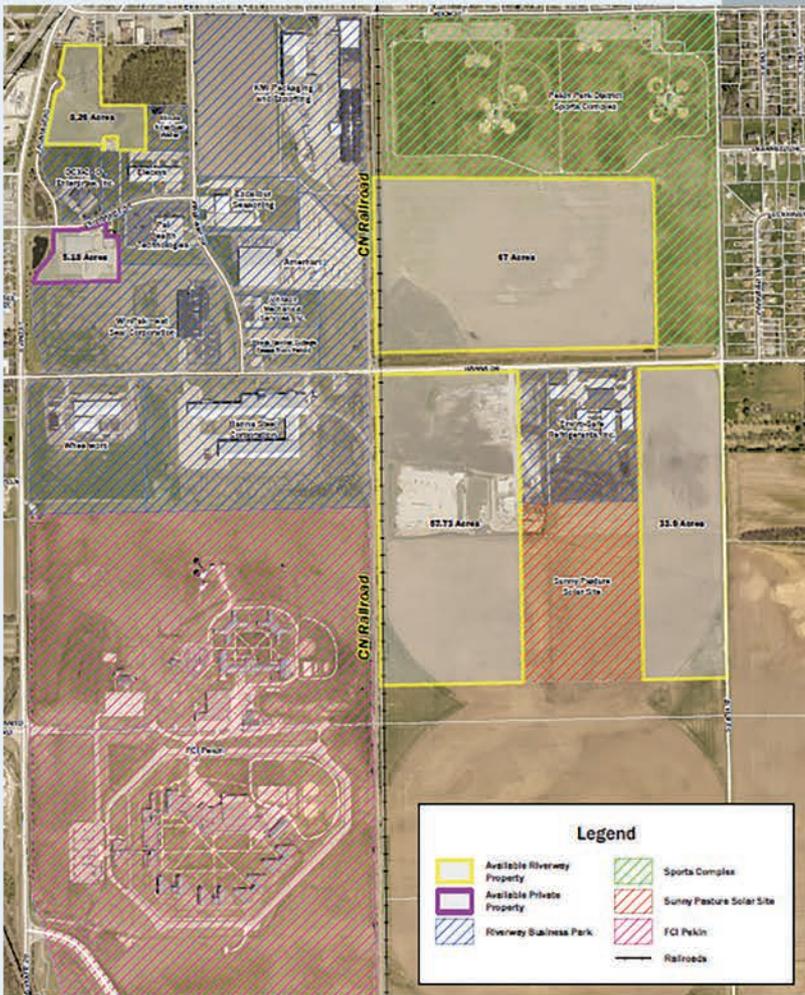




2024-2025

Illinois

Investment Guide



“We are looking to
into the future.”

– Mayor Mary Burress



Riverway Business Park

INFRASTRUCTURE



Water - Illinois American Water

- 12" main
- 6.5 MGD excess treatment capacity
- 1.5 MGD flow available



Sewer - City of Pekin

- 21"-24" mains
- 250,000 GPD flow available now
- 500,000 GPD flow available within 1 month
- 1 MGD flow available within 1 year



Electricity - Ameren

- 13.2/7.62kv 3-phase 25,000 kvfa substation 2 miles from park
- 10 MW supply available within 18 months
- 50+ MW supply available within 3 years



Natural Gas - Ameren

- 4"-8" mains

- 167 acres of city-owned property
- Can be subdivided to suit needs
- Industrial zoning
- Flat grade

INCENTIVES

Enterprise Zone • TIF district • Below-market land price

TRANSPORTATION

- < 1 mile to Illinois Route 29 and Illinois Route 9
- 7 miles from I-474
- 10 miles from I-155
- Rail on site – Canadian National
- 10 miles to Peoria Barge Terminal
- < 1 mile from proposed port (grant application submitted for construction)
- 3 miles to Pekin Airport
- 10 miles to Greater Peoria Regional Airport

Josh Wray, Director of Economic Development

309.478.5355

www.ci.pekin.il.us/departments/economic_development/

lead the growth of our region





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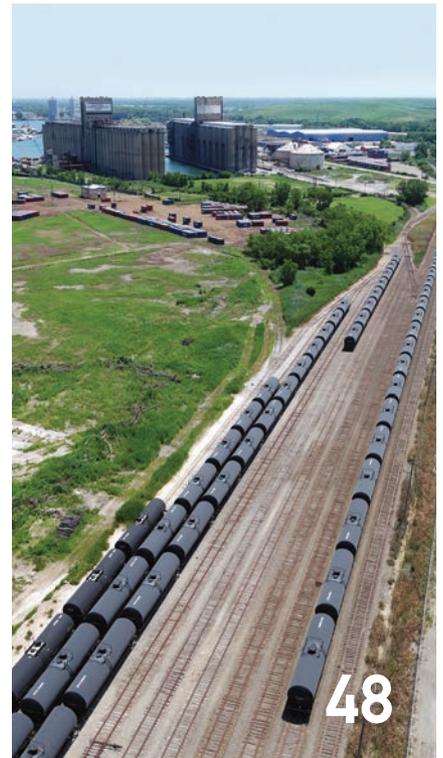
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From training grants to job tax credits, Illinois ensures that expanding companies get a leg up in talent attraction.



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See how Ameren Illinois offers
smart energy solutions at
AmerenIllinois.com/EconomicDevelopment



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The Land of Lincoln is known for growing crops and turning its seed corn — and insects — into popular food products.

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Need a place to store or distribute your goods? Look no more. Illinois has a spot for it.



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A little money goes a long way in Illinois, which offers a lot in return.



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Explore how your business can be part of this dynamic community. **FEEL THE ENERGY!**
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REASONS WHY BUSINESSES CHOOSE HOFFMAN ESTATES:



THREE INTERCHANGES ALONG I-90



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ENTERTAINMENT AND RECREATION FOR EVERYONE



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NEW TIF DISTRICT TO INCENTIVIZE DEVELOPMENT



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ILLINOIS

JEFFERSON COUNTY

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Brian@JeffCoDev.org
618-838-0545



Welcome To Illinois



Photo: Getty Images

Dear Readers,
Illinois is on the rise and there has never been a better time to live, work and do business here — in the Middle of Everything. Offering unmatched business incentive packages, modernized infrastructure, a top tier workforce, and world-class educational and research institutions, Illinois is a premier destination for businesses and families alike.

From attracting new companies and helping existing ones expand, to achieving record job growth and improving our state's fiscal health, we're continuing to make historic progress in Illinois. Alongside our Team Illinois partners, the State of Illinois is prioritizing economic development and improving our business environment.

With the 18th largest economy in the world topping \$1 trillion GDP, Illinois continues to reach record-breaking milestones for economic development in key sectors. Illinois' natural advantages such as our central location, abundant fresh water, and fertile soil are a strong foundation to build upon as we strengthen our strategic advantages like our massive clean energy production, world-class educational and research institutions, and our talented, highly educated workforce.

The State is making it easier and more beneficial for companies to locate and grow in Illinois by providing the business community with the tools they need to succeed, including infrastructure investments and optimized tax incentive programs. Our central location and proximity to airports, railways and shipping ports offers unparalleled access to global supply chains, providing companies an opportunity to contribute to and benefit from Illinois' position as a global economic powerhouse.



The choice is clear — Illinois is the best place in the nation to live, work and do business.

I hope you enjoy this year's Illinois Investment Guide and keep Illinois top of mind for all your business needs. Illinois is open for business.

Governor JB Pritzker



How Illinois Became the King of Midwest Commerce

by **RON STARNER**



The evidence that Illinois is a top-performing business environment keeps writing itself. In March, Site Selection magazine reported that Illinois ranked second in the nation for corporate expansions and relocations for the second straight year. Illinois tallied 552 corporate facility projects in 2023, up from 487 in 2022.

In that same issue, the nation's premier corporate real estate publication reported that Greater Chicago ranked as the No. 1 top-performing metro area in the country for a record-setting 11th year in a row. How dominant is

Chicago? Its 485 facility deals easily outdistances the 452 secured by Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington.

"Illinois continues to attract leading companies to our state, with hundreds of openings and expansions every year," said Gov. JB Pritzker. "With our unique incentives, our growing market, and our diverse and talented workforce, there's no doubt that the economy in Illinois is thriving. This impressive recognition from Site Selection Magazine for the second year in a row makes it clear: Illinois is back and open for business."

When you consider where businesses are investing in Illinois, the evidence of this robust

Chicago skyline.
Photo: Adobe Stock



From project rankings to higher education, scorecards tell a convincing story.

comeback becomes even clearer. The projects are not confined to just one or two corners of the state. They are occurring in every region of Illinois. Here are just a few of them:

- Gotion is building a \$2 billion electric vehicle manufacturing campus in Manteno and creating 2,600 jobs.
- Kraft Heinz is constructing a \$400 million distribution center in DeKalb and hiring 150 workers.
- Gulfstream is investing \$285 million in Cahokia while creating 200 new jobs.
- Incobrasa is doing a \$250 million expansion in Gilman

and adding 40 jobs.

- Manner Polymers is investing \$54 million in Mount Vernon and generating 60 jobs.

This momentum is contributing to an uptick in employment statewide. According to a recent release from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, total nonfarm jobs are increasing in a majority of Illinois metro areas. The data released on June 27 showed strong employment gains in 10 of the 14 MSAs in the state.

“Steady job growth continues to benefit workers and employers in every corner of the state,” Deputy Gov. Andy Manar said. “Investing in a strong, viable



Illinois ranks **second** in the nation for corporate expansions and relocations for the second straight year. Illinois tallied **552** corporate facility projects in **2023**, up from **487** in 2022.

Source: Site Selection Magazine, March 2024

workforce ecosystem which remains advantageous to our diverse labor force continues to be a top priority.”

The largest job gains year-over-year are occurring in the Champaign-Urbana MSA (up 3,100 jobs);

Bloomington (up 1,700); and Elgin (up 4,500). In the Chicago-Naperville-Arlington Heights MSA, 4,900 new jobs were added between May 2023 and May 2024.

Why Companies Choose Illinois

There are many factors contributing to Illinois’ statewide rebound post-COVID, but when we talk to CEOs and site selectors, they typically cite these factors as most important in why they chose an Illinois business location:

- Access to an abundance of world-leading talent from major research universities.
- A plethora of available sites and buildings.
- Much lower real estate and

business operating costs, especially when compared to both U.S. coasts.

- Abundant and affordable supplies of water, power and other essential utility infrastructure.
- The logistical advantage of being located in the center of North America.
- Access to six Class I railroads and multiple international airports.
- Access to North America’s largest industrial market in Chicago.
- Highly proactive economic development leadership teams at every level of government.
- Construction costs ranking among the lowest in North America.

As Kyle Schulz, chief growth officer at World Business Chicago, puts it, “Chicago is the capital of the Midwest economy. You will be able to find a customer in any sector here. We are the center of nearly 25% of U.S. GDP in this region. Chicago is a magnetic force that is attracting the young talent that every company wants.”

There are 500,000 college students within three hours of Chicago. Many of them attend colleges or universities ranked among the world’s best. For example, the University of Chicago ranks as the No. 6 Best College for Public Policy in America, per niche.com. It ranks in the top 10 in nine other categories. According to U.S. News & World Report, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign ranks as the No. 12 best public university in America and 35th best overall. It ranks in the top 10 nationally in library and information science; accounting; civil engineering, materials engineering; and general engineering.



Scan to
Learn More

It's a Fact: Natural gas drives clean energy and tech growth in Illinois

Our clean, safe, reliable and affordable energy delivery provides Illinois and our customers a competitive advantage, even in extreme weather. Natural gas is key for industrial, manufacturing, computing and data center operations in Illinois. It supports production, keeps costs manageable, creates jobs and sustains local economies.

Our energy efficiency solutions reduce costs and emissions, while combined heating and power (co-generation) meets large energy demands and timelines. With eight underground storage facilities, we ensure winter resilience. Additionally, our innovation in renewable and low-carbon fuels helps customers plan for a cleaner energy future, maintaining affordability and reliability.



“We are the center of nearly 25% of U.S. GDP in this region.”

— Kyle Schulz, *Chief Growth Officer, World Business Chicago*

The students who graduate from these institutions often pick Illinois as the place to build their career. That is why Chicago ranks No. 1 for business incubation and startups.

Schulz says the surrounding infrastructure makes business and career success so much more attainable in Illinois compared to other states. “The future of food and other industries is here in Illinois,” he said. “When you look at our affordable, reliable and clean power, plus the fact that we have every type of transportation infrastructure needed to move people and goods, we are an incredible magnet for business.”

A History Lesson in Progress

Downstate leaders echo these sentiments. At Coles Together Economic Development in Coles County in Mattoon, Illinois, Dr. Ronda Sauget, president and CEO, says that businesses in a variety of sectors are growing throughout the county.

“Rural King Supply farm stores are growing like mad in Mattoon,” Sauget said. “They are headquartered here, and they are bullish on this region. We have a Canadian National Railway

certified site. FutureGen is a carbon sequestration project that is poised to take off there. We are seeing a lot of interest here for carbon capture and sequestration. We believe that this site is going to be a destination for these projects.”

The site in question covers 420 acres in Mattoon. It was selected out of a national field of four finalists under the administration of President George W. Bush, but it is finally ready to move forward with development, said Sauget. “We now own a total of 1,200 acres,” she adds. “We have been sitting on this site for a long time. Only now has it become viable for private industry to pursue these kinds of projects.”

Mars Pet Care, Lender’s Bagels and a John Deere maintenance training school call Coles County home and continue to expand their workforces, said Sauget. “Plus, the family of Abraham Lincoln is here. A lot of Lincoln history is based in this county. A Lincoln-Douglas debate took place here. Tourists travel to Coles to see this history and experience the outdoor recreation that we have to offer.”

For growing companies, that’s yet another reason to invest in Illinois. 🍷

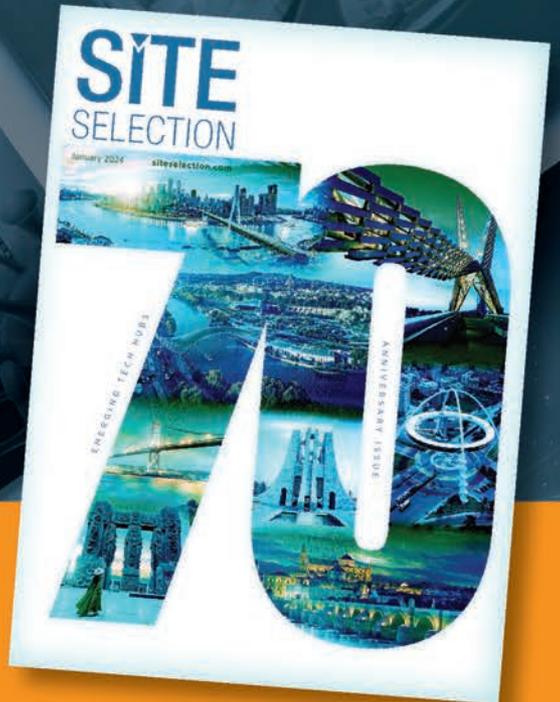
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How Illinois Competes to Win

by **RON STARNER**

A record-setting run of economic development wins has Intersect Illinois riding high and looking for more. To get a closer look at how Illinois lands game-changing capital investment projects, we turned to the leaders of Intersect Illinois — Chairman of the Board John Atkinson and Interim CEO Paulina San Millan.

Illinois has long been one of the manufacturing powerhouses of the country. What factors make it this way?

JOHN ATKINSON: Illinois' rich manufacturing history has evolved into an advanced, technology-driven sector. We have the talent companies need, the infrastructure to move products efficiently and effectively, and the sites to meet so many diverse needs.

In terms of talent, we have a vast talent pool ready for manufacturing jobs coming out of our renowned universities, large community college system and training programs. As demand for manufacturing talent continues to grow, Illinois is investing in programs like Manufacturing Training Academies

and Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs throughout the state that are preparing the next generation for jobs of the future.

In fact, Site Selection named Illinois the best state in the region for workforce development, recognizing its efforts to meet the demands of emerging industries such as electric vehicle manufacturing.

PAULINA SAN MILLAN: Companies are taking notice. For example, Rivian recently expanded its manufacturing operations in Normal, Illinois, where it employs more than 8,000, adding an additional 550 jobs and investing \$1.5 billion to increase production; the state is working with Rivian on job training as a part of the expansion.

Our infrastructure also helps us lead in manufacturing. Whether it's via road, air, port or rail, manufacturing companies can easily and efficiently transport goods. CNBC recognized this, naming Illinois' infrastructure one of the best in the country in its 2024 Top states for Business rankings.

The modern art wing at the Art Institute of Chicago.

Photo courtesy of Illinois Office of Tourism/Enjoy Illinois

Finally, the state has ample available sites for manufacturing. Our Vetted Sites program highlights our best 200-plus-acre greenfield sites around the state, providing relevant site details that help inform location decisions.

Greater Chicago has won the Top Metro Award from Site Selection Magazine for a record 11 years in a row, and Illinois remains near the top of the state list each year. What are Chicago and Illinois' secrets for remaining on top?

ATKINSON: It's no accident Chicago has secured this huge honor for corporate investment 11 times in a row, or that the state has continuously been ranked among the top. Illinois is home to one of the country's most diverse economies, where multiple industries thrive. The Chicago metro area provides access to diverse and skilled talent, global connectivity, robust infrastructure, and a world-class business environment, at a low cost compared to other big cities. From its thriving tech community to life sciences to financial services, the Chicago metro provides an attractive value proposition for companies looking to grow.

SAN MILLAN: In Illinois we've had major project wins, from Gotion investing \$2 billion in its electric vehicle battery manufacturing plant, to Rivian to Lion Electric investing more than \$131 million in the largest all-electric commercial vehicle production plant of its kind in the U.S. The momentum is real.

Illinois has nearly 2,000 major corporate headquarters operations statewide. Talent drives HQ decisions of companies. How does Illinois' talent stack up against its competitors?

SAN MILLAN: Our talent and workforce are key reasons companies choose to locate or expand in Illinois. The state is home to some of the world's top universities and the country's third-largest community college system. We are home to two of the top business schools; the University of Illinois alone graduates more engineers than Caltech, MIT and Stanford combined.

ATKINSON: Additionally, we have some of

the most unique and productive workforce training programs in the country, where we bring together public and private sectors to benefit both. An example of this is TCCI and Richland Community College's collaboration. The state provided more than \$20 million in capital grants to the City of Decatur and Richland Community College to build the first-of-its-kind Climatic Center for Innovation and Research as well as the EV + Energy Workforce Training Academy. Through the program, Richland will have three classrooms located within TCCI for an immersive hands-on learning experience, with cutting edge R&D with state-of-the-art climatic testing capabilities for EVs. Illinois truly is at an advantage when it comes to talent.

Does Illinois have any new incentive programs at its disposal to help expanding companies?

ATKINSON: Under the leadership of Governor Pritzker, Illinois is building its toolkit of incentives for companies that invest and bring jobs to the state. For example, in 2024 Illinois' legislature signed a package of incentives that will spur investment and sharpen the state's competitive edge in high-growth industries, such as quantum, semiconductors, EVs, clean energy and film. This omnibus package is anticipated to generate more than an estimated \$21 billion over the next 30 years.

Programs such as the REV (Reimagining Energy and Vehicles) Act have helped to attract significant investment and thousands of good-paying jobs from EV companies including Rivian, Gotion and TCCI. At the same time, those companies noted the state's infrastructure and workforce as reasons for growing here, along with the state support.

SAN MILLAN: But while incentives are a key part of the state's economic development toolkit, they are just one piece of the puzzle. Our assets — world-class workforce and talent, infrastructure and transportation, and our supportive ecosystem, when combined with incentives, provide a complete package for companies looking to expand or relocate.

What is happening on the available sites front in your state?

ATKINSON: Governor Pritzker has made a strong commitment to economic development, and under his leadership, Team Illinois has come together to attract new businesses — and that means prioritizing site readiness.

