



ILLINOIS

INVESTMENT GUIDE

2023-24



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- ✿ **Tesla** leases 660,000 square feet at Gateway Tradeport in Pontoon Beach, Illinois
- ✿ **Tyson Foods** invests \$180M in Illinois plant, will add 400 jobs
- ✿ **Southwestern Illinois College** builds \$20M manufacturing training academy
- ✿ **Illinois** invests \$105M in new SIUE healthcare education campus
- ✿ **Madison & St. Clair Counties** investing \$41M in freight infrastructure
- ✿ **NASCAR's Illinois 300 Cup Series** second annual race is a repeat sell-out

In Southwestern Illinois, seven rail-served, multi-modal access industrial sites and 2600+ acres are ready for development.



To learn more, contact Joe Dickerson, Director of Business Development at Greater St. Louis, Inc. at Joe@GreaterSTLinc.com.

*Source: Site Selection Magazine, March 2023

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ST. LOUIS INC.



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Welcome to the Middle of Everything



Dear Readers,

There's never been a better time to do business in the State of Illinois. With a thriving economy topping a \$1 trillion GDP, to unparalleled fiscal progress with eight credit upgrades in less than two years, to more state incentives available for job creators than ever before — if you are looking to locate or expand your business, look no further than the Land of Lincoln.

Illinois is in the middle of everything and we have unmatched assets: top-ranked infrastructure and transportation, a world-class workforce, and a state government that is committed to supporting job creators and companies that invest in our communities.

As part of this commitment, we recently created a new \$400 million Invest in Illinois Fund — a flexible closing fund. This is in addition to the most competitive EV and clean energy manufacturing incentives in the country through REV Illinois, comprehensive workforce support and incentives, and changes to incentives that minimize the administrative burden for companies.

In my role as Governor, I speak with a lot of companies and business leaders. I frequently hear of issues companies encounter in other states, including struggles to hire a qualified workforce or having to spend billions on infrastructure just to get up and running.

It prompts the question: Why build in the middle of nowhere when you can thrive in the middle of everything? Illinois' top-ranked infrastructure, workforce and unmatched access to global supply chains means Illinois companies can seamlessly move their products anywhere in the continental U.S., they can have their choice of turn-key megasites and begin production in record time, and they can access a built-in network of suppliers, top universities for recruitment and

training, and business ecosystems for every major industry.

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

Governor JB Pritzker

“Why build in the middle of nowhere when you can thrive in the middle of everything?”

— Gov. JB Pritzker



Photo courtesy of Illinois Public Radio





HOW ILLINOIS IS BUILDING A BETTER BUSINESS CLIMATE

From new incentive programs to unmatched market access, the Land of Lincoln leads.

by **RON STARNER**

When it comes to landing corporate facility investment projects, few states do it any better than Illinois. In fact, in 2022, Illinois finished second in the nation by winning 487 capital investment deals just one year after finishing third, according to data compiled by Site Selection magazine.

Over the last decade, Illinois has perennially performed at a top-5 state level, and it consistently ranks in the top two or three. Chicago, the

Chicago architecture is unparalleled to anywhere else in the world.

Photo courtesy of Illinois Office of Tourism

NAI Hiffman joined executives and employees of Experior Global and Transport, along with project partners and officials from the Village of Schaumburg, in a groundbreaking ceremony for Experior's new \$65 million headquarters and logistics campus on Irving Park Road in Schaumburg.

Photo courtesy of NAI Hiffman



“Our new campus will help us serve our clients better while giving us the flexibility to offer space to other firms. This location offers excellent access to local markets, downtown Chicago and points beyond.”

— Tom Dulian, CEO, Experior Global & Transport



state's largest city, has been the No. 1-ranked metro area in corporate facility performance for the entire past decade, winning yet again in 2022 with 448 projects last year.

What sets Illinois apart as a preferred destination for capital projects? The answer, of course, is multi-faceted, but it begins with the vast array of best-in-class assets found in the Land of Lincoln. According to media juggernaut CNBC, Illinois ranks second in the nation for infrastructure; second for education; sixth for access to capital; and ninth for cost of living.

Over the last four years, Illinois has improved its overall business climate ranking each time. “I couldn't be prouder that we're outpacing more and more states,” said Gov. JB Pritzker. “Over the last four years, our Rebuild Illinois Capital Plan has been modernizing our transportation systems. Our higher education institutions have become more affordable and have risen in college rankings. We've invested historic levels of funding into early childhood education and K-12 schools which now rank sixth in the nation by U.S. News & World Report. Illinois is improving our economic prospects by focusing on the long term.”

BUILD A **VIBRANT + INNOVATIVE** FUTURE IN MOUNT PROSPECT

Discover the thriving community of Mount Prospect, where opportunity and innovation converge. Nestled in a dynamic business landscape, the Village hosts visionary entrepreneurs and accomplished executives who embrace forward-thinking approaches to address real-world challenges. Mount Prospect boasts a talented workforce, complemented by top-notch public services and highly regarded schools, all centrally located at the heart of the Chicago metro region.

A mere 23 miles northwest of Downtown Chicago and minutes from O'Hare International Airport and Chicago Executive Airport, Mount Prospect is the ideal hub for both businesses and residents alike. To foster growth and success, the Village extends its unwavering support to the business community through an array of financial incentives, comprehensive marketing initiatives, and educational programs, such as the esteemed Mount Prospect Entrepreneurs' Initiative.

Experience the vibrant energy and endless opportunities of Mount Prospect. Step into a community where innovation knows no bounds and dreams find fertile ground to flourish. We invite you to join us in shaping the future together –

Experience Mount Prospect!



WHY MOUNT PROSPECT?

POPULATION

56,852

POPULATION GROWTH (2010-20)

5%

COOK COUNTY | 1.6%

MEDIAN INCOME

\$84,353

COOK COUNTY \$67,886

UNEMPLOYMENT

3.5%

COOK COUNTY | 7%

TOTAL RETAIL SALES

\$3.2B

TOTAL SALES PER CAPITA

\$40,474

COOK COUNTY | \$12,807

15 MINUTES FROM
O'HARE INT'L AIRPORT

40 MINUTES FROM
DOWNTOWN CHICAGO

SOURCE | CMAP Community Data Snapshot

SOUTH MOUNT PROSPECT TIF DISTRICT



**505 ACRE TIF DISTRICT
ESTABLISHED IN 2022**

DATA CENTER DEVELOPMENT
OPPORTUNITIES

NEAR I-90/I-294 INTERCHANGE

NEAR COMED KENT AVE. SUBSTATION

**COOK COUNTY CLASS 6B/7B
INCENTIVES**

CLOUD HQ DATA CENTER DEVELOPMENT
(1.5 MILLION SF)

**CONVENIENT TO DOWNTOWN
MOUNT PROSPECT METRA STATION**

LET'S
TALK!



BILL COONEY

Director of Community Development
847.818.5307

bcooney@mountprospect.org



Two of Exporior's six U.S. locations are in Illinois, including its new headquarters.

Photo courtesy of NAI Hiffman

Illinois has also improved its game in the ever-changing landscape of incentives. For example, earlier this year, the state significantly expanded its total offering of business incentives to encourage additional capital investment and job creation. At the forefront of this effort is an all-new \$400 million closing fund. This is discretionary cash assistance that is available for major job creators with large capital expenditures through the Invest in Illinois Fund.

Illinois Keeps its Programs Competitive

But that's not all. Among other enhancements, Illinois expanded and improved other premier incentive programs, including:

- Reimagining Energy and Vehicles (REV Illinois).
- Economic Development for a Growing Economy (EDGE).

- Manufacturing Illinois Chips for Real Opportunity (MICRO).
- High Impact Business (HIB).
- Enterprise Zone Expansion.

Illinois also extended the following programs: Illinois Angel Investment Credit; Data Centers Investment Program; Film Production Tax Credit; River Edge Redevelopment Zone Program; Blue Collar Jobs Act Tax Credit; Illinois Apprenticeship Education Expense Tax Credit; Illinois Historic Preservation Tax Credit; and the Prime Sites Capital Grant Program.

Commenting on the brand-new Illinois closing fund, the national site selection consulting firm of BLS & Co. said: "New for 2023, the State of Illinois has appropriated \$400 million for high-priority projects with funding levels at the discretion of the governor. Funds can be used to offset the upfront costs of construction, infrastructure and

site development for a project.”

Of course, incentives alone are not enough to seal a deal; nor are they usually the most important factor. And that’s where the state’s many business-friendly assets come into play. Being home to 1,900 company headquarters, including 33 Fortune 500 firms, makes Illinois a strategic draw for companies operating in highly competitive industries. The fact that Illinois is located in the heart of North America with the best Class I rail service on the continent is also a key differentiator, as is the presence of the country’s best airline service through Chicago O’Hare, Midway and other international airports.

‘Excellent Access to Markets in Chicago and Beyond’

All of these factors were key in persuading Experior Global & Transport to break ground on a \$65 million logistics campus in northwest Chicago. The project is a four-building headquarters and logistics campus at 1001 West Irving Park Road in Schaumburg. Located some 30 miles northwest of Chicago, the site is close to

several major highways including I-90, I-290 and I-355. It is also just 10 miles from O’Hare International Airport.

In 2022, ILLINOIS FINISHED SECOND in the nation by WINNING 487 CAPITAL INVESTMENT DEALS just one year after finishing third.

Source: Site Selection Magazine

“From Experior’s inception through its expansion, our company has provided excellent service in the transportation and supply chain industry by optimizing efficiency and reducing costs,” said Tom Dulan, CEO of Experior. “Our new campus will help us serve our clients better while giving us the flexibility to offer space to other firms. This location offers excellent access to local markets, downtown Chicago and points beyond.”

The new headquarters increases the number of Experior locations across the country to six. 📍

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2.79 Acres

2.78 Acres

2.64 Acres

2.65 Acres

Future Development

Future Development

Future Development

1/4 mile to I-55

Phase 1 Development 80 Acres

NORTH



Come Together

When it comes to economic growth, collaboration puts Illinois over the top.

Last December, an intriguing email landed unexpectedly in the inbox of Tony Iriti, executive director of the Jefferson County Development Corporation in Mount Vernon, Illinois. The sender was Matt Love, controller of Texas-based Manner Polymers. Love was leading his company's search for a new manufacturing location, its first outside the Lone Star State, and he wanted to take a look at Mount Vernon. Thus began a whirlwind journey that Iriti — a veteran of nearly four decades in the field — has come to call “the consummate case study for economic development.”

That's not because it was easy, but the reverse. To out-compete prospective locations in close to a half-dozen other states and thus deliver the \$54 million investment with its 60 well-paying jobs to Jefferson County would come

to require the active support of officials across three levels of government, assorted economic development boards plus local and regional utilities and other private partners. Just for good measure, Gov. JB Pritzker would sweep in at a crucial moment to help seal the deal for southern Illinois.

by GARY DAUGHTERS

“Throughout the entire process,” Love says, “city and state officials were great about quickly addressing challenges and coming up with an equitable solution to make the site work for us.”

Iriti, after his initial contacts with Matt Love, was quick to engage Intersect Illinois, the statewide hub for economic development, which took the lead in directing the site selection process and worked closely with DCEO which crafted a \$9 million incentive package.

“The state of Illinois,” Love says, “was very aggressive with their incentives compared to other states we were looking at. That was a major factor.”

But, in retrospect, it may have been the easy part. Iriti's initial challenge was to identify a site covering several dozen acres near the mainline of Union Pacific Railroad, which delivers Manner's raw materials. A local landowner agreed to sell to Manner after meeting with CEO Raj Bhargava during a formal site visit. Iriti had assembled Mount Vernon's city manager, chief engineer and other municipal officials, as well as representatives of local power suppliers and a Mount Vernon-based logistics company.

“When you can demonstrate that degree of collaboration,” says Iriti, “it helps show that you'll do whatever it takes to help them and to get them over the hump.”



“When you can demonstrate that degree of collaboration, it helps show that you’ll do whatever it takes to help them and to get them over the hump.”

— Tony Iriti, *Executive Director, Jefferson County Development Corporation, Mount Vernon, Illinois*

Bhargava raised a potential dealbreaker. He had questions about the cost of power in unregulated Illinois. Here, Mount Vernon’s Affordable Gas & Electric stepped up. Already committed to meeting a portion of the plant’s needs renewably, Manner decided that going 100% solar could be the solution to its concerns. Now planning to devote most of its property to an on-site solar farm, the company expects to break even on its green energy investment of up to \$11 million within four years.

And yet there was one more hurdle. Manner would require a 1,000-ft. rail spur to connect its facility to Union Pacific’s Mount Vernon mainline.

“When it came down to it,” says Love, “the project would not work if we did not get help on the rail spur compared to other locations.”

In another example of collaboration, the Governor’s Office and the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity came together with partners to help secure a rail spur that would connect the mainline to the new facility.

At the ceremony announcing Manner’s investment, Pritzker hailed this multi-level collaboration that helped bring the project to Illinois.

“Thanks to the coordination of

state and local officials creating policies to help grow our economy, companies like Manner Polymers are making their way to the Land of Lincoln to take part in our growing manufacturing ecosystem and clean energy revolution.”

Says Iriti: “We started out with nothing. Our competitors were offering free land and rail spurs and cheaper power. We didn’t have that, and we worked our way through it together. That’s why,” he says, “I truly believe this was a case study in collaboration.”

New Collaboration

Launched by Gov. Pritzker in March, Innovate Illinois is a statewide push to take that collaborative spirit to a whole new level, with a potential prize of federal funding in the many millions of dollars for advanced technology and green energy sectors. The Innovate Illinois coalition is a public-private partnership tasked with coordinating the state’s efforts to secure funding through the CHIPS and Science Act, the Inflation Reduction Act and the Infrastructure and Jobs Act.

“With the formation of Innovate Illinois,” said Pritzker, “we are launching a first of its kind effort to bring federal dollars to Illinois and strengthen the state’s long-term

economic vitality for generations to come. We are uniquely positioned,” the governor said, “to leverage our innovation hubs, public and private universities, and national laboratories to provide 21st century opportunities for our state’s workers, scientists, and businesses.”

Some of Illinois’ most preeminent institutions are all in. They include World Business Chicago, Intersect Illinois and the state Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, backed by business leaders and the academic heft of the University of Illinois system, the University of Chicago, Northwestern University and the state’s community colleges. Another key partner is P33, a privately funded non-profit focused on driving inclusive technology and innovation.

“Illinois has always distinguished itself by leading on many of the most cutting-edge, challenging challenges of our time,” said Brad Henderson, CEO of P33. “With this coalition, we believe Illinois will extend its leadership in critical areas like quantum computing, energy storage and biotechnology in ways that will include the full diversity of leaders and contributors in our state.” 🍷



‘Being in the Middle of Everything Helps’

The adage of ‘location, location, location’ rings true in Illinois.

Chicago skyline from Montrose Point Bird Sanctuary.
Photo by Ashleigh Porter

by **RON STARNER**

When Texas-based Manner Polymers announced that it will invest \$54 million to build a factory in Mount Vernon to make polymer compounds used in electric vehicles and solar panels, the news only confirmed what everyone has been witnessing in Illinois for the past two years.

