decision is informed. SizeUp York County gave entrepreneurs and existing businesses access to market and business intelligence that previously may have required outside consulting. Between July 21, 2025, and July 21, 2026, the platform recorded 533 user visits and 4,468 Insights reports and sub-reports. The vendor's ROI calculator estimated 532 hours of staff time saved and nearly \$1.6 million in research value.

SPARK created another entry point. Eleven entrepreneurs pitched ideas during the program's first two years, receiving coaching, feedback, visibility, and cash or in-kind support. The value was not only in the prizes. It gave people a structured way to test an idea and connect with a broader support network.



SECTION 6

ENTREPRENEURSHIP, LEADERSHIP & COMMUNITY CAPACITY

What does an effective rural EDO make easier for people and organizations to do?

Named resources and programs

SizeUp York County • SPARK Pitch Competition • 17-County Leadership • Dale Carnegie training • Ginger Johnson leadership/connection sessions • Retail Coach partnership • Childcare convening and partner work.

These initiatives do different jobs, but together they expand access to information, professional growth, specialized expertise, and relationships that can be difficult for a rural community to build alone.



SECTION 6

ENTREPRENEURSHIP, LEADERSHIP & COMMUNITY CAPACITY

What does an effective rural EDO make easier for people and organizations to do?

Relationships Are Infrastructure Too

Physical infrastructure matters, but communities also rely on civic infrastructure: trusted relationships, people willing to lead, organizations that communicate, and partners who know how to work together. YCDC strengthened that infrastructure through business visits, stakeholder communication, surveys, roundtables, public presentations, community updates, and participation in local, regional, state, and national networks.

This is especially important when issues cross organizational lines. Childcare, walkability, recreation, community amenities, creative-district opportunities, and projects such as Peyton Parker Lane Playground each had their own lead organizations and champions. YCDC contributed where an economic development perspective, convening role, data, communication support, or partner connection could strengthen the work.

The goal is not for YCDC to own every solution. It is to help keep shared challenges from becoming someone else's problem and to make it easier for the organization best positioned to lead to move forward.



SECTION 6

ENTREPRENEURSHIP, LEADERSHIP & COMMUNITY CAPACITY

What does an effective rural EDO make easier for people and organizations to do?



BEING AT THE TABLE

Relationships built outside York County strengthen the work inside York County. Active involvement with organizations such as NEDA, NREDA, and IEDC gives YCDC opportunities to learn from peers, build relationships with decision-makers and technical partners, stay closer to policy and funding conversations, and bring York County's needs and successes to a larger table. Those connections create exposure for York County and give local businesses and community partners another pathway to information, resources, and people who can help move an opportunity forward.

Being at the table also creates a two-way exchange. YCDC brings ideas, contacts, and emerging practices back to York County. At the same time, York County's experience helps inform broader conversations about rural housing, workforce, infrastructure, entrepreneurship, business investment, and the practical impact of state and federal policies. That matters because decisions made elsewhere often shape what is possible locally.

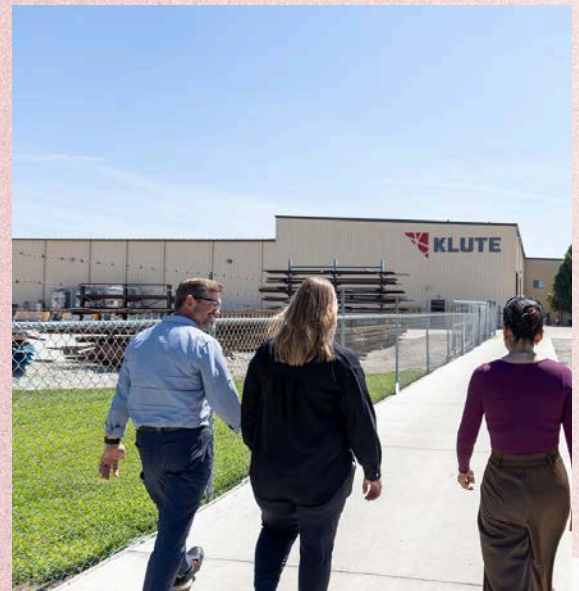
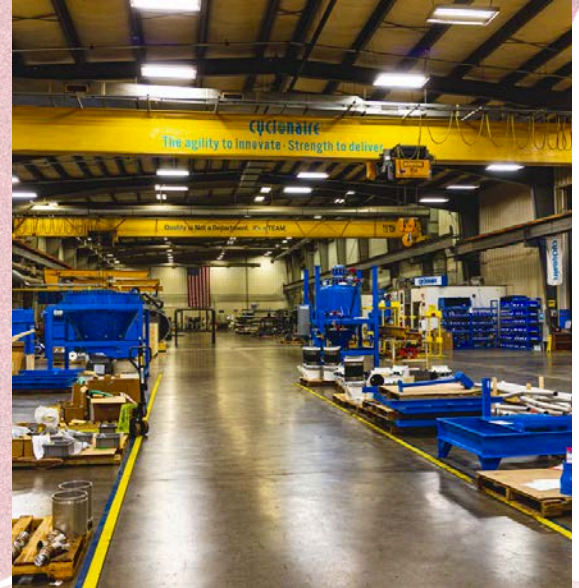
SECTION 6