Additionally, Illinois' efforts in the past year to further modernize its infrastructure for future development opportunities

that can't be more apparent than in its recent efforts to solidify the state as the world's hub for quantum computing. Quantum computing has the potential to change the world, and we want that to begin in Illinois. That is why the state is investing in its bold vision to build a \$500 million mega-campus to catalyze rapid innovation.

SAN MILLAN: Bedrock Materials is another great example of a startup choosing to locate in Illinois because of the state's unmatched resources for innovation. Originating out of Stanford, the battery technology startup chose to locate its R&D headquarters in Chicago, noting the state's access to talent, its rich EV and manufacturing ecosystems, and its tremendous R&D community, which includes Argonne National Laboratory and Fermilab.

Additionally, companies in the burgeoning sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) industry have found Illinois to be a favorable place to start up and commercialize. Companies like LanzaJet have chosen Illinois because of resources including the state's SAF tax credit, its robust ecosystem (including strong R&D), its wealth of feedstocks, its skilled biofuels workforce, and access to a large customer base.

What impact will the new Quantum Campus have on Illinois and the nation?

ATKINSON: The Illinois Quantum and Microelectronics Park (IQMP) is the result of Illinois' bold vision for a first-of-its-kind campus to bring together both private and public sector entities to catalyze rapid innovation and further establish the growing industry here.

The campus will attract new businesses, and support the growth and adoption of technologies, putting the state in a strong position to attract additional investments around quantum and other initiatives. DARPA has committed to being a part of the campus, announcing it will house its Quantum Proving Ground applied research program at the IQMP to prototype and test promising quantum technologies. PsiQuantum, a quantum computing company, is our first anchor tenant, having committed to building, housing and operating a full-scale, fault-tolerant quantum computer here.

Quantum technologies have the potential

“Governor Pritzker has made a strong commitment to economic development, and under his leadership, Team Illinois has come together to attract new businesses — and that means prioritizing site readiness.”



— John Atkinson, *Chairman of the Board, Intersect Illinois*

underscore its commitment to site readiness. The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) also announced \$42 million in funding for a new Regional Site Readiness Program to prepare for industrial development across the state. This program complements DCEO's Megasites Investment program, which aims to make the state more competitive for large-scale industrial investments.

SAN MILLAN: At Intersect Illinois, we continue to add to our Vetted Sites program that identifies top acreage greenfield sites and reviews characteristics including utilities, logistics, permitting and entitlement, workforce, ownership, local and state incentives, and environmental and topographic conditions. This program helps location decision-makers get up to speed quickly on sites that would meet their needs. We are paving the way for future growth.

Entrepreneurship and innovation play a major role in economic development. How well does Illinois do in fostering and supporting these areas and in ensuring a smooth pathway for startups?

ATKINSON: Illinois has always been, and will continue to be, a hub for innovation and

to change the world by solving some of the biggest challenges in health care, energy, transportation, national security and more. Here in Illinois, we have the existing ecosystem and resources to become the global hub for quantum, and the IQMP will help bring investment, access to good jobs, and economic development in our communities.

Chicago has long been America's logistics hub. What makes it this way, and are there any new investments in this area?

SAN MILLAN: We've touched on numerous industries that are strong in Illinois — from manufacturing, to agribusiness, to technology. All of these need two things — talent and infrastructure. Our transportation, distribution and logistics (TDL) infrastructure is rivaled by few.

You can reach nearly the entire North American market within a four-hour flight or 83% of the continental U.S. within a two-day

“You can reach nearly the entire North American market within a four-hour flight or 83% of the continental U.S. within a two-day drive of Illinois.”

— Paulina San Millan, CEO, *Intersect Illinois*

drive. Additionally, we have the third-largest highway system, are the only place where all Class I railroads meet in two places and are home to three major inland ports with access to the Atlantic Ocean, Great Lakes and Gulf of Mexico.

This central location, unparalleled access and supportive state government make it a natural destination for TDL. These are also why we are fourth in the nation for the number of transportation and warehousing establishments. 📍



Comcast helps keep Illinois connected

Comcast has invested **\$1.4 billion** in technology and network infrastructure in Illinois over the last three years to deliver an even greater internet and customer experience.

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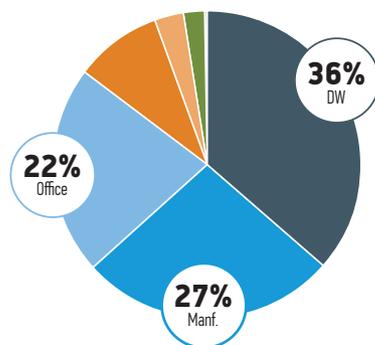
Illinois by the Numbers



Top 20 Projects of 2023

COMPANY	CITY	SECTOR	CATEGORY	INVESTMENT (US\$M)	JOBS
Stellantis	Belvidere	Automotive	New	3,200	
Gotion High-Tech Co.	Manteno	Electronics	New	2,000	2,600
Rivian Automotive	Normal	Automotive	Expansion	1,500	550
Stellantis	Belvidere	Automotive	Expansion	1,500	
Warwick Carbon	Decatur	Consumer Products	New	1,000	24
Aligned Data Centers	Hoffman Estates	IT & Comm.	New	1,000	200
T5 Data Centers	Northlake	IT & Comm.	New	500	
Wieland Rolled Products NA	East Alton	Metals	Expansion	500	
Primary Products Ingredients Americas	Decatur	Food & Beverage	Expansion	400	
The Kraft Heinz Co.	DeKalb	Food & Beverage	New	400	150
Ford Motor Co.	Chicago	Automotive	Expansion	400	
Coreweave	Volo	IT & Comm.	New	290	10
Stream U.S. Data Centers	Elk Grove Village	IT & Comm.	New	250	50
Incobrasa Industries	Gilman	Food & Beverage	New	250	40
Aligned Data Centers	Elk Grove Village	IT & Comm.	New	250	50
Compass Datacenters	Hoffman Estates	IT & Comm.	New	250	25
Endeavour Energy	Aurora	IT & Comm.	New	250	60
Fervalue USA	Bloomington	Food & Beverage	New	214	200
CJ Logistics Corp.	Elwood	Transport & Logistics	New	150	160
CJ Logistics Corp.	Des Plaines	Transport & Logistics	New	150	160

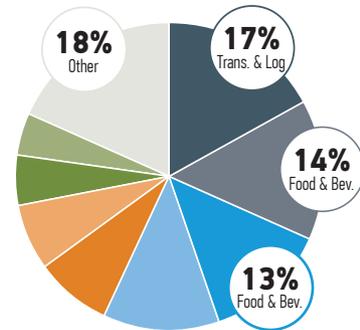
Top Projects by Type 2024 YTD



TYPE	PROJECTS
● Distribution Warehouse	293
● Manufacturing	215
● Office	177
● Headquarters	73
● Research and Development	25
● Data Center	17
● Call Center	1

Source: Conway Projects Database

Top Projects by Sector 2024 YTD



SECTOR	PROJECTS
● Transport & Logistics	106
● Machinery, Equip. & Const.	90
● Business & Financial Services	81
● Food & Beverage	76
● Consumer Products	50
● IT & Comm.	43
● Chemicals & Plastics	32
● Electronics	27
● Other	113



Illinois ranks No. 1 in the Midwest for Workforce Development.

500 **30+**

Fortune 500 headquarters, the highest number in the Midwest



5th

Largest GDP in the nation, 18th largest economy in the world



#2

In the nation for business expansions and relocations in 2022



6.4M

Deep talent pool: 6.4 million person workforce



35%

35% educated with a Bachelor's degree or higher



247

247 higher education institutions



Illinois has 1,900 major corporate HQs, 2,000 global companies and 1.2 million small businesses.

Source: Intersect Illinois



Chicago's O'Hare ranks as one of the most connected airports in the world



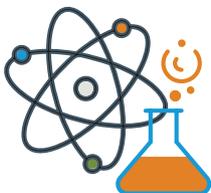
#1

In Sustainable Development in Midwest



84

84 international consulates, and 6 international trade offices (in Belgium, Canada, China, Israel, Japan and Mexico)



5 FEDERAL LABORATORIES

USDA Agricultural Research Service, DoD U.S., Transportation Command, DoD Construction Engineering Research Laboratory, Argonne National Laboratory, Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory

Source: Intersect Illinois



Ford Motor Company has been assembling vehicles in Chicago since 1914. Seen here is the Ford Wabash Avenue Plant in Chicago.

Image courtesy of Ford Motor Company

Building On Solid Momentum

DCEO Director Richards outlines how state government partners with private industry to create expansion opportunities.

by RON STARNER

Illinois is no stranger to stellar economic development performance. Over the past decade, Illinois has consistently ranked as a top three state in total corporate facility investment projects, while Chicago has claimed the No. 1 metro title from Site Selection a record 11 years in row.

Illinois maintains this lofty status by constantly fine-tuning the economic development programs at the state level. In the following interview, we hear from Kristin Richards, the director of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.

In the past year, Illinois has secured a number of new project investments and expansions that span several industries. What is the state hearing from corporate leadership as it relates to why Illinois stands out for supporting these large-scale investments?

KRISTIN RICHARDS: The state takes a united approach to working with companies in our business development pipeline.

Alongside our Team Illinois partners within the Governor's Office, Intersect Illinois, Innovate Illinois, and other local economic development organizations, we are providing comprehensive services to companies who are drawn to our world-class workforce, unmatched infrastructure, top-tier education and research institutions, and more. Companies frequently comment on how this Team Illinois unity, welcoming collaboration and nonstop commitment to project success, led them to a pro-Illinois decision.

Corporate leadership has also stressed that the diversity of the state's economy is a value-add in their own supply chains. Access to a diverse landscape of skilled manufacturers reduces costs and helps companies meet timelines. Team Illinois continues to sponsor industry days for different sectors, providing forums for companies to meet and matchmake, amplify their work with economic development professionals, and discuss industry trends with policymakers to make those important connections.

A ready, trained workforce is top of mind for all companies, and there is no question that Illinois' workforce assets can deliver. Illinois' workforce is the best in the Midwest for a reason: Illinois invests in its people from cradle to career. From 664 nationally ranked public high schools to the third largest community college system in the country, to 3 million Illinoisans having a bachelor's degree or higher, companies can attract the talent they need in Illinois.

Team Illinois can also leverage resources from the state's Rebuild Illinois program to invest in site readiness and public infrastructure. Illinois has long been regarded as a great state to do business with because of our networks of roads, rail, airports and barges that help companies move goods to market. Illinois is in the middle of everything, and companies know that their ability to access international ports, all Class I railroads, and fly direct to cities across the world is an asset that is unique to Illinois.

The state has looked at sectors with high projected growth and layered that with our internal assessment of our right to win to create targeted incentives in those areas of overlap. This has produced meaningful and competitive

incentives that resulted in billions of dollars and thousands of jobs being created across the state.

The state has been adamant in strengthening incentives to offer businesses and building on many targeted workforce programs. Are these moves often a result of listening to current community needs or anticipating future needs?

RICHARDS: Both. Thanks to the support of Governor Pritzker and the Illinois General Assembly, the level of support offered to companies is stronger than ever before. The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity looks outward and listens, and we are deeply committed to not only hearing from partners about how to make Illinois' offerings the best in the nation but thinking steps ahead of other states about the high-growth industries that will flourish in Illinois' business ecosystem.

HB5005, recently passed and signed by Governor Pritzker, included investments in tax credit programs for the film industry and research and development projects across the state, as well as changes to the Economic Development for a Growing Economy (EDGE) and Reimagining Energy and Vehicles (REV) programs to address emerging industries and large projects. The bill also eliminates red tape for the Blue-Collar Job Act (BCJA), expands the River Edge Redevelopment Zones to new downstate communities and codifies quantum computing as eligible for the Manufacturing Illinois Chips for Real Opportunity (MICRO).

A ready workforce and a continued partnership to build out training, the talent pipeline, and retention strategies is an essential part of Illinois' promise, and the State continues to invest in the Fast Track program, along with a range of other employee training and apprenticeship programs, to help prepare the workforce that companies need. Community colleges are an essential partner in this effort: Manufacturing Training Academies are capital grants to community colleges tied to major employers in next-generation industries and many of the Climate and Equitable Jobs



Kristin Richards,
Director, DCEO



Iroquois Landing is one of the prime available sites at the Port of Chicago.

Image courtesy of Illinois International Port District

Act (CEJA) Workforce Hubs will be located at community colleges.

The state's Apprenticeship Tax Credit provides \$5 million annually in credits to offset the costs of in-house apprenticeship programs. Illinois leads the nation in approved apprenticeship programs, and investing in creating apprenticeship opportunities for Illinoisans is a focus across workforce leadership. This also means that Illinois offers companies dedicated apprenticeship program experts, located across the state, to support program design and set-up.

At the state level, we know that site readiness is top of mind for all companies looking for a location. DCEO has invested in site readiness, with \$80 million committed to site development across the state over the last 18 months.

As the state welcomes new project investment, how vital has continued investment into programs like ETIP and JTED become around the state?

RICHARDS: Legacy DCEO programs like ETIP and JTED are renowned for their ability to gainfully impact employers and jobseekers. The Job Training and Economic Development Program (JTED) is more than 25 years old, for example, and the legislature has recognized its ongoing impact in training under-resourced individuals to find meaningful employment in sectors with workforce shortages.

The Employer Training Investment Program (ETIP) is another legacy program with a record of accomplishment of success. As

part of business deals, or through the state's partnership with Team Illinois members like the Illinois Manufacturers' Association, companies can receive a one-to-one match to cover the costs of training their people.

In addition, the Fast Track program — which is a newer program in our portfolio — provides nimble support to help companies in their recruitment, training and retention, typically in partnership with workforce or education providers. Fast Track funds the development of a specific plan to support companies, along with state-funded staffing to implement that plan.

Covering every aspect of what the state's workforce might need to secure quality employment is no simple task. How will growing workforce programs like Home Illinois Workforce Pilot Program aid the state in reaching more of its underserved populations?

RICHARDS: It is tough to find a job when one's living situation is tenuous. The Home Illinois Workforce Pilot Program is an example of DCEO's continued efforts to support Illinois families who need it most. This funding will increase job opportunities, provide a pathway to sustainable employment, and ensure individuals who are underemployed, unemployed and underrepresented have the support and resources they need to obtain permanent housing. This is one bright example of many programs created to help Illinois' most vulnerable residents by providing them with access to the tools and resources needed to become career ready and contribute to Illinois' growing economy, while also providing companies with access to trained talent.

DCEO continues to diligently work to implement CEJA workforce and training programs that support jobs in the clean energy industry and growth among clean energy businesses. CEJA programs including the Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship and the Clean Jobs Workforce Network focus on supporting Illinoisans in communities most impacted by economic barriers and environmental change.

Workforce development programs implemented through CEJA and JTED come with dedicated barrier reduction and supportive services funding. These funds ensure that trainees with financial constraints have the resources they need to see the training program

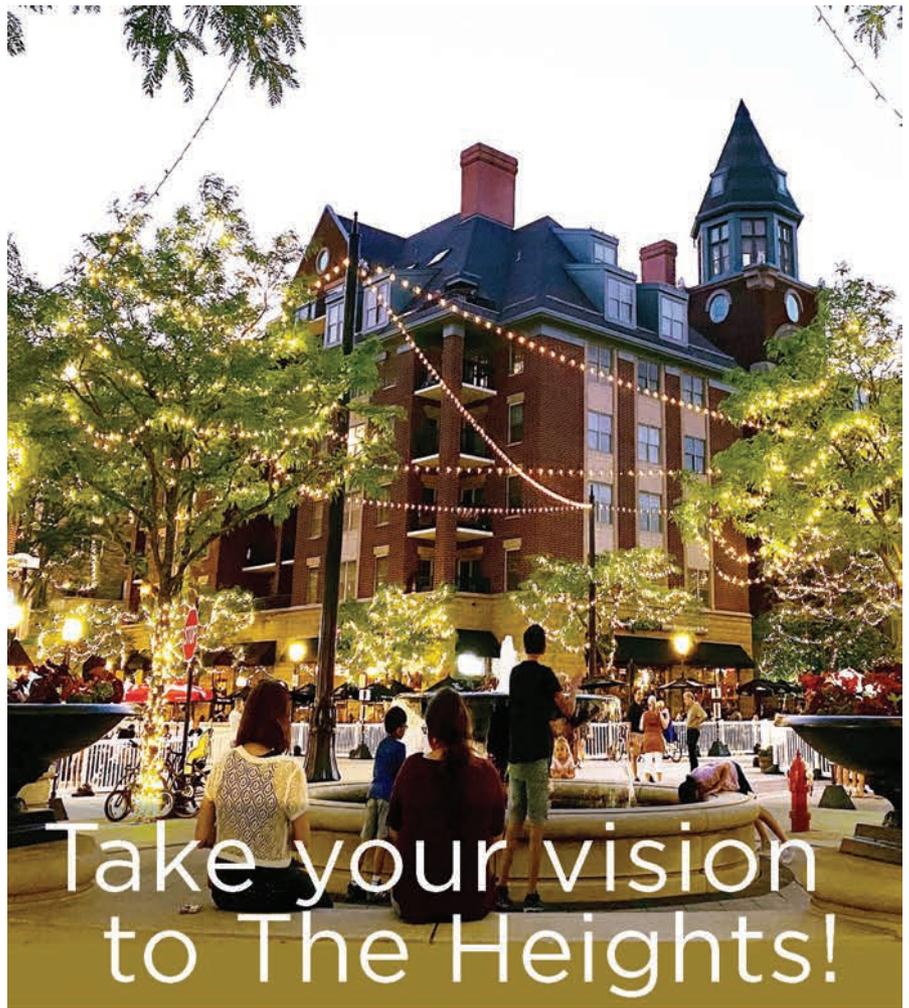
through to completion, including financial support for child care, transportation, counseling and more.

Driving innovation has become a key focus for the state and its businesses alike, from Tech Hub designation to incubators like mHub. How would you assess the future of collaboration across Illinois in comparison to a decade ago?

RICHARDS: Recently, the state's Research and Development Tax Credit was extended, and legislation was enacted to expand the popular, first in class REV, EDGE and MICRO incentive programs to attract emerging industries and support pre-revenue companies. DCEO does this all in lockstep with Team Illinois partners. This is a collaborative effort to ensure State resources are aligned with what innovators need to succeed.

To maximize the potential benefits Illinois can receive from new federal opportunities supporting innovation in IIJA, IRA, and CHIPS, Governor Pritzker created Innovate Illinois in partnership with economic development organizations and research universities. Innovate Illinois gathers stakeholders to communicate to federal grant makers, disseminates information about federal opportunities, promotes efforts by Illinois applicants, and provides support to coalitions in Illinois applying for opportunities. The state often further supports applications for federal funding through its competitive Federal Grant Support Program, which covers a portion of the required cost-share for federal grants.

In 2024, the state started a new Advantage Illinois Loan Guarantee Program to increase the capital options available to small businesses, as well as the Illinois Innovation Venture Fund (INVENT), a \$114 million direct equity capital program. 🍷



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WELCOME TO THE CENTER OF EVERYTHING

Development highlights
from Illinois' 10 regions.

by LINDSAY LOPP

From the tech-driven east to the fertile farmlands of the west, each of Illinois' 10 regions contribute unique strengths to the state's robust economy, fueling a dynamic synergy that attracts global investment. In 2023, this teamwork secured an impressive 552 corporate projects, propelling Illinois to the No. 2 spot in Site Selection magazine's prestigious Governor's Cup. The data show that this success isn't limited to one area alone: Communities across Illinois are ripe with the infrastructure, workforce and development tools expanding businesses are searching for.



Northeast

When most people think of Illinois, more often than not, the bright lights of the Chicago skyline come to mind. Brimming with over 7 million people, nearly 100,000 licensed businesses and numerous Fortune 500 headquarters, including Boeing, Kraft Heinz, United Airlines and JLL, the Windy City is an epicenter of the American economy. Known as the third-largest city in the country, the Chicago area is bustling with businesses and with numerous museums, theaters and restaurants, offering a lively blend of industry and quality of life.

