

Robert J. Schaefer's involvement in economic development began during his time working at NIPSCO. He was assigned by NIPSCO to work with economic development agencies throughout the region to assist them in their efforts to attract and retain businesses. Each of these agencies felt that NIPSCO's presence at the table was valuable and necessary for them to be successful.

When Mayor Sheila Brillson took office, among her highest priorities was job creation and economic development. She wanted Michigan City to be in the forefront in this arena. In order to realize her vision, she put together a small group of experts to assist and advise her. One of those experts was Bob.

Bob called upon his economic development experience with NIPSCO. He knew what attributes an organization needed to make economic development efforts effective. Based largely on Bob's advice, an existing non-profit organization was repurposed to become MCEDC with a board of directors consisting of members appointed by the Mayor and the Chamber of Commerce.



Bob's involvement did not end with the formation of MCEDC. He has remained involved by serving on the board of directors, filling in when staff vacancies have occurred, assisting in recruiting, researching, and interviewing staff candidates, facilitating the organization's first strategic planning session, and providing valuable advice to executive directors along the way.

Bob's recent activities with EDCMC have included managing the Circle of Investors Campaign, an effort in association with the La Porte Economic Advancement Partnership to secure funding from local and regional businesses and encourage their involvement in economic development in the area. Since its inception, the Campaign has raised more than \$1.5 million split between Michigan City and La Porte economic development agencies.

While some aspects of the organization have changed, it's not a stretch to say that Bob's fingerprints are all over EDCMC, from its beginnings to today.

Bob was instrumental in the formation of the Unity Foundation of La Porte County. He served the Unity Foundation as its first executive director, a role he filled while still working for NIPSCO. Bob served for many years as a member of the Foundation's board of directors and, because of his long affiliation, was named an honorary board member.

Bob was also a long-standing member of the board of directors of the Center of Workforce Innovation, serving as its Chairman for several of his years on the board. That organization focuses on all aspects of the development of a quality, educated, and well-trained workforce with the goal of enhancing economic development in our region.

Bob gave back to his community by serving several years on the Long Beach Town Council, some of those years as the Council's president.