These are record-setting times for economic development in the Land of Lincoln.

Illinois finished 2022 ranked second in the nation for total corporate facility investment projects while the state’s biggest city, Chicago, ranked first among all metro areas in the nation.

It was all part of a record-

strong year on multiple levels for Illinois. Long known for its global leadership position in innovation and entrepreneurship, Illinois also recorded its best year in history for venture capital invested in the state — at \$10 billion.

These accomplishments are no aberration, either. For the past decade, Chicagoland has outperformed every other MSA in the nation in new plants and expansions. Illinois as a state is a perennial top two or three performer and has been for well over a decade.

For an insider’s perspective on this wave of investment, we turned to Dan Seals, CEO of Intersect Illinois, a public-private partnership that focuses on global business attraction for the state.

What do you think were the four biggest economic development project wins of the past year in Illinois?

DAN SEALS: Quebec-based Lion Electric just opened its new electric school bus plant in Joliet. They started working on that project two years ago. It covers 900,000 square feet and will employ around 1,400 skilled workers. It is expected to have a manufacturing capacity of 2,500 all-electric buses by the end of this year. To see that site go from nothing to what it is today — the largest commercial EV plant of its kind in North America — is amazing.

Another big win for us was LG Chem of South Korea. They announced last year that they

would invest to build two new bioplastics plants in Illinois. They are working with ADM to come up with more sustainable products. That is a Korean manufacturing company that decided to choose Illinois because the chemical manufacturing workforce in the area is so strong.

Manner Polymers out of Texas was another huge win for Illinois. What won the CEO over was having lunch in the town. He likes to go incognito when he visits places. He walked around a town in another state and didn't like how he felt there. Here, he liked the way he was treated in Mount Vernon. He even built a 15-acre solar field to help power the company.

Ollie's Bargain Outlet created 145 jobs and invested \$16 million to set up a distribution center in Illinois. I

like this story. The City of Princeton has been working to get the site ready for the right project for years. It is a small town on Interstate 80, but they are playing the long game. In this case it paid off, because due to their advance work, Ollie's was able to move quickly on the deal.

How has Illinois improved its overall business climate over the past several years?

DAN SEALS: The big picture is getting our fiscal situation back under control. The Governor and the Legislature made some big moves in that area. Aggressive new incentives have been passed too. We have a \$400 million closing fund for cash grants. REV Illinois is big for EV and battery projects; and our new MICRO Act is big for

semiconductors.

Thanks to EDGE (Economic Development for a Growing Economy) and our improved fiscal condition, we can commit more resources to incentives. We have been proactively going out there and telling our story. Our largest delegation recently attended a major trade show event in the UK. That is evidence of this sort of lean-in proactive approach from the Governor on down.

Illinois once again ranked second in the nation for corporate facility expansion projects in 2022, and metro Chicago finished first.

What are the primary factors that are responsible for these accomplishments?

DAN SEALS: Being in the middle

With miles of advanced, fiber-dense network infrastructure, 2 million WiFi hotspots, residential internet speeds up to 6 Gbps, commercial internet speeds up to 100 Gbps, and programs that have connected more than 1.6 million low-income Illinoisans to the internet at home, Comcast is Illinois' economic development partner.

Contact us today at economic_development@comcast.com to learn how we can partner to meet your connectivity needs.





A Lion Electric school bus like this one will soon be built at a brand-new manufacturing plant in Joliet.

Photo courtesy of Lion Electric

of everything helps. When you are at the center of the nation's infrastructure, there is not a better place for getting your product out to customers. All of our major transportation assets are managed well and effectively. CNBC talked about our excellent infrastructure in its recent Best States for Business rankings.

The other key asset is our skilled workforce. We get high rankings for our educated workers and our community colleges. That allows us to do a lot of value-added manufacturing. That is our bread and butter for most of our growth. Life sciences combine with that really well. We are a leader in medical manufacturing and distribution.

That has been at the heart of the success we have had, but I think we can do better. Telling our story is an important part that has been missing. I don't think that Illinois has typically done a great job telling our story. A lot of other states with a lot less to offer are talking. It is time that we start talking about what we do well.

What are the top two or three priorities of Intersect Illinois over the next 24 months?

DAN SEALS: A big one is Vetted Sites. Utilities, rail companies and highways — let's identify the best sites we have. Let's figure out where rail spurs and substations go on each site, and then let's market

those sites. We have already started that process. We have identified the first tranche of megasites. I want to finish building out that program over the next several months.

Second is international growth. We just came back from the UK. We also hosted the Midwest-Japan Conference in Chicago. Lion Electric is a Canadian company. The UK, Canada and Japan are the three biggest foreign investors in Illinois. I want to engage with them more to bring even more foreign direct investment into Illinois.

The third priority is to tell our story more.

Innovation and entrepreneurship have long been strong suits of Illinois.



“A lot of other states with a lot less to offer are talking. It is time that we start talking about what we do well.”

— Dan Seals, CEO, Intersect Illinois

What is happening on this front these days in your state?

DAN SEALS: There is a lot going on here. Chicago had \$10 billion of venture capital invested here last year — a new record. Several emerging sectors are creating new business leaders in new areas. The Chan Zuckerberg Initiative chose to invest \$250 million in Chicago for its Biohub. Chicago won with the University of Chicago, Northwestern and the University

of Illinois all collaborating in the life sciences space. Industrial fermentation is taking off. That is where agriculture meets biotech. We are seeing that applied to fuels, eliminating plastics and other areas. All are showing growth in Central Illinois. Quantum technologies is another emerging sector here. We have a critical mass of quantum computing capability in Chicago. We are seeing a lot of startups in that space. UK ventures are coming here because of that.

This also helps in communications and advanced manufacturing.

Finally, water is starting to become part of our value proposition. As we continue to see extreme weather, we recognize that we are sitting on the world’s largest supply of freshwater. That water is a vital resource to our quality of life and businesses. Semiconductor firms need it. We are seeing water become a big issue and a major strategic advantage for Illinois. 🌊

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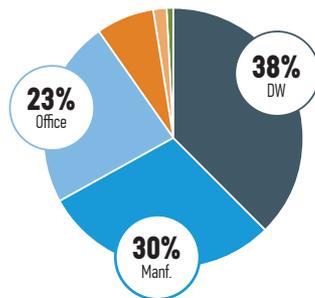
Illinois by the Numbers



Top 20 Projects of 2022

COMPANIES	CITY	SECTOR	CATEGORY	INVESTMENT	JOBS
Walmart	Belvidere	Consumer Products	New	1,200	
Edged Energy	Aurora	IT & Comm.	New	500	
The Kraft Heinz Co.	DeKalb	Food & Beverage	New	400	150
Cyrusone	Aurora	IT & Comm.	Expansion	250	
Norfolk Southern Corp.	Chicago	Transport & Logistics	Expansion	150	
Experior Global Warehousing	Schaumburg	Transport & Logistics	New	65	
Prysmian SPA	Du Quoin	IT & Comm.	Expansion	64	80
Manner Polymers	Mount Vernon	Chemicals & Plastics	New	54	60
PCI Pharma Services	Rockford	Life Sciences	Expansion	50	250
Gulfstream Aerospace Corp.	Cahokia Heights	Aerospace	Expansion	29	200
North Star Pickle	Lake Zurich	Food & Beverage	New	15	25
Illinois-American Water Co.	Jerseyville	Waste Mgmt	Expansion	15	
Bonnell Industries	Dixon	Machinery, Equip. & Const.	New	11	
YR Media	Chicago	Business & Financial Services	Expansion	10	
Wozniak Industries	Bedford Park	Metals	Expansion	9	19
JGS Lake Zurich West	Lake Zurich	Metals	New	9	8
Carlisle Construction Materials	Greenville	Machinery, Equip. & Const.	Expansion	8	
All Rite Spring Co.	Spring Grove	Automotive	New	4	
DOT Foods	University Park	Food & Beverage	Expansion	2	40
Coinflow Labs	Chicago	IT & Comm.	New	1	
Gotham Greens Pullman	Chicago	Food & Beverage	Expansion	1	

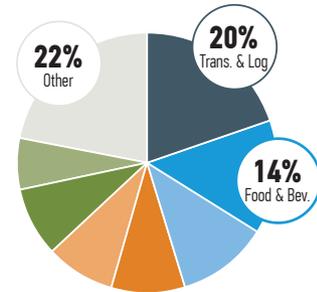
Top Projects by Type 2023 YTD



TYPE	PROJECTS
● Distribution Warehouse	47
● Manufacturing	37
● Office	29
● Headquarters	9
● Data Center	2
● Research and Development	1

Source: Conway Projects Database

Top Projects by Sector 2023 YTD



SECTOR	PROJECTS
● Transport & Logistics	21
● Food & Beverage	15
● Machinery, Equip. & Const.	12
● Business & Financial Services	10
● Consumer Products	9
● IT & Comm.	9
● Life Sciences	7
● Other	23

Quick Facts for Illinois



No. 2

in the nation with 487 corporate facility expansion projects in 2022.

Source: Site Selection



No. 1

metro area in the nation last year was Chicago with 448 corporate facility projects.

Source: Site Selection

500

33

Fortune 500 headquarters.

Source: Intersect Illinois/
Fortune magazine



18th

largest economy in the world.

Source: Intersect Illinois

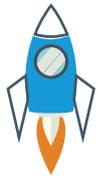
Startup Epicenter



760

startups launched from Illinois universities over the past 5 years.

Source: Intersect Illinois



In 2022, Illinois startup companies raised more than

\$10.3 B

Source: Intersect Illinois

Education taken Higher



No. 5

data center destination in the world



247

higher educational institutions



The University of Illinois graduates more engineers each year than Stanford, Caltech, and MIT combined.



25k

25,000 tech companies, employing 250,000 people.

For the Long Haul



No. 3 largest Interstate highway system in the U.S.



No. 2 Largest rail system in the U.S.



No. 1 state in the U.S. for nuclear power



Transitioning to 100% clean energy by 2050

Home to Success



2,000 Global Companies



Labor force of 6.47 million people



No. 8 Best State to Start a Business in 2023 – Forbes



1.2 million Small Businesses



5th largest GDP in the nation, **18th** largest economy in the world



Photo: Getty Images

Illinois REVs Up Development with New Incentive Program

DCEO Director shares insights into how the state has improved its business appeal.

by RON STARNER

If you're looking for a good example of how Illinois supports economic development, you need look no further than the announcement Gov. JB Pritzker made in Du Quoin. Joining with local leaders and partners, he announced the awarding of a new incentives package that enabled Prysmian Group to break ground on a \$64 million facility expansion in cable manufacturing for the renewable energy and electric vehicle sectors.

The incentives is coming from the new Reimagining Energy and Vehicles in Illinois (REV Illinois) program that subsidizes private capital investment into EVs and renewables. The help from the state is paving the way for Prysmian to add 100,000 sq. ft. and 80 new jobs in Southern Illinois while retaining the 225 employees who currently work there.

"This expansion will produce cutting-edge, high-quality, sustainable products that not only help enhance the grid — by increasing reliability, preventing blackouts and reducing overall maintenance costs," said Andrea Pirondini, CEO of Prysmian Group North America. "Ultimately, we will ensure we have the capacity needed, when it is needed, in order to ensure we can build an electrical grid that's built for the future. As we work to help harden the grid across the U.S., Du Quoin will play a large role in that."

Headquartered in Milan, Italy, Prysmian produces cables and systems for use in the energy and telecom sectors. Prysmian is the largest cable producer in the world, with 30,000 employees and \$16 billion in annual sales revenue. The 140-year-old multinational firm has 28 plants in North America, 48 in Europe, 13 in Latin America, 13 in Asia-Pacific, and seven in Africa, Turkey and the Middle East.

The North American Group of Prysmian is based in Highland Heights, Kentucky, and oversees all continental manufacturing, eight distribution centers and six R&D centers. More than 6,000 associates are employed by Prysmian across North America, where the firm registers net annual sales of \$6 billion.

Kristin Richards, director of the Illinois Department of Community and Economic Opportunity, said REV Illinois made the deal in Southern Illinois possible. "REV Illinois is already changing the way we do business in Illinois by providing competitive incentive packages to companies that share the state's commitment to building a clean energy economy," she noted. "Prysmian Group's groundbreaking represents another positive step forward toward building up the clean energy ecosystem in Southern Illinois by creating jobs and investing in the community."

We recently caught up with DCEO Director Kristin Richards for a more in-depth discussion of Illinois' economic development performance and the ways in which the state supports it.

Illinois set an all-time record in 2022 by securing more than \$1 billion in total capital investment from companies receiving EDGE funds. What has Illinois done to create this momentum of positive economic growth in the state?

KRISTIN RICHARDS: Illinois' world-class infrastructure, workforce and prime location in the middle of everything have always been a draw for businesses and a foundation for the \$1 billion milestone and other achievements, such as reaching \$1 trillion in GDP for the first time in 2022.

In addition to our world-renowned assets, we're making

positive strides due to collaboration. The DCEO team works closely with local officials, utility companies and other important stakeholders to maximize incentives, benefits and workforce support at all levels of government in order to attract and support companies. Our team-centered approach to bringing important decision-makers together early in the site selection process is key to Illinois' success.

Gov. Pritzker recently signed into law the implementation of a new \$400 million deal-closing fund for Illinois. How will this new incentive help DCEO close deals?

KRISTIN RICHARDS: Illinois has more business attraction tools at its disposal than ever before — and businesses are taking notice. Momentum is on our side and our pipeline has grown exponentially over the past year.

The Invest in Illinois Fund is an important incentive designed to close the deal with major job creators, but it's also beneficial because it sends a powerful message: Illinois is dedicating significant resources to business attraction and is a serious contender for large-scale projects. The Illinois General Assembly working together with Governor Pritzker to provide resources for a closing fund is a signal that leadership in this state is laser-focused on winning large capex and job creators, and providing the tools needed to do so.

The Great Lakes are the world's largest natural supply of freshwater. How can Illinois capitalize on this asset in its economic development strategy and marketing?

KRISTIN RICHARDS: DCEO is uniquely suited to work with our region's industry, research, innovation and entrepreneurship



“Our team-centered approach to bringing important decision-makers together early in the site selection process is key to Illinois’ success.”

— Kristin Richards, Director, DCEO

communities to leverage the economic potential of the blue economy. It is critically important that we not only view the Great Lakes as an asset that improves the quality of life for residents of the region, but in this age of climate change and water scarcity in so many regions of the U.S., a stabilizing force for companies that locate in Illinois. This comes down to collaboration, ensuring existing programs and resources are leveraged. For example, ensuring stakeholders are aware of available workforce program support, incentives and grant opportunities offered.

Mount Vernon has been the site of multiple project wins of late. From Continental Tire’s \$129 million expansion to Manner Polymers bringing a \$54 million investment to town from Texas, this small Southern Illinois city is firing on all cylinders right now. What’s happening to make the Southern Illinois region such magnet for industrial success?

