



# **Lincoln/Logan County Development Partnership**

## **Annual Report for 2014**



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Our Lincoln/Logan County Development Partnership (LLCDP) office would like to update you on what has been a productive and busy 2014 program year.

Our job is to improve the overall economy of each community and area within Logan County. To do so, we began the year by identifying four strategic areas on which our work would focus:

- **New Business Creation:** Attracting and establishing new businesses.
- **Business Retention/Expansion:** Retaining/sustaining existing businesses and helping them expand.
- **Workforce Development:** Improving the quality of our county's workforce in order to meet the needs of our area's employers.
- **Community Capacity Development:** Increasing the ability of individual communities to strengthen and expand their own economic bases.

Next, we set specific goals to help achieve the aim of each strategic area that had been identified. Each goal was broken down into specific tasks, so progress could then be tracked and measured.

Following is an update describing what our LLCDP office has done during 2014, including a forecast of next steps we plan to take in 2015.

### 1. Strategic Focus: New Business Creation

#### Goal 1: Advance Current/Ongoing Countywide Projects Designed to Attract/Establish New Businesses

##### Task 1 - Provide Economic Development Information/Support for Wind Farm Projects in the County

Two wind farm projects continued to be developed in the county during 2014. The most promising of the two is the one being done by the Italian firm, Relight. Based on meetings and conversations with Relight's new U.S.-based representative, the company has stated its intention to have the project operational by or before 12/31/15. Our office has provided Relight with resource information regarding sales tax credits, real estate tax information, and assistance in meeting with county officials. The second project is being done by American Wind Energy Management Corp (AWEM). The communications we have had with AWEM's representative do not lead us to believe that it is progressing as steadily as the Relight project.

**Next Steps:** Regular communications will continue with Relight to assist them with information, resources, or whatever else is needed to move this wind farm project forward.



## Task 2 – Assist with Implementation of Lincoln’s Portion of the 5th Street Road Project

One of the first projects undertaken during 2014 was to work with City of Lincoln officials and representatives from Prairie Engineers to identify a set of next steps that needed to be taken in order to carry out the long-standing 5th Street Road project. This was done throughout March and April, concluding with the development of a timeline that detailed specific milestones and those responsible for achieving them, in order to begin construction work on the project during the summer of 2016. Funding, with the exception of one element, is in place for the project. Work was completed to review options for filling this funding gap, including applying for a federal Economic Development Assistance (EDA) grant, a state-level Economic Development Program (EDP) grant, and having the City of Lincoln issue bonds. The EDP grant option was eliminated because the project would not generate enough new jobs to meet EDP grant requirements. Based on the last communications had with City officials, it is likely that the bonding initiative will be pursued. Prairie Engineers is no longer working on the project. The timeline has been completed, and it is in the hands of City officials to carry out.

**Next Steps:** If requested, our office will provide additional assistance to help carry out the steps included in the timeline for this project.

## Task 3 - Assist with Implementation of Logan County’s Portion of the 5th Street Road Project

Our office worked with County Engineer, Bret Aukamp, to determine if the County's portion of the 5th Street Road project qualified for inclusion in the CEDS comprehensive strategy document (the CEDS document identifies projects in the five-county Economic Development District of which Logan County is a part that may qualify for Federal funding). It was ultimately decided that the County's portion of this project would not generate sufficient new jobs to qualify it for inclusion in the CEDS document.

**Next Steps:** Continue working with Bret Aukamp to identify possible new projects to propose for inclusion in the CEDS plan.

## Task 4 - Finalize Electric Aggregation Renewal Process with Logan County Communities and County Board

From March through June, our office worked with the Illinois Community Choice Aggregation Network (ICCAN) to monitor the electric supply market in order to make a recommendation to Logan County municipalities and the County Board regarding whether or not to participate again in the electric aggregation program. A series of meetings were held in several communities and the County Board to keep them updated on the possible options. By late June, it became clear - given the supply price Ameren was going to be able to offer – that the best recommendation to members of the ICCAN group that they go back to Ameren as their suppliers for a 12 month period.



**Next Steps:** Continue to communicate with ICCAN throughout 2015 in order to provide a new recommendation to ICCAN communities and the County Board based upon the electric supply market when the renewal period comes around again next July.

