



Marketing your Community—Does Yours Stand Out?

From business retention and attraction to tourism, how to show you're interested and ready

You live in a great small town. Your community is known around the area for its charm, healthy downtown area, good schools system, and friendly folks. You have organizations and community champions that want to help promote growth and bring revenues to help with maintaining and improving such a great town. Knowing that revenues come from businesses, population, and attracting visitors, your town starts brainstorming how to make it happen.

This proactive attitude sets you apart from many communities. But most of the other qualities, such as friendly folks and a healthy downtown, put you on par with thousands of others of communities nationwide. So what can your community do to make your mark? There are some fundamental tools and information any community can use to market itself to a variety of audiences, all with the goal of providing a healthy economic foundation for your residents.

Who are we and what do we want?

Some towns have a giant statue to attract thousands of tourists a year. Others keep bringing businesses to their downtown, building a retail tourism attraction that keeps the local economy moving. Another town has fabulous recreational amenities that attract big events and seasonal visitors. What is your community about? The first step is to work within your community to determine what your goals are and what resources you have to work with to achieve those goals.

How do we get there?

Goal: Attracting businesses

Your brainstorming and goal setting resulted in the idea that your town needs more businesses to help maintain its image, infrastructure, amenities, and quality of life. What are some simple things you can do to attract new establishments?

➔ **Create a user-friendly website.**

This is the first place many businesses and site selectors look for fundamental information on your community. Without a web presence, you are falling behind other communities in your ability to market and compete. Many communities take web presence a step further by using social media such as Facebook and Twitter. The following are commonly sought topics:

- contact information (name, address, phone number, fax number, email addresses);
- up to date information in a nice looking site – check out other towns' sites to get ideas on what looks professional and what might detract viewers
- links or information on available buildings and sites in your community
- links or information on any municipal plans, zoning ordinance, or other regulatory

information that could impact developers

- links or information on local economic development agencies
- demographic and community data – population, geography, economy, workforce, top employers, taxes, etc.
- available incentives and other benefits that come with moving to your town

➔ **Be ready.**

How quickly you respond to requests for information can make the difference of whether a business stays interested in moving to your community. Having a nicely designed packet of information ready that might need only a bit of customizing to individual requests might include much of the same information that is suggested for your website:

- contact information
- information on available buildings and sites in your community
- demographic and community data
- available incentives and other benefits

Goal: Keeping the businesses you have

According to research conducted

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ECIEDD Counties

Champaign
Douglas
Ford
Iroquois
Piatt
Vermilion

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Spotlight on Success: Business expansions and openings around the region

Champaign County

Herff Jones plans to make \$2 million in building and equipment upgrades to its plant on North Market Street in Champaign. As a result of consolidating product lines there, Herff Jones could potentially add 80 jobs locally, bringing total employment at the cap-and-gown plant to more than 300. The Herff Jones facility in Arcola will remain open.



Construction of an addition to the **FedEx Ground** facility Apollo Subdivision in Champaign should be complete by late summer 2012. The 97,600 square-foot addition will expand the hub to about 250,000 square feet. The company has not indicated how many new jobs will be created.

Iroquois County

Iroquois Development Association anticipates a February opening for the **Super Wal-Mart** under construction in Watseka. The new store will add 10-15 employees in addition to those moving from the existing Wal-Mart.

A new **Pilot gas station** will open across from the Gilman Industrial Park. A third truck stop west of I-57 will re-open in the area as well.

A new **KFC** has opened on the west side of Watseka, replacing the one damaged by floods in 2008.

Vermilion County

A new **Kohl's** department store will open on North Vermilion Street in Danville in fall 2012. The 55,000 square-foot store will employ about 70. Several other developments are anticipated at the site.

The Tabani Group, Dallas, Texas, acquired the Village Mall Shopping Center and immediately announced a new 41,000 square foot anchor, **Dunham's Sports**, to open October 2012. Another anchor will be announced soon.

Covington Foods will open a County Market supermarket in spring or summer 2012 at 1628 Georgetown Road in Tilton. The new 35,000 square-foot store is expected to have 60-75 full and part time employees.