This atmosphere stretches beyond

the city limits, influencing life throughout Northeastern Illinois. Naperville, Aurora, Joliet and Elgin are among the various communities with thriving economies that attract attention from investors.

Over the last few years, the city of Aurora has announced several data center projects from Google Cloud and CyrusOne. Edged Energy, a subsidiary of Endeavour, broke ground on a new state-of-the-art data center campus in May 2023.

Unlike traditional data centers which put significant pressure on the power grid and consume nearly 136 billion gallons of water each year in the U.S. alone, Edged Chicago-Aurora will feature waterless cooling technology designed to handle high-density loads (up to 50 kW/rack in air-cooled configurations and greater densities with liquid cooling

plug-in components) yet consumes no water. This methodology is expected to strengthen the local grid while remaining carbon neutral.

This project will be Edged Energy's first data center development in Illinois and is expected to consist of three buildings across 65 acres. The first will be completed in June 2024 and once the entire campus is completed will boast 100 MW of capacity.

The initial press release states that ComEd, the electrical company serving northern Illinois, is providing the infrastructure needed to power the new data center campus from its nearby regional substation. Additionally, Seefried and Edged Energy will be adding a new substation onsite to support future phases of the development.

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Illinois State University, Normal

Photo courtesy of Illinois Office of Tourism



North Central

With a workforce of over 300,000 and various institutions of higher learning, including Illinois State University, Bradley University and the University of Illinois Medical School, North Central Illinois fuels employee pipelines for an array of industries.

Due to this resource, alongside the region's strong logistic capabilities and extensive background in manufacturing, many notable brands boast operations in communities such as Morton, Peoria, Bloomington and Normal. From Caterpillar and Rivian to Ferrero and Nestle, household names have established facilities and continued to expand in the area.

For the last 28 years, Peoria has served as the home base for one of the world's fastest growing high-

end eyewear companies, Maui Jim. Founded in Hawaii, the company made the move to Illinois in 1996 after acquiring its former Peoria-based mainland distributor and has since stayed firmly planted in the city. So much so that when the company decided to expand its operations in fall 2023, it selected a site as close to home as one can get.

On 80 acres across the street from its headquarters, Maui Jim is investing \$80 million into a new 150,000-sq.-ft. building. The company plans for \$50 million to go toward creating labs, manufacturing, distribution, logistics and office space, \$20 million for fixtures and the remaining \$10 million will be used for site improvements, land acquisitions and roadway work.

This announcement comes only a year after Maui Jim was acquired by Kering Eyewear, showcasing a

continued commitment to North Central Illinois.

"Being a company that was created here and really took off, I think that we're very proud to see that we have the hundreds of Maui Jim employees here in Peoria that are working, and we're very excited that Kering Eyewear is going to have a footprint here as well, and that hopefully we'll see that number continues to grow," said Peoria City Manager Patrick Urich.

In support of this project, the Peoria City Council unanimously approved a redevelopment agreement with Maui Jim in which the city will reimburse 85% of the company's property taxes related to improvements. The remaining 15% of those reimbursements will go to the Dunlap School District.



Central

Located smack dab in the center of the state, Central Illinois is a melting pot for many of the industries that contribute to Illinois' diverse economy. From manufacturing, food processing and mining to business services, medical devices and health care, the 12 counties within this region serve a broad range of businesses, varying in size and specialty.

And as America pivots toward a greener future, Illinois is beginning to usher in new industries to meet evolving needs. Therefore, it's no surprise that these emerging sectors are anchoring new facilities in Central Illinois.

Broadwing Energy LLC, a subsidiary of Warwick Carbon

Solutions, is developing a first-of-its-kind power and steam facility in Decatur. Fueled by a \$1 billion investment, this new-age concept is expected to capture over 90% of CO₂ emissions with a combination of CO₂ removal technology.

The plans for this project also call for Warwick to build and operate a natural gas power plant that will provide both electricity and steam to agribusiness leader Archer Daniels Midland's (ADM) Decatur processing operations, using removal technology to capture CO₂ emissions, which will then be safely and permanently stored underground using ADM's Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) capabilities. The goal is to capture over 90% of CO₂ emissions and potentially sequester more than 2 million tons of CO₂ annually.

With construction expected to

begin in 2025, Warwick plans to hire around 1,000 construction employees as well as 24 permanent positions once the facility is completed in 2028.

"Broadwing Energy demonstrates Decatur's position as a global leader in technology and innovation, and industrial growth is not possible without the necessary utility infrastructure to support it," said Nicole Bateman, President of the Economic Development Corporation of Decatur and Macon County. "Broadwing impacts our community directly through the construction of the new facility and immediate job creation, which reinforces our collective efforts to train the next generation of both construction and tech workers. This power plant is an investment in the growth potential of our entire region."



Illinois Research Park interns at the 2024 Research Park Career Fair

Photo courtesy of University of Illinois Research Park



East Central

Last September, Incobrasa Industries, a leader in soybean processing, commenced construction on the expansion of its manufacturing facility in Gilman. Backed by an investment of \$250 million, Incobrasa plans to build a new 170,000-sq.-ft. soybean crushing facility, enabling the company to make greater use of the vast supply of soybeans that is available in Illinois, which is the largest soybean producer in the United States.

As part of the expansion, the company received an Economic Development for a Growing

Economy (EDGE) tax credit and plans to create 40 full-time jobs while retaining 200 jobs in the state.

In addition to the new facility, Incobrasa is constructing a 50-acre solar array, which will have the capacity to generate 5 megawatts of energy to help fuel the plant and feed the grid.

While many communities in East Central Illinois are agricultural powerhouses, the region is also an engine for groundbreaking discoveries. The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, located in the heart of this region, plays a crucial role in this regard.

Known as one of the top research institutions in the country, UIUC is a hub for the development of next-generation technologies.

With leading Engineering, Computer Science, Agriculture and Environmental Sciences and Biomedical programs, UIUC attracts exceptional students as well as innovative companies.

At the Research Park at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, a leading hub for corporate research and startup development, technology-based businesses have the opportunity to collaborate with faculty and students as well as utilize university labs, equipment and services. More than 120 companies, including over 70 homegrown startups, are currently located at the Research Park, employing over 2,100 employees and 800 student interns.



We're At The Center Of It All

Spanning six communities and 1.6 million consumers, the Mid-Illinois Collaborative has an aggressive growth strategy to capitalize on key Innovation in **Sustainability, Manufacturing, Agriculture & Bioprocessing, Research & Development, and Transportation.** We are primed for development and committed to fast-tracking business growth.

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Rockford, Illinois

Photo: Getty Images / DenisTangney Jr



Northern Stateline

The Northern Stateline is abundant in engineering talent, boasting over 56,000 engineers within a 50-mile radius of the Rockford metropolitan area alone. According to the Rockford Area Economic Development Council, engineering positions account for 1.7% of the metro's total employment — 31% higher than the national average.

This fact is greatly fueled by the region's ever-growing aerospace cluster. Over 250 companies and 11 tier-one suppliers affiliated with this industry are located within a 90-mile radius of the metro, creating the No. 6 largest concentration of aerospace employment in the nation.

Collins Aerospace recently expanded its Rockford facility to include a new \$50 million advanced power electric systems lab, dubbed "The Grid." Described as an "engineers' playground," the remodeled 25,000-sq.-

ft. space will develop and produce cutting-edge motors, controllers, generators and distribution systems for the next generation of electric-powered commercial and military aircraft. The Grid has an initial test capability of 8 megawatts and is expected to go up to 15 megawatts. Collins expects this facility to play a major role in the aviation industry's target of achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

To additionally support the company's clean energy goal, Collins broke ground in April on a 6.5-acre solar farm at its Rockford operations, which will be owned and operated by ENGIE North America (ENGIE) as part of a 15-year power purchase agreement.

This addition will help supply roughly 10% of the Rockford Plant 6 facility's electricity needs yearly, reducing the plant's greenhouse gas emissions by more than 1,500 metric tons of carbon dioxide annually, the equivalent of taking 357 gasoline-powered cars off the road for one year.



Once considered the American heartland's hidden gem, the Quad Cities are swiftly gaining attention as a desirable place to do business. Comprising Rock Island, Moline, and East Moline in Illinois and Davenport and Bettendorf in Iowa, the region fosters a collaborative environment, working together to accelerate development.

In 2023, the Davenport-Moline-Rock Island metro secured 27 corporate expansion projects, ranking No.5 in Site Selection magazine's Top Mississippi Corridor Metros by total projects. According to the Quad Cities Chamber, last year's investments totaled more than \$393 million and created 457 new jobs within many of the region's five target industries: advanced metals & materials manufacturing, agricultural innovation, logistics, corporate operations & support services and defense.

One of the metro's most recent wins includes the \$22 million expansion of Parr Instrument Company's operations in Moline. Anchored in the city since 1911, the company will more than double its existing facility. The project is expected to provide annual economic impact of over \$80.3 million.

With the added space, Parr will be able to increase capacity for its laboratory research equipment, which includes calorimeters, pressure vessels and chemical reactors, as well as retain the location's 94 employees.

"Parr is a great example of manufacturing in the Quad Cities. They make very unique products and have a very specialized workforce," said Chris Caves, Vice President of Business and Economic Growth at the Quad Cities Chamber in April. "They're expanding their markets and their product offerings right here in Moline. It's a really encouraging investment in our region. It takes many partners to bring a project of this size and scope to reality."



Southeast

Eastern Illinois University (EIU), located in Charleston, is a key educational institution in the region, significantly contributing to the local economy and industry. The university's economic output in 2024 totaled over \$371 million, more than 4,500 jobs and \$53.8 million in public revenue, according to EIU's 2024 Economic Impact Study.

While agriculture and manufacturing remain cornerstones of the region's economy, EIU offers a range of programs — including Business Analytics, Information Technology, Cybersecurity, and Digital Media Technology — designed to meet the growing need for skilled professionals in up-and-coming fields. And through the Lumpkin College of Business and Technology, EIU has established the Industry Partners Program (IPP), which connects companies seeking new talent for internships or full-time positions with trained students and graduates.

Through grant support from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic

Opportunity (DCEO) and Small Business Development Lead Center, EIU launched its first Illinois Small Business Development Center (SBDC) last April. Located in Mattoon, the university has partnered with Elevate Coles County Innovation Center (CCIC) on this initiative to broaden access to professional business advising, training, and state and federal resources for small businesses and entrepreneurs in the region.

In addition to this location, EIU plans to open a second SBDC in Effingham this summer. Together, both EIU SBDC centers will serve eight counties: Clark, Coles, Cumberland, Douglas, Edgar, Effingham, Moultrie and Shelby.

"The Illinois SBDC at Eastern Illinois University is here to cheer on local entrepreneurs, support economic growth, and celebrate the spirit of innovation in our community," said Amy Patrick, director of EIU's SBDC. "Whether you need help running a business, coming up with marketing ideas, figuring out finances or planning for the future, the SBDC at EIU will have your back."

Eastern Illinois University's campus in Charleston

Photo courtesy of Eastern Illinois University



Southern Illinois University Carbondale aviation students.

Photo courtesy of Southern Illinois University Carbondale



Southern

Home to four of the state's 13 Port Districts, three Class I railroads and three interstate highways, Southern Illinois' robust infrastructure supports the distribution and manufacturing of numerous products across the country. Situated between two of the nation's mightiest rivers, the Mississippi and Ohio, this region offers an expansive logistics network that many companies are eager to capitalize on.

In June 2023, Manner Polymers announced the establishment of a new manufacturing facility in Mount Vernon. Prominent brands like Pepsi, Walgreens and Continental Tire boast operations near the city, contributing to the area's strong

manufacturing reputation.

Bolstered by a Reimagining Energy and Vehicles in Illinois (REV Illinois) incentive package, Manner Polymers plans to invest \$54 million into this project. Expected to span 80,000 sq. ft., this new facility will produce an assortment of PVC compounds, including automotive PVC compounds for use in electric vehicles (EVs) and components for solar panels at this location. A 15-acre on-site solar field will also power the facility.

"Not only will we incorporate the most advanced manufacturing control systems available, but we will also produce substantially all of the electricity that we use," said Raj Bhargava, CEO of Manner Polymers. "Our objective is to build the lowest cost, highest quality,

most environmentally sustainable flexible PVC compounding plant in the world."

Once Manner Polymers completes the project in the fall of 2025, it will be able to increase its production capacity by 100 million pounds, strengthening the domestic supply chain for various high-demand industries.

The company is also expected to create over 60 new jobs, drawing on Southern Illinois' skilled talent pool to fill these positions. With a strong history in manufacturing and one of the top automotive programs in the country located at Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIU), the region offers workers at the various skill levels necessary to support the growth of electric vehicle manufacturers and their suppliers.

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- **50,000+ Veterans in our Workforce**
- **Home to WWT Raceway**
- **Just a short drive to St. Louis**





Southwest

In Madison County, workforce training isn't limited to post-secondary programs. At the

Collinsville Area Vocational Center (CAVC), future workers are gaining valuable skills during their junior and senior years of high school.

With an outreach that encompasses multiple districts, including Bethalto, East Alton,

Wood River, Roxana, Edwardsville, Collinsville, Triad, Highland, Lebanon, Mascoutah and Duplo, the CAVC is providing a pipeline of skilled workers for various industries' throughout the county, which is considered a part of the Metro East region of Greater St. Louis.

While CAVC currently boasts 16 pathways, including electronics, precision machining, cybersecurity, CNA, building trade and auto body, the training center is embarking on a new expansion to not only increase its program offerings but its capacity for students, as well.

Backed by a \$25 million appropriation from the State of Illinois, CAVC is constructing a new state-of-the-art facility dedicated to the industrial arts. With this additional space, CAVC expects to increase its offerings to over 22 programs, with enough room to train more than 800 students.

With an existing workforce over 273,000, communities across Southwest Illinois provide trained workers for some of the largest companies in the country. Amazon, P&G, Boeing, FedEx, Walgreens, Amsted Rail, U.S Steel and Hershey are some of the region's largest employers.

Located within 500 miles of one-third of the nation's population, Southwest Illinois' strategic location and robust multimodal connectivity via rail, road, river and air continue to attract investment in the area.

Most recently, Wieland Rolled Products North America revealed that it was investing \$500 million to modernize its facility in East Alton, one of six locations within the state.

Great River Trail, Rock Island

Photo courtesy of Illinois Office of Tourism



Railway in Galesburg

Photo: Getty Images /Leadinglights



West Central

Capitalizing on its natural resources is what West Central Illinois does best. Blessed with sprawling farmlands and fertile soil, this section of the state innately draws agribusiness-related companies to the region. Dot Foods, Archer Daniels Midland and Smithfield Foods are among the various industry giants anchored in the area.

Headquartered in Galesburg, Western Smokehouse Partners LLC, a family-owned and operated company, has steadily been making a name for itself in the meat snacks sector. Since 2020, the company has quickly expanded

its footprint inside and outside of Illinois, acquiring operations in Galesburg and Springfield, Illinois; Burlington, Iowa; and Shelley, Idaho. As of May 2024, Western Smokehouse Partners runs five facilities, boasting more than 500,000 sq. ft. of manufacturing space and nearly 900 employees.

A sixth location is soon to be added to the roster. In May, the company announced that it will be growing its footprint in Galesburg with a third facility. Because of competitive offers from other locations in the company, Western Smokehouse is seeking an incentive of \$300,000 from the city of Galesburg. In return, Western Smokehouse says it would agree to keep its headquarters in the city for a 10-year period as well as retain or create 32 local jobs, an estimated

economic impact of over \$2 million.

In addition to the region's thriving agriculture and food processing scene, this corner of the state benefits from being located along the Mississippi and Illinois rivers. Due to this asset, and the logistics and economic capabilities it enables, seven communities in West Central and Northwest Illinois have recently been designated River Edge Redevelopment Zones.

As of June 2024, Quincy, Moline, East Moline, Ottawa, LaSalle, Peru and Rock Island are able to leverage new incentives to attract investments and create jobs. Developers undertaking historic renovation projects in these areas could be eligible for income tax credits culminating in 45% of their costs as well as a slew of other incentives. 🍷

TESTIMONIALS FROM BUSINESS LEADERS

WHAT BUSINESS LEADERS ARE SAYING ABOUT ILLINOIS



We chose Decatur for our first US operation **because of its location in the heart of the Midwest** corn belt and its proximity to our partner ADM and other agribusiness leaders. ”

— CLÉMENT RAY, *Chief executive officer of Innovafeed*

Bringing Ferrero's decades of experience making high-quality, world-class chocolate to Illinois — the heart of America's food and confections industry — **is going to help us achieve our goal of being the sweets and treats leader in the market.** ”

— ALANNA COTTON, *President and Chief business officer, Ferrero North America*

Chicago's legacy as a manufacturing titan also provides infrastructure to which few cities can hold a candle. Situated at a rail hub and on the Great Lakes watershed, it is an intermodal transport phenomenon. Chicago O'Hare airport is the most connected international airport of any in the world, bar none, with 249 direct flight destinations. Public transportation in the city is cheap, effective, and on time. **Electricity is reliable, affordable, and today over 50% carbon-free thanks to the nation's largest fleet of nuclear power plants.** And its 1.1 billion square feet of industrial real estate averages \$7.90 per square foot — about 60% less than Silicon Valley. ”

— SPENCER GORE, *CEO, Bedrock Materials*

The state is far more than just an attractive market for solar generation—for Nexamp, **it's a state which shares our vision of a cleaner, more equitable energy future powered by a diverse, equitable, and skilled workforce.** As we sought a location for a second headquarters, Illinois was the natural choice because of our mutual interest in seeing clean energy work for - and do right by - everyone. ”

— ZAID ASHAI, *CEO, Nexamp*

The support from the state will allow us to quickly bring our midsize SUV, R2, to market and provide even greater consumer choice for EVs. Governor Pritzker has always been a strong advocate for providing economic opportunities for Illinois residents and business owners alike. **We look forward to continuing our close partnership and building upon the success we have enjoyed.** ”

— RJ SCARINGE, *Founder and CEO, Rivian*



Try to Keep Up:

Improvements Keep Illinois Hubs Rolling

by ADAM BRUNS

Five years after the \$45 billion Rebuild Illinois program was passed by the Illinois Legislature, the pace of projects is nearly as fast as the speed with which vehicles in 2023 traveled more than 103 billion miles in the state.

On highways alone in 2023, Rebuild Illinois made \$13.6 billion in improvements statewide on 5,659 miles, 578 bridges and 865 additional safety projects. By the end of June 2024 the highways total had reached \$16 billion and 6,541 miles.

“Here in Illinois, we’re on a mission to modernize our infrastructure and make transportation more reliable for commuters, families, and businesses,” said Governor JB Pritzker in December. The previous July, he and the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) released the largest multi-year program to repair and modernize infrastructure in state history: \$41 billion over six years.

The old and new Chain of Rocks Bridge.
Photo courtesy of Adobe Stock/
MarekPhotoDesign.com

“Covering fiscal years 2024-2029, the multi-year program is the first time in more than a decade IDOT released a comprehensive approach to invest in all modes of transportation,” an IDOT release explained, “roads and bridges, aviation, transit, freight and passenger rail, waterways, as well as bike and pedestrian accommodations.”

More than half of those 103 billion miles traveled last year ticked by in the Chicagoland region. But a healthy percentage also comes from southern Illinois, where officials gathered recently in Marion to dedicate the patriotic \$7.3 million Westminster Drive bridge over I-57. The bridge includes a 10-foot-wide pedestrian and bicycle path that connects the Crab Orchard Greenway, a 20-mile regional multi-use trail that not only gets people moving but connects them to Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge and John A. Logan College.

Quality of life for long-distance truckers and drivers is important too, which is why the \$531.6 million investment by the Illinois and Missouri DOTs to build a new I-270 Chain of Rocks Bridge over the Mississippi River is also crucial.

