



 **ECO DEVO 101**

**CASE STUDY:**

# How Wyandotte County is Using Automation to Increase Domestic Manufacturing Operations



**Local manufacturers like Marvin Windows and training providers like Alpha Robotics, Inc. are using automation and advanced technology to propel the manufacturing industry forward in Wyandotte County. The county's emergence as a hub for domestic manufacturing is driven by the rapid integration of automation and robotics. Advanced technology makes domestic production not only viable, but increasingly competitive.**

**Marvin and Alpha Robotics are showcasing how technology and talent development go hand-in-hand to strengthen American manufacturing.**

Marvin, a premier window and door manufacturer, recently expanded operations in Wyandotte County with a 400,000-square-foot facility set to be a vital addition to the manufacturing and fabrication industry in the county. [The expansion brought 70 new jobs to Wyandotte County, with an anticipated 600-person workforce to come by the close of 2028.](#)

Alpha Robotics, a certified FANUC and Yaskawa Motoman robotics training facility, serves the Kansas City metro through training at its facility, as well as on-site training.

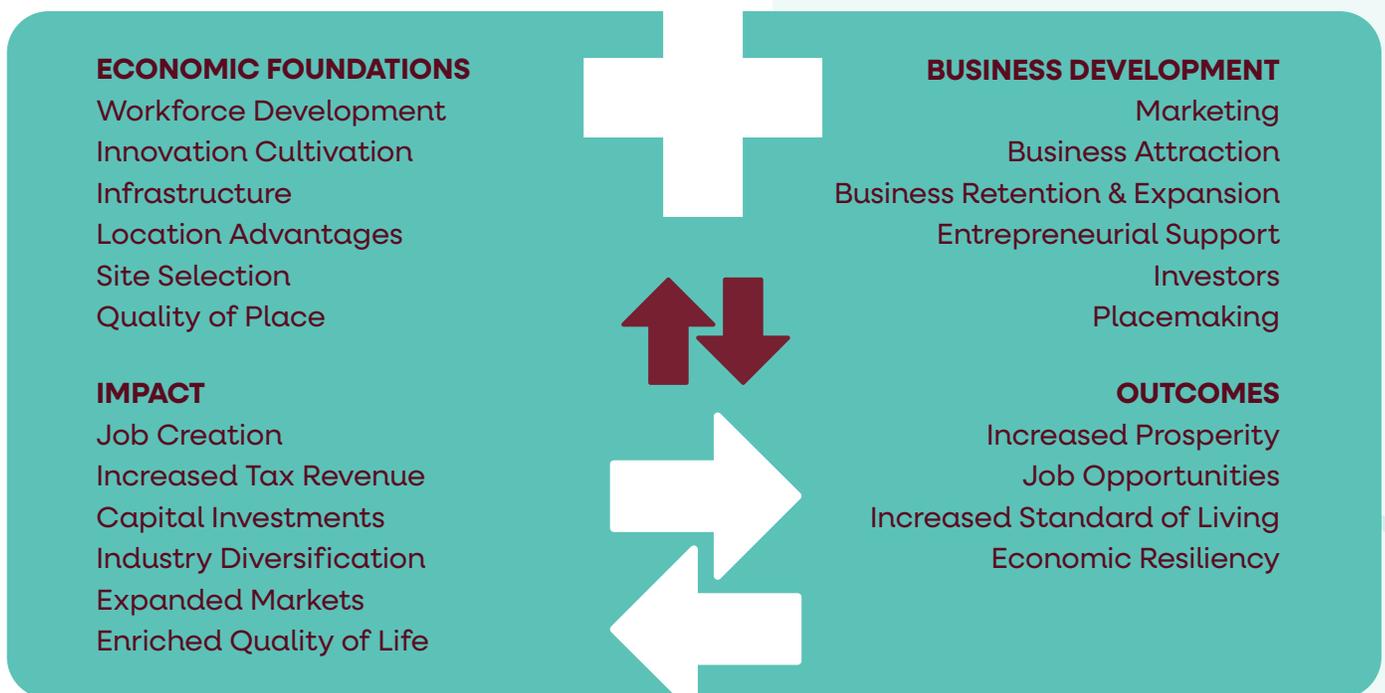
# EcoDevo 101: How Economic Development Supports the Growth of Wyandotte County Businesses

Economic development is often discussed in terms of its parts, each category siloed and distinct: business retention and expansion, attraction, workforce development, and job creation, among others. [Wyandotte Economic Development Council](#) (WYEDC) joins other innovative thinkers working to flip the perception towards an ecosystem model where each objective is interlocked and dependent like the pieces of a puzzle, to form the total picture of [EcoDevo 101](#).