KRISTIN RICHARDS: Southern Illinois is a great place to do business. A lot of that comes down to our workforce, capital investments and program investments. For Manner Polymers, we were able to secure the company location through REV Illinois, but also because DCEO has been giving economic development tools that enabled us

to make investment in a new rail spur that will benefit the whole area. This is an example of a win that resulted from our economic development strategy, which is to work closely with companies and localities to tailor incentive packages to meet their needs.

Prysmian Cables in Du Quoin also announced its expansion, which was supported by REV incentives. The company has facilities across the globe under consideration for expansion, but they chose Illinois because of our incentives, infrastructure and workforce.

Many communities in Southern Illinois are undergoing energy transitions. This transition is an economic development opportunity. The state is fully committed to ensuring our world-class workforce has the tools it needs to succeed in the clean energy space. This includes investing more than \$180 million in clean energy workforce and community development programs, investments in advanced manufacturing training centers, and other workforce programs.

The revitalization of the south Chicago neighborhood of Pullman has become a big success story in Chicagoland. How did this happen?

KRISTIN RICHARDS: Pullman is a great example of revitalization and how government entities can

support economic development. It went from being a large brownfield to becoming a renewed manufacturing and distribution hub in an area of Chicago with historical significance in those industries. The transition has happened over many years, but one thing is certain: The city and the state collaborated closely in support of revitalization.

The Pullman success story is a great example of one of the many uses for megasites, which the state has focused on as a growth area with the recent launch of a \$40 million grant program.

What makes Illinois a national leader in infrastructure?

KRISTIN RICHARDS: Rebuild Illinois — the state’s \$45 billion 5-year capital investment plan — has given DCEO the ability to access resources to drive specific company needs, which would not be possible without the partnership of the Governor and the General Assembly.

An example is our \$21 million in funding for the City of Decatur and Richland Community College to build a first-of-its kind research and innovation facility and training program in partnership with TCCI — an EV supplier which received the state’s first REV Illinois agreement. This kind of capital investment grows the overall ecosystem, incentivizes businesses to expand or locate in Illinois, and helps boost our workforce. It’s a

win-win for companies, higher ed, communities and Illinois.

What emerging industries are poised to take off and grow exponentially in Illinois in the coming years?

KRISTIN RICHARDS:

With companies reshoring, Illinois expects to see growth in advanced manufacturing,

EVs and clean energy manufacturing, distribution and food processing. Given Illinois' world-class location and infrastructure, companies that manufacture in Illinois know that they can distribute products anywhere in the world with ease. That serves as a major draw.

Illinois is also a leader in emerging tech, specifically quantum. Illinois is home to

the first quantum-focused accelerator in the U.S. and two of the five new National Quantum Information Science Research Centers in the country. Illinois has invested \$200 million in the quantum industry. Illinois is a world-class quantum hub; we definitely expect to see the industry grow. 🇺🇸

Arlington Heights

Illinois

- Population: 78,000
- Average Annual Household Income: Over \$100,000
- Annual Retail Sales: Over \$1.5 Billion
- Top 10 Chicago Area Employer
- 3,000 companies with over 50,000 employees
- Direct Access to I-90 and I-290/I-355 (via IL-53)
- 15 Minutes to O'Hare International Airport
- 15 Minutes to Chicago Executive Airport
- Home to two of Metra's most-boarded stations



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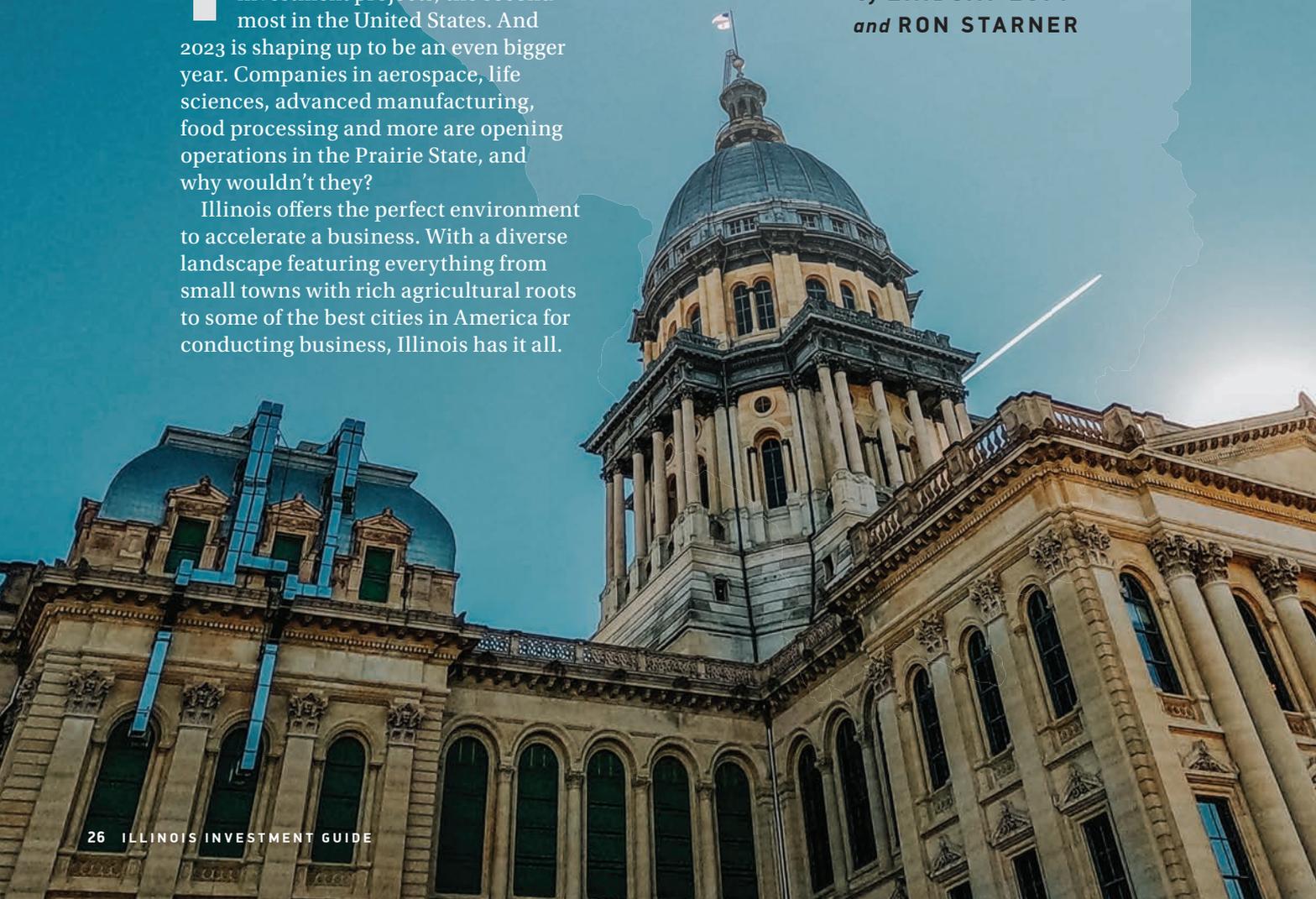
TOP 10

A road trip through the region's recent expansion projects.

Industries across the board are flocking to Illinois. In 2022, the state amassed 487 capital investment projects, the second most in the United States. And 2023 is shaping up to be an even bigger year. Companies in aerospace, life sciences, advanced manufacturing, food processing and more are opening operations in the Prairie State, and why wouldn't they?

Illinois offers the perfect environment to accelerate a business. With a diverse landscape featuring everything from small towns with rich agricultural roots to some of the best cities in America for conducting business, Illinois has it all.

by **LINDSAY LOPP**
and **RON STARNER**





Central Illinois

Central Illinois is about to get a whole lot sweeter. Last March one of the fastest growing ice cream brands in the nation, Tillamook County Creamery Association, announced that it was establishing operations in Decatur, Illinois. This will be the company’s first manufacturing facility outside of Oregon and its only location dedicated to ice cream production.

“Opening this Illinois manufacturing location will enable us to make more of our ice cream closer to the eastern U.S., where demand for our ice cream is growing fast. In the last year, we’ve added 1.6 million households and grown ice cream sales nearly 60% in the eastern U.S.,” said Mike Bever, executive vice president of operations at TCCA. “Ultimately our continued growth is a ‘win’ for who and what matters most to us. It allows us to continue to generate meaningful profits for our farmer-owners, create growth and well-being opportunities for our 900+ employees and to give back to the communities where we live and work. Now we get to welcome Decatur into that valued group.”

Previously, the Decatur plant was owned and operated by Prairie Farms, who also utilized the space for ice cream production until early 2022. Tillamook plans to spend \$50 million on upgrades and expects the facility to be operational by October 2024, creating 45 new jobs. A press release from the city of Decatur also revealed that the company plans to acquire property adjacent to this project for future expansions.

“Tillamook is a fantastic company that will fit in perfectly here,” said Economic Development Corporation of Decatur-Macon County President Nicole Bateman. “It’s no surprise they selected Decatur for expansion due to our strong business climate, affordable utilities and excellent location with access to a huge base of

new customers in the Midwest.”

Tillamook isn’t the only food manufacturer expanding in Decatur. In 2022, Archer Daniels Midland (ADM) announced a \$300 million investment to double production at its Decatur factory. Construction is expected to finish in early 2025. Alongside this project, the company also plans to open a new protein innovation center in Decatur.



North Central

North Central Illinois is manufacturing all of your fall favorites. From candy to pumpkin pie, companies in this region make family traditions taste great.

While all of Illinois is known for its impact on American agribusiness, the village of Morton stands out among the rest. Known as the Pumpkin Capital of the World, 85% of canned pumpkin consumed in the United States is processed at the local Libby’s cannery, which is owned by Nestle.

To celebrate the beginning of canning season, Morton has hosted its annual Pumpkin Festival for 56 years. Activities such as Libby’s Pumpkin Weigh Off, pie eating contests, parades, carnival rides

and a 10k race draw in over 75,000 guests each year.

With Ferrero’s latest expansion in Bloomington, some of Halloween’s most popular candies are now produced in North Central Illinois. As one of the largest chocolate and confectionery companies in the world, Ferrero is famous for manufacturing sweet treats like Nutella, Tic Tac, Butterfingers and CRUNCH products.

“Central Illinois sits in the heart of our nation, so it’s only fitting that it serves as the heart of Ferrero’s North American operations: CRUNCH, 100 Grand, Raisinets, and now Kinder Bueno, all made right here,” said JB Pritzker, the Governor of Illinois, when Ferrero broke ground on its new Kinder Bueno production facility in November 2022.

The company has invested \$214.4 million into this expansion, which is expected to create 200 new jobs.

“Ferrero’s expansion here shows why Illinois is the hub of America’s food and confections industry. Our incredible workers and world-class infrastructure are fueling innovation and growth,” said U.S. Senator Dick Durbin. “We thank Ferrero for making our state their chocolate manufacturing home in America — these investments are playing an important role in Illinois’ continued economic success.”



Morton Pumpkin Festival princesses
Photo courtesy of Enjoy Illinois



Thermo Fisher Scientific, located in Rockford, has been producing fine chemicals and biologicals for over 50 years.

Photo courtesy of Thermo Fisher Scientific

Northern Stateline

The Northern Stateline is a hotbed for healthcare. Many of the region's largest employers, such as Bond Drug Company of Illinois, Mercy Health System and Freeport Regional Health Care Foundation, are affiliated with the life sciences industry.

Many of the universities scattered across the region supply this industry with a pipeline of skilled workers. The University of Illinois College of Medicine in Rockford boasts several renowned educational programs including its Doctor of Medicine, Master of Science in Medical Biotechnology and Rural Health Professions programs. Northern Illinois University in DeKalb also offers a variety of in-demand life sciences undergraduate and graduate programs including Biomedical Engineering, Nursing and Medical

Laboratory Sciences.

Following PCI Pharma's latest expansion in Rockford, 250 new jobs will be introduced within the next two years. The company, which operates as a biopharma contract manufacturing partner, revealed in March that it was investing \$50 million to expand its existing plant in Rockford, increasing its capacity for injectable drug-device combination products.

According to the press release, an additional 200,000 sq. ft. facility will be constructed on the property. The new build will feature more than 20 customer suites that will include multifunction machines capable of assembling and packaging vials, prefilled syringes, auto-injectors, and pen-cartridge combinations.

"The need for injectable drug-delivery device combination

product capacity and expertise is critical, and we are responding with a world-class facility to address the future demands of our global clients so they can focus on developing therapies to improve the lives of patients with serious chronic conditions," said Salim Haffar, CEO of PCI Pharma Services.

Thermo Fisher Scientific, another well-known pharmaceutical company, also boasts a location in Rockford. This branch of Thermo Fisher's operations specializes in bulk manufacturing capabilities and is ISO 9001 certified, which is acceptable for many bulk manufacturing projects. At this location the chemicals and biologicals producer manufactures and packages over 2,000 Thermo Scientific Pierce products.



Northwest

If you've ever visited the Quad Cities, then you know what Northwest Illinois is all about: tremendous quality of life, made possible by hardworking people who keep the wheels of commerce turning in the heart and soul of Middle America.

Anchored by the communities of Moline, East Moline, Rock Island and Silvis on the Illinois side, the Quad Cities are to Illinois what the Twin Cities are to Minnesota — the quintessential nature of the state. One reason this area is booming is because it offers the best tax-free financing option in Illinois.

The Quad Cities Regional Economic Development Authority was established by an act of the Illinois General Assembly. The bill set up the QCREDA as a general development agency for Henry, Knox, Mercer, Rock Island, Carroll, Lee, Whiteside, Jo Daviess and Stephenson counties.

The agency has been around for 30 years and during that time has produced record-breaking success. Augustana College, Isotech of Illinois Inc., Steel Warehouse Inc. and Whitey's Ice Cream Manufacturing are just a handful of the many entities that have expanded over the years due to the financial assistance of QCREDA.

But that's not all that's occurring in Northwest Illinois. Other regional hubs include Ottawa, Sterling, Dixon and Galena. Each is a vibrant community boasting abundant resources for families and employers alike. It's no wonder that John Deere, Kone, Arconic, Bunge, Cargill and Exelon call this region home. With a population of half a million and a workforce of 250,000, plus higher-ed institutions like Augustana, Western Illinois University and Trinity College of Nursing, employers can readily

find the talent and skills they need to thrive.

It also helps that Northwest Illinois facilitates commerce with a superior transportation network. Interstates 39, 74, 80 and 88 connect the region to surrounding states and form the crossroads at the heart of the country. Three Class I railroads and one Class II railroad serve the community; the Quad Cities International Airport connects daily to many other regional air hubs; and the Mississippi River offers the area

two competitive ports — one on each side of America's most important inland waterway.