“This isn’t just an investment for the Metro East region — it’s an investment for our entire nation,” Pritzker said last year. “This major freight corridor connects our ports and railways — essential to maintaining a steady supply chain for Illinoisans, Missourians and all Americans alike.”

The I-270 loop connects many of the region’s warehouses and distribution parks, ports, airports, and rail yards on both sides of the Mississippi River. “Nearly 70% of the region’s industrial tenants occupying large warehouse space in excess of 500,000 square



“You can ship directly to the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean from Chicago. This is the only port that can do both.”

— Erik Varela, *Executive Director, Illinois International Port Authority*

feet are within 10 minutes of the Interstate,” the State said. A report from bistate organization St. Louis Regional Freightway released in May 2024 stated the St. Louis region had nearly 6 million sq. ft. of distribution space ready to be occupied at one of the lowest average asking rents in the entire Midwest: \$5.67 per sq. ft. “Large blocks of space are built and available,” the report found, “especially in the Metro East (Southwestern Illinois), which offer immediate opportunities for absorption and growth.”

“The report emphasizes the significance of industrial sites and buildings in the freight and logistics supply chain and highlights the robust market fundamentals in the St. Louis region, along with its workforce strengths,” said Mary Lamie, executive vice president of multimodal enterprises for Bi-State Development and head of the St. Louis Regional Freightway.

That’s reason enough to update a bridge originally built 58 years ago when traffic was less than half what it is today, as the bridge accommodates 51,000 vehicles a day, 20% of them trucks. Construction is expected to be complete in 2026.

The bistate metro St. Louis region includes all six Class

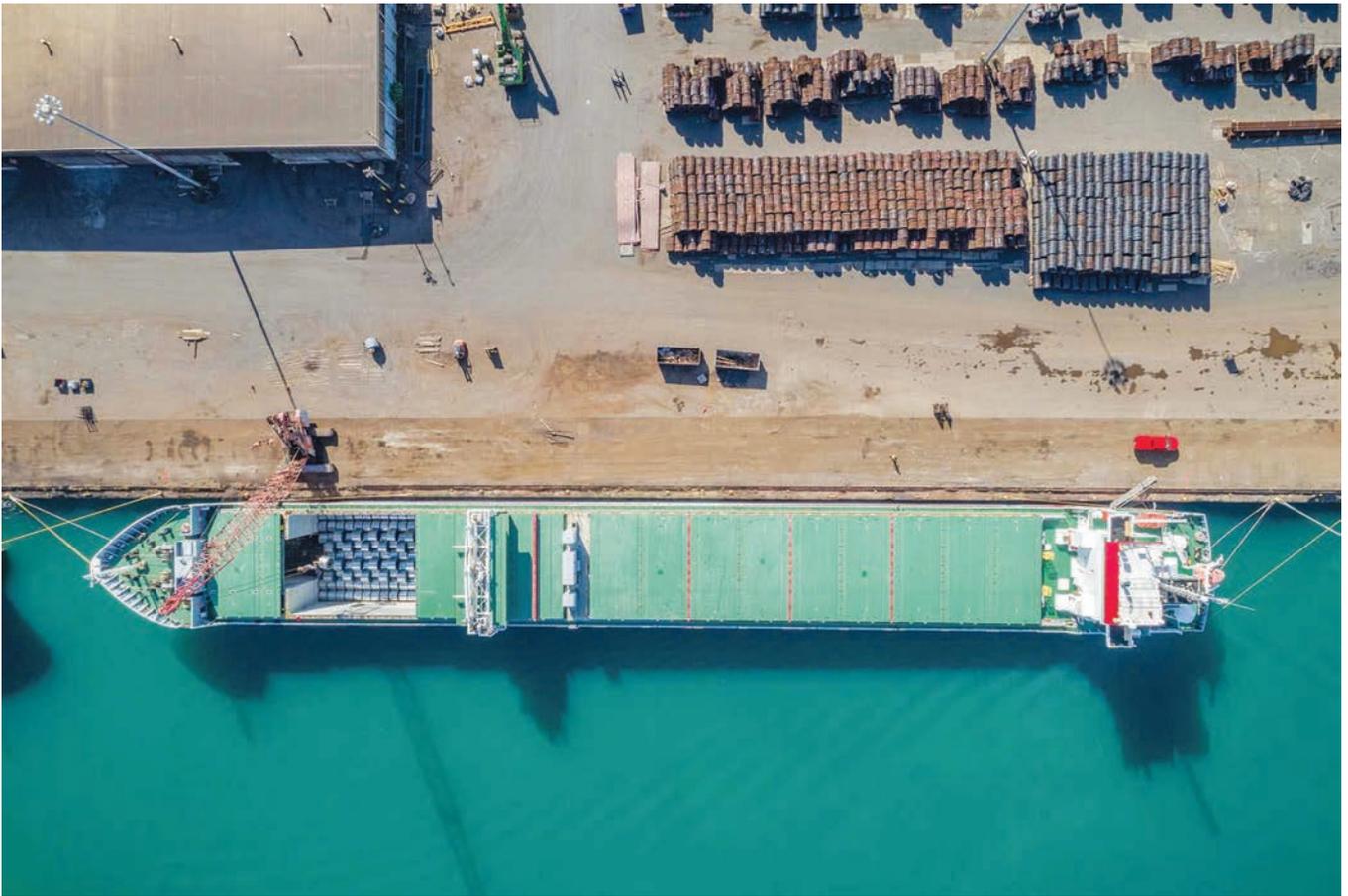
I railroads, five airports with capacity, four interstates and the “Ag Coast of America,” a 15-mile stretch of the Mississippi River around Cahokia, Illinois, that includes 16 barge transfer facilities. The St. Louis Regional Freightway’s 2025 Priority Projects List includes 27 projects totaling \$8 billion. Other improvements to the region include light rail service to MidAmerica St. Louis Airport in Mascoutah, Illinois, a key asset for a growing aerospace and aviation sector.

Chicago’s International Port

The Illinois International Port Authority oversees nearly 2,000 acres of industrial and recreational land of Illinois International Port District, a bulk and breakbulk port created in the 1950s in the Lake Calumet area. Think steel, pig iron, cement and timber, as well as sugar, grain, lentils and rice.

In a recent conversation with Site Selection magazine’s Ron Starner, Erik Varela, executive director of the Illinois International Port Authority, said his district moves a lot of what gets distributed throughout the Great Lakes ports system and the nation’s inland river ports.

“You can ship directly to the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean from Chicago,” he said. “This is the only port that can do both,” with facilities that connect via Lake Michigan to the St. Lawrence



Maritime business at the Illinois International Port District in Chicago makes a \$476 million impact.

Photo courtesy of IIPA

Seaway and through inland rivers to the Mississippi River. The port, which welcomes vessels from all over the world, accounts for 3,250 direct and indirect jobs and around \$51 million in local and state tax revenue and \$57 million in federal tax revenue, he said.

All told, maritime business at the port makes a \$476 million economic impact. It includes tenants such as St. Mary Cement (a subsidiary of a Colombian company), Kinder Morgan and North American Stevedore Company, the district's largest tenant. Recent investments have come from Mount Carmel Stabilization, Maloney Lumber and Tootsie Roll Sweet Mix. Some tenants take advantage of the IIPD being in federal Foreign-Trade Zone No. 22. Most take advantage

of access to all six Class I railroads and to multiple major interstate highways at the district's doorstep.

Expansion plans by the IIPD itself include a lighting upgrade at Calumet River Terminal; using federal funds, state rail funds and city TIF dollars to upgrade the Calumet warehouse roads, electrical and sewer infrastructure; and investing \$55 million to reconstruct the 3,000-ft., 113-year-old Iroquois Landing dock wall.

Varela hopes to see multiple parcels of empty land at IIPD developed in the near future.

"Most other ports along the Great Lakes do not have available land like this," he said. And while the port district remains focused on bulk commodities, "bringing in international containers is a future opportunity for us." 🍌

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WOOD DALE
ILLINOIS





Crunching the Numbers

How Illinois' data center boom became a race for power.

by **RON STARNER**

Illinois ranks as a global top five data center market that gains market share each year. The numbers behind the surge reveal who's investing in Illinois and where the dollars go.

A recent Newmark U.S. Data Center Market Overview shows that "Chicago remains an attractive market for hyperscalers like Microsoft and Meta, as well as other firms, due to its connectivity at the center of the country, power infrastructure and large talent pool. Major industries driving demand include technology, finance and health care. Overall, data center

inventory has expanded 35% from 2019 measures, yet availability remains under 2%."

Numbers like that drive growth. With a total market size of approximately 1GW and an availability rate of just 1.6%, Chicagoland is getting looks from more national developers and end-users. Newmark projects supply growth of 300 MW by 2027.

Another factor driving growth is cost, and on that measure, Chicago remains a bargain. CBRE reports that Chicago still has the lowest rental rates of all major global markets at US\$155 to \$165 per month for a 250-to-500-kW requirement.

Costs and supply were big factors behind Dallas-based Compass Datacenters' recent purchase of Sears' 2.4 million-sq.-ft. headquarters campus. Compass plans to raze the campus to make room for data centers.

On June 13, ComEd teamed up with Compass to kick off the project at the old Sears site in Hoffman Estates. Upon completion, the project will be one of the largest-ever data center campuses in Illinois. The \$10 billion investment represents

Rendering of CloudHQ's Mount Prospect Technology Campus.

Courtesy of CloudHQ

one of the largest corporate facility projects in state history.

“We’re taking a careful and methodical approach to demolition, setting the stage for doing what we do best — building sustainably and building to last,” said Compass CEO Chris Crosby. “We appreciate the opportunity to help build Illinois’ digital infrastructure and serve the state for years to come.”

ComEd will deliver a new substation to the site by mid-2026 to power the 200-acre campus. Around 1,000 construction jobs will be created during the buildout.

Compass has company. On May 3, Atlanta-based T5 Data Centers announced it will build a 480-MW data center campus in Grayslake. The 160-acre site will be operational by 2027 and house multiple data center facilities about 40 miles north of Chicago.

“The new Grayslake campus represents a major investment by T5 to meet the growing demand for large-scale data center capacity to support cloud and artificial intelligence workloads,” said David Horowitz, senior vice president and head of leasing for T5. “The site’s location is perfectly positioned between major data center hubs of the northern Chicago suburbs and southeastern Wisconsin, which provides an ideal connection point. The Chicago land market continues to be one of the premier markets to build and operate data centers because of the attractive tax incentives, labor pool, established connectivity, and power availability.”

Where Chicago Ranks Globally

According to Intersect Illinois, Chicago is tied with Dallas as the third-largest data center hub in the U.S. with 4.8 million sq. ft. Another 2.2 million sq. ft. of construction is in the pipeline. Earlier this year, Cushman & Wakefield reported that Chicago is the fourth largest data

center market in the world.

Incentives help. Illinois passed a major data center incentive program bill in 2019. The legislation provides exemptions from state and local sales taxes on projects that invest at least \$250 million and create at least 20 new jobs over a five-year period. These projects may also be eligible for an additional tax credit equal to 20% of the wages paid to construction workers who build these facilities in certain qualifying zones.

After Gov. JB Pritzker signed this legislation, Illinois landed 15 data center projects investing more than \$4.6 billion into new

“It is a power-first strategy. I have never seen the magnitude of projects that we have now. We are seeing 600MW to 1.4GW projects; and the land requirements are larger too. It is an open arms race.”

— Ed Sitar, Senior Manager of Economic Development, ComEd

facilities in the state.

In fact, yet another one was announced March 26 when DPK Hillside proposed building a two-story, 245,000-sq.-ft. data center at 101 North Wolf Road in the Hillside area of Chicago. The 13-acre project will take two years to build and target hyperscale customers, DPK said.

Andy Cvengros, managing director of brokerage for JLL, says these projects are not an anomaly.

“CloudHQ is investing \$2.5 billion to build 1.5 million square feet at the old United Airlines HQ in Mount Prospect. Prime Data Centers signed a lease for 175 MW and is spending \$1 billion at Elk Grove Village. Stream Data Centers bought 52 homes and tore them down to build data centers. Hoffman Estates, Aurora, Elk Grove and Franklin are all growing as data center markets around Chicago,” he says. “The suburbs are going crazy right now. Downtown Chicago



Prime Data Centers' topping out ceremony in Elk Grove Village.

Photo courtesy of ComEd

sites are just too small. As demand increases, more movement will be seen out west. Elgin and others will get more looks.”

As Chicagoland becomes

“Everything is being considered. They are looking at power plants and drawing a circle around them. It is 100% a race.”

— Andy Cvengros, *Managing Director of Brokerage, JLL*

saturated, says Cvengros, developers will look to build in Joliet and other markets south of Chicago. “A substantial amount of power is already there,” he says. “People are looking at the area around Rivian in Normal. Everything is being considered. They are looking at power plants and drawing a circle around them. It is 100% a race. If you find the property and the available power, data centers require a load study. Those studies take six to eight months and cost \$200,000. Where the rubber meets the road is the end-user pushing the deal.”

‘It Is an Open Arms Race’

Ed Sitar, senior manager of economic development for ComEd,

the state’s largest electric utility, says, “It is a power-first strategy. I have never seen the magnitude of projects that we have now. We are seeing 600-MW to 1.4-GW projects; and the land requirements are larger too. It is an open arms race. Everybody wants to be the first to deploy their servers and be operational for AI hyperscale cloud computing.”

Sitar calls these investments “transformative” for Illinois. “They are wins at the local and state level,” he says. “They pay a lot of taxes, but they do not bring in a lot of people.”

The typical site search in Illinois today begins with a request to find 100 acres so that the buyer or tenant can build a multi-building campus, he adds. “In some instances, they are going vertical. Prime Data Centers is a three-story project. They just topped off their new facility a few weeks ago. They are doing three buildings. Each is three stories tall.”

Eric Whitfield, director of economic development for Ameren Illinois, says that “our increase in volume of data center inquiries has gone up double since last year. Several are in advanced stages and

are doing transmission studies, ranging from 500 MW to 1 GW. We are helping them evaluate a few sites in our territory. As sites in northern Illinois get gobbled up, we are seeing more inquiries and interest in southern Illinois.”

He adds that “a lot of data center companies come directly to us. They are looking for available sites with proximity to Chicago and St. Louis. We keep a portfolio of available sites on LOIS. Energy is at the top of their list. We keep a few sites in our back pocket for companies that will be heavy energy users.”

The state incentive program attracts interest, he adds. “The state has done a good job with the data center incentive,” says Whitfield. “We have been encouraged with what we have seen. Incentives are the cherry on top.” 🍒



Prime Data Centers is investing \$1 billion in Elk Grove Village.

Photo courtesy of ComEd



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Let's Make a DEAL

The Port of Chicago has multiple sites available and ready for industrial development. Images courtesy of Illinois International Port District

Illinois offers certified industrial sites ready for development.

by **RON STARNER**

Illinois has 14 megasites that are ready and available for development by large end-users, but that is only where the story begins in the Land of Lincoln.

While other states talk a good game about their megasites programs, Illinois puts teeth into the details. For example, Gov. JB Pritzker last year allocated \$40 million in Rebuild Illinois Capital Funds to strengthen the state's megasites program.

"The competitive grant opportunity is open to governments, private businesses or non-profits to support site development in order to attract large-scale industrial investments in underutilized areas and former industrial sites," according to the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.

This funding has so far enabled the assemblage and marketing of 14 megasites statewide. The inventory of available large sites ranges from a 137-acre site called Gratton Farm in Steward in Lee County to a 3,300-acre site known as the Marquis

Industrial Complex in Hennepin in Putnam County. Other large megasites include a 3,200-acre site in Kankakee County; a 3,184-acre site in Grundy County; and 3,000 acres in Livingston County.

When the governor announced this program last year, he noted that "major job creators are consistently looking for investment-ready sites they can get up and running in a short amount of time — and Illinois is home to some of the largest such sites in the country, all ripe for fresh development."

Grants from the Megasites Investment Program range from \$250,000 to \$5 million and are tied to total acreage, up to a maximum award of \$5,000 per acre. Eligible sites must contain at least 200 contiguous acres and applicants must own or have an agreement in place to acquire the property at the time of application. A dollar-for-dollar capital match is also required from applicants.

"Megasites are a major draw for companies looking to locate or expand in Illinois, and given our superior infrastructure and

workforce, there's boundless investment opportunities throughout the state," DCEO Director Kristin Richards said when the program was unveiled. "Megasites are akin to a turnkey house: move-in ready with zero hassle — which is exactly what fast-growing businesses are looking for."

Grant funds may be used for such expenses as site grading and drainage, rehabbing existing structures, remediation and cleanup, and land acquisition and related costs.

FutureGen Site Awaits the Future

DCEO and Intersect Illinois offer a database of available megasites, as well as smaller developable parcels. These are parcels that have been identified by Intersect Illinois as top sites based on eight characteristics: acreage, utilities, logistics, permitting and entitlement, workforce, ownership, local and state incentives, and environmental and topographic conditions.

One of those sites is a Canadian National Railway served certified site in Mattoon in Coles County, called the FutureGen Site. It comprises 420 contiguous surface acres and 1,200 contiguous subsurface acres owned by Coles Together. The site has been approved by the U.S. Department of Energy as suitable for storing up to 50 MMT of injected carbon dioxide for carbon capture and sequestration.

Dr. Ronda Sauget, president and CEO of Coles Together, calls it a game-changer for Coles County and east central Illinois.

"We believe that this site is going to be a preferred destination for carbon capture projects," she says. "The state has already paid for all environmental work. They also passed indemnification language. The local residents support it. We

“We have sites across the entire territory. We have identified a couple of prime sites in each region. They have a couple hundred acres each and are near substation infrastructure.”

— Eric Whitfield, *Economic Development Director, Ameren Illinois*

did a fantastic job educating the community. The total real estate package was the No. 1 reason we were selected above the other three finalist sites.”

A few hours to the north, the Illinois International Port District is marketing several build-ready sites of its own to industrial developers. These include IIP Shed 4; a 90-acre site at Butler Drive; and 1-million-BU grain silos (see photo, p. 50).

“We manage over 2,000 acres,” says Erik Varela, director of the

“Major job creators are consistently looking for investment-ready sites they can get up and running in a short amount of time.”

— JB Pritzker, *Governor of Illinois*





**Intersect Illinois
is marketing
AVAILABLE
PROPERTIES
through its
Vetted Sites
program.**

Source: Intersect Illinois

**Rural King Supply is expanding its footprint
in Coles County, Illinois.**

Image courtesy of Coles Together ED



Port of Chicago for IIPD. “We have three main land bodies: Iroquois Landing on Lake Michigan; the River Terminal that connects to the Mississippi River; and our terminal on the Little Lake Calumet River.”

Through these three landings, the Port of Chicago is the only Great Lakes port that connects cargo carriers to both the Atlantic Ocean (via the St. Lawrence Seaway System) and the Gulf of Mexico (via the Mississippi River).

“We handle 10 million tons of cargo annually,” Varela says.

**Downstate Sites
for Data Centers?**

Also available to developers are multiple sites being marketed by Ameren Illinois throughout the downstate region.

“We handle the bottom three-fourths of the state, from Interstate 80 south,” says Eric Whitfield,

director of economic development for Ameren Illinois. “We have available land sites with proximity to Chicago and St. Louis. All of our sites are available for viewing on LOIS. We also support the Vetted Sites program of Intersect Illinois.”

Whitfield notes that “we have sites across the entire territory. We have identified a couple of prime sites in each region. They have a couple hundred acres each and are near substation infrastructure.” These sites are ideally suited for data centers, he adds.

Clean energy companies are also candidates for these sites, he says.