Douglas County

The City of Tuscola is revitalizing its downtown with several new businesses. Alex Ruggieri is redeveloping the 12,000 sq. ft. building at **100 North Main** into upstairs residential and downstairs commercial. The \$970,000 project provides for the redevelopment of the largest vacant property in Downtown Tuscola and includes a \$220,000 grant and \$325,000 loan from the City's TIF program. **Hotwire Networks**, a computer service company, will open at 134 West Sale Street in Spring 2012. **Vintage Karma** will open in Spring 2012 at 110 West Sale Street, featuring an art gallery, co-op art space, and tattoo studio.

The former **Dixie Truck Stop** site in Tuscola is being redeveloped. The Illinois EPA and Tuscola's TIF program funded demolition and environmental remediation. New site work and construction of the new development, including outlots, should begin in Spring 2012.

Ford County

Community and Economic Development Foundation of Ford County reports that **Alamo** will add **30 new jobs** at its Gibson City site. The 180,000-square-foot plant at 1020 S. Sangamon Avenue has 232 employees, all but three of whom work full time. The plant manufactures tractor-mounted rotary mowers and tillage equipment, said Scott Wolf, vice president of Alamo Group Illinois.

Asta Care Center of Ford County, 1240 N. Market St., held a groundbreaking ceremony on Aug. 18 for a new wing, allowing for the addition of seven rooms for patients and space for a fitness center and lounge.

Full-Fill, which produces food aerosol products, will add 150 jobs as part of a 100,000 square foot expansion at its Henning facility.



An expansion at **Sygma** in Danville will bring 70 new jobs to the area. The company supplies products to restaurants.

Piatt County



Kirby Medical Center, formerly Kirby Hospital, opened its new facility on September 29, 2011, adding 12-15 new employees.

The hospital purchased 108 acres of land just north of Interstate 72. The facility itself will be 72,000 square feet and the hospital campus will take about 23 acres.

Additional plans for the site include a mix of retail, commercial and residential development.

Nexstep, formerly O'Cedar, moved its production facility from US45 to the industrial park west of Paxton and added a production line that was previously in Pennsylvania. The new facility offers better shipping facilities with larger loading dock areas.

Solae in Gibson City added a second warehouse for food grade soybeans. They purchased a 63,000 square-foot former manufacturing facility.

Kirchner's Building Center in Paxton just completed an extensive renovation of their showroom and warehouses.

HRW, Inc. announced a new \$1.3M investment at 1850 E. Voorhees with the establishment of a new manufacturing facility for a specialty agricultural product. The company will initially employ 25 employees.

Thyssen Krupp Presta is investing \$38.8 million in its Danville facility, creating 100 new jobs.

Other area expansions include:

- 5 jobs at **Autozone**
- 5 jobs at **Towne Machine**, a manufacturing and prototyping business
- 5 jobs at **T.h. Snyder Company**, a custom woodworking firm.

Marketing Your Community *(continued from Page 1)*

by Blane, Canada Ltd., 76% of new jobs and capital investment in a community come from existing business. This jumps to 86-90% in rural areas. Building relationships in this scenario is just as important as in attracting outside businesses. Marketing focuses on being a good information provider, listener, and advocate for your community's businesses.

➤ Visit local business leaders

"Economic development organizations have used executive contact, private one-on-one meetings with business executives, as a central part of business retention...the goals have been to help companies at risk of leaving/downsizing; identify opportunities to help companies expand in the community; identify problems that could cause employers to leave a community; and build relationships with individual company executives" (Blane, Canada Ltd.).

Visits should be about the business, not just about what the business does for the community. Building relationships that foster how the company perceives its place in the community and its relationship with community leaders could be important factors in whether it will stay in your town.

➤ Economic Gardening.

"Economic gardening is an entrepreneurial approach to economic development that seeks to grow the local economy from within. The focus is on providing accurate, timely and relevant information to local entrepreneurs about key areas such as their competitors, customers, markets, and industry trends.

Armed with this kind of information, a small business owner can make better strategic decisions, avoid costly mistakes, and successfully grow his or her enterprise. Economic gardening strategies help local small businesses discover how to reach markets outside the region. In turn, these exporting growth-oriented companies can spur the formation of local business suppliers and

service firms to support them. More and better-paid workers also increase the demand for local goods and services, recirculating wealth throughout the local and regional economy."

(growinglocaleconomies.com/economic_gardening)

An easy first step in economic gardening can be to invite community members together who want to work on economic development. Discuss your assets, identify people who desire to be responsible for moving things forward, set some achievable goals, and get to work. Some economic gardening initiatives start out as simple as an open meeting at a local restaurant to start the conversation. There are a variety of online resources on economic gardening; the City of Littleton, Colorado created the concept.