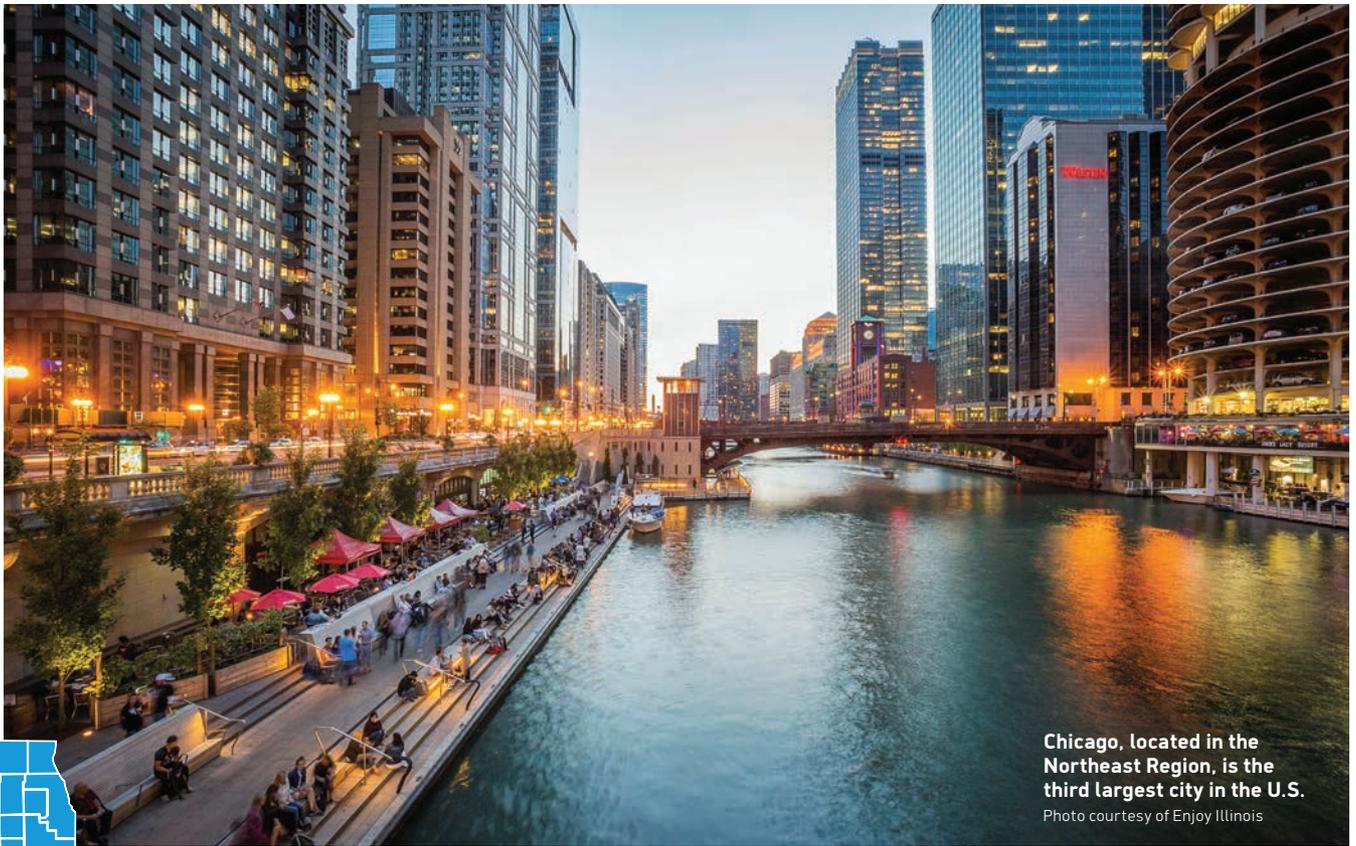
These are just a few of the reasons why so many companies in agriculture and farm equipment, defense manufacturing, advanced materials, and logistics and warehousing call this region home. In fact, 150 Fortune 1000 companies do business in Northwest Illinois.

The resources and tax assistance of QCREDA work daily to increase that tally.

Kayaking in the Quad Cities

Photo courtesy of Enjoy Illinois





Chicago, located in the Northeast Region, is the third largest city in the U.S.
Photo courtesy of Enjoy Illinois

Northeast

Chicago, an epicenter of economic activity, culture and community, has set the precedent for success in this region. From finance and technology to life sciences to food manufacturing, industries across the board thrive throughout Northeastern Illinois.

Chicago's booming business climate has certainly influenced the cities and small towns in the surrounding area. Each year, numerous expansion projects are announced throughout the region. In 2022, 448 corporate facility investment projects were announced in the Chicago-Naperville-Elgin metro, earning the area its ranking as the No. 1 Metro in the United States by Site Selection magazine. This July, Site Selection magazine also ranked two counties in Northwest Illinois among the Top 10 in the nation. Cook County, with 231 investment projects, tied with Harris County, Texas, for No. 2 and

DuPage County, with 91 investment projects, was listed at No. 9.

Lake County, the northern neighbor of Chicago's Cook County, is home to 80% of Illinois' life sciences jobs and headquarters. Approximately 147 life sciences companies, including Abbott, Walgreens, Pfizer, AbbVie, Takeda, and Horizon Therapeutics, employ more than 33,000 people in Northeast Illinois, generating \$85 billion in worldwide sales.

Food manufacturing is also a major industry in Lake County. According to Lake County Partners, five food-related companies in Lake County have received over \$33 million in growth capital investment since 2019, including Cool Beans in Lake Forest, McClary Innovation in Barrington, Produce Alliance in Buffalo Grove, Riceworks in Long Grove and Winestyr in Gurnee.

Over the last year, Lake County's footprint in this industry has continued to expand. In July,

NorthStar Pickle Company announced that it was building a new 60,000- to 80,000-sq.-ft. processing and distribution facility in Lake Zurich. Currently, NorthStar Pickle Company processes and ships approximately 300,000 pounds of pickle products each week, but that isn't enough to meet customer demand. Through this \$15.2 million project, the company's set to scale production and increase capacity.

Henry Broch Foods, a U.S.-based international food ingredient, processing and co-packing company, also expanded its Lake County footprint this summer. The nearly \$40 million project added 160,000 sq. ft. to the company's Waukegan headquarters. The newly constructed space will be dedicated to production, robotic warehouse (ASRS) and distribution. Henry Broch Foods already employs 400 workers in the Lake County area and plans to add 150 more to its workforce following this expansion.



West Central

In April, United Alloy, a Wisconsin-based contract metal fabricator, began production at their new facility in Quincy. Initially, this location will function as a small, weld-only site, though the company does have plans to construct a larger facility within the next few years.

When the expansion was announced, United Alloy stated that it chose to expand in Quincy due to the “great workforce” located in the region. With an expansive network of local colleges and universities, Western Illinois is known to provide companies in its communities with an overflowing pool of skilled workers.

In September 2022, John Wood Community College broke ground on the expansion of its Workforce

Development Center in Quincy. The \$6 million project is partially funded by a \$3 million EDA Economic Adjustment Assistance Program Grant.

“The College is expanding our career education programs, and these training programs all require physical space to conduct hands-on training,” said Andy Sprague, JWCC Board of Trustees secretary, in a press release. “Leveraging federal grant dollars is an excellent opportunity to provide in-demand programs and state-of-the-art facilities for this region to support the workforce needs of the Tri-State area.”

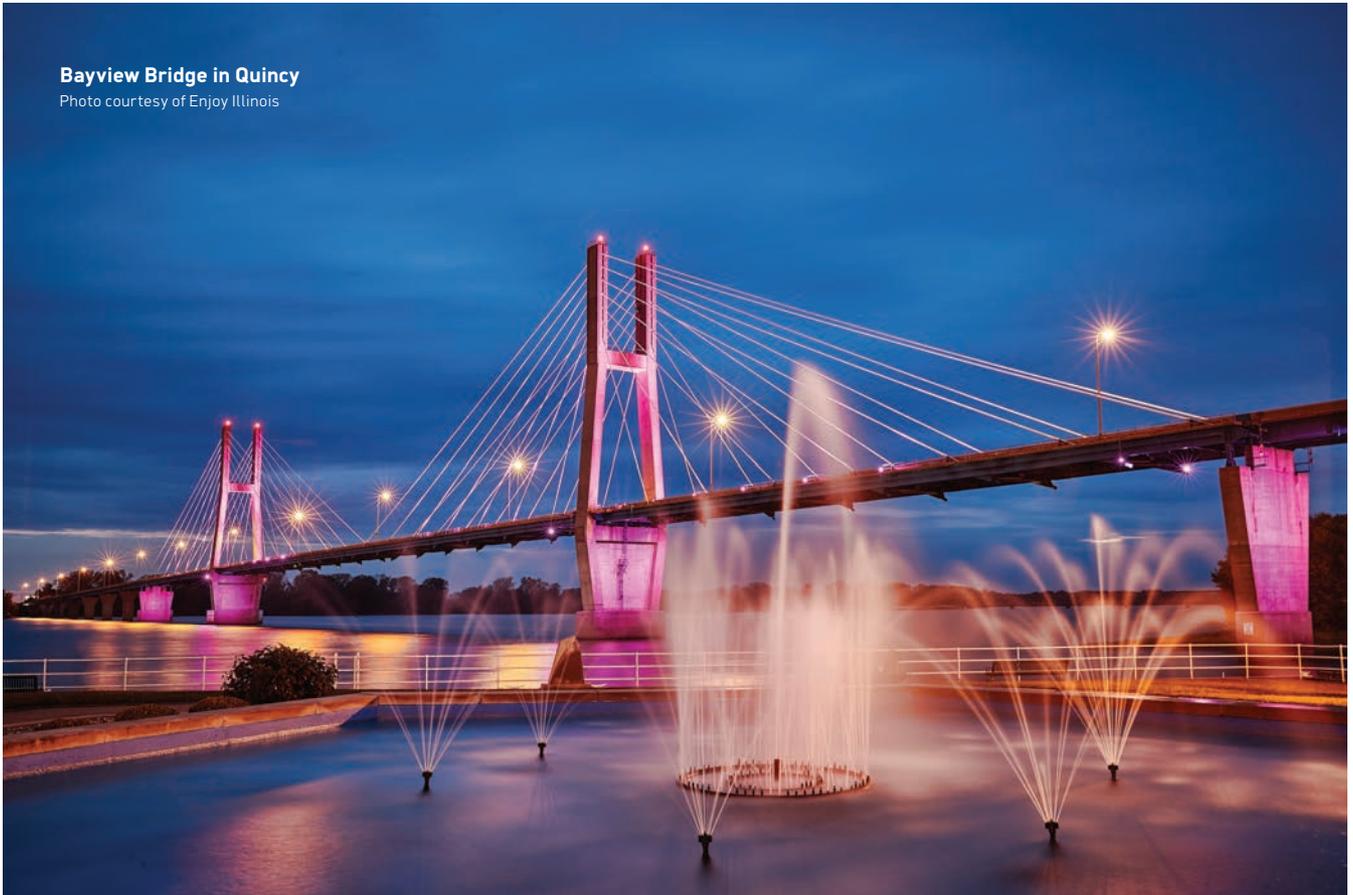
With this expansion, JWCC aims to meet the increase demand by local businesses for employees trained in trucking, welding and manufacturing.

“I know a lot of local businesses are in need of more workers, and we’re hoping this expansion will deliver on that for our local community and the region.” said Bill LaTour, JWCC dean of operations, to WGEM.

JWCC’s Workforce Development Center now spans 30,000 sq. ft. This project expanded the facility’s east side by 14,170 sq. ft. and added a new building entrance, a Truck Driver Training wing, and additional classrooms and lab space for HVAV and other business and industry training programs. The existing facility also received upgrades including a new virtual reality lab and expanded spaces for programs such as robotics and automation, welding, and industrial maintenance and manufacturing.

Bayview Bridge in Quincy

Photo courtesy of Enjoy Illinois



AGCO has donated \$5 million to construct the 25,000-sq.-ft. state-of-the-art training center at Parkland College.

Photo courtesy of Parkland College



precision ag technologies, as well as general ag concepts.

“Parkland College’s longstanding reputation for excellence in agriculture education and diesel technology makes it a perfect location to train AGCO’s future technicians,” said Seth Crawford, AGCO SVP and GM, Precision Ag and Digital, in a press release. “The AGCO Agriculture Service Technician A.A.S. degree program at Parkland is an exciting commitment that will help educate the technicians of tomorrow that our dealers and farmers need to keep feeding the world.”



Southeast

Time and time again, John Deere turns to Illinois for its latest expansion projects. With five facilities, including its world headquarters, located in the state, John Deere knows that it can rely on Illinois to provide the perfect location.

This sentiment continues to ring true with the company’s latest project, a new distribution center in Mattoon. The facility, which was previously occupied by LSC Communications until 2020, is well equipped to expand the company’s warehousing, packaging and logistics operations. Following John Deere’s record-breaking net sales in 2022, which totaled more than \$52 billion, a 19% increase from 2021, the company embarked on this expansion to accommodate its rapid growth.

As a community deeply rooted in agriculture and manufacturing, the Southeast region is home to a workforce and training programs tailored to John Deere’s needs. At this facility, the company expects to hire 200 new employees from Coles County.

East Central

Some of the biggest entrepreneurs in America found their footing in East Central Illinois. With the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign pumping out the next generation of innovators, it’s no wonder this metro was listed as one of the Top 5 startup cities in Silicon Prairie.

Companies such as Tesla, PayPal, YouTube, Oracle and Yelp were all co-founded by UIUC alums. With assets such as the Research Park at UIUC, the university aims to continue to spur cutting-edge innovation, industry partnership and support students’ entrepreneurial and academic pursuits.

The Research Park is currently home to over 120 companies, including Fortune 500 corporations and more than 70 startups.

In September 2022, ADM opened the ADM Science and Technology Center at the research park.

“University of Illinois students and visiting scientists have helped ADM tackle big challenges and have developed business cases for important research projects. For the university and its students, the new facility will provide hands-

on experiences working on real projects that are making an impact not just on ADM, but also on the world,” said ADM Senior Vice President and Chief Science Officer Todd Werpy, Ph.D.

The center is focused on creating opportunities for students in human nutrition research and development, wet chemistry, sensory science, data science, computational fluid dynamics, and customer interface and applications.

Other universities in the region have also benefited from strategic industry partnerships. Last March, AGCO Corporation, a global leader in the design, manufacture and distribution of agricultural machinery and precision ag technology, announced the expansion of its technician training program with Parkland College in Champaign. AGCO has donated \$5 million to construct the 25,000-sq.-ft. state-of-the-art training center, which will house the college’s new AGCO Agriculture Service Technician Associate in Applied Science (A.A.S) degree program. Through this educational pathway, students will gain specific knowledge on AGCO-branded equipment and cutting-edge

John Deere celebrated the plant's opening in March, two months before another major project in Mattoon, the Emerald Acres Sports Connection, broke ground. Both of these developments are going to be a major economic boost for Coles County.

More than \$70 million has been invested into the Emerald Acres Sports Connection, a state-of-the-art sports complex that will span 150 acres. This funding will create eight baseball diamonds, 16 multi-purpose fields, a family entertainment center and an indoor facility with eight basketball courts that can be converted into 16 volleyball courts.

This project is expected to benefit the Coles County community in many ways.

"Number one, it gives our teams

the opportunity to recruit young athletes in the fields we already have athletic programs in such as volleyball, softball, men's and women's baseball. But more importantly, it also gives us venues to play," Josh Bullock, president of Lake Land College, said to local news station, WTWO.