“Illinois has a net zero goal by 2050. We will see more industry coming to Illinois to capitalize on that in the areas of hydrogen, clean fuel, carbon sequestration, and solar,” Whitfield says. “Ethanol and sustainable aviation fuels are opportunities here as well.” 🍌



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Composite photo-illustration created by Sean Scantland using Getty Images

by **MARK AREND**

More than 375,000 Illinoisans work at foreign-owned companies, 36% in the manufacturing sector, according to the Global Business Alliance (GBA), which tracks and advocates for foreign direct investment (FDI) nationally and at the state level. That number represents 7.4% of total employment in Illinois. Moreover, FDI employment grew 8% from 2016 to 2021, according to GBA, whereas overall private-sector employment fell 3% during that time.

Intersect Illinois, a public-private partnership that helps companies locate in or expand in Illinois,

notes that the top five international companies in Illinois alone employ roughly 50,000 people. These include Compass Group based in the U.K., Otto Krahn Group (Germany), Canadian National Railway (Canada), Swiss Steel Group (Switzerland) and Schneider Electric (France). Companies based in these countries and Japan employ the most workers stemming from FDI in Illinois.

Other than being home to Chicago, the third largest U.S. city by population and the top Midwest commercial hub, why do so many foreign companies invest in Illinois?

 **The number of jobs created by global investment in Illinois has been growing for years, **beating the national average in the concentration of these jobs.** Clearly, global investment is a critical component of Illinois' economy.”**

— Jonathan Samford, *Executive Vice President, Global Business Alliance*

Checking All the Boxes

“International companies make the decision to invest in states like Illinois for access to world-class universities, a talented workforce, an unrivaled consumer market and quality infrastructure,” says GBA Executive Vice President Jonathan Samford.

More than 190 higher education institutions are in Illinois that combined graduate more than 825,000 annually. That’s a deep labor pool for foreign-owned and domestic companies to draw from.

And Illinois is well situated and equipped for companies bringing materials in and shipping finished products out. All of the Class I railroads operate in Illinois, and the state is home to eight foreign trade zones. Chicago O’Hare International Airport has nonstop flights to more than 200 destinations worldwide, which makes visiting the parent company overseas a cinch. O’Hare and Chicago/Rockford International Airport are among the largest U.S. cargo airports. These are key assets for manufacturers and other employers.

“International companies investing in Illinois help bolster America’s manufacturing sector,” says GBA’s Samford. “Of the 376,700 workers employed by these international companies in Illinois, nearly 40% have advanced manufacturing jobs. The great thing about these investments is that they aren’t just for two or three years; they are decades-long commitments. Zurich Insurance, for example, has operated in the U.S. for over a century.

“The number of jobs created by global

investment in Illinois has been growing for years, beating the national average in the concentration of these jobs,” adds Samford. “Clearly, global investment is a critical component of Illinois’ economy.”

Record Export Sales in '23

In June, Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity announced record export sales of more than \$78 billion in 2023. Illinois is the fifth-largest exporting state in the U.S. and the top state for exports in the Midwest.

Canada is by far the top destination for Illinois exports, with \$20.5 billion worth heading north of the border in 2023. Mexico is the second-largest export market at nearly \$13 billion, followed by Germany (\$4.5 billion), China (\$4.41 billion) and Australia (\$4.40 billion). Top exports to Canada are machinery, chemicals and transportation equipment.

Also in June, Governor Pritzker and Ontario Premier Doug Ford signed a Memorandum of Understanding that a statement from the Governor’s Office says “strengthens collaborations to attract trade opportunities and investments for both Illinoisans and Ontarians. With a focus on manufacturing, energy, agriculture, and automotive industries, the MOU aims to improve workforce development, expand innovation and technology, and grow the total Illinois-Ontario trade value, which is already valued at over \$19.5 billion (USD).” 🇺🇸



Booked And Busy

by ALEXIS ELMORE

Economic development in Illinois depends on the strength of its workforce. No employment journey is without its obstacles. However, intentional workforce initiatives give credence to the notion that a rising tide lifts all boats.

A significant focus for the state has been expanding opportunity under the Job Training and Economic Development (JTED) Program. Funded through the American Rescue Plan Act, the workforce program was created two years ago, focusing on unemployed and underemployed Illinois residents heavily affected by the pandemic.

To no one's surprise, leading industries — agriculture, manufacturing, information technology, life sciences, transportation and logistics, construction and tourism — experienced the brunt of closures and layoffs at the time. It was a blow that left many residents



without a job or options moving forward. Years later, these labor shortages continue to haunt employers.

Through JTED, participants across a variety of industry-focused training programs were able to receive the certifications and credentials needed to secure a new role. The \$20 million invested was distributed across 44 community-based organizations (CBO) and colleges across the state and provided training to 6,000 residents looking to re-enter the workforce. In contrast to traditional workforce funding, many JTED programs ran well past a year due to the creation of an Employment Barrier Reduction Fund.

“After discussions with many providers who work with vulnerable populations, one thing they mentioned was the need to have a fund that could be accessed when people faced situations where they could be deterred from either completing training or being able to stay on the

job,” says Illinois Office of Employment and Training Deputy Director Julio Rodriguez.

In one example, a Rockford area resident who had completed all training and secured a new job was unsure if he would be able to continue his job due to a situation that hindered his means of transportation. The community provider was able to allocate resources through the fund to handle the car repairs and avoid the loss of a hard-earned role. While JTED works to clear the pathway to new career opportunity, the aspect of mentorship throughout the entirety of an individual’s employment journey isn’t to be overlooked.

A second round of funding introduced an additional \$13 million in late 2023, with a goal to build upon the program’s traction and expand its focus. Continuation of JTED brings priority to ensuring the state’s underrepresented populations — primarily immigrants, refugees,

Photo: Getty Images



Rockford, IL

Photo: Getty Images

justice-involved individuals and rural residents — have access to the resources and expertise needed to land a fulfilling role.

“The other part of JTED is working with employers to be amenable to look at populations that historically they may not have considered. It focuses on populations people forget can be just as viable an employee as anyone else,” said Rodriguez. “And I will tell you, that has been one of our greatest successes.”

Barriers faced by these target groups can be daunting in finding ideal employment opportunity and enriched quality of life. For immigrants and refugees arriving to Illinois and receiving work authorization, JTED providers aim to not only help navigate employment but help in other areas such as finding adequate housing. Rural residents, particularly in southern Illinois, can work with their CBO to navigate issues like transportation that often narrows one’s scope.

“The Rivian plant in Normal is an example,” Rodriguez continues. “That’s a great opportunity for someone [in a rural community], but it’s really getting access to those jobs. That’s part of what programs like JTED try to do.”

Meanwhile, an emphasis for justice-involved individuals is placed on youth and working to provide the soft skills needed to allow them to share their story and move forward past the associated stigma.

“I think people forget we all make mistakes,” said Rodriguez. “Sometimes people need a chance. You can’t correct your life if nobody’s giving you the opportunity to make new choices.”

New Avenues

In March 2024, Governor JB Pritzker announced the JTED Program would expand once again, this time introducing the \$5 million Home Illinois Workforce Pilot Program, a new partnership among the state’s Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, the Illinois Department of Human Services and the Illinois Interagency Task Force on Homelessness to Prevent and End Homelessness.

Homelessness currently affects over 10,400 individuals throughout the state, more than 50% of which are located in Chicago, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Youth, aged 18 to 24, make up about 12% of that total.

Implementation of this new program puts a strategic focus on creating a direct avenue between these individuals and hiring employers. The goal is to not only provide the services that improve the chance of securing a new role, but to establish financial stability and obtain permanent housing.

The pilot program is set to begin this fall, as applications from the Notice of Funding Opportunity now move into the selection process. For Rodriguez, who has worked in workforce development for over 20 years, this is the first time the State has been very intentional about bringing these two systems together to strengthen the continuum of care infrastructure.

“Part of this pilot is trying to figure out alignment and when is it the right time to work with individuals who are experiencing



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homelessness,” said Rodriguez. “It may start with getting them stable, and maintaining that stability by providing them opportunities to work.”

“Part of this pilot is trying to figure out alignment and when is it the right time to work with individuals who are experiencing homelessness. It may start with getting them stable, and maintaining that stability by providing them opportunities to work.”

— Julio Rodriguez, Deputy Director, Illinois Office of Employment and Training

Assets such as the state’s selection of over 435 Registered Apprenticeship Programs or On-the-Job Training can be key motivators. The ability to earn a living while gaining new skills at the same time can encourage the consistency employers value, while showcasing the skills of an overlooked population.

“I have found with a lot of employers that once you peel away the stigma of homelessness, they become more empathetic to understanding that circumstances happen,” said Rodriguez.

Working Toward Clean Energy

One sector in particular is set to make waves in term of employment opportunities moving forward. The nationwide focus on EV production has led many manufacturers to set up shop in Illinois and for good reason.

Incentives made available through the Reimagining Energy and Vehicles in Illinois Act (REV Illinois) have proven vital to securing large-scale projects and securing thousands of new jobs. The most impressive example is Rivian’s May 2024 announcement of a \$1.5 billion R2 production facility in Normal, Illinois, creating more than 550 new jobs. In securing REV, the company received a 30-year, \$827 million incentive package with a requirement to retain at least 6,000 jobs over this period.

The EV activity isn’t to be concentrated. Lion Electric opened doors to its new Channahon EV plant in July 2023. Months later, Gotion announced it would construct a \$2 billion EV battery plant 40 miles southeast in Manteno.

Both projects were supported by REV Illinois and carry a combined target of 3,840 new jobs created.

The Biden-Harris administration breathed new life into the dormant Stellantis facility in Belvidere with \$334 million in federal funding in July 2024. Having closed its doors in early 2023, the company will now move forward with plans to transition into manufacturing EVs and various components.

While the industry builds its traction, state leadership looks to guarantee employers and talent find seamless connection. This work began in 2021, when Illinois leadership announced \$15 million in funding toward two Manufacturing Training Academies (MTA) at Heartland Community College and Southwestern Illinois College (SWIC).

Heartland used its \$7.5 million grant to establish a first-of-its-kind Electric Vehicle-Energy Storage MTA in partnership with Rivian. The \$17 million facility began its work in February 2024, spanning 45,000 sq. ft. for programs focused on robotics, HVAC, welding, digital media and a State Farm EV lab.

With the aid of SWIC’s \$7.5 million grant, the college opened doors to its \$20 million, 33,000-sq.-ft. manufacturing education hub in July 2024. As part of the grant funding, SWIC was able to add additive manufacturing, tool and die mold-making and advanced automation/multi-axis computer numerical control certificates to its current offerings.

As industry investment grows, leadership announced a crisp \$12 million to construct a new MTA at Kankakee Community College’s Riverfront Campus in Kankakee County. Conveniently located near Gotion’s planned site, this MTA will provide training and education programs for jobs in manufacturing EVs, EV batteries, energy storage systems and more.

“Continued investment into MTAs has allowed the State to provide significant resource dedication toward developing high-tech training facilities that allow us to prepare Illinois residents for cutting-edge jobs within the state’s fastest growing sectors,” according to the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. “By supporting Illinois residents’ access to advanced training facilities, we are supporting the continued growth of our companies in Illinois and, in turn, the continued growth of our economy.” 🍌



In Illinois, Industry and Academia Go Hand in Hand

by LINDSAY LOPP

Ninety percent of Southern Illinois University automotive students graduate with employment already secured.

Photo courtesy of Southern Illinois University

Workforce needs are changing faster than anyone can anticipate. As industries evolve in response to technological advancements and global competition, the demand for talent in emerging skillsets has grown more urgent. Recognizing this, universities across Illinois are proactively collaborating with industry partners to bridge the gap between education and employment. These partnerships, whether through advisory boards, internships or research programs, play a crucial role in ensuring that students are graduating with

knowledge necessary to fill the most in-demand and complex roles in today's workforce.

Steering in the Right Direction

Southern Illinois University Carbondale is no stranger to the automotive and aviation industries. Long before colleges across the country began implementing new programs in response to the rise of electric vehicles and green technologies, SIU established what has become nationally recognized degree programs in both subjects.

“When you think of automotive education, SIU is at the top, and in terms of aviation one of the top two or three that our industry partners



Members of the SIU Carbondale School of Aviation prepare for the 2024 Air Race Classic competition.

Photo courtesy of Southern Illinois University

look to hire,” said Dr. Robert Morgan, dean for the College of Health and Human Sciences. “They recognize the quality of students that we produce. These are intense programs and students that make it through both our automotive and aviation programs, they’re leaving with a state-of-the-art

to work for these corporations have later returned to lend their expertise to the college’s advisory board, helping shape a curriculum that is consistent with industry trends and emerging standards as well as connect students with internships and employment opportunities. According to Dr. Morgan, around 90% of students from the automotive program graduate with a job in hand.

“They invest in us and they communicate to us what we need to know to educate the students. So, when a student leaves here with that SIU brand, companies know the quality of employees they’re going to get, both from a professionalism standpoint but also from a technical skills standpoint,” said Dr. Morgan. “From day one, the faculty are working actively to not only provide the highest quality of training, consistent with the best practices, but they’re preparing them to enter the workforce. They’re preparing them

“They recognize the quality of students that we produce. These are intense programs and students that make it through both our automotive and aviation programs, they’re leaving with a state-of-the-art education, in part because of that reciprocal investment.”

— Dr. Robert Morgan, *Dean for the College of Health and Human Sciences, Southern Illinois University of Carbondale*

education, in part because of that reciprocal investment.”

Ford, GM, Delta, United and American Airlines are among the programs’ most notable partners. Many alumni who have gone on

with the soft skills, the professional development opportunities, with the networking that's needed to give a competitive advantage to our students. Our students are highly trained, they enter the workforce ready to go. And our corporate partners know, and quite frankly, expect that."

Career-Building Closer to Campus

Considered one of the best public universities in the country and a top research institution, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's reputation attracts a wide array of industry partners. As SIU has experienced, these partnerships not only enhance the university's programs, but can provide the opportunity for students to gain on-the-job experiences and skills training.

To expand opportunities for these mutually beneficial collaborations, UIUC established the Research Park at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Located on campus, the Research Park serves as a technology hub where startup companies and corporate research and development operations can work with faculty and students on collaborative research, access university labs, equipment and services and take advantage of the industry networks the location provides.

ADM, Abbott Laboratories, AbbVie, Cargill, Capital One, Caterpillar, Deere & Company, Motorola Solutions, P&G, Rivian, State Farm and Yahoo are among the more than 120 businesses with operations there, annually hiring over 800 interns. The internship opportunities these companies create are available for multiple degree disciplines, including engineering, graphic design, marketing and chemistry, among others.



On October 10, 2023, Kohler Co. celebrated the opening of the new Kohler Innovation Center at the University of Illinois Research Park.

Photo courtesy of University of Illinois Research Park

Kohler Co., an industry leader in the manufacturing of plumbing products, plans to utilize the university's student intern program to develop a pipeline of engineering and data analytics talent. This is one of the primary focus areas of the company's new Kohler Innovation Center, which opened last October at the Research Park. In addition to eventually hiring up to 25 students, Kohler aims to leverage the university's resources to develop supply chain optimization strategies and investigate and adapt technology for "the factory of the future."

"The Kohler Innovation Center at UIRP provides our students the opportunity to work on solutions for the Midwest and beyond," said Susan Martinis, vice chancellor for Research and Innovation at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. "Such real-world experiences are examples of the transformative educational opportunities at Illinois that grow from our leadership in engineering, data science and industrial design."

To further enhance its support for innovation and student success, the Research Park also houses a state-of-the-art startup incubator. EnterpriseWorks provides budding companies access to resources and guidance through every stage of the development and commercialization process. Due to UIUC's preeminence within the technology sector, a diverse portfolio of companies, ranging from agtech and biotechnology to software development and material sciences, have been able to grow their footprint. Since opening in 2003, EnterpriseWorks has launched more than 250 startups and the careers of many more aspiring entrepreneurs.

By nurturing early-stage ventures, the incubator is able to drive technological advancements while bolstering innovations created by faculty, students and the local community. Through this ecosystem, the Research Park not only supports established companies but also empowers students and new businesses. 🍌

ILLINOIS BREAKS INNOVATION BARRIERS



by ALEXIS ELMORE

The grand opening of mHUB's new HQ in December 2023 came with \$9.6 million in funding from the State of Illinois toward driving clean technology solutions.

Photo courtesy of Christopher Barrett; design by GenSLer

If there was ever a time to allow a new idea to bloom in Illinois, it is now. Planting roots in Illinois comes with ease as the state approaches its peak season to harvest fresh innovations.

It doesn't require a green thumb. New programming is helping small and mid-sized businesses rise high.

The arrival of the new \$3 million Illinois Innovation Voucher Program (IIV) in March 2024 aims to not only provide the space and resources for burgeoning ideas to come to fruition, but an avenue for small and medium-sized enterprises to collaborate with higher education. The IIV program, a partnership between the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) and the Illinois Science and Technology Coalition, will provide up to \$75,000 in grant funding for costs associated with

research engagement.

"With top research universities, tech incubators and accelerators, and two national labs, cutting-edge research is happening in every corner of the state," said DCEO Director Kristin Richards. "New grant programs like Innovation Vouchers are encouraging collaborations between universities and Illinois corporations to promote groundbreaking research and innovation. Looking ahead, the State will continue to invest in research and innovation, including the half-billion-dollar quantum campus that will make Illinois an even more desirable destination for technology companies, entrepreneurs and investments."

The program is not catered to a single industry, nor does each project have to follow the same development path. While some may use the voucher to utilize lab

or research facilities at a higher education institution, others may allow for university professors to run their research project to gather the needed technical information. Regardless of whether one is looking to get started or move into testing proof of concept, this initiative is designed to drive innovation forward.

Expenses covered include sharing of technologies, knowledge, facilities and equipment; salaries for research and scientific expertise; new product development; product commercialization; prototyping, piloting, testing and product validation; business model and service development; innovation and technology audits; implementation of new technology; and acquiring metrology and standardization.

To qualify, the small to mid-sized business with fewer than 500 employees must be based in Illinois or employ a minimum of 100 full-time Illinois residents. If there are plans to engage with a university or college, the institution has to be an Illinois-based non-profit higher education institution. Each selected business must remain in the state for the entirety of its research engagement

In covering the basics that tend to produce the biggest obstacles, eligible companies focus on perfecting their project-supported by a network of expertise. Paired with the Small Business Innovation Research/Small Business Technology Transfer Matching Grant Program for up to \$50,000 in-state matching funds toward federal R&D in partnership with a research institution, moving an idea into commercialization comes with less stress.

“The level of collaboration and intensity of focus on attracting innovators is like never before,” said Richards. “DCEO

puts resources into funding the Manufacturing Training Academies, Climatic Center for Innovation and Research, Wet Labs Capital Grants, Innovation Vouchers, CZ Biohub, iFAB, mHUB, CQE, the DARPA Quantum Proving Ground and

“**The level of collaboration and intensity of focus on attracting innovators is like never before.**”

— Kristin Richards, *DCEO Director*

many others because we know that science and engineering can lead to breakthroughs that result in industrial and commercial uses that benefit all of us for generations to come. The State invests in emerging industries that have the potential to transform Illinois’ economy.”

A Hotspot For New Development

Seven years since the hardtech and manufacturing innovation center first arrived, mHUB has been vital to the launch of over 1,600 products, investment into 46 hardtech start-ups, raising more than \$1.89 billion in capital and creating over 5,500 new jobs in Illinois.

The grand opening of mHUB’s new 80,000-sq.-ft. innovation center and HQ took place in December 2023. In comparison to its former site, located just 1.5 miles away, this revitalized former manufacturing facility in Chicago’s Kinzie Industrial Corridor supplies 50% more usable space. The two-acre site allowed mHUB to include additional specialized equipment,



five larger private wet labs and expanded electronics and testing space within its prototyping labs.

Aside from supporting new entrepreneurs, mHUB has become a hotspot for industry collaboration for sustainable manufacturing, climate and energy technologies and medical technologies. More than 275 companies, including Siemens and Gilero, have set up shop in the new HQ to pursue various manufacturing-focused projects.

The U.S. Department of Energy joined in the action by awarding mHUB with \$100,000 in funding toward the establishment of the Clean Tech Innovation Network in March 2024 and returning a week later with \$150,000 toward the development of a Climate & Energy Pilot Launchpad Program.