## **Goal 2: Leverage Opportunities to Attract and Establish New Business in Logan County.**

### Task 1 - Assist Each Logan County Community with attracting New Businesses.

Atlanta – The City of Atlanta assumed responsibility for the USDA Rural Business Enterprise Grant originally received by the Partnership in 2010. Our office provided support in transitioning the grant from the Partnership to the City of Atlanta. The project in Atlanta originally planned for construction of a professional services facility, with a focus on providing incubator space for an emerging professional healthcare practice. Due to the withdrawal by the original physician who had exhibited an interest in establishing a practice in the incubator, the City of Atlanta has decided not to move forward with a healthcare focused incubator and is now working to determine how best to continue with the incubator project. Our office also provided assistance to help establish two new businesses in Atlanta: the Pistol Prep Academy and The Colaw Rooming House tourist attraction. Finally, our office worked with the newly formed Atlanta Economic Development Commission to put in place a marketing/development plan for land located at the Interstate 55 interchange.

**Next Steps:** Work with the City of Atlanta to map out a new plan for utilizing the USDA RBEG grant. Also, continue to help the City respond to any inquiries regarding development of the Interstate 55 interchange area.

Elkhart – Met with business owners and city officials on 11/13/14 to listen to their current needs/challenges, plus brainstorm ideas for new business development. In the process, our office provided information regarding the services and resources we offer to existing businesses and as assistance in developing new businesses.

**Next Steps:** Continue to meet with business owners and community leaders in Elkhart in order to help meet their economic development needs.

Latham - Met with Mayor of Latham to conduct a review of current businesses/services in town and think through possibilities for development.

**Next Steps:** Work with the Mayor to determine if the City would like to conduct a brownfield assessment project designed to determine if there are any brownfield properties/sites in the City that could be the target of a grant application to fund cleanup of the site in order to make it more attractive for development. Also, offer to conduct a Business/Community Development meeting with Latham business owners and city officials similar to the Elkhart meeting conducted on 11/13/14.

Lincoln - Throughout the year, our office provided resource information to interested parties regarding available industrial sites and the establishment of new businesses in Lincoln. Information



provided related to projects involving: purchase of the former PPG plant for two different new businesses; establishment of a new IT security consulting firm, development of a new taxi service; creation of a cigar store/lounge; establishment of a medical marijuana cultivation center; establishment of a leather craft business, and creation of a veteran's rehabilitation center.

In addition, our office responded to requests for support by the Mayor of Onarga, Illinois who works for a firm interested in exploring the possibility of establishing a treatment center for troubled youth at the former Lincoln Developmental Center. Our office touched base with the City of Lincoln to ensure it knew of this contact. Mayor Snyder indicated the City thought it best to wait until after the November elections to be in touch again.

**Next Steps:** Continue to respond to all requests for information/support received from individuals or firms interested in establishing new businesses in Lincoln. Also, follow-up with the mayors of both Onarga and Lincoln to determine the best way to move forward with Onarga's interest in a project at the former Lincoln Developmental Center.

### Task 2 - Leverage Tourism to Help Attract New Logan County Businesses

Our office provided assistance to the owners of The Colaw Rooming House and Pistol Prep Academy in Atlanta to design and develop marketing plans and materials.

Our office established a relationship with the Mt. Pulaski Courthouse Foundation in order to assist with its efforts to increase tourism there by restoring the courthouse.

Our office reached out to the new Director of the Logan County Tourism Bureau in order to establish a relationship that works to leverage opportunities to create new tourist related businesses throughout Logan County.

Our office hosted a meeting of tourism, community, and convention & visitor's bureau representatives at a 12/3/14 meeting to discuss the possibility of a group being formed to specifically promote the stretch of Rt. 66 that runs from Bloomington south to Sherman, Illinois – with the aim of helping these communities enhance their ability to leverage Rt. 66 for economic development purposes.

The Interim Ex. Director of our office accepted an appointment to a national Rt. 66 Steering Committee charged with creating a new organization that would promote, preserve, and help bring prosperity to all of Rt. 66 across the nation.

**Next Steps:** Continue to work with the Logan County Tourism Bureau to leverage our office's regional and national Rt. 66 connections in order to increase tourism in Logan County.



## **2. Strategic Focus: Business Retention/Expansion**

### **Goal 1: Advance Countywide Projects Designed to Help Retain/Sustain Existing Businesses**

#### **Task 1 – Ensure Involvement of Manufacturers Throughout the County in the EDD-sponsored "Supply Chain Diversification" Project.**

The Economic Development District (the five-county economic development group of which Logan County is a member, and which maintains the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy – CEDS project) received a grant in 2014 designed to look into the creation a network of like-minded manufacturers that could work together to identify and develop ways they can expand their markets and production capabilities. Specifically, the project was designed to help manufacturers identify:

- New markets for existing products
- New product opportunities
- Access to support resources and information
- Access to technologies
- Joint venture opportunities

Countywide manufacturers included in the supply chain project were: Eaton Corporation, ADM Alliance Nutrition, Inland Tool Company, International Paper Company, Ardagh Group

(Bottling factory), Heritage Packaging, Shew Custom Woodworking, and Precision Products. Moving forward, the EDD will work to set up a new clearinghouse of information designed to help manufacturers throughout the five-county region work more closely together to purchase products from each other, enter into new joint ventures, and work to expand their markets.