Local sports teams, specifically on the collegiate level, will be able to access these facilities for regional games and competitions. The indoor courts will feature court overlay and seating for up to 3,000 spectators.

Varying sectors of the complex will also be utilized for concerts, rodeos, and other sporting and entertainment events. Construction is also underway for "The Shops at Emerald Acres Sports Connection," a retail, hotel and restaurant space adjacent to the complex.



Southwest

The St. Louis Downtown Airport in Cahokia Heights is one of the many transportation hubs to benefit from the bipartisan Rebuild Illinois capital program. In April, the airport received \$5.4 million to boost business and global competitiveness. This funding has been funneled into several airfield improvements including a ground run-up and compass calibration pad, which accommodates 500 yearly aircraft maintenance tests.

"Aviation is a vital part of our state's economy and the multimodal system that makes us the transportation hub of North

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Gulfstream Aerospace is expanding its operations at the St. Louis Downtown Airport

Photo courtesy of Gulfstream Aerospace

America. St. Louis Downtown Airport is a key part of that system, one we're proud to invest in," said Illinois Transportation Secretary Omer Osman. "Through Rebuild Illinois, we're delivering transformational projects just like this one across all modes of transportation in every region of our state, improving local quality of life and creating economic opportunity."

Outside of the Chicago area, the St. Louis Downtown Airport is one of the busiest general aviation airports in Illinois. Each year, it makes significant contributions to the region's economy, amassing more than \$422 million annually. This number is set to scale, as major expansion projects have already been announced in the wake of Rebuild Illinois investment.

In June, Gulfstream Aerospace revealed that it was expanding its existing operations at the airport. The company is investing \$28.5 million to modernize its facility and equipment, and increase capacity for operations including avionics integration, exterior aircraft painting and furniture installations. Following this expansion's completion, the company will create 200 new jobs and retain 500 existing positions.

"They could have gone anywhere in the country, but they are here because Illinois has the workforce and infrastructure," said State Rep. Kevin Schmidt (R-Millstadt), in July.

Alongside Rebuild Illinois' investment, incentives unique to the state also played a role in securing this deal. Gulfstream

received an Economic Development for a Growing Economy (EDGE) tax credit, which stipulates the company's multi-million-dollar investment and job creation goal.

Only 27 miles north, at the St. Louis Regional Airport in Madison County, West Star Aviation is also expanding their operations. In July, the company broke ground for the 75,700-sq.-ft. expansion of its Maintenance Repair and Overhaul (MRO) facility. This project will increase the location's hangar capacity, back shop and storage space.

With these projects underway, companies are quite literally taking off in Southwest Illinois. Whether by air, rail, road or river, this region knows what it takes to make and move products.



Southern

Imagine, for a moment, that all this industry transpired in your backyard: Continental Tires announces a \$129 million expansion; Italy-based Prysmian Group breaks ground on a \$64 million expansion; and Manner Polymers of Texas opts to build a \$54 million plant.

Not a bad haul, you say. Well, this is exactly what Southern Illinois has attracted in less than a year, and the region is far from done. Two of these projects landed in Mount Vernon, a small town in the heart of Jefferson County. But Mount Vernon has plenty of competition from other cities in the region for the title of kingmaker.

Carbondale, Marion, Harrisburg and West Frankfort serve as the other anchor communities in this 19-county region that borders the Mississippi River, the Ohio

River, Kentucky and Missouri. Transportation, distribution and automotive manufacturing are the core industries in the region, and all are supported by a network of colleges and universities that are world-class.

They are led by Southern Illinois University, which is ranked in the top 5% of U.S. higher education institutions for research. John Logan College, Shawnee Community College, Rend Lake College, Southeastern Illinois College and Illinois Eastern Community College are the other schools that annually produce talented graduates highly coveted by employers. These graduates continually replenish a regional workforce of 142,000-plus.

Located between the nation's two most important inland waterways — the Mississippi and the Ohio — river transport is vital to trade

in the region. Four of Illinois' 13 port districts are located in Southern Illinois, as are three Class I railroads and three Interstate highways. That transportation network is being further bolstered by a \$13.9 million grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation for Better Utilizing Investment to Leverage Development.

It is no wonder, then, that major employers in the region include heavyweights Aisin Manufacturing, Continental Tire, Champion Laboratories, Pepsi and Walgreens.

They are not alone. Some 400,000 residents make their beds here. Every year, they are visited by millions of tourists flocking to hike, sightsee, camp, bike and otherwise enjoy the beauty of Shawnee Bluffs and the many other natural wonders of the region. 🌲



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Washington Park

Photo courtesy of City of Peru

Clock City Nails Down Historic Plant Investment

Nationwide search concludes with Peru landing its biggest prize yet.

by RON STARNER

Peru, Illinois, is a place that is known for making clocks and nails. It is no surprise, then, that Peru beat out every other location in the country in the race to land an \$80 million factory for GAF, the largest roofing and waterproofing manufacturer in North America.

The 450,000-sq.-ft. facility will be located just north of Interstate 80 and west of Plank Road on the OmniTRAX rail line. Construction is underway on the site, and the plant is expected to be operational in 2024. More than 70 workers will be employed at the factory in this north central Illinois community of 10,000 people.

When the project was announced last year, Peru Mayor Ken Kolowski heralded the news as “a momentous day for the city of Peru and our continuing efforts to keep expanding the job base in Peru for the benefit of all Peruvians as well as our community partners in our three-

county region” along the Upper Illinois River.

GAF CEO Jim Schnepfer said that Peru won the plant investment because “Peru’s proximity to our customer base, transportation

“I cannot stop talking about how smart and talented the people Peru are. I have been mayor for two years now, and the amount of talent that we possess in this city is ridiculous.”

— Peru Mayor Ken Kolowski

infrastructure, and access to outstanding manufacturing and engineering talent make it an ideal location for us to

continue our growth.”

The Parsippany, New Jersey-based company engaged Memphis-based J.M. Mullis Inc. to conduct a multi-state site search. Mullis recommended Peru as the top choice.

To learn more about this project and why the place they call Clock City is winning over big investors these days, we turned to Peru Mayor Ken Kolowski.

What does the \$80-million GAF plant investment mean to the people of Peru, Illinois?

MAYOR KOLOWSKI: When all is said and done, this deal will be closer to \$100 million. The creation of 75 jobs that will pay up to \$45 an hour will reward us in a big way. Half of this workforce has already been hired, and they are all from this region. That will turn those employees into customers who will go to our restaurants and buy cars and homes here. This is a huge win for everyone in Peru.

How was your city able to beat out all other locations in America for this project?

MAYOR KOLOWSKI: Peru is a very unique spot in Illinois. Just look at our location. We are on I-80 and I-39. This plant site is located two minutes from our airport. It has access to rail. That was the biggest factor; and it has an easy in and an easy out. They also like the location of being only two minutes from Interstate. They like our entire community, our park system, our school system. Peru is a wonderful place to live and work, and they saw that.

What do you think is Peru's best-kept secret?

MAYOR KOLOWSKI: It is not necessarily a secret, but one of the things is our school system in Peru.



It is amazing. The kids who grow up here get a great education. Another gem is our parks and recreation team. They do amazing work. They keep our park facilities looking

phenomenal. We have added new pickleball and tennis courts. We have a great lake. Tons of kids camp all summer here. We are hosts to the Taste of Illinois. And, on a personal note from me, I cannot stop talking about how smart and talented the people who are running Peru are. I have been mayor for two years now, and the amount of talent that we possess in this city is ridiculous. Every day, I say to myself, I am so lucky to have this kind of visionary workforce. They are willing to tackle the day-to-day problems. They are A-plus all the way around. 🍌

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From infrastructure modernization to sustainability investments like energy efficiency, renewable natural gas, and hydrogen exploration — we have the incentives, services and solutions to invest in businesses ready to locate, stay and grow in Illinois.





Mount Vernon: The Factory Town that Dreams Big



Photos courtesy of City of Mount Vernon, Illinois.

by **RON STARNER**

If the name Mount Vernon sounds familiar, it's because it is. The town of Mount Vernon, Illinois, was named after George Washington's famous plantation in Northern Virginia.

Founded in 1817, Mount Vernon is the seat of government for Jefferson County and, more recently, has become a magnet for capital

investment in south central Illinois.

Continental Tire brought a \$129 million capital project to town in 2022, and earlier this year Manner Polymers of Texas opted to build a \$54 million plant in this city of 15,000 people.

We recently caught up with Mount Vernon Mayor John Lewis to learn more about this sudden growth wave and what's driving it.

Tell us about the Continental Tire and Manner Polymers projects. How was your small town able to land these twin heavyweights?

MAYOR JOHN LEWIS: We have a hard time attracting anything in Southern Illinois because it is small and rural. When they do come, they are successful. Continental Tire moved here in the 1970s. That plant in Mount Vernon is now the largest of all Continental plants in North America. Manner Polymers out of Texas was looking for a place in the Midwest. We were competing with Arkansas, Missouri and Indiana. We were trying to provide them with a good site and everything they needed for infrastructure.

They were being offered a \$2.5 million rail spur by other states. For a small community to come up with that, that was not happening. We were dead in the water. Gov. Pritzker called a meeting with six mayors from Southern Illinois. He wanted to hear about our problems. During that conversation, you could tell that the Governor was interested in what was happening down here. It was a three-hour meeting. Manner Polymers was brought up. I just brought it up as a side note. The Governor said that 50 jobs are 50 jobs and we needed to make it happen. Our economic development director Tony Iriti called me two days later. He said, “I just heard from Intersect Illinois, and we got our rail spur.” That project would not have happened had it not been for Gov. Pritzker and Intersect Illinois.

What are your town's best assets?

MAYOR LEWIS: It is what all of Southern Illinois has. We are very friendly, and we love people. The pace is a lot slower in Southern

Illinois. It is better for families. You don't get much of that in Chicago. Mount Vernon is a wonderful place to raise a family. Housing is half the price of Chicago. There are a lot of advantages. I love the lifestyle here. We offer so much more than the hustle and bustle you find in the big city.



“We are going to be a diamond in Southern Illinois in five years.”

— John Lewis, Mayor of Mount Vernon

What is driving business growth in Mount Vernon?

MAYOR LEWIS: I think the quality of workers is driving it. That is what made this place the largest and top producing plant for Continental Tire. They have invested over a billion dollars here. We have a Walmart distribution center, and we have NuTherm International. They supply components to nuclear power plants all over the world. It is the caliber of people and their work ethic that

bring employers to Mount Vernon.

If I were to visit Mount Vernon, tell me a few places I should visit.

MAYOR LEWIS: We have one of the finest museums in Illinois — the Cedarhurst Center for the Arts & Mitchell Museum. We have Rend Lake that covers Jefferson and Franklin counties with lodges to stay in. People come from all over the Midwest to visit. We have some great eating establishments. Their food is better than the chains. Numerous great restaurants are here. Casa Raya and The Frosty Mug are two of the best. The Bonnie Café is located at our airport. They are very popular.

Why should more businesses look to locate in your community?

MAYOR LEWIS: Our location is a big draw. We are located at the intersection of I-57 and I-64. A trans-modal area is being developed at the rail link here. Large aircraft including 747s can fly out of our airport. We are a progressive city that is forward looking. We promote the safety of the citizens with our police and fire departments. We just built a brand new \$12 million police facility. We are one of the very few cities in Southern Illinois that has had the revenue to replace water and sewer infrastructure. We are \$25 million into a \$97 million water project.

We are going to be a diamond in Southern Illinois in five years. We have new streets. We have new homes. We have been blessed with new revenues since 2017. Our sales tax revenues are going up every year. Exit 95 on I-57 is new and Exit 94 is being built up. We have a lot of developers out of St. Louis interested in locating here; and Tony Iriti is the best economic developer we have ever had in Mount Vernon. 🍷



Bridges to Prosperity

By ship, railcar or truck,
Illinois gets the job done.

by ADAM BRUNS

Nearly 1,200 Illinois projects — including \$144 million toward rehab of the Calumet Bridges — are receiving more than \$10.2 billion in federal funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

Photos courtesy of the Illinois International Port Authority

Drivers in and around Chicago are used to seeing lots of trucks on the roadways. Those trucks aren't just transporting goods. They are keeping the wheels of commerce turning for all of Illinois and much of the country.

It comes with the territory when your state is a perennial leader in logistics facility investment and goods movement. Approximately 25% of all freight trains and 50% of all intermodal trains in the U.S. pass through metro Chicago. Trucks account for about one in seven vehicles on the urban interstate highways in Illinois. Some facilities in metro Chicago carry over 30,000 trucks each day.

And even more transportation infrastructure investment is on the way.

Site Selection magazine's annual

Global Groundwork Index looks at national infrastructure investment figures from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) alongside the publication's proprietary data on corporate end-user facility investment. The ranking's 2023 edition found Chicagoland is No. 4 in the country — part of an upper echelon of Midwestern cities with intrinsic industrial and geographic ties to Chicago like spokes on a wheel: No. 1 Indianapolis (185 miles to the southeast); No. 5 Cincinnati (300 miles); and No. 2 Columbus, Ohio (five hours away).

Nearly 1,200 Illinois projects are receiving more than \$10.2 billion in federal funding from the BIL. Some of those projects involve famously tangled highways, but they include other modes too: commuter rail on Chicago's North Side and freight rail along the metro area's Western

Avenue Rail Corridor, for example. Among four projects nationally to receive Large Bridge Project Grants in 2022, the City of Chicago will receive \$144 million to rehabilitate four bridges over the Calumet River on the Southside of Chicago.

The Calumet River connects Lake Michigan with the Illinois International Port District (IIPD), which is further connected to the Illinois River providing access to the Gulf of Mexico. Each bridge lifts an average of 5,000 times per year, providing continuous and safe access for marine traffic to and from the port and surrounding industry. The bridges carry a combined average of over 40,000 vehicles per day, 3,000 of which are trucks.

The IIPD also received \$24.5 million in funding from a \$15 million-plus Competitive Freight Program Grant from the Illinois

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WOOD DALE
ILLINOIS





Department of Transportation (IDOT) and additional funds from Cook County, the State of Illinois, the City of Chicago and Senator Tammy Duckworth. It's the second major investment by IDOT at the port in recent years.

"Illinois is one of the nation's largest transportation hubs. We're proud of our ongoing partnership with the Port and we expect to see the impact of our investment on the global economy," said BJ Murray, section chief of IDOT's Aviation and Marine Transport Program.

Encompassing nearly 2,000 acres of industrial and recreational land, the IIPD contributes more than \$700 million to the economy per year. It does so through its ship and rail ports that connect to Lake Michigan (part of Marine Highway 90) and St. Lawrence Seaway routing in one direction and, via the Lake Calumet Terminal six miles inland, to the Mississippi River and inland port network all the way to the Gulf of Mexico. It is estimated that marine cargo activity being handled within the IIPD directly or indirectly supports 22,851 jobs within the state. Six Class I railroads provide service within the port district, which is also

traversed by five Interstates, two U.S. highways and four state highways.