A partnership among mHUB, the University of Chicago and Argonne National Laboratory created the Clean Technology Economy Coalition as a result of potential EDA funding through the \$1 billion Build Back Better Regional Challenge in 2021. Through the Coalition, an approximately \$189 million strategy was developed with a goal of making Illinois a leader in grid technology, innovation, production and deployment.

“A part of that strategy was driving innovation capacity,” says mHUB Chief of Staff Allison Winstel. “The Clean Tech Innovation Network will do that by connecting a network of innovation, entrepreneurship and job creation in the clean tech sector.”

In partnership with the Greater Englewood Chamber of Commerce (GCC), the Clean Tech Innovation Network has now entered its Progress Phase, having submitted a proposal for an additional \$100,000 in July 2024. As of now, mHUB and GCC are designing the initial versions of clean energy programming for startups and workforce training. So far, a Clean Energy Innovation and Manufacturing Workshop series has launched and will take place over the next year. Meanwhile, GCC has begun recruitment for its first solar training program.

Goals set for the first year of the Clean Tech Innovation Network included supporting 10 clean energy startups, supporting 40 returning citizens and aiding the development of six new clean energy businesses. The partnership so far has supported six clean energy startups, 10 returning citizens and four new businesses in less than six months.



“A key next step will be bringing other partners to the table,” said Winstel. “We envision this like a tiered network, where no matter where someone is in a community they can get access to the resources to explore careers and entrepreneurship in the clean tech sector in Chicago.”

The Climate & Energy Pilot Launchpad Program builds upon years of accelerator cohorts mHUB has been focused on, now with the added assistance of industry partner Nicor Gas. Winstel states that in working with climate and energy startups have the biggest support gap comes in the piloting stage, rather than early stage support or funding amassed in later stages.

“There’s a gap in access to industry and access to funding and support when they hit that pilot and demonstration stage, which for high-tech companies like climate and energy is absolutely critical in order to get through the valley of death,” said Winstel.

As companies reach this milestone, this program is designed to provide startups with technical assistance, one-on-one mentorship and access to mHUB’s network of industry partners. Initially, mHUB aims to guide three to six startups through their pilot process. In

the fall of 2024, mHUB plans to apply for a \$1 million Cooperative Agreement Grant from the DOE that would secure program funding for another three years, allowing it to scale the program up to twice a year and accept more startups per round.

“I want to see the state capture this opportunity to be an innovation cluster and a manufacturing cluster for the critical clean energy and grid technologies,” said Winstel. “Where mHUB sees this big opportunity is Illinois carving out its place in the clean energy sector, leveraging our strong manufacturing base, our national labs, universities and the innovation ecosystem to become a global leader in development and production of these technologies.”

In the meantime, innovative activity persists in Chicago. In July 2024, mHUB announced the launch of its third MedTech cohort alongside industry partners Baxter International Inc., Endeavor Health and GE HealthCare. The six-month program provides startups with mentorship, lab access, legal assistance, industry insights, pilot opportunities and \$200,000 in cash for prototyping and commercialization measures. 🍌



Biomanufacturing research at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

Photo courtesy of IBRL

Illinois' singular assets earn "Tech Hub" status and propel new engines of sustainable production.

by GARY DAUGHTERS

When doling out taxpayer dollars under the Biden Administration's Tech Hubs program, the U.S. Commerce Department is quick to cite the numbers behind its granular vetting process. Of close to 500 coalitions that formed nationwide in hopes of receiving funding under the CHIPS and Science Act, a mere 31 were granted Tech Hub status after an initial knock-out round that concluded in October of 2023. Of those, just 12 — including Illinois' iFAB Tech Hub — were approved for federal funding, close to \$51 million each, as announced to great fanfare in July.

As with iFAB, a biomanufacturing venture led by the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and joined by 30 other partners, the Tech Hubs project seeks to supercharge innovation and job creation by wrapping emerging technologies around an outstanding regional asset. For iFAB, that asset is Illinois' abundance of soybeans and corn, which biomanufacturing processes can convert into a wide range of sustainable alternatives to fuel-based products, including high-value biofuels, pharmaceuticals, food additives, animal-free proteins and cosmetics. Illinois, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, led the nation in soybean production and ranked second for corn in 2023, which — combined with the state's history of agricultural innovation — make iFAB a clear fit as a biotech hub.

"Our program," said Beth Conerty, iFAB's regional innovation officer, "is strategically positioned to lead the charge in transforming the bioeconomy. Through iFAB, Illinois is not just participating in biomanufacturing — we are helping to shape the future of the industry."

In the short time since its foundation, the iFAB consortium of leaders from higher education, economic development organizations, government, industry and labor has secured more than \$680 million in cash match and strategic investments. The bulk of the federal Tech Hubs award is to go toward an expansion of Urbana-Champaign's Integrated Bioprocessing Research Laboratory, which serves as a bridge between basic research and commercial applications of bioproducts. This, for an industry that is projected to reach \$200 billion by 2040, with the potential to generate 1 million jobs by 2030.



Oh, the Things You Can Do With Corn and Soybeans

2024 corn harvest: 2.27 billion bushels.

Photo from Getty Images/wbrianwatkins

Another chunk of the Tech Hubs grant is designated for iFAB member Primient, a top producer of food and industrial ingredients made from renewable, plant-based sources — primarily corn. Headquartered in the Chicago suburb of Schaumburg, Primient employs more than 500 workers at its precision fermentation facility in Decatur.

"The [Tech Hubs] award is a testament to the dedication of the iFAB leadership and partners who had a clear vision from the start," said Primient CEO Jim Stutelberg. "For Primient, this is the next step in our journey of renewing, modernizing and growing to meet the potential of the bioeconomy."

Primient's history in Illinois stretches back to the early 1900s, when it was founded in Decatur as the A.E. Staley Manufacturing Company. In March of 2024, the company announced a five-year, \$400 million investment in its Decatur operations, which guarantees its presence in Central Illinois for decades to come.

"Primient's investment in its

The black soldier fly.
Photo from Getty Images



Decatur operations reinforces the company’s longstanding position as a community leader and signifies strong confidence in our shared future,” said Julie Wolfe Moore, Decatur’s mayor. “We are proud to partner with them as they lay the foundation for the next generation, ensuring that Decatur is ready to step into the potential of the bioeconomy.”

The versatility of corn and soybeans makes each a crucial component in biomanufacturing. According to the USDA’s most recent annual report, issued in January, Illinois farmers produced a nation-leading 648 million bushels of soybeans in 2023 to go with 2.27 billion bushels of corn, second only to Iowa.

In 2023 — with Gov. JB Pritzker in attendance — soybean processor Incobrasa Industries broke ground on a \$250 million expansion of its production facility northwest of Chicago. The expansion includes the construction of an advanced soybean crushing facility, capable of producing soybean meal and husks — both used in animal feed — as well as soybean oil, which has nutritional and industrial applications. The expansion is to create or retain 240 jobs.

Like Primient, Incobrasa received an Economic Development for a Growing Economy (EDGE) tax credit, awarded by the State in conjunction with a minimum capital investment of \$155.8 million.

“Because of the EDGE tax credit, we will be able to expand our workforce and our footprint with local farmers,” said Aluizio Ribeiro, Incobrasa’s president and CEO.

Enter the Insects

Often mistaken for wasps, *Hermetia illucens* — better known as the black soldier fly — is found in cities, fields and forests over most of America. And as a promising, new source of protein, it’s become the raw material for yet another innovative food product emerging from Illinois. In partnership with Decatur-based food conglomerate ADM, the French animal feed and nutrition startup Innovafeed recently opened what is said to be the largest insect protein facility in the world. The company’s new North American Insect Innovation Center is co-located with ADM’s Decatur corn complex, with ADM providing corn by-products to supply Innovafeed’s insect rearing process.

“It is yet another example,”

said Chris Cuddy, president of ADM’s Carbohydrate Solutions business, “of how we are constantly identifying new ways to create value from corn, oilseeds and more. At a time when the demand for animal feed protein is steadily increasing,” Cuddy said, “insect farming stands out as a true solution for the future.”

tons of fertilizer. Innovafeed said the facility’s location in “the heart of the corn belt” offers the potential for multiple such sites to be deployed in the future.

“As the project expands, we believe Innovafeed can benefit from a strongly qualified local workforce, as well as contribute to developing new skills specific

“Illinois is not just participating in biomanufacturing — we are helping to shape the future of the industry.”

— Beth Conerty, *iFAB Regional Innovation Officer*

The Decatur facility is Innovafeed’s first in the U.S. It has a targeted annual production capacity of 60,000 metric tons of animal feed protein derived from *Hermetia illucens*. It also has the annual capacity to produce 20,000 metric tons of oils for poultry and swine rations and 400,000 metric

to our innovative industry,” said Maye Walraven, the company’s U.S. general manager. She added that Innovafeed envisions Decatur as “a promising hub for innovation with many opportunities for collaboration.” 🐦



A Bright Manufacturing Future

Workforce and incentives propel the evolution of a signature industry.

by GARY DAUGHTERS

Gulfstream is expanding in Cahokia Heights.
Photo courtesy of Gulfstream

Back in the late 1970s, Jan Polka wanted to burnish the look of the tractor-trailer he hauled gravel in. He cut up some sheet metal, spiffed it up with chrome and fitted out his rig with some shiny new wheel covers. He started getting looks. His truck, that is.

“People kept asking me on the CB radio, ‘Where’d you get those wheel covers?’ Polka recalls. “So, I started making them in my garage, and one thing led to another.”

He named his company RealWheels, its first two employees being himself and his wife Sherri. Today, the expanding enterprise founded in Lake County, Illinois, employs some three dozen workers and — seemingly on a dime — can crank out products from an ever-evolving catalogue of close to 3,000 items. Bumpers, fenders, hubcaps, door pulls, valve extensions, hood trim bezels, simulators. And, of course, the company’s bread and butter, those

patented wheel covers.

“We make products for vehicles, pure and simple,” said Polka, whose chief lieutenants now include his sons Greg and Cory. “It’s gone way beyond the wheel accessories it all started from.”

Lake County, about halfway between Chicago and Milwaukee and bordered on the east by Lake Michigan, boasts a \$20 billion manufacturing sector, “the largest contributor to our gross regional product,” according to Lake County Board Chair Sandy Hart. The county is big into pharmaceuticals manufacturing and hosts such global giants as Abbott, AbbVie, AkzoNobel and Baxter. But, for Lake County — which counts within its borders more than 600 manufacturing businesses — behemoths such as those are but the icing on the cake.

“Most of our manufacturing comes from small and medium-sized businesses like RealWheels,” said Ronald



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Southern Illinois University



RealWheels' signature wheel covers.

Image courtesy of RealWheels

“The total economic impact of manufacturing on the state of Illinois is estimated to be **between \$580 billion and \$611 billion annually.**”

— Illinois Manufacturers Association

Lanz, business development director for Lake County Partners, a non-profit economic development organization.

Workforce Leads the Way

Like RealWheels, many of those smaller manufacturers power the Midwest automotive industry. And it's the Lake County workforce, Lanz believes, that powers those manufacturers. Nearly 100,000 manufacturing workers account for one of the highest concentrations in the state, a county-wide manufacturing workforce that grew by 3.6% in 2023 alone. Manufacturing represents one out of every seven jobs.

“The biggest thing I hear from our businesses,” said Lanz, “is the strength of our workforce ecosystem, both the existing workforce itself — and the level of skills that are here currently — plus the ability to upskill employees to meet the needs of that advanced manufacturing sector. It's what puts us over the top with a lot of these employers as to why they want to be here.”

The College of Lake County, with several locations, is the source of a sizable quotient of the region's budding talent. The college's crown jewel — Lanz calls it a “game changer” — is the recently opened Advanced Technology

Center in Gurnee, a 170,000-sq.-ft. industrial education facility converted from a former Lowe's. The Center offers instruction in industrial technology and automation, robotics, mechatronics and other emerging disciplines. Crucially, its administrators work hand-in-hand, Lanz says, with local manufacturers.

“They want to talk to companies very specifically and as early as possible,” he said, “to understand exactly the kind of training they need. And they are tailoring the curriculum based on those conversations and based on those needs to make sure that we have a workforce, not just today, but one that's continuing to roll out indefinitely into the future.”

As to the growth of the region's manufacturing sector, Lanz also credits Illinois' state leadership for upping its game. Passed with bipartisan support by the Illinois legislature in 2021, the Reimagining Electric Vehicles in Illinois Act (REV) is a highly competitive incentives program created to attract companies along the EV supply chain. In 2023, Illinois doubled down, introducing a major expansion of clean energy incentives through Invest in Illinois, a \$400 million closing fund available to major job creators.

“We have the incentives and

the effort from the state, both for advanced manufacturing and the EV sector and now really moving into the data centers and the quantum sectors,” Lanz said. “That's been the result of efforts put together by Governor Pritzker and the legislature.”

When officials in Wisconsin made a play to lure RealWheels across the bi-state border, Lake County and the City of Zion joined forces to retain the business as one of the region's home-grown success stories. Lake County Partners helped to identify a site for RealWheels to expand and the city assembled an attractive incentives package.

“They just hopped to it and assisted in so many ways,” said Polka. “We felt like we were being taken care of so well. We wanted to stay here anyway, so it was win-win all around.”

The new RealWheels facility spans 65,000 sq. ft., big enough, Polka had hoped, to set up sons Cory and Greg for the day that he and Sherri retire.

“But,” he said, “we're pretty much filling it up already. We'll be needing more space.”

How Incentives Hit Home

REV and Invest in Illinois played major roles in what Gov. Pritzker has called “the most significant

new manufacturing investment in Illinois in decades,” a \$2 billion EV battery “gigafactory” planned for Kankakee County, south of Chicago. Gotion has committed to creating 2,600 jobs at the site of a former K-Mart warehouse in the city of Manteno. Gotion became the first-ever “Invest” recipient, an award of \$125 million announced in September of 2023.

The State’s robust incentives also helped to secure a \$500 million investment from Wieland Rolled Products North America. The expansion of Wieland’s East Alton facility, just north of St. Louis, will serve to retain 800 jobs while enabling the company to increase production of copper and copper alloy products, critical components in electric vehicles, EV charging infrastructure and renewable energy products. Wieland’s total incentive package from the State, which includes REV and other incentives, is valued at approximately \$231 million and is the product of more than a year of public-private collaboration.

“I’m incredibly grateful to Governor Pritzker and other officials,” said Greg Keown,



The Advanced Technology Center at the College of Lake County.
Photo courtesy of Lake County Partners

the company’s president. “This is a shining example of how public-private partnerships are intended to work.”

Illinois also came through with an EDGE (Economic Development for a Growing Economy) tax credit to support a recent expansion by Georgia-based Gulfstream Aerospace that’s to create or retain some 700 jobs in Cahokia Heights. The \$28.5 million expansion will bring Gulfstream’s total footprint at the city’s St. Louis Downtown Airport to 642,657 sq.

ft., enabling it to increase capacity for exterior aircraft painting, furniture installations, avionics integrations and other operations, according to a release.

“We appreciate our partnerships with the state of Illinois, St. Clair County, Bi-State Development, the city of Cahokia Heights and the village of Sauget for their continued support as we grow our presence and local workforce in the region,” said Gulfstream President Mark Burns. 🍌

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Green Everywhere You Look

by ADAM BRUNS

Photo courtesy of Invenergy

Five years after Governor JB Pritzker signed into law the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act, Illinois is showing evidence of how real the green energy economy can be.

You can even find it near the green ivy at the legendary Wrigley Field on Chicago's North Side, where the Chicago Cubs and Invenergy in June announced an agreement making the Chicago-based global developer, owner and operator of clean energy solutions the "Official Solar Provider" of the Cubs and Wrigley Field.

You can find it in places like Bolingbrook, the Chicago suburb where Invenergy the very next month broke ground on its \$30 million, 135,000-sq.-ft. Center of Excellence, a clean energy training and manufacturing facility.

Invenergy and its affiliated companies around the world have successfully developed more than 31,000 megawatts of projects that are in operation, construction or contracted, including wind, solar, transmission infrastructure and natural gas power generation and advanced energy storage projects. The company said the project builds on its 20-year history of investments in its home state of Illinois, including the current expansion of its Chicago headquarters at One South Wacker in downtown Chicago.

The HQ expansion announced in October 2023 was the largest expansion of the year in Chicago's Loop. Invenergy says it has added over 1,300 new employees in the United States and around the world over the past five years.

Asked for insights into the

growth of the company, Invenergy Executive Vice President and Operating Business Leader Steve Dowdy said, "The current expansion of our headquarters and buildout of the new COE will equip the growing workforce of the future with the resources necessary to accelerate a cleaner, more reliable grid. The COE is Invenergy's latest investment in the workforce of the future and reinforces our leadership in meeting the growing demand for clean energy."

Noting that the new project is about 30 miles from Invenergy's Loop headquarters, Dowdy said, "The COE continues Invenergy's commitment to our home state, elevating Chicagoland as the tip of the spear for energy infrastructure investment and innovation. In addition to its proximity to our home office,



“About 30 miles from our headquarters, the Center of Excellence continues Invenergy’s commitment to our home state, elevating Chicagoland as the tip of the spear for energy infrastructure investment and innovation.”

— Steve Dowdy, Executive Vice President and Operating Business Leader, Invenergy

Bolingbrook provides access to key transportation infrastructure and a skilled workforce making the village an ideal place for new economic development and one of the best places to live for families in the country.”

The company is not alone among growing clean energy firms choosing Chicago. In January 2024, national community solar provider Nexamp announced Chicago would be its second national headquarters, where the company anticipates adding 50 more team members over the next two years. The expansion is part of more than \$2 billion in planned investments in Illinois. The company also has launched a new fellowship program in partnership with the City Colleges of Chicago that is designed to create opportunities for underserved or underrepresented populations to gain exposure to career opportunities in the renewable energy field.

“We began our work in Illinois in 2018 in response to the Future Energy Jobs Act, which created the state’s first community solar program and sought to accelerate Illinois’ decarbonization efforts,” said Nexamp CEO Zaid Ashai. “Thanks to Governor Pritzker’s leadership in securing the passage of the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act in 2021, Illinois is our fastest growing market. But the state is far more than just an attractive market for solar generation—for

Nexamp, it’s a state which shares our vision of a cleaner, more equitable energy future powered by a diverse, equitable and skilled workforce. As we sought a location for a second headquarters, Illinois was the natural choice because of our mutual interest in seeing clean energy work for — and do right by — everyone.”

Busy October

The same October 2023 that saw Invenergy’s HQ expansion also saw the unveiling of the Chicagoland Climate Investment Alliance, whose coalition includes Invenergy among other prominent organizations and elected officials. And the month saw the announcement that the Midwest Alliance for Clean Hydrogen (MachH2) was selected by the U.S. Department of Energy Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations (OCED) to develop a Regional Clean Hydrogen Hub (H2Hub). The federal hydrogen hubs program is investing \$7 billion in seven hubs. MachH2 anticipates creating 13,600 direct jobs — 12,100 in construction and 1,500 permanent jobs.

Comprising more than 70 public and private entities representing every phase in the hydrogen value chain across Illinois, Indiana and Michigan, MachH2 aims to “enable decarbonization through strategic hydrogen uses including steel and glass production, power generation, refining, heavy-duty transportation

and sustainable aviation fuel.”

Among Illinois companies in that sustainable aviation fuels (SAF) segment is Chicago-based LanzaJet, which recently has received a \$20 million investment from Groupe ADP and opened its first commercial-scale ethanol-to-SAF plant. The ADP stake adds to investments from the likes of Shell, Southwest Airlines, Mitsui & Co. and British Airways.

In 2023, the Invest in Illinois Act signed by Gov. Pritzker included a \$1.50-per-gallon purchase credit for SAF sold to or used by an aircraft in Illinois until January 1, 2033. Now the MachH2 hub is ready to take it to the next level.