ENTREPRENEURSHIP, LEADERSHIP & COMMUNITY CAPACITY

What does an effective rural EDO make easier for people and organizations to do?

The Capacity Behind the Work

Strong external results require strong internal capacity. During the strategic period, YCDC strengthened governance, financial stewardship, board development, cybersecurity, technology, human-resource procedures, communication, and data systems. Much of that work is invisible, but it determines whether a small staff can manage funding, protect confidential information, respond to risk, and coordinate complex initiatives over time. Technology, including responsible use of artificial intelligence, helped extend staff capacity without replacing professional judgment, local knowledge, confidentiality, verification, or accountability. The objective was not to build a larger organization for its own sake. It was to ensure YCDC remained capable of serving York County with the trust and responsiveness the work requires.



SECTION 7

WHY YCDC / BUILDING WHAT'S NEXT

What will York County do with the capacity it has built?

The 2021–2026 strategic period did not end with every challenge resolved. Housing remains difficult. Employers continue to navigate workforce pressures. Infrastructure needs will evolve. Business projects will change. New technologies and market conditions will create opportunities we cannot yet predict.

York County enters the next strategic period with stronger business relationships, better information about infrastructure and sites, expanded housing tools, deeper education and workforce partnerships, new resources for entrepreneurs, wider visibility, and an organization better equipped to coordinate complex work.

That capacity matters because opportunity does not arrive on a schedule. A community cannot begin building relationships after a company asks for a response. It cannot wait to understand its utilities until a prospect is ready to choose a site. It cannot create a workforce pipeline, housing system, or trusted partnership overnight. The work begins before the outcome is known.



SECTION 7

WHY YCDC / BUILDING WHAT'S NEXT

What will York County do with the capacity it has built?

Why YCDC

YCDC matters because someone must hold the connections among business, housing, workforce, infrastructure, entrepreneurship, quality of life, and community priorities. Someone must maintain relationships when there is no active project, ask the next question when an idea is incomplete, connect local leaders with technical expertise, translate data into practical decisions, and keep long-term opportunities moving through changes in leadership, funding, and market conditions.

That work does not replace the authority of businesses, local governments, boards, developers, or residents. It helps each make better-informed decisions and gives the community more choices.

Why York County

York County's strength is not that every community agrees on every issue or that every project succeeds. Its strength is the willingness of businesses, communities, schools, utilities, nonprofit organizations, investors, elected officials, and residents to keep coming to the table.

The answer to "Why York County?" is built through that willingness: to invest, collaborate, be honest about constraints, learn from one another, and prepare for opportunities that may take years to become visible.



SECTION 7

WHY YCDC / BUILDING WHAT'S NEXT

What will York County do with the capacity it has built?



A Rural Economic Development Story

This is York County's story. It is why effective economic development organizations matter across rural America. Rural communities need organizations that can work across boundaries, connect local priorities with outside resources, preserve institutional knowledge, and stay focused on long-term capacity while helping solve immediate problems.

The next strategic period will bring different projects and new questions. The central work will remain the same: listening carefully, building relationships, improving information, helping partners move solutions forward, being at the table where opportunities and decisions take shape, and expanding the choices available to York County's businesses, communities, and people.

BUILDING WHAT'S NEXT

Building the answer to "Why York County?" has never been about one project, one investment, or one organization. It is built through thousands of conversations, hundreds of partnerships, and a shared belief that when a community prepares together, it creates opportunities none of its members could build alone..



York County
Development
Corporation
Why York County