The magazine caught up with Erik Varela, executive director of the Illinois International Port Authority, as he attended the sold-out American Great Lakes Port Association annual conference in Chicago. He heard a statistic from American Association of Port Authorities: While federal spending since 2014 has increased by 77%, federal funding to support ports has increased by 394%. "It is a tremendous growth time for ports," he says.

His family lives in Logan Square, a Northside community just west of I-90/I-94, so he understands the importance of reducing commute times to the far South Side.

"When those bridges are taking five or six minutes to raise or lower, you have truck traffic backed up," he says. "The quicker we can get those bridges up and down, the quicker we can move those trucks and reduce congestion."

There are few points in America where all forms of transport infrastructure converge so powerfully and internationally. "We are a true international port on the Great Lakes," Varela says.



Erik Varela, Executive Director, Illinois International Port Authority

"There is a huge interconnectivity and intermodal capability."

The port welcomes vessels loaded with steel from Turkey, lumber cargoes from Germany and iron ore and lumber from Canada. At the Lake Calumet Terminal, loads of bulk sand, lime silicate and grain come in by barge and go out by rail or by truck. The Bishop Ford Expressway is adjacent. Varela says that it's a spot where congestion is rare: "You can be in and out of my port in three minutes," he says.

Tenants at the port include Kinder Morgan (ethanol and aircraft de-icer) and Tootsie Roll, which moves sugar through the port to its plant in Wisconsin. Mt. Carmel Stabilization years ago invested \$14 million to retrofit the port's original grain silos to hold lime silicate, which is shipped out by truck and rail to dry out the ground at development sites. Mt. Carmel and Tootsie Roll both recently extended their agreements by 10 years.

Funds from BIL and from IDOT through Rebuild Illinois will help Varela upgrade warehouses constructed when the IIPD began operation in the 1950s, repair pothole-pocked trucking roads and, he hopes, repair a dock wall that will allow a doubling of handling capacity. He sees great possibilities as the nation transitions from coal to renewables for his port to embody that transformation.

“As the Midwest looks at building wind farms, I want to make sure those components come to the Port of Illinois,” he says. “If those are being produced in Europe, they could come via the St. Lawrence Seaway. We could put those on a railcar or maybe even a barge, or ship them by the Mississippi River or rail

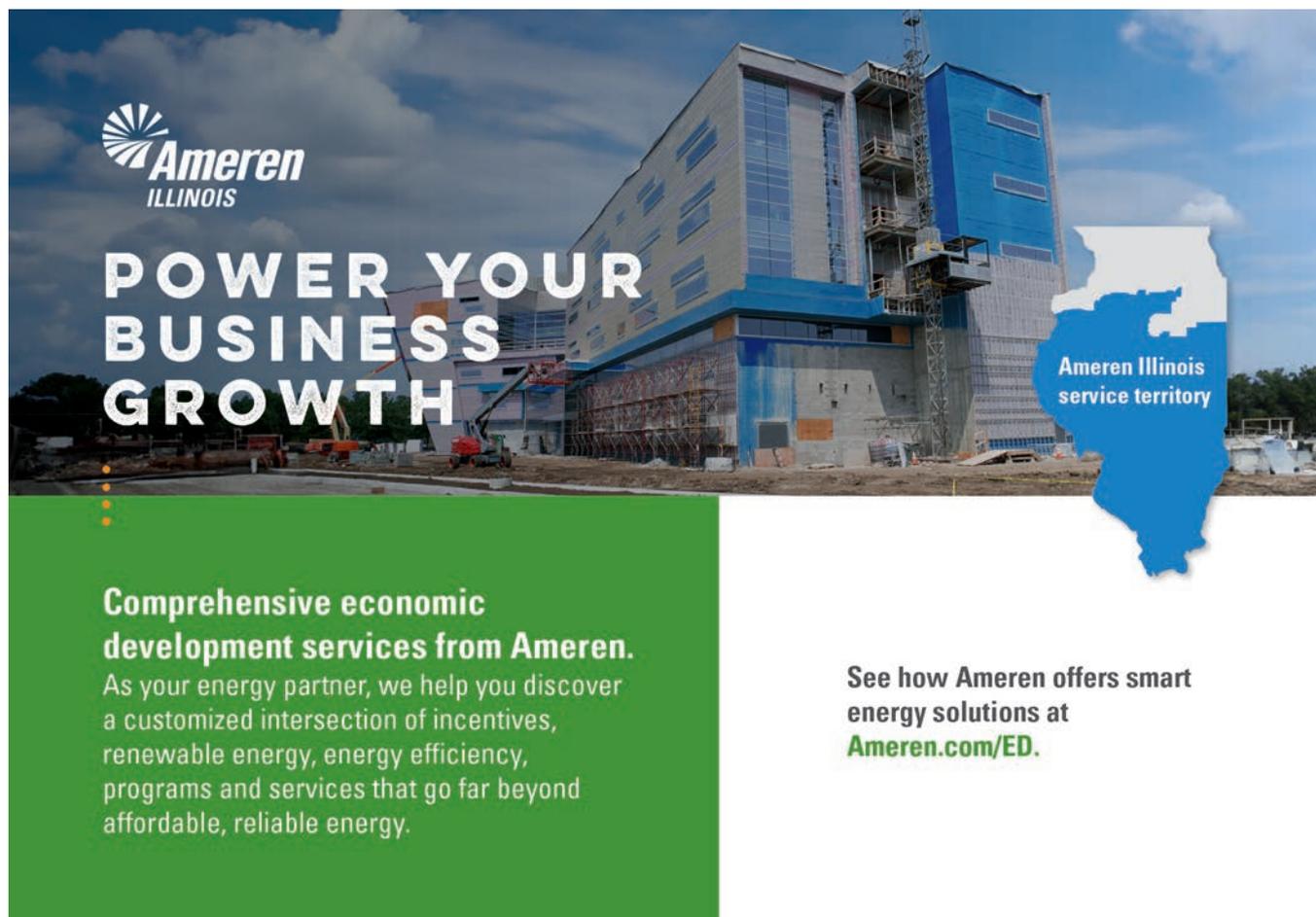
lines to Mid-America and beyond.”

Further land development is a tantalizing prospect, he says, as IIPD, unlike many Great Lakes ports, still has an abundance of land to be developed. “But we are a port first and foremost,” Varela says, “using that multimodal connectivity.”

State officials know Illinois is a hub for a reason. Which is why Gov. Pritzker joined state and local officials at IDOT headquarters to announce the largest multi-year program to fix and repair infrastructure in state history: \$40.99 billion over six years. It is part of the bipartisan Rebuild Illinois capital program that through year five has made approximately \$12.1 billion of improvements statewide on 5,339 miles of highway, 533 bridges and

762 additional safety improvements. Moreover, the federal Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act will add an additional \$17.8 billion into infrastructure projects funded by Rebuild Illinois.

“Over the next six years, we’re investing over \$40 billion to improve all modes of transportation across our great state. That means better roads and bridges, modernized transit and aviation, and expanded and faster passenger rail service,” said Gov. Pritzker. “Rebuild Illinois has increased safety, efficiency, and opportunities for residents all over the state — and over the next few years, we will keep building on that progress, with all 102 counties of Illinois included in the multi-year program.” 🍌



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— **ERIC VAN DER VALK**, *Executive Vice President and COO, Ollie's Bargain Outlet, Inc.*

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— **ALANNA COTTON**, *President and Chief Business Officer of Ferrero North America*

We looked at a litany of states, quite a few sites, but we kept coming back to Mt. Vernon [Illinois]. And there are a few reasons behind that. **One reason is logistics. Mt. Vernon is ideally situated from both a rail standpoint, as well as a road and a trucking standpoint...** But frankly, the most important aspect, was what we saw was an alignment of values.

— **RAJ BHARGAVA**, *CEO, Manner Polymers*

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— **ANDREW ELSENER**, *Spot Inc. co-founder*

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— **JIM SCHNEPPER**, *CEO, GAF*



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It's **PRIME TIME** in Illinois

How a new tax incentive is driving data center investment in the Prairie State.



Rendering of new CloudHQ data center campus in Mount Prospect, Illinois. Courtesy of ComEd

Four of the largest data center campuses in America are being built in Illinois right now, and the state is rolling out the welcome mat for more.

CloudHQ, Prime Data Centers, Microsoft and Meta are the four companies developing massive data center projects in the Prairie State. Thanks to the governor and state lawmakers, these are not likely to be the last.

The state has enacted expansive data center incentives that prime the pump for continued investment into cloud computing and the servers that make it possible. The Data Center Tax Exemption makes large investments into new data centers eligible

for a sales tax exemption on qualifying tangible personal property including new equipment, construction materials, and building infrastructure in addition to excise tax exemptions on electricity consumed at the facility.

To be eligible, companies must invest more than \$250 million and create more than 20 new jobs over a 5-year period. Those jobs must pay at least 120% of the applicable county median wage, and the project must meet carbon neutral status or attain certification under one or more green building standards. The project may also qualify for an additional tax credit equal to 20% of wages for construction workers who build data centers

by **RON STARNER**

in qualifying underserved census tracts.

These incentives are music to the ears of executives at firms that are scrambling to keep up with demand for data services. The first recipient of the new incentive is Prime Data Centers, which broke ground last November on a \$1 billion data center campus in Elk Grove Village.

Known as Prime ORD, the campus will cover more than 750,000 sq. ft. and have 175 megawatts of capacity at full buildout, officially creating the largest data center campus in Greater Chicago.

“The partnership between Elk Grove and the data center industry has led to

“Chicago is the nexus for the Midwest, so that is where we needed to be.”

— Keith Harney, CEO, CloudHQ



Photo courtesy of ComEd

unprecedented growth and positive economic impact,” said Nicholas Lang, CEO of Prime Data Centers. “Looking ahead, we will continue to partner with forward-thinking governments, executing on an aggressive, multinational expansion plan that will establish Prime as the data center foundation for the global proliferation of content creation and cloud solutions.”

\$4.6 Billion and Counting

Gov. JB Pritzker welcomed the development and pledged to continue to support the growth of the data center industry in Illinois. “From the outset of my administration, I have prioritized attracting companies in the rapidly growing data center industry,” he said. “Thanks to these efforts and our reputation as a global tech hub, we have 15 operating data centers investing more than \$4.6 billion in our communities — all while creating thousands of jobs.”

For his part, Elk Grove Village Mayor Craig Johnson said his community would continue to back data center projects with generous local incentives too.

According to a new report from CBRE, Greater Chicago is one of the 24 largest data center markets in the world and one of the most affordable for end-users. “The worldwide shortage of available supply is leading to price increases for data center capacity,” notes CBRE. “Singapore has the highest rental rates at \$300 to \$450 per month for a 250- to 500-kilowatt requirement, while Chicago has the lowest at \$115 to \$125.”

The report adds that demand is outstripping supply in many markets. “In Chicago, vacancy fell to 6.7% in Q1 2023 from 8.2% a year earlier — the biggest decrease in any North American market — even as inventory grew 21%.”

Much of that new inventory is coming from big investors. “Hyperscalers and enterprise operators remain interested in Chicago,” the CBRE report states. “Land availability continues to be extremely limited in the O’Hare market, and land prices remain stable despite broader macroeconomic conditions.

Demand from both data center developers and institutional industrial developers remains strong.”

Factors like these are driving CloudHQ to develop what will eventually be the most expensive data center project to date in Illinois: a \$2.5 billion corporate campus in Mount Prospect in the Elk Grove area. CloudHQ broke ground a year ago on this 1.5 million-sq.-ft. campus about 20 miles north of downtown Chicago. This hyperscale data center is being built on a site formerly occupied by the corporate headquarters of United Airlines. It is slated for completion next year and is expected to create hundreds of high-wage jobs.

Power, Connectivity Seal the Deal

Keith Harney, CEO of CloudHQ, told Site Selection magazine after the groundbreaking that Greater Chicago provided everything his company was seeking for this new multi-tenant facility. “Chicago is the nexus for the Midwest, so that is where we needed to be,” he said. “This was the largest contiguous

site that we were able to find. The notion of power was there, and it was available and cooperative for our needs, as well as the connectivity, thanks to ComEd.”

Harney adds that CloudHQ “kicked the tires on 25 different sites” before closing the deal to acquire the property from United Airlines. The success of that deal has emboldened CloudHQ to expand again, he notes. “We expect that we will clearly be in the market again for another site,” he said. “We don’t think two and done. We think according to demand. As the market gets more efficient, it gets more competitive.”

Some of that competition is coming from Meta and Microsoft. Meta Platforms Inc. is investing

\$1 billion to build 1.5 million sq. ft. of data center space in DeKalb, while Microsoft has plans to invest more than \$500 million into data centers in Hoffman Estates.

“There are billions of dollars being invested in Illinois by data centers, and Hoffman Estates is contributing to that,” says Kevin Kramer, director of economic development for the Village of Hoffman Estates in Cook County. “Microsoft has already invested over \$300 million into building a 200,000-sq.-ft. data center on an 80-acre campus they own. They have plans to build at least another two to three buildings with a total spend of more than \$500 million.” 🍌

15 operating data centers are investing more than \$4.6 billion in Illinois communities.

Source: Gov. JB Pritzker



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- Two existing TIF Districts adjacent to the municipal airport.






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CNI Corp. has engineered a complete turnaround of Pullman Park.

Photo Courtesy of CNI Corp.

Need a Site?

by RON STARNER

Illinois Has Cash

Gov. Pritzker unveils \$40 million grant program to develop megasites.

CNI Corp. President David Doig remembers when Pullman Park was little more than a 180-acre brownfield in suburban Chicago. Today, the park stands as a monument to economic revitalization.

“CNI’s Pullman Park Development went from a 180-acre brownfield to a new, green manufacturing and distribution hub,” CNI Corp. President David Doig said recently. “This area is now a model for economic development — creating more than 2,000 jobs — and it all began with a \$10 million grant from the state.”

The state grant funded site cleanup and upgrades that ultimately paved the way for Method Soap Manufacturing, Amazon, Whole Foods and Gotham

Greens to build and open plants in the industrial park that is part of the rebirth of the historic Pullman community.

Pullman’s rich history dates to its founding in the late 1800s. Built by railcar magnate George M. Pullman, the community once was described by the Times of London as “the most perfect town in the world.”

As happens with most towns, this one eventually fell on hard times, but no one is lamenting that chapter now as CNI (Chicago Neighborhood Initiatives) spearheads a redevelopment effort that is restoring the luster to place that gave birth to the Illinois labor movement.

Front and center is Pullman Park, where CNI is engineering a remarkable turnaround. Amazon

recently opened a 150,000-sq.-ft. fulfillment center in the park and brought 200 to 300 new jobs with it. Method, which opened a LEED-certified soap factory in the park in 2014, expanded to an additional 400,000-sq.-ft. warehouse on site in 2020. Gotham Greens in 2019 opened a second greenhouse, a 100,000-sq.-ft. facility that doubles the firm’s production workforce in the park; and Whole Foods brought a 140,000-sq.-ft. distribution center and 100 jobs to the park in 2018.

Spurring Business Attraction

None of that would have been possible without the seed money from the state to create a site suitable for modern industrial development.