“I couldn’t be prouder that once again, Illinois and the Midwest will be leading the way in equity-conscious clean energy development through the construction of a major hydrogen production and distribution hub,” said Governor Pritzker. “When I signed the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act in 2019, it was with this sort of collaborative, economically sound manufacturing and expansion in mind, and we are seeing the results of those efforts play out every day.” 🍌

Invenergy’s projects include wind power, solar power testing and energy storage at the 34,000-acre, 266-megawatt Grand Ridge Energy Center, in operation since 2008 in La Salle, Illinois, halfway between Chicago and Peoria.

Photos courtesy of Invenergy



Illinois Is Going Electric

Expanding incentives support a growing ecosystem.

by GARY DAUGHTERS

Rivian celebrates a milestone.

Photo courtesy of Rivian

When the 100,000th Rivian rolled off the line at the automaker's plant in Illinois last spring, the smiles of assembled Rivian autoworkers reflected the spirit of a banner draped across the SUV's windshield: "Built With Normal Pride," it read.

The moment served as another mark of validation for an electric vehicle maker that landed in 2017 in Normal, Illinois, amid certain reserves of doubt. The untested California startup with little more than a prototype was proposing to convert a shuttered Mitsubishi plant — whose closure had claimed more than 1,200 jobs — and build electric SUVs and pickups there. At a time when EVs still were considered exotic, the notion struck some as far-fetched. An electric pickup truck?

"To be honest, we didn't know what Rivian



would be,” recalls Chris Koos, Normal’s mayor since 2003, “so there was some initial skepticism. You know, ‘Who are these guys? What are they going to do in our community? Will it be a flash-in-the-pan kind of startup and then go away?’ ”

But in the ensuing seven years, even as several ambitious EV startups have indeed come and gone, Rivian has not just survived but has expanded and by many measures thrived. From what officials in Normal initially assessed as a “niche” company, Rivian is now the second-largest employer in McLean County, with a payroll around 8,000. Take a spin in Rivian’s R1 and try not to be wowed by the SUV’s acceleration — officially zero to 60mph in 3.5 seconds, but seemingly even faster — the gentle ride and attractive interior all assembled exclusively in Normal. The R1 consistently fares well in head-to-

head matchups with competitors such as the Model X of industry leader Tesla.

“The 2024 Rivian R1S is not only a more affordable vehicle, but it’s also more spacious, has a longer range and comes with a higher-quality cabin,” reads a recent comparison from U.S. News & World Report. “If you want the whole package,” the multi-point assessment concludes, “go for the Rivian.”

Having already invested some \$2 billion in its Normal facility, Rivian notched another major milestone in May, when it announced plans to expand plant operations through an \$827 million incentive package provided by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. The expansion is to pave the way for production of the company’s R2 SUV, to be introduced in 2026 at a lower starting price of \$45,000.

“The support from the state will allow us to quickly bring our midsize R2 to market and provide even greater consumer choice for EVs,” said Rivian founder and CEO RJ Scaringe. “We look forward,” he added, “to continuing our close partnership and building upon the success we have enjoyed.”

“Rivian shows that we were willing to take a risk on new technologies. They’ve proven themselves to be great community partners. We’re very, very proud to have them here.”

— Chris Koos, Mayor of Normal, IL

That success, said Mayor Koos, has become a source of pride for Normal, which brands itself an “EV Town.” Rivian, he said, “shows that we were willing to take a risk on new technologies. They’ve proven themselves to be great community partners. We’re very, very proud to have them here.”

Billions for Batteries

Passed with bipartisan support by the Illinois legislature in 2021, the Reimagining Electric Vehicles in Illinois Act (REV) is a highly competitive incentives program created to attract companies along the EV supply chain. The law also serves to support the State’s ambitious climate agenda, whose goals include putting a million EVs on the road by 2030. In 2023, Illinois doubled down, introducing a major expansion of its clean energy incentives through Invest in Illinois, a \$400 million closing fund available to major job creators.

Both programs played roles in what Gov. JB Pritzker has called “the most significant new manufacturing investment in Illinois in decades,” a \$2 billion EV battery “gigafactory” planned for Kankakee County, south of Chicago. Gotion has committed to creating 2,600 jobs at the site of a former K-Mart warehouse in the town of Manteno.

Gotion is the first recipient of Invest in Illinois funding, crafted to help major employers with up-front capital costs. The \$125 million “Invest” award is part of an incentives package valued at \$536 million. The State will also fund a new manufacturing training academy and will award an additional grant to workforce providers to expand training and prepare regional employees for the new jobs.

Mark Denzler, president and CEO of the Illinois Manufacturers’ Association, hailed Gotion’s investment as “a huge win” for Illinois.

“We are proud to have partnered with Gov. JB Pritzker’s administration and lawmakers on both sides of the aisle to put in place incentives to help bring these businesses to Illinois,” he said, “and we look forward to the continued success of this important industry.”

Another factor in Gotion’s decision to choose Illinois after a nationwide search was the input of ComEd. One of the country’s five biggest utilities, ComEd delivers power to some 70% of Illinois’ population, including Chicago and surrounding areas. In addition to rendering support in identifying potential sites, ComEd is adding a large mobile transformer to help kickstart Gotion’s production in 2024 and will build a substation to support the project’s massive need for electricity.

“ComEd’s expertise and capacity,” said Mohamed Ali Zeitoun, Gotion’s deputy director of manufacturing, “make it an essential partner as we expand our operations.”

Gotion will become the largest employer in Manteno, a town of fewer than 10,000 people about an hour south of Chicago on Interstate 57.

“The addition of an EV battery manufacturing site represents a great future of economic opportunity for our village,” said Manteno Mayor Tim Nugent. “Gotion’s upcoming production plant not only symbolizes progress but also stirs anticipation for the abundance of educational and employment opportunities it offers.” 🍌



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No Better Place to Be Global

AIT Worldwide Logistics' global headquarters in Itasca in DuPage County occupies multiple floors of the 25-story suburban tower 2 Pierce Place, the second-tallest building in Illinois outside the Chicago city limits.

Photo courtesy of AIT

Odyyssey Logistics has a slogan: "Movement is life." No three words could better describe the logistics lifeblood of the Chicagoland and Illinois economies.

When we ran the numbers in Site Selection magazine's proprietary Conway Projects Database to see where all major corporate end-user facility investments with a distribution function were located since January 2019, Chicagoland and its 1,186 projects beat out second-place Dallas-Fort Worth by more than 350 projects for No. 1 in the nation. That total comprised more than 92% of the Illinois total and brought the state to No. 2 in the nation behind Texas.

Not every project comes with a capital expenditure amount, but for those we could track, the Illinois total capex came to more than \$10.1 billion in that time frame, creating

more than 34,100 jobs and representing (again, for those projects where the figures were available) more than 210 million sq. ft. of space.

Odyssey, a Connecticut company with a \$3 billion global freight network, started with five employees in chemical logistics 20 years ago and today serves 6,000 customers worldwide. The company in May 2024 celebrated the move to a new intermodal division regional headquarters office in the Chicagoland suburb of Lombard.

"This new Chicago-area office signifies our deep commitment to growing our North American operations," said Hans Stig Moller, CEO of Odyssey Logistics. "It's strategically located to leverage major transportation hubs, allowing us to deliver exceptional service to our clients while positioning us for future expansion."

by **ADAM BRUNS**

Southern Illinois

Central Transportation and Distribution Hub

17-County Site Inventory

Priority Energy Communities Region for Federal Programs



- ✓ **LOGISTICS INFRASTRUCTURE**
3 Interstate Highways & 5 Class I Railroads
- ✓ **INLAND PORTS**
Mississippi & Ohio Rivers; Route for 80% of U.S. Inland Barge Traffic
- ✓ **CENTRAL**
Within 5 Hours Driving Distance To 8 Major Cities; 1 Hour Flight to Chicago
- ✓ **SITES**
Large & Small Existing Buildings Available; Sites 250+ Acres Available
- ✓ **LABOR FORCE**
400,000+ within 50 miles; 1 MILLION+ within 75 miles
- ✓ **WORKFORCE TRAINING**
Top Research University - Southern Illinois University Carbondale, 5 Community Colleges, Employer-Specific Training Options
- ✓ **COST OF LIVING**
12% Below U.S. Average
- ✓ **QUALITY OF LIFE**
Shawnee National Forest, 9 State Parks, 10+ Lakes, 100+ Miles of Bike Trails

DID YOU KNOW?

Southern Illinois is one of six designated Energy Community regions prioritized for federal economic development investment.



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“After more than 40 years in business, and immense expansion to more than 110 locations across Asia, Europe and North America, we’re fortifying our roots in the Chicago area.”

— Vaughn Moore, AIT Chairman & CEO

Lombard is located in DuPage County, part of a multi-county metro region that encompasses a lot more than the City of Chicago’s Cook County. Broken down by county, here’s how the distribution facility investment activity is distributed in Illinois:

COUNTY	Total Logistics Projects Jan. 2019- June 2024
Cook.....	445
DuPage.....	258
Will.....	193
Kane.....	159
Lake.....	84
McHenry.....	21
Madison.....	13
(St. Louis Metro Area)	

Broken down by city, the data speak volumes about which communities have the infrastructure for moving goods and for moving things along. All cities are in the Chicago metro area:

COUNTY	Total Logistics Projects Jan. 2019- June 2024
Chicago.....	105
Bolingbrook.....	53
Elk Grove Village.....	51
Elgin.....	50
Aurora.....	49
Joliet.....	45
Bensenville.....	39
Franklin Park.....	35
Romeoville.....	35
West Chicago.....	32
Addison.....	30
Melrose Park.....	21
Batavia.....	20
Bedford Park.....	20
Carol Stream.....	20
Waukegan.....	18
Glendale Heights.....	18

A Load of Projects

The pipeline of recent project activity includes the following:

AIT Worldwide Logistics, which originally opened for business in Chicagoland 45 years ago as Air-It-There, Inc., in January 2024 opened a new 370,000-sq.-ft. AIT-Chicago office and warehouse in Palatine that is near major Interstate highways, key intermodal terminals and Chicago O’Hare International Airport.

The new station — the largest in the company’s global network — consolidates suburban operations and support staff from locations in Wood Dale and Itasca, where the company in 2023 moved into a new global headquarters situated near the intersection of I-290 and the Elgin-O’Hare Expressway.

“After more than 40 years in business, and immense expansion to more than 110 locations across Asia, Europe and North America, we’re fortifying our roots in the Chicago area,” said AIT Chairman and CEO Vaughn Moore at the opening of the new HQ, which consolidates shared services staff from multiple other Itasca facilities. “Working together in this state-of-the-art office space allows us to be much more collaborative, enabling faster, real-time reactions,” he said in a release, noting that the building at 2 Pierce Place — the second-tallest building in Illinois outside the Chicago city limits — “also provides the additional space we need to accommodate the future growth of our shared services teams.”

At its own headquarters in the Cook County city of Des Plaines last year, CJ Logistics America — a business whose parent company is based in South Korea — announced a strategic partnership with the Korea Ocean Business Corporation (KOBIC) to invest \$457 million in its “North American



CJ Logistics America is investing \$150 million apiece and creating 160 jobs apiece at two new facilities in Elwood (Will County) and Des Plaines (Cook County).

Rendering courtesy of CJ Logistics America and Business Wire

Project” to construct three large-scale logistics centers containing more than 3.8 million sq. ft. in the United States.

As if proving the theory that the Second City is still first in goods movement, two of the three are in the Chicago area: one in Des Plaines and one in Elwood, located adjacent to the intermodal terminals of BNSF and Union Pacific in the logistics capital of Will County. The primary focus of the facilities is to handle “the import and export cargo of global and South Korean companies and e-commerce sellers, thereby supporting their market entry into the U.S.,” the companies stated.

“The construction of logistics hubs in the U.S. will enhance the competitiveness of South Korea’s global supply chain,” said Yang-soo Kim, CEO of KOBC, “and create value-added supply chain services through integration with maritime logistics.” In promoting the Elwood facility’s capabilities in July 2024,

CJ Logistics noted that “as part of the nation’s largest inland port, we also operate an active Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ) at this site which makes it ideally situated to support global trade. From this prime central location our customers are able to reach up to 26% of the U.S. population within just two days.”

As recently as Q1 2023, the U.S. ranked as South Korea’s largest trade surplus country (\$7.2 billion) while e-commerce exports to the U.S. reached \$323 million in 2022, a 23.8% increase over 2021.

The lifeblood of the global logistics economy, it seems, moves with great dispatch through Illinois. 🇺🇸



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Chicago's Biohub Boom

Chicago's life sciences market has recently become one of the most active areas for new construction in the industry. CommercialCafe's Top 25 U.S. Metros for Life Sciences report shows that around 1.2 million sq. ft., nearly half of the city's life sciences real estate, has been added to the market since 2018.

Alongside ranking the metro No. 10, the report largely attributed this industry's growth to the strength of Chicago's talent and education system. Approximately 1.2 million people, roughly 18% of residents in the Chicago-Naperville-Elgin metropolitan area aged 25 or older, hold at least a bachelor's degree in a related field, creating the fourth largest life sciences talent pool among U.S. markets.

Throughout the metro, more than 35 institutions offer industry-related programs or majors, a concentration second only to New York. With multiple renowned research universities fueling this pipeline, many companies are expanding in the Chicago area to meet the talent where it grows.

Attracting Industry Partnerships

By anchoring its second location in Chicago, the Chan Zuckerberg Biohub is bringing together three of Illinois' leading scientific and technology institutions — the University of Chicago, the University

Why the Windy City's life sciences sector is on the rise.

by LINDSAY LOPP

of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and Northwestern University. Backed by a \$250 million investment, the CZ Biohub Chicago launched its research in October 2023, focusing its attention on investigating inflammation and the immune system to identify inflammatory states that underlie many diseases, enabling new, groundbreaking therapeutics.

After a highly competitive year-long application process, the team of Illinois institutions beat out 58 applicants from 172 institutions across the country. Letters of support from political leaders and a \$25 million capital commitment from the State bolstered Chicago's application.

"The Chan Zuckerberg Initiative has recognized what we've been promoting and demonstrating to investors and businesses across the globe — when it comes to cutting-edge development and research, there's no better place to build a top-tier workforce and develop cutting-edge technologies than Illinois and Chicago," said Gov. Pritzker. "The CZ Biohub Chicago will be an industry-leading scientific research

CZI Co-Founder and Co-CEO Priscilla Chan, Illinois Governor JB Pritzker, and Chan Zuckerberg Biohub Chicago President Shana Kelley at the CZ Biohub Chicago launch.

Photo courtesy of Chan Zuckerberg Initiative (CZI)

center in the heart of Fulton Market with the support of our local university and workforce talent, and I cannot wait to see what sort of groundbreaking advances in biomedical research will result from this endeavor.”

Turning Concepts into Companies

Outside of the CZ Biohub, Northwestern University, the University of Illinois and the University of Illinois Chicago are also part of a research collaboration known as the Chicago Biomedical Consortium (CBC).

Launched in 2006, more than \$76 million has been invested in CBC initiatives to date, resulting in more than 323 awards granted, over 2,715 research papers published, six national research centers established, and over \$920 million dedicated to research funding.

One of the CBC’s most recent wins is the creation of the Chicago Biomedical Consortium Hub for Innovative Technology and Entrepreneurship in the Sciences (CBC-HITES), one of only 13 hubs in the National Institutes of Health’s Research Evaluation and the Commercialization Hub (REACH) program.

“Building on infrastructure developed by the CBC, the new REACH hub connects Chicago medical scientists with the expertise and network they need to develop their ideas into biotech applications,” said primary investigator Satish Nadig, MD, PhD, director

of Northwestern’s Comprehensive Transplant Center, chief of organ transplantation in the Department of Surgery, Edward G. Elcock Professor of Surgical Research and professor of Microbiology-Immunology and Pediatrics. “The goal is to get innovative treatments from discovery to patient delivery faster, and we needed a way to teach medical inventors about that process. We’re helping patients and expanding the Chicago-based life sciences ecosystem at the same time through this unprecedented collaborative effort.”

Housed in Northwestern Medicine’s Comprehensive Transplant Center, CBC-HITES will provide access to product development education, industry connections, project management and seed funding necessary for development. Medical researchers at nine Chicago-based institutions are eligible to participate: Northwestern University, The University of Chicago, The University of Illinois Chicago, The Discovery Partners Institute, Illinois Institute of Technology, Loyola University Chicago, Northern Illinois University, Rosalind Franklin University and Rush University.

Backed by an investment of \$10.4 million, CBC-HITES offers two funding opportunities, including “early” awards (up to \$75,000) for projects that need an enabling experiment and “late” awards (up to \$250,000) for more progressed projects. 🍌

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Where Quantum Science is PERFECTED

by MARK AREND

On July 25, Palo Alto, California-based PsiQuantum, a maker of quantum computers, announced plans to build a 300,000-sq.-ft. Quantum Computer Operations Center at a former U.S. Steel site on the south side of Chicago. It will be the anchor project for the Illinois Quantum and Microelectronics Park, which “will catalyze the state’s highly developed quantum ecosystem, including the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), the University of Chicago, the Chicago Quantum Exchange, Argonne and Fermi national labs and DARPA, the U.S. Department of Defense’s Advanced Research Project Agency and others,” according to the company, which plans for about 150 employees at the facility.

Solutions for Critical Industries

PsiQuantum plans to build the first U.S.-based utility-scale, fault-tolerant quantum computer at the site.

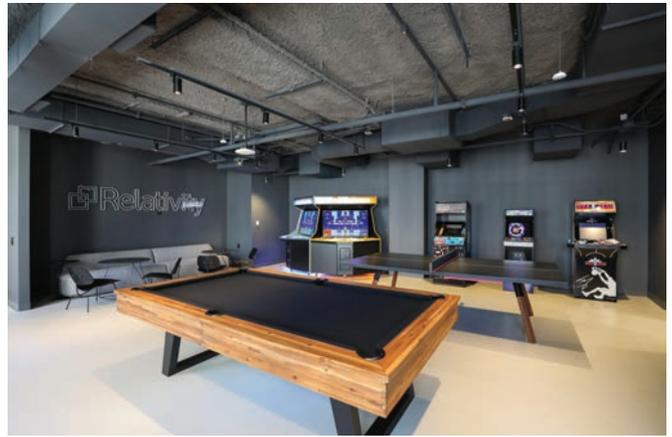
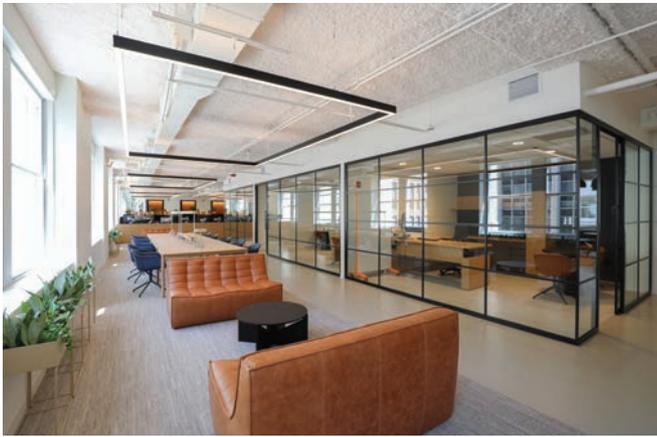
“It is widely acknowledged that a utility-scale quantum computer

will need on the order of 1 million qubits, a number necessary to achieve the critical threshold for quantum error correction,” the company explains in a release. “The commissioning of such a system will enable highly precise answers for computational problems that can never be solved by conventional computers. Illinois’ critical industries — including agriculture, pharma, energy, materials, financial services and manufacturing — should all benefit significantly from these quantum computing capabilities.”

Quantum computing may be an emerging technology, but it’s already well established in Illinois, particularly in Chicago. The Chicago Quantum Exchange (CQE), based at the University of Chicago’s Pritzker School of Molecular Engineering, is the Midwest’s leading affiliation of universities and national laboratories — Argonne National and Fermi National Accelerator — dedicated to sharing research and engineering expertise to advance quantum science.