## Economic Development Ecosystem

Structuring economic development around this ecosystem framework — like pieces of a puzzle — creates an environment where economic foundations and business development create impact and favorable economic outcomes. Wyandotte Economic Development Council prioritizes:

- Creating Jobs
- Raising Household Income
- Building and Strengthening the Workforce
- Improving Quality of Life
- Generating Tax Revenue



## Character of Place is an Important Economic Foundation

In [“The character of innovative places: entrepreneurial strategy, economic development, and prosperity”](#) (*Small Bus Econ* 43, 9–20, 2014), Maryann P. Feldman asks, “Why do investments in certain places yield jobs, growth and prosperity while similar investments made in seemingly identical places fail to produce the desired results?”

While acknowledging that geography and clustering of resources play important roles, she postulates, “What matters most is human agency — the building of institutions and the myriad public and private decisions that determine what I call the character of place — a spirit of authenticity, engagement and common purpose.”

In the Kansas City, KS, (KCK) region, Wyandotte Economic Development Council (WYEDC) supplies the human agency for placemaking, bringing assets, stakeholders, innovators and agencies together to fortify the region’s economic development ecosystem. WYEDC promotes and strengthens Wyandotte County’s economy through innovative approaches to programs, partnerships and incentives, as well as leadership in industrial, residential, office and retail markets. In 2024, WYEDC’s efforts resulted in 19 announced projects, \$863 million in capital investment, and 345 new jobs. There has been over \$6.2 billion in capital investments since 2012.





## Marvin and Alpha Robotics are Harnessing Automation and Advanced Technology to Expand Domestic Operations and Increase Job Creation and Retention

For Marvin, a company known for its high-quality windows and doors, automation has been central to expanding operations at the new facility in Wyandotte County.

**“Automation has played a crucial role in expanding our operations by allowing us to produce a more consistent product while also eliminating hazards for our employees,” said Robert Conchola Jr., Director of Operations, Marvin Windows.**

At Marvin’s new plant, automation has significantly improved efficiency. According to Conchola, one machine is now able to accomplish multiple production functions simultaneously. Instead of needing three separate areas to perform functions like pressing, drilling and injecting a window frame, one machine can accomplish all three of these functions in one pass.

**“This saves space and reduces overall expenses,” said Conchola.**

The company plans to integrate additional robotic processes in areas with higher ergonomic risk, like handling large windows, to ensure employee safety remains a top priority.

Contrary to common fears, Conchola emphasized that automation isn’t replacing jobs, but enhancing them. The benefits that flow from automation are directly correlated to job retention at Marvin. Employees feel safer and more prioritized which results in more efficiency.

**“We prioritize our employees first, and the automation we aim to introduce is intended to reduce risks and make their jobs easier,” he said.**



## Marvin Builds a Skilled Workforce Through Investment and Partnership

Marvin Windows has more than 5,000 employees nationwide, and has locations in 19 North American cities. The corporation was recognized as one of [America's Best Large Employers](#), by Forbes magazine (2025). Marvin expanded operations in Kansas City and officially opened the doors to the 400,000-square-foot facility in October 2025. The new facility exclusively manufactures Marvin's new fiberglass product.

The \$90,000,000 investment in Wyandotte County not only promises significant growth for the manufacturing industry in the region, but also the consistent hiring of new employees over the next three years. With this promise of growth, a skilled and adaptable workforce is needed.

According to Conchola, as automation evolves, so do the skill requirements. Workers are now expected to possess not only a strong understanding of basic computer literacy but they must also have a willingness to learn new technologies. Automation in manufacturing facilities is typically user-friendly, but as new automotive technology is introduced, different skillsets are required to troubleshoot and maintain the equipment.

**“I’ve noticed that our maintenance technicians need to continue their education in controls and other computer-related skills to keep up with these advancements,” said Conchola.**

In an effort to maintain a skilled workforce, Marvin maintains a strong partnership with Kansas City Kansas Community College (KCKCC). KCKCC offers programs like the [Automation Engineer Technology](#) A.A.S. and Certificate, that train students to apply engineering principles and technical skills to support professionals in developing, installing, calibrating, modifying, and maintaining automated systems.

Students enrolled in advanced manufacturing classes at KCKCC are eligible for the Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education ([FAME program](#)). Through this earn-and-learn model, students alternate between classroom instruction and practical training with local manufacturers and technology experts like Marvin and Alpha Robotics, gaining real-world skills in automation, robotics and system maintenance. The program prepares graduates to enter the workforce as highly skilled technicians, ready to support advanced manufacturing operations and evolving automated technologies.

For workers looking to add to their skillset, KCKCC offers career training like the [robotics technician course](#).

### **Robust Workforce Training with Alpha Robotics, Inc.**

Technology training providers such as Alpha Robotics, Inc. have joined the efforts to build a highly skilled and adaptable workforce in Wyandotte County as well. Alpha Robotics, another supporting member of the Kansas City Chapter of FAME, offers training on the latest robotics equipment to those already employed with local manufacturers.