Earlier this year, Gov. JB Pritzker announced a plan to double

down on those investments as he unveiled a new \$40 million grant opportunity to develop megasites. Appropriately, he chose Pullman as the place to deliver the news.

“Major job creators are consistently looking for investment-ready sites they can get up and running in a short amount of time,” Pritzker said. “The new Megasites Investment Program grants will help communities innovate their own business attraction efforts and will spur economic development in communities across our great state.”

The \$40 million in Rebuild Illinois Capital Funds will be designated to prepare and equip large, developed sites ready for occupancy for manufacturers, distribution centers, industrial centers and more. The competitive grant program is open to governments, private businesses or non-profits to support site development. The goal is to attract large-scale industrial investments in under-utilized areas and former industrial sites.

Megasites Investment Program funding is issued through a competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) and is open to the various groups mentioned above. Grants range from \$250,000 to \$5 million. Eligible sites must contain at least 200 contiguous acres. Applicants must either own or have an agreement in place to acquire the property when they apply. The grant also requires a dollar-to-dollar capital investment match.

Underserved areas and Opportunity Zones are given priority. This allows the developed sites to market additional incentives to potential business prospects.

Funding can be used to pay for roads, electric power, water, broadband and other



“Megasites are akin to a turnkey house: move-in ready with zero hassle, which is exactly what fast-growing businesses are looking for.”

— Kristin Richards, *Director, DCEO*

infrastructure. Dollars can cover costs such as grading, drainage, rehabbing, remediation, cleanup and other site development work. Land acquisition and related expenses also qualify.

“Megasites are a major draw for companies looking to locate or expand in Illinois, and given our superior infrastructure and workforce, there are boundless investment opportunities throughout the state,” said Kristin Richards, director of the Illinois Department of Economic and Community Opportunity. “Megasites are akin to a turnkey house: move-in ready with zero hassle, which is exactly what fast-growing businesses are looking for.”

Your Vetted Site Is Ready

Another program aimed at helping the state compete for some of the biggest economic development projects is Intersect Illinois’ Vetted Sites program.

The program focuses on large sites (more than 400 acres with

qualifying assets) and megasites (more than 1,000 acres). Intersect Illinois evaluates those sites based on attributes such as utilities, workforce, ownership, environmental and topographic data, logistics and distribution capabilities, local and state incentives, permitting and entitlement, and more.

The program provides the needed site and infrastructure data for fast-moving projects so companies can make location decisions quickly and accurately. Two of the pilot sites being marketed through the program are the 534-acre Clarius Five Star tract in Morris in Grundy County and the 3,300-acre Marquis Industrial Complex in Hennepin in Putnam County.

Clarius is within the Chicago metro area and has CSX railway access. Marquis is two hours from Chicago and has a Norfolk Southern rail spur. For more information on these and other sites visit www.intersectillinois.org. 📍

Global EV Investors Pick Illinois Sites



by MARK AREND

The top seven foreign-owned companies doing business in Illinois employ nearly 61,000 people. That's more than the population of Des Plaines, a Chicago suburb and the state's 20th largest city. But it's a fraction of the more than 375,000 workers in the state employed at more than 2,000 international companies. Of those, 37% work in the manufacturing sector.

Many international companies in Illinois, of course, are in Chicago — the state's and the Midwest's top commercial hub. Think ArcelorMittal (based in Luxembourg), Veolia Environmental Services (France) and ABN AMRO (Netherlands). But they're also in Elgin (Böhler-Uddeholm, based in Austria), Waukegan and Buffalo Grove (Yaskawa America, Japan) and Tinley Park (Straive, Singapore), among dozens of other Illinois communities.

According to Global Business Alliance, which tracks foreign direct investment into the U.S., Illinois' FDI employment rose 17% from 2015 to 2020 while the state's overall

private-sector investment fell 5% during that time. Why the jump in investment from companies based outside the U.S.? Perhaps it's their proximity to more than 80 consulates that can help relocating employees, or Illinois' fifth-place rank in exports, or the connectivity afforded by O'Hare International Airport and its 66 global destinations. Global travel data provider OAG named O'Hare the most connected airport in the world in 2022.

Electric vehicle manufacturing executives no doubt landed at O'Hare in their analysis of Illinois locations for their production facilities.

Southern Illinois Wins Italian Investment

Cable producer Prysmian Group, headquartered in Milan, Italy, announced a new Reimagining Energy and Vehicles in Illinois (REV Illinois) incentive agreement and broke ground on an expansion of its facility in Du Quoin in southern Illinois. The 100,000-sq.-ft. expansion will enable the company to increase cable manufacturing

for the renewable energy and electric vehicle sectors. The \$63.8 million investment will create 80 new jobs.

REV Illinois is an incentives program to bolster Illinois manufacturing in the clean jobs economy, created to attract companies all along the supply chain in the electric vehicle and renewables sectors, according to the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. It supports the state's plan to achieve 100% clean energy by 2050, including putting one million EVs on the road by 2030.

Joliet, which it says is the largest all-electric U.S. plant dedicated to medium and heavy-duty commercial vehicle production. It is expected to have a manufacturing capacity of 2,500 all-electric school buses at the end of 2023. At full scale, the plant has an estimated production capacity of 20,000 vehicles per year in a combination of both buses and trucks, which the company estimates should require around 1,400 skilled workers.

Lion Electric says it chose Illinois for the state's resources, its central proximity to

Prysmian Group's
\$63.8 million
100,000-square-foot expansion will
create 80 new jobs through Illinois
(REV Illinois) incentive agreement

“This expansion will produce cutting-edge, high-quality, sustainable products that will help enhance the grid by increasing reliability, preventing blackouts and reducing overall maintenance costs,” said Andrea Pirondini, CEO of Prysmian Group North America at the announcement. “Ultimately, we will ensure we have the capacity needed, when it is needed, in order to ensure we can build an electrical grid that’s built for the future. As we work to help harden the grid across the U.S., Du Quoin will play a large role in that.”

Prysmian Group elected to expand their facility in Illinois after considering expansion of their Mexico facility, according to a company release: The comprehensive REV Illinois incentive package encourages forward-thinking manufacturers to invest in renewable energy, while aligning with the state's initiative to increase production and usage of EVs. Prysmian Group was eligible through REV due to manufacturing renewable energy components.

Even More EV Investment

The Lion Electric Company, based in Quebec, opened its 900,000-sq.-ft. plant in

customers and the domestic supply base, and for its vision that aligns with the state's common goals for a more sustainable future. “We are at the forefront of a manufacturing rebirth in the United States, and together with Governor JB Pritzker and his team, industry stakeholders and EV advocates, we are creating the next era of transportation in the Midwest, with a critical need to reduce carbon emissions, strengthen the region's economic vitality, and support sustainability,” said Marc Bédard, CEO-Founder of Lion Electric.

Among those making remarks at the opening ceremony was ComEd CEO Gil C. Quiniones. “ComEd is thrilled to power Lion Electric's first-ever U.S. manufacturing plant, where new, locally built EVs will play a critical role in helping our customers move toward fewer emissions and cleaner futures,” he said. “As a partner on their plans to grow in Joliet from day one, ComEd shares Lion's commitment to expanding access to electric transportation options that will help lower pollution, enhance air quality and stimulate new jobs and economic growth for the communities of Illinois.” 🇺🇸



How Illinois Boosts Its Future Workforce

The state remains steadfast in workforce development investments.

A \$2.6 million investment aids Illinois in increasing qualified aviation mechanics.

Photo courtesy of AAR CORP

by ALEXIS ELMORE

When it comes to workforce development, Illinois holds the title as the No. 1 state in the Midwest in part because it is a state with vast talent initiatives.

But it's not about rankings here. It's about commitment to building a talent pipeline that powers the state's leading industries for years to come. In doing so, 2023 has been a year of targeted investments that are gaining the nation's attention.

From medical research, EV

innovation, and aviation to various trades training, the state is leaving no stone unturned. By introducing new initiatives and expanding opportunities to underrepresented populations across every education level, Illinois is prepared for long-term industry success.

Life Sciences Research

Notably, The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Northwestern University, and the University of Chicago were selected for the first expansion of the Chan Zuckerberg Biohub Network in March 2023.

Out of 58 applicants and a year-long competitive process, the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative (CZI) selected the state to build out Chan Zuckerberg Biohub Chicago.

Following in the footsteps of CZ Biohub San Francisco, the new biomedical research hub will focus on addressing scientific challenges over the next 10 to 15 years. These institutions will lead in the development of new technologies aimed at studying and measuring human biology, collecting biological signals from human tissues unlike ever before.

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AAR CORP will develop new programs for high school and college students.
 Photo courtesy of AAR CORP

“We are excited to scale this successful model of collaborative science into a larger network by welcoming the new Biohub in Chicago,” said CZI Co-Founder and Co-CEO Priscilla Chan in the official announcement. “This institute will embark on science to embed miniaturized sensors into tissues that will allow us to understand how healthy and diseased tissues function in unprecedented detail. This might feel like science fiction today, but we think it’s realistic to achieve huge progress in the next 10 years. I look forward to the advances in science and technology that this new Biohub will spur in studying how tissues function to understand what goes wrong in disease and how to fix it.”

Professor Shana O. Kelley of Northwestern University will serve as president of the new location. To support the project, Governor JB Pritzker committed

\$25 million in capital funds to aid in its launch. The site will feature a biofoundry, laboratories, meeting spaces, and more to develop these new technologies and lifesaving treatments.

“We’re thrilled to be part of the Chan Zuckerberg Biohub Network, which will galvanize multidisciplinary research and drive more progress than any one of these institutions could have achieved on its own,” said CZ Biohub Chicago President Shana O. Kelley. “The scientific challenge we’re exploring, to develop new tools to better measure tissues and gain insights into inflammation, can only be solved by interdisciplinary collaboration, has large engineering challenges to surmount, and is wildly, but not impossibly, ambitious.”

This new edition supports the state’s ever-growing life sciences industry, which supports over 14,000

companies and more than 579,000 employees. As Illinois ranks among the top five states in the country for life science graduates, projects like this showcase there is plenty of room and talent on board for innovation to take place.

EV Training Charges Forward

Getting in front of the nation’s EV revolution requires collaboration on every level to ensure talent, suppliers, and manufacturers are prepared to lead in our transition to cleaner mobility.

With that in mind, TCCI Manufacturing announced that it will bring an EV Innovation Cluster to central Illinois by 2024. The electric compressor manufacturer plans to collaborate with Richland Community College, the City of Decatur, and the Illinois Innovation Network to bring the state a prime location to tackle workforce needs.

TCCI will invest \$20 million to

redevelop its Decatur facility from combustion to electric compressor manufacturing. In addition, the state granted Richland Community College with \$15.3 million through Rebuild Illinois and the City of Decatur will invest \$6 million on the project.

The reimagined facility will be home to an EV Workforce Training Academy, Climatic Center for Innovation and Research, and Electric Compressor Component Manufacturing on TCCI's site. To address future workforce needs the Innovation Cluster will provide a STEM pathways program and accredited apprenticeship programs.

"Recently, we have been offering more opportunities for students going into technical programs, and Electric Vehicle training is one piece of that puzzle," says Richland Community College President Dr. Cristobal Valdez. "I have had my eye on the advancements in Electric Vehicle manufacturing for a while. By partnering with TCCI on this new training facility, we are shaping the future of the Central Illinois workforce. We are extremely excited to be a part of this endeavor and grateful to Governor Pritzker and DCEO for their investment in Richland Community College."

Richland and TCCI will collaborate with the University of Illinois' Grainger College of Engineering and Northern Illinois University to create the EV Training Academy. Here, students will receive an immersive learning experience focused on EV advanced engineering, software technology, and electrification training. The full-scale Climatic Center will allow students to have a hands-on environment to simulate and test high voltage systems, battery cooling, and A/C and heat pump capabilities.

"Together we are establishing a new model for Illinois that sets the

stage for how education, research, and industry work together to cohesively advance us faster, invest in our people, and grow our economy. This state-of-the-art facility will build the bridge from employer and unemployed to keep pace in a rapidly changing economy and address the need to build a skilled workforce. We are honored to be shaping the future of the EV industry in central Illinois," says Valdez.

Apprenticeships Take Flight

Governor JB Pritzker joined AAR CORP to announce a \$2.6 million aviation workforce development investment at Rockford International Airport (RFD).

The program will be housed at AAR's Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) site at the airport which will provide strategic training for both students and employees in collaboration with Rock Valley Community College and various high schools located in Northern Illinois. This investment additionally supports 80 new apprenticeship opportunities focused on growing qualified aviation mechanics to meet industry demand.

The grant, administered through the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), provides AAR room to expand workforce programming, which includes high school aviation programs. Chicago's Olive-Harvey College will gain an Aviation Sheet Metal course and Rock Valley Community College will develop a new Airframe and Powerplant Program with curriculum enhancements focused on transport category aircraft and systems.

"When we invest in Rockford's airport and the programs it boasts, we invest in Rockford's people, advancing opportunity for every Northern Illinoisan," said Governor JB Pritzker. "Illinois is already a

transportation powerhouse, and by working in close collaboration with our state's powerhouse aviation companies, we are laying the groundwork to keep our communities connected, and competitive, for years to come."

RFD currently supports over 21,000 jobs with a \$4.7 billion economic impact and is home to United Airlines and AAR CORP's headquarters. With more than 626,000 aviation maintenance technician jobs predicted to hit the market by 2040, according to Boeing's Pilot and Technician Outlook report, investments like these are vital to the next generation of flight.

Just one day after this investment was announced, Gov. Pritzker and DCEO additionally announced the expansion of the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program.

When the program was introduced in 2021, Illinois Works awarded \$10 million to 22 organizations, supporting over 1,000 participants. It was designed to increase access to underrepresented populations by providing skills training to transition program graduates to full apprenticeship programs for construction and building trades.

In 2022, 85% of participants were of Black, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American background, while women represented 25% of pre-apprentices. As the program enters its second year it receives a \$13 million award for 30 candidates, which allows for a 40% increase from its first year for up to 1,400 pre-apprentices in 2023.

This year, 19 renewed grantees and 11 new grantee organizations and institutions were awarded funding, ranging from \$200,000 to \$600,000, to aid participants in receiving certification that will qualify for continuation into relevant trade apprenticeship programs. 🍌

Supercomputing Elevates Research In Illinois

The birth of Aurora is a breakthrough generating global attention.

by **RON STARNER**

What can a \$500-million supercomputer do to help advance the next generation of research in artificial intelligence, data analytics and climate modeling? A lot, especially if that computer is the first and most powerful of its kind.

Welcome to Argonne National Laboratory in Lemont, Illinois, about 24 miles southwest of downtown Chicago. Here, a team of University of Chicago researchers and computer scientists are working to install the finishing touches on Aurora, a giant exascale supercomputer that is the result of a massive public-private initiative.

Built in partnership with Intel and Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE), Aurora is designed to seamlessly integrate the critical scientific tools of data analysis, modeling and simulation, and artificial intelligence.

The numbers are staggering. Aurora will be capable of delivering more than 2 exaflops of computing power — or 2 billion calculations per second. That is almost 50 times faster than Argonne's current supercomputer, Polaris.