Goal: Bring on the tourists

Marketing to tourists and their representatives can become a very expensive endeavor, depending on your geographic reach, quality of your marketing materials, and available local resources.

➤ Once again, the website.

The most obvious tool for marketing your attractions is web presence. As with business attraction, the information you provide should be easy to access, easy to understand, nicely designed, and specific enough to make potential clients want to know more. Basic contact information, business hours, travel directions, and ideas on how a day could be spent in the area are all common search items for potential tourists. Depending on the size of your attraction, you also may want to provide links about lodging and other attractions.

➤ Printed marketing materials.

More of a financial investment than the website, printed materials can range from advertisements in different media to brochures that are available via mail or at area establishments. Printed materials by nature need to attract attention; investing in a professional design and printing service can help ensure a quality product

that will stand out from the rest. Putting these documents on your website in a printable format will also help spread the word about your community.

Measuring Success

No matter what your goals, resources are almost always limited. It is important to set measurable benchmarks for success in your initiatives so that you can see if you are getting "bang for your buck" for your marketing investments. Stepping back to periodically measure your success will allow you to optimize your efforts.

How can ECIEDD help your community?

ECIEDD is here as a resource for all communities in the six-county region. We can help market your community in many ways, including:

- Creating a **Community Profile** that includes demographics, economy, and other data
- Collecting **data and resources** to put on your community's website
- Providing and **analyzing data** related to businesses and potential gaps to fill in your community
- Creating a **marketing strategy**
- Creating an **economic development strategy**
- Facilitating **community meetings**, focus groups, and/or business forums
- Creating **comprehensive plans**
- **Researching potential funding sources** for community development projects
- **Reviewing and revising zoning and other ordinances** to help ensure your community develops in conformance with community desires

ECIEDD provides 60 free labor hours to each county per year, so it is possible that your community can use our services free of charge. Please contact Susan Chavarria at 217-819-4053 or schavarr@ccrpc.org for more information.

ECIEDD provides technical support to economic development agencies and communities in Champaign, Douglas, Ford, Iroquois, Piatt and Vermilion Counties.

How can we help you?

2012 ECIEDD Board Meeting Dates

**March 1
June 7**

**September 6
December 6**

All meetings are held at 1:30 pm in the John Dimit Room 1776 East Washington Urbana

ECIEDD Benefits - Available to all communities in the six-county area

- ✓ **Free labor hours:** Each ECIEDD county has 60 free labor hours per fiscal year (October 1 through September 30). Municipalities and agencies can request grant research, grant writing, data acquisition and analysis, and creating marketing materials, among other activities.
- ✓ **EDA grant application research and writing:** ECIEDD staff will research whether a potential project qualifies for Economic Development Administration funding, write the application, and maintain communications with EDA about the project at no charge. This benefit is in addition to the 60 free hours.
- ✓ **Economic Impact Model:** ECIEDD staff can model the economic and fiscal impact of a proposed or existing development at the county, regional, and state levels. Potential developers and the community want to know how the project can impact the area.
- ✓ **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy:** This federally mandated document details our region’s economic goals and needs; thereby enabling opportunities for funding projects, and allowing for continued planning grant funds from EDA. *Projects cannot receive EDA funding in our District unless they are listed in the CEDS.*
- ✓ **Educational Opportunities:** In 2009, ECIEDD staff held a Wind Energy forum with speakers from Midwest Energy and Illinois Wind Working Group. In 2010, staff coordinated a Business Retention Workshop with presenter Eric Canada, and a Strategic Doing workshop with Ed Morrison. More workshops and educational opportunities will be offered in the future.
- ✓ **Employer data for the six-county area:** ECIEDD staff have employer data for the six county area. Staff can complete data research, analysis, and reports to suit your needs.



We're on the Web!
www.eciedd.org

Go paperless!
If you would like to receive this newsletter via email, please contact Susan Chavarria at schavarr@ccrpc.org or (217) 328-3313.

ECIEDD Board 2011-2012

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Seamus Reilly, Parkland College

Douglas County
Brian Moody, Tuscola Economic Development
Lloyd Murphy, Tuscola National Bank
Vacant—Arcola Chamber of Commerce

Ford County
Rick Bowen, County Board
Randy Ferguson, County Board
Diane Johnson, Gibson City Chamber

Iroquois County
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