**Next Steps:** Continue to work with the EDD to ensure Logan County-based manufacturers benefit from the network being put into place as a result of the Supply Chain Diversification project.

#### **Task 2 – Ensure Involvement of Businesses Throughout the County in the EDD-sponsored "Business Retention" Project.**

The EDD also received a grant in 2014 to fund a series of “Business Retention” visits throughout the five-county group. Our office worked to include six different Logan County Businesses [3 in Lincoln & 1 each in Atlanta, Mt. Pulaski, and Emden] in this project, which was designed to provide free business consultation services. In particular, the project helped participating businesses identify specific steps they could take to improve, enhance, or stabilize their businesses.

**Next Steps:** In 2015 our office will follow-up with each of the participating businesses to determine if they need any resources, information, etc. If the Business Retention project is funded again in 2015, our office will work to ensure businesses from across our county are included.



Task 3 - Assist Each Logan County Community with Retaining – Sustaining - Expanding Its Existing Businesses.

Atlanta – Our office provided support to the City in helping expand the Casey’s General Store to its new location at the Interstate 55 interchange. Our office also worked with the management of the Atlanta Inn in their efforts to become branded as an Econo Lodge project.

**Next Steps:** Work with the Atlanta Betterment Fund’s Arch Street Artisans shop to investigate ways in which it might expand in order to develop a second shop location, bringing on additional artisans in the process.

Broadwell – Our office has become aware of the new Deilkes Kustom Chopper and Rod Shop located in Broadwell.

**Next Steps:** Reach out to, and work with, the owners of Deilkes Kustom Chopper and Rod Shop to leverage Rt. 66 marketing/development opportunities.

Lincoln - Heritage Packaging project: In March, our office began hosting a series of meetings with the Heritage Packaging Company, located on 5th Street Road, and the City of Lincoln regarding the company’s plans for expanding the size of its factory. To do so, Heritage Packaging needed to expand its water/sewer system, which involved having the property on which the factory sits annexed into the City of Lincoln. Meetings continued through June, during which time an annexation agreement was drafted and approved by Heritage Packaging and the City. Once the water/sewer extension work is

completed, Heritage Packaging will be positioned to nearly double its factory size and bring on a number of new employees.

**Next Steps:** Continue to communicate with Heritage Packaging throughout 2015 to provide any additional assistance it may need, particularly in terms of workforce development.

Mt. Pulaski – Throughout the year, our office assisted the corn cob processing plant located just east of Mt. Pulaski, that is owned by The Andersons, LLC, with its desire to improve truck access off Rt. 121 into their manufacturing facility. Contacts were made with IDOT to research grant support, such as the "Truck Access Route Program" (TARP) or other programs that could provide financial support for adding a turn lane to Rt. 121 in order to address traffic concerns. Also worked with The Andersons, LLC regarding the possibility of using a small, triangle-shaped parcel of land just west of the corncob plant's property as a staging ground for its trucks. Ultimately, the Andersons, LLC determined that the triangle-shaped parcel would not work as a solution to its traffic-flow issue, as the property has been designated as a brownfield site.

**Next Steps:** Investigate status of property to the east of the corn cob processing plant to see if it could be used as a staging areas for trucks waiting to enter the grounds of the corn cob processing plant.



### 3. Strategic Focus: Workforce Development

#### **Goal 1: Meet the needs of area employers by Increasing the Number and Scope of Programs Providing Workforce Development Opportunities to Logan County Communities.**

##### Task 1 - Identify and Provide County-wide Manufacturers and Businesses with Programs/Services to Develop their Workforces via "ATIM" - the Accelerated Training for Illinois Manufacturing Program Administered by Illinois Dept. of Commerce and Economic Opportunity

Our office helped design, develop, and carry out a 9-week long ATIM workforce development training program. The program was conceived following a series of meetings and on-site interviews our office coordinated with representatives from various Logan County manufacturers, including: Eaton Corporation, Inland Tool, Heritage Packaging, International Paper, Ardagh Group (bottling company), Precision Products, and ADM Alliance Nutrition. The meetings/interviews were designed to identify the workforce needs of our county's manufacturers in order to create a customized training program that would help meet those needs. Meetings were then held with representatives from the Illinois Workforce Development System, Heartland Community College, the ATIM program, and the Land of Lincoln Workforce Alliance resulting in a collaborative effort to design and implement a Certified Production Technician training program. The

program was successfully implemented, with eight participants graduating and receiving CPT certificates on 11/18/14.

