



Growing Your Business

By Jennifer Smith

Dane County is a great place to live, and the good news is that it's getting better. The unemployment rate is 2.5% in Madison and 3.1% in Dane County (*Forbes* and DWD, respectively); job growth in Madison is 1.2% and income growth is 3.1%, ranking it 10th on *Forbes'* list of national metro areas for business and careers. We have a high-caliber workforce with plenty of intellectual firepower. Our industries collaborate and draw business from around the world; our town-and-gown relationships continue to generate commercial spin-offs.

According to the Madison Area Builders Association (MABA), the number of new homes built in Dane County in the past year is up 28%. Our well-established neighborhood associations play a vital role in maintaining the quality of life, working with (not against) area developers to bring attractive economic development projects here. As a result, downtown Madison continues its renaissance, attracting a variety of new business and cultural events and programs. First-rate convention and meeting facilities, which already draw coveted business gatherings, have received a boost from recent airport upgrades and the promise of Wi-Fi service. This doesn't even mention lakes, parks, bike paths... you get the picture.

Simply put, this all points to the fact that we are a unique area with a solid economy and a variety of opportunities for business growth and development. In the following pages, IN BUSINESS has compiled important resources to fund and develop your business, from the start-up stage to expansion. We've also included a 'pat on the back' for a job well done – a special section on Wisconsin business awards, including some of the best practices that members of the awards committees have seen over the years.

Here's to your business!