



One Voice 2009 Projects

McLean County Business Incubator

Issue: Funding for the construction of the McLean County Business Incubator and One-Stop Business Development Center

Request: \$2 million

Background: A strategic planning committee commissioned by the Economic Development Council of the Bloomington-Normal Area identified the development and establishment of a business incubator as a key strategy in assisting local businesses to grow and prosper in the Bloomington-Normal area. Illinois State University is working with the EDC and local communities to establish this incubator/research park to assist local entrepreneurs and apply research created at the university to potential commercial uses. The incubator will be one part of a network of business assistance programs, which will include Illinois State University-affiliated campus organizations that have economic development or research interests. It is also envisioned that other regional and local economic development organizations would be located in the business incubator/university research park.

It is envisioned that the McLean County Business Incubator will assist these clients:

- Aspiring entrepreneurs
- Existing small to medium-sized business owners
- Researchers with the potential to develop commercial enterprises at Illinois State University

Illinois State University received a \$250,000 grant from the Small Business Administration for the feasibility study and planning of the incubator. This is a follow-up request for funding for the construction of the incubator.

Multi-Modal Transportation Center

Issue: Funding for construction of the Normal Multi-Modal Transportation Center

Request: \$10 million

Background: The centerpiece of a comprehensive uptown revitalization effort by the Town of Normal is a Multi-Modal Transportation Center to be located in the heart of the uptown. The center is designed to not only serve the residents of the Town of Normal, but also enhance and provide access to public and private transportation for the residents of Bloomington, McLean County and the region. The center will provide transportation access to the city bus system; regional, interstate and charter buses; passenger

rail service; airport shuttles; taxis; park and ride facilities and pedestrian connections to the uptown, Constitution Trail and the Illinois State University campus.

The center will also include space for a variety of transit user services, including an eatery, retail shops and other public uses, such as a community center and offices for non-profit agencies requiring convenient access to public parking and transit services for their clients.

The project is included in both Metropolitan and State Transportation Improvement Programs. Illinois Department of Transportation, Amtrak and the Union Pacific Railroad all support the project and have been involved in the facility design process.

McLean County Museum of History

Issue: Funding to renew the exhibit, "Encounter on the Prairie"

Request: \$750,000

Background: The McLean Historical Society is an Illinois Not-for-Profit Corporation that operates the McLean County Museum of History and conducts educational programs and operates a library within the Museum. The organization serves nearly 35,000 people a year in the Central Illinois region. It raises its annual support and revenue of \$1,100,000 from private sources (70%) and through local governmental support (30%).

In 1992, the Museum opened a 5,000 sq. ft., national award-winning exhibit titled "Encounter on the Prairie." The exhibit took four years to develop and cost, at that time, nearly \$1,000,000. The exhibit views McLean County as a place of cultural encounter. Since opening, over 320,000 people have viewed the exhibit. The exhibit is now 16 years old. The galleries are worn. The artifacts on display need conservation. Most importantly, the technologies used to teach, distribute information and provide educational entertainment to wider audiences have fundamentally changed the nature of museum exhibitions.

Renewal of the exhibit through gallery refurbishments and digital technology enhancements will require funds at a level of \$1,000,000. These funds would be used for:

- Gallery carpeting, painting, case repairs and replacement, re-lighting, wiring - \$100,000
- Artifact conservation, artifact cleaning and restoration - \$150,000
- Gallery interactive, video/sound production and installation, intranet installation - \$200,000
- Development, design, building and launching virtual exhibit and learning website - \$300,000
- Development of educational support programs, teachers guides, predevelopment testing and evaluation - \$250,000

City of Bloomington/Village of Downs Water Project

Issue: Funding for construction to extend municipal water supply from Bloomington, Ill. to Downs Crossing

Request: \$2.1 million

Background: The Village of Downs and the City of Bloomington, Illinois, is seeking to work jointly in a water supply expansion project to promote growth in an underserved area. The project funds will be for

the extension of the 16" diameter water main from the City of Bloomington Drinking Water Supply system to "Downs Crossing," located at the southwest corner of the intersection of State Route 150 and Towanda-Barnes Road (County Highway 36).

This drinking water supply extension is needed to create jobs at "Downs Crossing." This project is also another step in the strengthening of the regional infrastructure of an envisioned regional water supply which will serve future generations.

The current users of a non-community water supply at the site include Corn Belt Energy, a bank and coffee/sandwich shop. The Village's current water supply cannot meet the demand of the development. Any additional development will require a community water supply to meet the demands and regulations for the number of water services and people at the property.

A commitment has been made by local developers to construct a combination health care and assisted living facility. The health care facility will create 28 FTE jobs. The general distribution of job types and staffing load includes, but is not limited to: Medical/Nursing – 20, Management – 1, Office Staff – 4, Maintenance – 3.