**Next Steps:** In 2015 our office will continue to leverage the collaborative group (HCC, ATIM, Workforce Alliance, Manufacturers Council, etc.) in order to design and develop additional training programs focused on meeting the workforce needs of Logan County manufacturers.

##### Task 2 - Sustain and expand the agricultural sector of the County's economic base by initiating programs that focus on ag-related workforce development and support for young entrepreneurs interested in getting into agriculture.

Our office began to investigate the needs and opportunities related to meeting the workforce needs of the agricultural sector of Logan County's economic base during 2014. We attended a Field Day at PrairEarth Farms, south of Atlanta, to learn more about sustainable agriculture and network with representatives from the University of Illinois, The Land Connection, Iroquois Valley Farms, LLC, and others involved in sustainable agriculture. In order to begin putting together a network of resource people who could help with the efforts of our office to focus attention on workforce development for the agricultural sector of our county, meetings were held with David Bishop, owner/operator of PrairEarth Farms and Betsey Pech, former ag. teacher from Hartsburg/Emden High School. A meeting was also held with Dr. Andrew Wise, superintendent of Olympia CUSD



16, and Mr. Ed Jodlowski, Olympia HS principal to introduce the idea of working together on agricultural workforce development.

**Next Steps:** Work with representatives of Iroquois Valley Farms, The Land Connection, PrairEth Farms, Mrs. Pech to further develop a set of specific resources that can be made available to younger individuals interested in beginning their own farm operations.

#### **4. Strategic Focus: Community Capacity Development**

**Goal 1: Increase and enhance the ability of individual communities in Logan County to sustain and expand their own economic bases.**

##### Task 1 – Respond to requests from Logan County communities regarding local economic development projects.

Atlanta – Our office helped draft language for the ordinance adopted by the Atlanta City Council to establish a new Atlanta Economic Development Commission for the City. We also helped the AEDC recruit, hire, and begin to work with a development firm that is putting together a marketing plan for the Interstate 55 interchange area at Atlanta.

**Next Steps:** Continue to provide support to the AEDC on an as-needed basis.

Latham – Work with the Mayor of Latham to determine if funding from the State for “brownfield development” is something the city wishes to use as a

way of jumpstarting economic development in Latham.

Lincoln – Our office has assisted the committee working to establish a “CEO” (Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities) program in Lincoln/Logan County. Our office facilitated a meeting with Bob Bagby, Andrew Wise (Olympia Superintendent) and Ed Jodlowski (Olympia H.S. Principal) to provide Mr. Wise and Mr. Jodlowski with background information on the CEO program and invite Olympia to participate in the program. Mr. Wise introduced the idea of Olympia participation in the CEO program at the 10/14/14 Olympia school board meeting. The idea was unanimously adopted.

**Next Steps:** Approach area manufacturers to introduce the CEO program and attempt to solicit their support to help financially underwrite it.

Mt. Pulaski – Our office has provided assistance to the Mt. Pulaski Courthouse Foundation’s fundraising campaign to restore the courthouse and enhance its ability to attract tourists. We provided assistance/resources regarding: strategic planning, grant sources, and fundraising processes.

**Next Steps:** Continue to provide resource assistance to help the Mt. Pulaski Courthouse Foundation achieve its fundraising goals.



Task 2 – Conduct meetings and interviews with community representatives and business owners to identify the current ways in which they work individually or collectively on economic development. Then, identify appropriate resources, information, and/or assistance to provide Logan County communities in order to assist them with community-specific economic development projects, focusing primarily on: TIF assistance, marketing assistance, Business District development assistance, establishing economic development commissions, establishing Historic Commissions, grant resources/writing, State of Illinois resources, etc.

Elkhart – Our office met with a group of local business owners and community representatives on 11/13/14 to identify shared interests and goals for developing their local economic base. Our office also invited Sarah Wallick, from the Logan County Tourism Bureau, to join us.

**Next Steps:** Continue to meet with business owners and community leaders in Elkhart in order to help meet their economic development needs.