

Milwaukee coalition named as finalist in economic development initiative

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A coalition of Milwaukee-based organizations is getting \$500,000 in planning funds after being chosen as a finalist for a federal economic development initiative.

Grow Milwaukee was one of 22 groups selected from 565 applicants for the Distressed Area Recompete Pilot Program, putting it in the running for up to \$50 million in funding, President Joe Biden announced yesterday during a visit to Milwaukee.

This program of the U.S. Economic Development Association was authorized for up to \$1 billion in total funding in the CHIPS and Science Act, including \$200 million for the 2023 competition, the EDA website shows. The Recompete Pilot Program aims to support areas of the country where employment among residents between the ages of 25 and 54 is well below the national average.

The initial strategy development grant will help Grow Milwaukee work on its plan for the 30th Street Industrial Corridor, an 880-acre area of the city that officials have targeted for a revitalization effort. In a release on the announcement, U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin noted the corridor has a “history of segregation and business exodus that has stunted economic prosperity” in the surrounding area.

“I am thrilled that Milwaukee has been selected for this program, putting us on the path to connect more people with good-paying jobs, grow our Made in Wisconsin economy, and ensure that no community is left behind,” the Madison Dem said.

According to the group’s Phase 1 plan document, the effort will support advanced manufacturing business expansion to create jobs, helping to address the area’s “chronic underemployment” problem.

“We will tightly link industrial land preparation and business expansion with investments in paid pre-apprenticeships for union trades and workforce partners,” plan authors wrote.

The coalition is made up of the city and county governments and businesses including the Milwaukee Bucks, Rockwell Automation and Jonco Industries, as well as the nonprofits Northwest Side Community Development Corporation and WRTP Big Step, the Milwaukee School of Engineering, the Wisconsin Economic Development Corp. and others. Their goals include developing vacant and underutilized sites, expanding workforce opportunities and supporting business growth.

The NWSCDC is the lead applicant, and other organizations are listed as strategic partners including the Milwaukee Area Labor Council AFL-CIO and Froedtert Health.

Phase 2 applications are due April 25, with winners being announced by the end of summer 2024.

See the release:

<https://www.baldwin.senate.gov/news/press-releases/baldwin-announces-milwaukee-selected-as-finalist-in-new-economic-development-program-opens-door-to-up-to-50-million-investment>

See more on the program:

<https://www.eda.gov/funding/programs/recompete-pilot-program>

See the city's plan for the corridor:

<https://city.milwaukee.gov/DCD/Projects/30thStreetIndustrialCorridor>

-By Alex Moe