**“Our goal is to make sure that the teammates operating robotics in their local facilities are properly trained and able to do their jobs efficiently,” explained Eric Young, President, Alpha Robotics, Inc.**

Alpha Robotics operates a physical training location in Lenexa, but serves the entire Kansas City Metro and beyond, through mobile training. Young noted that technology has become a universal part of the trades.

**“There are a lot of jobs that can be replaced by automation, but you can’t replace the person that keeps that automation running,” he said. “Ever-evolving electronics are used to automate our manufacturing spaces. As equipment gets “smarter” the trades must adapt through continued education.”**



## Competitive Wages for Highly Trained Technicians

While many outdated misconceptions of manufacturing careers exist, skilled technicians can earn salaries comparable to those of engineers, with additional opportunities to increase their earnings through advanced training. According to Young, entry-level engineers in the Kansas City metropolitan area earn an estimated starting salary between \$60,000 and \$70,000 per year, while most technicians receive wages of approximately \$30 per hour—equating to a similar annual income. Manufacturing employees in Wyandotte County reported an average annual wage of \$83,097 in 2024 ([WYEDC](#)).

**“Someone in the trades can choose to work overtime and bring home \$100k in short order. An engineer on salary doesn’t have that option,”** said Young. **“Having an option to increase your income that easily makes this a competitive career path.”**

## Wyandotte County & WYEDC Support Company Growth

**“Automation is a catalyst for economic resilience in Wyandotte County—enhancing productivity, attracting advanced industries, and creating pathways for residents to access high-wage, high-skill jobs,”** said Greg Kindle, President, Wyandotte Economic Development Council. **“By embracing smart technologies, we position our community to compete globally while improving local quality of life. This is largely why Wyandotte County has the second highest wages paid in the State of Kansas.”**

According to Kindle, WYEDC’s careful selection and support of companies like Amazon, Marvin and Marshalltown have positioned Wyandotte County and specifically the [435 Logistics Park](#), for more growth through highly automated and technology-based companies expanding to the area.

Marshalltown, a renowned supplier of high-quality tools and products to major retailers such as Lowe’s and Home Depot, is investing \$27 million to construct a new distribution center in the industrial park. The 200,000-square-foot facility will serve as a major distribution hub and critical transfer point for the company’s operations. Upon completion, the project is expected to create 40 new jobs in the Kansas City area.

Kindle emphasized that WYEDC employs a careful and thorough vetting process designed to attract businesses that will strengthen both the region’s economy and its communities. Rather than focusing solely on national brand recognition, the organization evaluates companies based on their people, culture, and commitment to making a positive local impact. This ensures that each new partnership contributes to the long-term vitality of Wyandotte County.

## Wyandotte Economic Development Council's EcoDevo 101

Wyandotte Economic Development Council's focus on supporting the growth of local businesses improves the county's economic development ecosystem, by pulling the pieces of the puzzle together: business attraction and job creation, business retention, and improved quality of life.

The next piece of this puzzle is generating tax revenue for Wyandotte County, which decreases the tax burden on each individual taxpayer.

**“When Wyandotte County residents aren’t working or are making less money than they could, fewer people are paying taxes. That creates a higher tax burden on everyone else and can cause some understandable frustration. We’re prioritizing getting all Wyandotte County residents to work earning as much as they can. Companies like Marvin Windows and Alpha Robotics, Inc. play an important role because they prioritize a highly-trained and resilient workforce that adapts to inevitable technological changes while offering high wages that can support a family,”** said Kindle.

To state it simply: The more people and more companies contributing to the tax base, the further spread out the tax impact and the lighter the burden on the individual.

And that is EcoDevo 101– what Wyandotte Economic Development Council does, but WYEDC can’t do it alone.

For those wondering how they can help to grow Wyandotte County's economy, Kindle has this to say, **“Before people can bring their “dish” to the potluck, they need a high paying job. We have those in the community so if you know someone who is working part-time or in a low paying job, encourage them to apply. And, if they don’t have the skills currently, tell them to reach out to [Monica Brede](#) so she can help them move from a job to a lasting career.”**





Wyandotte County Economic Development Council (WYEDC) helps businesses harness “The Power of the Dotte.” WYEDC promotes and strengthens Wyandotte County’s economy through innovative approaches to programs, partnerships and incentives, as well as leadership in industrial, residential, office and retail markets. Contact them today! Follow WYEDC on LinkedIn and Facebook!



Marvin Windows and Alpha Robotics, Inc. are leading the charge in redefining what American manufacturing can achieve through automation, collaboration, and community investment. Together, the businesses exemplify how innovation and workforce development power Wyandotte County’s manufacturing future.

Learn more about Marvin’s impact and career opportunities at [www.marvin.com/careers/locations/kansas-city](http://www.marvin.com/careers/locations/kansas-city).

Discover services and training courses at [www.alpharoboticskc.com](http://www.alpharoboticskc.com).



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