The development of Downs Crossing with this project will include advanced technology in the newest equipment in health care for the elderly. It will generate higher skilled occupations (physicians, nurses, skilled aides, etc) as well as less skilled occupations. The construction phase of the project will create an estimated 40-50 short term, construction jobs. The relocation of Corn Belt Energy Corporation to Downs Crossing was the largest job creation in the Village's history.

The cost of the water main extension is estimated, through an opinion of probable cost developed by the Village's engineer, to be \$2,100,000. The Village of Downs, through a rural development program of the USDA, was awarded a 0% loan in conjunction with the Corn Electric Cooperative for \$360,000. These funds could be utilized for the design of the water main. The Village and City are seeking funding assistance to be applied towards the construction of this water main.

MyEntre.Net Rural Entrepreneurship Program

Issue: Funding to establish a rural entrepreneurship program

Request: \$500,000

Background: Rural entrepreneurs are often removed from other entrepreneurs, especially those in the same industry. They are far from the networks, advice and resources to which urban entrepreneurs have access. MyEntre.Net surrounds rural entrepreneurs with resources (counseling from Small Business Development Center staff, access to economic development professionals, advice from retired entrepreneurs, connection to relevant state offices, etc.) such that their business can thrive and expand.

To begin their engagement in MyEntre.Net, entrepreneurs in selected counties come to a free meeting at a central location. Through an intake process, MyEntre.Net staff finds out what assistance entrepreneurs need with marketing, capital, human resources, health care or other issues. The information is then shared with service providers, and all interested entrepreneurs receive a discount for upcoming training events through relevant offices. The entrepreneurs leave feeling supported and connected.

MyEntre.Net staff and their programs “touch” each entrepreneur 6 times during a year. This includes webinars, training sessions offered in their communities, regional meetings and an on-line discussion forum. Consequently, small business owners can communicate with other small business owners, the staff of Small Business Development Centers, staff of state offices, engaged faculty at universities throughout the state and local economic development officials. These individuals, offices and agencies provide advice and link small business owners with the specific resources that will help them grow their business.

Lastly, MyEntre.Net provides an avenue for rural businesses to tap into the growth of broadband access in Illinois. Webinars and on-line discussion forums through My Entre.Net will use broadband access to further local economic development.

MyEntre.Net has existed in Iowa for 4 years. It began with entrepreneurs in 6 counties and now works state-wide. They have created a detailed manual describing the process for replication. They wish to partner with the Stevenson Center in replicating the program in this state. Illinois entrepreneurs and communities have the chance to benefit from the expansion of a tried and successful rural economic development model.

In Illinois, MyEntre.Net will be housed at the Stevenson Center for Community and Economic Development at Illinois State University. Since 1994 the Center has been providing talented community and economic development professionals to communities around the state, nation and world. Faculty and students affiliated with the Center come from 4 departments (Economics, Geography-Geology, Politics and Government and Sociology/Anthropology). They engage in direct outreach to communities through Brownfield redevelopment programs, economic impact analyses, needs assessments and grant-writing training.

Lexington Wastewater Treatment System

Issue: Funding for the City of Lexington, Illinois Wastewater Treatment System

Request: \$1.5 million

Background: The City of Lexington, population 1,920, has never had a municipal wastewater collection and/or treatment system. It is the largest community without a wastewater collection and treatment system in the state of Illinois. Currently, the residents have septic systems, owned and operated by individual property owners, and a “wild cat” type of sewer system. Each home has been responsible for its own sewage system and/or direct piping of their wastewater to the “wild cat” system, which merely transports the wastewater through an existing drainage tile system to various unpermitted discharge locations.

The Illinois EPA has noticed the City of violations of environmental statutes, regulations and/or permits found in the Environmental Protection Act. The existing conditions (lack of space and unfavorable soil conditions for septic systems, inadequate septic systems and a “wild cat” sewer system effluent contributing nutrients to surrounding creeks and the Mackinaw River) warrant immediate action.

The City has considered the probable development costs and has analyzed various means of paying for the project. An important consideration in the development of the various financing models is to

maintain a competitive cost of living for residents of Lexington as compared to the cost of living in surrounding communities. The various sources of local revenue that have been analyzed include: fixed and variable user fees, municipal utility taxes, non-home rule sales tax, tax increment finance (TIF) district and property taxes.

The property tax rate, a barometer for cost of living, ranks number six out of 21 McLean County communities. Increasing property taxes will deteriorate the attractiveness of living in the community. Similarly, user fees must be comparable to surrounding communities. Lexington has the fifth-highest water fee out of 100 communities surveyed. The City has taken steps to capture revenue from all other sources. The yield of all the options combined, in consideration of the City's objective to maintain a competitive cost of living, falls short of the necessary resources to build the project and respond to the IEPA violations.