Rendering of the Illinois Quantum and Microelectronics Park.

Photo courtesy of Lamar Johnson Collaborative, PsiQuantum



Relativity recently moved into new HQ offices at 231 South LaSalle in Chicago. Relativity is a global legal technology company.

Photos courtesy of Relativity

One of CQE’s roles is leadership of The Bloch: End-to-End Quantum Solutions at Scale, better known as The Bloch Tech Hub, a consortium of research universities, technology companies and others that combined form a regional quantum information science and technology ecosystem that’s one of the most robust in the country. In fact, it’s robust enough to have been designated one of 31 inaugural Tech Hubs by the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration (EDA). Such a designation, according to the agency, “is a strong endorsement of a region’s plan to supercharge a critical technology ecosystem and become a global leader over the next decade.”

The Illinois Fermentation and Agriculture Biomanufacturing Hub, or iFAB, led by the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign,

also was designated a Tech Hub by the EDA. In July, the program awarded iFAB \$51 million to support its mission to be a global leader in biomanufacturing and precision fermentation.

‘Innovation Powerhouse’

Governor JB Pritzker is a leading advocate for Illinois’ leadership in cutting-edge technology. “I couldn’t be prouder that the Biden Administration has selected The Chicago Quantum Exchange’s the Bloch and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign’s iFAB Hub as two of just 31 inaugural tech hubs — opening the door for even more investment, advancement, and discovery,” he said when the Tech Hubs were announced. “There’s no doubt that the rest of the nation have caught on to our great state’s status as an innovation powerhouse — and our future

couldn’t be brighter.”

In June, the governor signed an omnibus bill that, among other measures, creates a Quantum Enterprise Zone to support a proposed quantum campus. That campus is becoming reality.

“Quantum computers have held theoretical promise for decades, but it’s infrastructure projects like the Illinois Quantum and Microelectronics Park that are required to develop this technology and scale from hype to reality,” said PsiQuantum CEO and Co-founder Professor Jeremy O’Brien at the project announcement. “Governor Pritzker and Illinois understand what’s needed to unlock quantum computing’s potential, and we’re thrilled to partner with them and anchor the state’s quantum strategy with the first utility-scale quantum computer in the United States at this iconic location.” 🇺🇸



Illinois Gets Picture Perfect

To grow an established film industry, one must advance along with the diverse needs of production, and Illinois is doing just that.

In many ways, the state has solidified its place as a darling for industry professionals. Film and television giants Apple TV+, Disney, FX, HBO Max, NBC, Netflix, Warner Brothers and 20th Century Fox for example find themselves returning to Illinois year after year to deliver blockbuster hits.

While there is no doubt in the availability of scenic, physical shooting locations across the Prairie State, its state-wide portfolio must include an array of soundstages that afford unique advantages to the life of any film or television production. In heeding the call, Governor JB Pritzker and the

Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) announced a crisp \$10 million would be awarded to three studio projects throughout the state in February 2024.

“This is the first time DCEO’s Film Office has had a grant program specifically aimed at film and TV soundstage infrastructure,”

says Illinois Film Office Director Peter Hawley.

“Illinois is on track to make film a billion-dollar industry. Good infrastructure — stages and crews — are necessary to getting there. The Illinois Soundstage Capital Grant is a signal that the State of Illinois is committed to the long-term success of the film industry and ensuring soundstages are available for productions.”

The Illinois Soundstage Program awardees

by **ALEXIS ELMORE**

FX’s “The Bear” began filming in Chicago in 2021, going on to win 10 Emmy Awards in 2023. Photo courtesy of FX

included The Field Studios (\$5 million), Fresh Films (\$3.8 million) and Flyover Film Studios (\$1.1 million).

Of the three, Fresh Films has had firm roots in the state for over 20 years, based in the Quad Cities community of Rock Island, Illinois. The Fields Studios and Flyover Film Studios are representative of the new kids on the block, albeit each project's developers are far from green in terms of film and television industry expertise.

Set For Take-Off

Two years ago, Shatterglass Films Co-Owner Jennifer Shelby gained first-hand experience working on a movie shot in and around Champaign County's Village of Rantoul. A warm welcome and readiness to support the project from the community and Village administration alike made for a lasting impact.

Flyover Film Studios emerged in Champaign County soon after. Shelby, Luke Boyce and Brett Hays of Shatterglass Films partnered with The Line Film Company's Sarah Sharp and Rob Stern and Dustin Hoke of Dustin Hoke Services. All now have set out to ensure East Central Illinois has the infrastructure in place to drive production in the region.

The team found a location that had all the characteristics to allow this dream to take flight. The former Chanute Air Force Base, located in Rantoul, came ready-made with more than six acres to build upon and 290,000-sq.-ft. of interior space in Hangar One, accompanied by 40-foot ceilings.

"The funding from the Illinois Soundstage

Grant Program will be a huge boon to our project," says Shelby, who now serves as president of Flyover Film Studios. "It was thanks to the grant that we were able to move our project completion date to the fall of 2026."

Prior to the arrival of grant funding, initial work on the studio consists of building out production offices, standing sets and organizing supplies and equipment offerings. Standing sets include an array of settings such as a police station, classroom,

For every dollar invested by the state there is a \$6.81 overall return on investment, Olsberg SPI found in its recent study 'Economic Impact of the Illinois Film Production Services Tax Credit.'

bank lobby and a real commercial plane. With the \$1.1 million award in place, Flyover will move forward with the construction of four soundstages across 100,000 sq. ft and include additional mill space for crew. Initial plans were made for only two soundstages, Shelby states that the additional two will allow the studio to accommodate more productions.

"Not only will the stage development attract productions, but the entire infrastructure of vendors, crew members, locations, background actors and more

Flyover Film Studios is revamping a former Air Force base into a new production studio. Photo courtesy of Flyover Film Studios



Economic Impact of Illinois Film Tax Credit (2017-2022) Amount (\$USM)

Direct Impact	1,946
Indirect Impact	621
Induced Impact	1,038
Total Gross Value Added	3,606

that we are building will continue to make Central Illinois a more sought-after destination,” says Shelby. “When you partner all of this with a place that offers vast amounts of free or low-cost parking, highly affordable permits and a trained work force, we will be hard to beat.”

Flyover Film Studios encompasses the space and capacity for all types of film and television productions, including commercials and music videos. It will also provide the region’s universities and colleges an opportunity to carry out film projects in partnership with Flyover Film Studios.

“The main purpose of Flyover Film Studios is to offer movie makers the physical space needed for filming and simultaneously ensure they have the support needed for filming in a non-traditional area for the industry,” says Shelby.

About two hours north in Chicago, Knickpoint Studios has officially opened doors to The Fields Studios. Home to nine soundstages across 132,000 sq. ft. and more than 350,000 sq. ft. of production and office space, this massive purpose-built studio was awarded \$5 million through the Illinois Soundstage Program.

The funding will be used toward the construction of interior spaces within the studio’s main building. Once complete, the project looks to welcome a number of local, independent vendors to the space to service the needs of productions operating here.

Fresh Films has plans to use its \$3.8 million grant funding toward the construction of its new \$12 million film studio in Rock Island County. The project is anticipated to break ground in early 2025, though a specific site within the county has yet to be announced. According to Fresh Films, it will introduce studio space and training center. As of now plans include two 20,000-sq.-ft. soundstages, mill space, production support spaces and a training stage.

“The studio will serve as a catalyst to diversify the local economy, not just in job creation for local talent but also in how it can

attract professionals from the entertainment industry, spurring the growth of related businesses and services which adds to the overall financial health of the community,” said Fresh Films Founder and Managing Director Kelli Feigley. “The grant is an investment in economic growth, cultural enrichment, and community development, with far-reaching benefits for the Western Illinois region and for the State of Illinois.”

Come One, Come All

Much of the movie magic that has commenced throughout the state since the early 2000s can be attributed to the growth of the Illinois Production Services Tax Credit.

An uncapped, 30% transferable tax credit on eligible expenditures, with an added 15% for salaries paid to underrepresented Illinois-based crew, has been a gamechanger solidifying Illinois as a sought-after film destination.

Research conducted by creative industries consultancy Olsberg SPI showed that the overall impact of the film tax credit cannot be overstated. Without it, only 6.4% of current production expenditure would be active. The study states that the other 93.6% can be attributed directly to the incentive’s presence.

From 2012 to 2022, the tax credit supported an average of 261 projects a year, a production expenditure of \$404 million in that period. Data concluded that for every dollar invested by the State resulted in a \$6.81 overall return on investment.

Since 2022, Illinois legislative amendments to the state’s film tax credit have resulted in raising the credit’s salary cap from only covering the first \$100,000 of Illinois resident salaries to now covering the first \$500,000 for qualified resident and nonresident salaries.

In a more recent move, the passage of HB 5005 will now allow game shows, competition shows and national talk show productions to qualify for the Illinois Production Services Tax Credit. 🎬



Tourism and hospitality are big businesses in Illinois, and Governor JB Pritzker intends to keep it that way. In October 2023, he and the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) announced two tourism grant programs worth \$15.4 million to support and enhance tourism-related projects, events and festivals across the state. The \$10.8 million Tourism Attractions Grant Program funds improvements to tourism attractions so they will increase their economic impact. The \$4.6 billion Tourism Private Sector Grant Program helps organizations attract and host events and festivals. Private entities must match grants awarded by DCEO.

“As our tourism industry continues to bounce back from the pandemic, I’m happy to announce another \$15.4 million in tourism funding so we can keep breaking records and displaying Illinois values of resilience and strength on an international scale,” said Gov. Pritzker when announcing the grants.

Twenty local tourism organizations around Illinois were recipients of the Tourism Private Sector Grant Program. Among other events, the funds helped support the Enjoy Illinois 300 NASCAR Cup Series race in Madison and the Formula 1 Powerboat Racing Championship in Alton, on the Mississippi River, in June.

Swim, Bike, Run in Rockford

Such funding is also helping bring the world-renowned IRONMAN triathlon to Rockford

Tourism Grants Make All of Illinois a Destination

by MARK AREND

— its first ever appearance in Illinois. DCEO is awarding an \$800,000 grant to the Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau so the city can host the IRONMAN 70.3 Rockford-Illinois triathlon taking place from 2025 to 2027. DCEO says the event will attract nearly 3,000 athletes and 15,000 visitors for each race and will have an economic impact of roughly \$45 million.

“Rockford has shown itself to be a charming midwestern destination city with an abundance of outdoor recreation,” said Eric Atnip, race director for the event, in a June 24th release naming Rockford as the host city. “We are excited to partner with Go Rockford to offer this exciting new option on the North American IRONMAN 70.3 circuit for our many dedicated athletes. We can’t wait for athletes to come experience this welcoming community and see what makes Rockford so special in 2025.”

Meanwhile, hotel revenues reached a record nearly \$308 million in Fiscal Year 2023, which is

Tri-City Speedway in Granite City, Illinois, is a popular racetrack for drivers and motorsports fans alike.

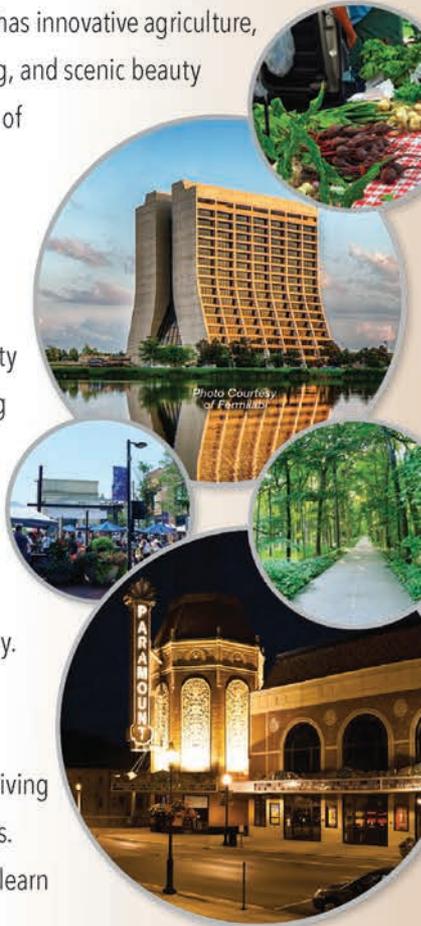
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“The record growth in international visitors is a testament to the strength of Illinois’ tourism industry.”

— Kristin Richards, *Director, DCEO*

higher than the pre-pandemic record reached in 2019. Illinois welcomed 111 million visitors in 2022 — 14 million more than in 2021. DCEO also tracks visitors’ spending. They spent \$44 billion in 2022, or 91% of what they spent in 2019.

Passport Control

In 2023, according to DCEO, 2.11 million international visitors came to Illinois, adding nearly \$2.7 billion to Illinois’ economy.

“The tourism sector plays a vital role in Illinois’ economy, driving job creation, economic growth and supporting our small businesses and communities across the state,” said DCEO Director Kristin Richards, announcing the numbers in May. “The record growth in international visitors is a testament to the strength of Illinois’ tourism industry and its ability to attract visitors from around the globe.”

DCEO reports that the top five markets for visitation to Illinois in 2023 included Canada, Mexico, India, the United Kingdom and Germany. According to its analysis:

Canada emerged as the leading market for international visitation, with an impressive increase from 425,000 to 627,000 visitors, representing a substantial 48% growth.

Overseas visitors (defined as visitors not from Canada and Mexico) also showed significant growth, surging from 963,000 visitors in 2022 to 1,347,000 in 2023, marking a 40% increase.

India demonstrated substantial growth in visitors to Illinois, with an increase of 55% from 2019 to 2023.

Mexico contributed to the upward trend, with visitation numbers climbing from 164,000 to 183,000, reflecting a notable 12% rise.

Illinois attributes much of the success of its tourism and hospitality industry to its “Middle of Everything” tourism campaign, which it launched in 2022. Data from Longwoods International says the campaign has resulted in 2 million additional trips and \$1 billion in tourism-related spending. 🇺🇸

Diverse Opportunities and Vibrant Communities

Why Illinois is the right place for you.

by LINDSAY LOPP

Sam Vadalabene Bike Trail, Alton.
Photo courtesy of Illinois Office of Tourism

Whether it be young professionals, families or businesses looking for where to relocate next, Illinois is often at the top of the list. The state's diversity, from its landscape to its economy to its people, is undoubtedly one of its strongest selling points.

For instance, Chicago, one of the largest cities in the country, boasts world-class cultural institutions, a dynamic food scene, and bustling business districts. Yet, only a few hours away, one can find charming small towns like Galena, mid-sized, more family-friendly cities such as Peoria and Rockford, and a vast expanse of rivers and forests ready to be explored.

This unique blend of urban

excitement and rural tranquility gives Illinois the ability to cater to projects of varying sizes and people of differing passions. In 2023, the state secured 552 business expansion or relocation projects, earning a No.2 ranking in Site Selection Magazine's Governors Cup for the second year in a row. Many of the attributes attracting business also contribute to the state's excellent quality of life.

Education

One of Illinois' cornerstones is its top-tier academic system. Ranked No.2 in Education in CNBC's 2023 Top States for Business report, the state is home to some of the best public and private schools in the nation, ensuring that residents have access to superior educational

opportunities from kindergarten through college.

The University of Illinois system, with campuses in Urbana-Champaign, Chicago, and Springfield, and Northwestern University, located in Evanston, are leaders in research and innovation, attracting students and industry partners from around the globe.

These institutions, along with Illinois' extensive community college system, not only supply the state with a highly skilled workforce but continue to open doors for its citizens to explore good-paying careers in various sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, energy, finance, technology, health care and film. Illinois' diverse economic environment provides ample



The Chicago Theater.

Photo courtesy of Halle Busby Photography

opportunities for its residents to pursue their desired career pathways.

Affordability and Access

For those looking to stretch their dollar further, Illinois offers many mid-sized cities and small towns where the cost of living is significantly lower while still in close proximity to major cities.

In the southern region of the state, cities such as Alton, Edwardsville, and Belleville are less than 30 minutes away from St. Louis, Missouri. Boasting highly rated school systems, scenic views of the Mississippi River and thriving economies, these areas provide residents with the benefits of urban living without the high price tag, making them ideal for families and individuals seeking a more economical and slower-paced lifestyle.

The same can be said for the communities within the Greater Chicago area. Like the rest of the state, these communities differ from town to town. Situated on the shores of Lake Michigan, Waukegan offers affordable living with scenic views and various outdoor activities. While slightly more expensive than other suburbs, Naperville is still a more affordable alternative to living in Chicago while boasting a similar energetic downtown area.

Though the prices and atmosphere may vary, one thing stays the same throughout the state: the convenience of a central location in close proximity to many major cities.

Determination to Grow

These advantages, combined with the state's robust infrastructure, incentives, and industry networks, have led to consistent year-over-year growth. As more companies and individuals relocate to Illinois, the state's leadership is committed



Main Street Galena.

Photo courtesy of Illinois Office of Tourism

to building on this momentum, reinvesting the success back into its communities, and further enhancing their appeal.

In August 2022, Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity awarded \$106 million in grants from the Rebuild Illinois Downtowns and Main Streets Capital (RDMS) program to 50 communities.

Launched through Rebuild Illinois State capital funds and further expanded by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), the grants support projects that will revive and refresh commercial hubs, beautify and modernize downtowns, address critical infrastructure needs, boost jobs and improve residents' quality of life.

Initially created to accelerate economic recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic, this program continues transforming cities and small towns statewide. In April,

the RDMS program announced its second round of funding. A total of \$20 million will be available for projects, as well as an additional \$10 million in Research in Illinois to Spur Economic Recovery (RISE) grants.

"We empower our communities by connecting people with the resources they need to make the changes they want to see," said Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton. "Downtown spaces are hubs for connection; people want to spend time together in public spaces when those spaces are clean, functional, and vibrant."

With awards ranging from \$250,000 to \$2 million, by working in tandem, these programs are poised to elevate local economies in a myriad of ways. While a project eligible for RDMS funding must be located in a commercial center or downtown area, the objective can range from modifying roadways, parking and public way improvements, investments

in parks and venues or plazas for public use to sustainability upgrades, structural repairs and mixed-use or transit-oriented development.

RISE recipients may include capital and non-capital projects such as water, sewer, or broadband infrastructure, investment in affordable housing, local workforce development programming, retrofitting or renovating facilities and buildings, investment in site readiness for business development, and tourism promotion programming.

"Supporting our downtowns and Main Streets is essential to maintaining strong communities across Illinois," said Senator Karina Villa (D-West Chicago). "The hearts and souls of our neighborhoods are often found in our local city centers, and the RDMS and RISE grant programs will accelerate economic growth that will be felt for years to come." 🍷

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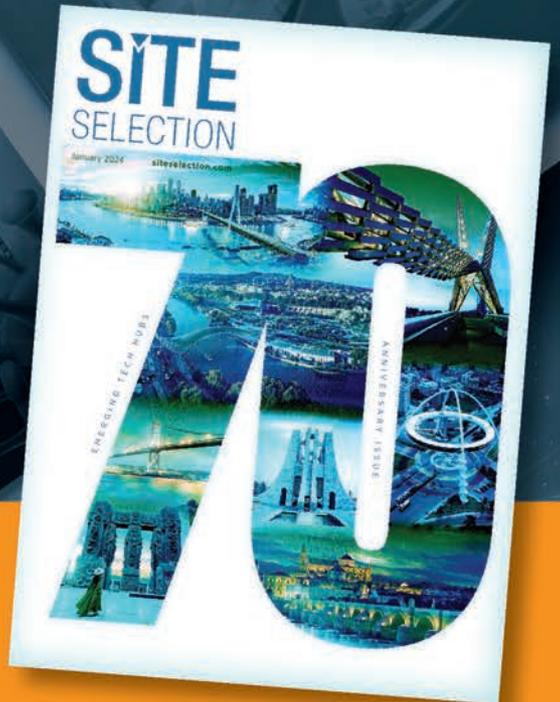
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