Summer 2023 marked a milestone for Aurora. That's when workers at Argonne installed the 10,624th and final blade. Each blade weighs 70 pounds. Each of the computer's 166 racks contains 64 blades. Aurora is so



big that it takes up the equivalent of two pro basketball courts.

But it's not just the size that turns heads; it's the raw processing power. Aurora uses HPE Slingshot high-performance fabric. Some 220 petabytes of capacity are churned out by Aurora's 1,024 strategic nodes.

Michael Papka, deputy associate laboratory director of computing, environment and life sciences at the Argonne Leadership Computing Facility (ALCF), says, "Construction has taken several years, as we needed to expand and update the data center at the ALCF to house the Aurora



exascale supercomputer. Aurora is made up of rows of supercomputer cabinets that stand over eight feet tall. The cabinets are outfitted with more than 300 miles of networking cables, countless red and blue hoses that pipe water in and out to cool the system, and over 10,000 computer blades.”

Papka adds that “we will begin running early science research projects on Aurora this summer as we continue to make sure the system works as intended. We expect to fully open up to researchers around the globe in 2024.”

This one-of-kind computing

system has already captured the world’s attention. On June 5, the University of Chicago announced a research partnership with Japan’s Tohoku University. The new Chicago-Tohoku Quantum Alliance will concentrate on several key fields of study, including quantum sensing, quantum communication, and new materials development.

Funded in part by a \$100 million contribution from IBM and \$50 million from Google, the University of Chicago is now spearheading an effort to advance the future of quantum computing technology.

Aurora is a new supercomputer at Argonne National Laboratory in Lemont, Illinois. Above, a pipes worker stands in the mechanical room.

Photos courtesy of Argonne National Laboratory



The electrical room at Argonne National Laboratory in Lemont, Illinois.

SIU Meets Automotive Skills Demand

Aurora may be the splashiest news on the university research front, but Illinois boasts a long and proud history of public-private alliances that bring the brainpower of academic institutions together with the builders of industry.

their skills in automotive design and manufacturing.

SIU offers one of just 12 automotive technology baccalaureate degree programs in the country, as well as the only one at a major research institution. SIU auto-tech grads are in such high demand that 90% of them will accept full-time job offers before graduation.

“We cannot produce enough graduates for the industry,” said Mike Behrmann, SIU program chair, in an article on the SIU website. Students work in all areas of automotive technology, including battery packs, transmissions and drivetrains, engines and electrical systems.

Matthew Ellickson says he owes his career success to the education and training he received at SIU. Employed by Power Solutions International as a customer support engineer, Ellickson says, “I love that the Automotive Technology Program left me with a vast choice

“I love that the Automotive Technology Program left me with a vast choice of opportunities not only in the automobile industry, but also in the off-road industrial market.”

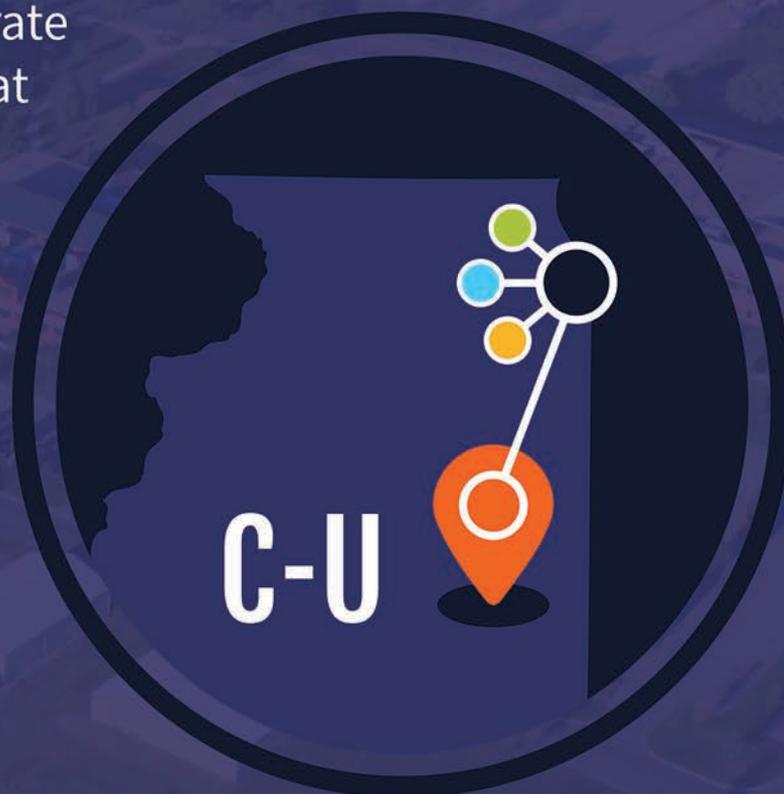
— Matthew Ellickson, *Customer Support Engineer, Power Solutions International*

A case in point is the automotive technology program at Southern Illinois University. At SIU’s Transportation Education Center in Carbondale, students are trained in advanced automotive technology to meet growing demand for



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Aurora mechanical workers tour the facility.

of opportunities not only in the automobile industry, but also in the off-road industrial market.”

Ellickson’s story is told on the SIU website. When asked what advice he would give to current and future students, he said: “Stay open-minded. Don’t get your mind set on working for one company or a certain position. I never thought I would be doing what I am now, but I have never been happier with my decision. Most of all, interview and intern with as many companies as possible.”

The folks at Power Solutions International are glad he did, and even happier that he now works for them.

Innovation Hub Coming to Edwardsville

That’s not the only success at SIU these days. SIU Edwardsville recently received a \$2.3 million grant from the state of Illinois to create an innovation hub. Gov. JB Pritzker announced the grant as part of a \$37.3 million initiative to establish five Illinois Innovation Network hubs around the state.

“Rebuild Illinois is not just about modernizing our roads and bridges,” the governor said. “It’s about building a future for generations to come that is economically prosperous with the promise of opportunity at every turn.”

SIU Edwardsville plans to use the grant to launch the Center for Sustainable Communities and Entrepreneurship (CSCE). Other schools receiving innovation hub grants are Northeastern Illinois University, Northern Illinois University, Southern Illinois University Carbondale and the University of Illinois Springfield. 📍

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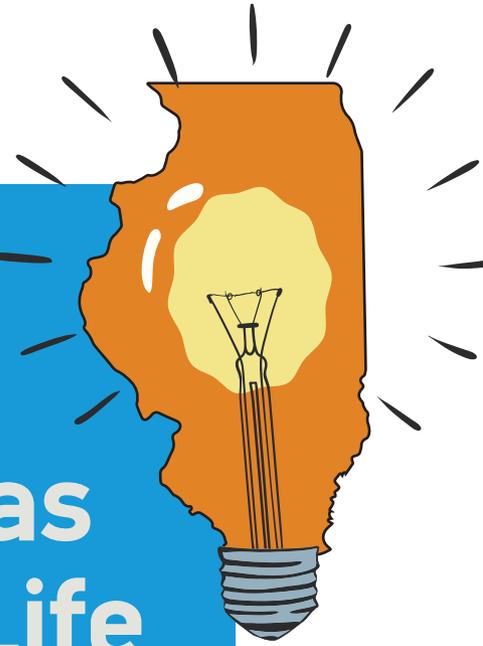


SouthernIllinoisNow.org





ILLINOIS: Where Great Ideas Come to Life



Groundbreaking
discoveries are a dime
a dozen in Illinois.

by LINDSAY LOPP

The Allbirds Plant Pacer sneaker is made with MIRUM, an 100% plastic-free, plant based material created by Natural Fiber Welding.

Photo courtesy of Allbirds

Martin Cooper, the father of the cell phone, is not the first or last Illinoisan to push the boundaries of technological innovation. Every decade inventors from Illinois are shaking up society. Some of the world’s most common conveniences, the dishwasher, the TV remote — even zippers, were all invented in the Land of Lincoln.

Even now, inventors in Illinois continue to revolutionize everyday items. Natural Fiber Welding, a Peoria-based company, is redefining what our clothing is made from and, in doing so, providing an answer to the world’s textile waste crisis.

According to Boston University, each year, people in the United States throw out more than 34 billion pounds of used textiles, with 66% ending up in landfills. While wool can take one to five years to disintegrate, synthetic fibers, such as polyester, nylon and spandex, can take up to 200 years to fully decompose.

To combat the growing piles, NFW developed a technology that transforms plants and natural fibers into fabric, footwear and other durable goods. The company currently boasts four eco-friendly materials; MIRUM, a plant-based plastic-free faux leather; CLARUS, a performance cotton textile altered to be an alternative to synthetic fabrics; PLIANT, the world’s first naturally cured performance rubber outsoles; and TUNERA, a first-in-kind plastic-free foam.

“We envision a world that doesn’t rely on plastic, where abundant natural materials enable people and



Photo Courtesy of Allbirds

the planet to thrive together,” said Luke Haverhals, CEO and founder of Natural Fiber Welding, in 2022. “We’re here to leave the world better than we found it and we look forward to working with our brand partners to build a comprehensively circular coalition for the planet.”

NFW’s growing network of associates includes big names in the fashion industry. New Balance, Wolverine Worldwide, Allbirds, Camper and Deckers are all members of NFW’s Footwear Collective, a group of like-minded brands working to advance the development of naturally circular performance material for footwear. Each member of the Footwear Collective has released or is working on shoe designs that feature NFW’s technology.

“New Balance is developing pinnacle performance footwear in 2024 that leverages NFW’s CLARUS® natural yarns,” said New Balance Senior Manager of Innovation Katy O’Brien in a press release. “NFW’s material breakthroughs are revolutionizing the way the entire industry makes, uses, and ‘disposes’ of products.”

Allbirds chose to include MIRUM in its first collaboration with the company. In September 2022,

the shoe designer released the Plant Pacer Sneaker, Allbirds’ first plant leather product. The wheels for this project were first set in motion in early 2021 when Allbirds invested \$2 million as part of NFW’s Series A.

“For way too long, fashion companies have relied on dirty synthetics and unsustainable leather, putting established ways of doing things and costs before the environment. We wanted to put an end to that, which led us to create the Plant Pacer,” said Tim Brown, Allbirds co-founder and co-CEO.

The Plant Pacer demonstrates that with materials like MIRUM available, companies don’t have to sacrifice standards, animals or the environment to produce high-quality products.

Even couture fashion brands have recognized that NFW’s eco-friendly technology can easily replace animal-made materials. Luxury designer, Stella McCartney, debuted handbags made with MIRUM in her Winter 2023 Paris fashion show.

“My Winter 2023 show is both a celebration of the love between humans and animals, as well as a call-to-action to take a stand for our planet — the perfect setting to introduce my iconic Falabella and Frayme bags in MIRUM®,” said Stella McCartney in 2023. “I have long dreamed of the day when we would see a plant-based alternative to leather that does not kill a single creature and can be easily given back to Mother Earth, without creating waste. There is no compromise on desirability or durability; the future of fashion has arrived.”

Resources to Remember

The future of fashion isn’t the only thing that’s arrived in Illinois. Throughout the state, opportunities to accelerate innovation have taken root.

The Illinois Innovation Network (IIN) connects entities across the state to drive integrated research and economic development. In December 2022, the organization received \$37.3 million to construct and renovate innovation hubs at five universities. Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU), Northern Illinois University (NIU), Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC), Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE) and the University of Illinois Springfield (UIS) will all benefit from the funding IIN received through the Rebuild Illinois Capital program.

launched more than 1,500 products. These companies have created over 5,000 jobs and generated over \$2.6 billion of economic activity.

By working with mHUB, entrepreneurs can collaborate with industry partners and investors in the early stages of physical product development, enabling them to accelerate commercialization. Creators with inventions geared toward advanced and sustainable manufacturing, climate and energy tech, medical devices, and other industries have greatly benefited from mHUB's resources and network.

Seven years after the

“NFW’s material breakthroughs are **revolutionizing** the way the entire industry makes, uses, and ‘disposes’ of products.”

— Katy O’Brien, *Senior Manager of Innovation, New Balance.*

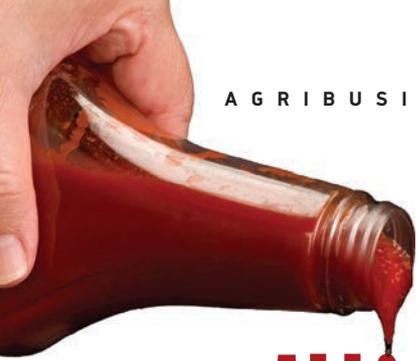
“From researching water resources at NIU’s Northern Illinois Center for Community Sustainability to addressing food deserts and agricultural challenges at SIUC’s Illinois Food, Entrepreneurship, Research, and Manufacturing hub, young Illinoisans will have the opportunity to shape our future by coming up with cutting-edge solutions to our 21st-century problems — all while furthering our state’s status as a national hub for all things research and innovation,” said Governor JB Pritzker.

Entrepreneurial resources, such as mHUB, a manufacturing hardtech innovation center, have played a crucial role in attracting worldwide attention to Illinois’ research network. Since its establishment in 2017, mHUB has supported over 500 startups and 200 manufacturers that have

organization opened its first location, mHUB announced that it was expanding its Chicago footprint. In April, the organization acquired a historic manufacturing facility in the Kinzie Industrial Corridor for \$50 million. This new location will increase the organization’s office space and prototyping and testing facilities.

Following this expansion, mHUB will be the largest independent manufacturing innovation center in the country. Over the next five years, it is predicted to support over 450 new startups and manufacturers, create 4,500 new jobs, and generate over \$2.1 billion in revenue and \$1.95 billion in investment.

As innovators continue to come to the state, attracted by its universities and research assets, it’s only a matter of time before another groundbreaking discovery from Illinois is announced. 🍌



Illinois Hits The Spot



by ALEXIS ELMORE

Leading U.S. food brands continue to select the state for business reach and growth.

When it comes to grub, Illinois knows what flavorful combinations will stand the test of time. Every state

has its claim to a national culinary favorite, though many of America's most popular meals and snacks come from the Land of Lincoln.

The classic deep-dish pizza, brownies, Cracker Jack popcorn, Twinkies, and Italian beef sandwiches were all created in Illinois. It's safe to say the Prairie State knows what hits the spot.

This legacy in food invention has not only satisfied the country's cravings but provided a pull for a plethora of iconic food and beverage companies.

Snacking in Illinois

The Kraft Heinz Company announced a delicious \$400 million investment an hour west of Chicago in DeKalb, Illinois. The investment supports the company's plans to construct one of North America's largest automated consumer packaged goods distribution centers.

The Kraft Heinz Company is investing more than \$400 million in DeKalb, Illinois.

Photo courtesy of The Kraft Heinz Company



“DeKalb was chosen as the site for Kraft Heinz’s newest distribution center due to its prime location off a major roadway, direct access to the national railway system with Union Pacific, the strong local labor market, and the property tax abatement and incentive package in partnership with the DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation,” says Kraft Heinz Global Communications Manager Allison Naval.

The prime location of the planned 775,000-sq.-ft. facility, paired with integration of automated technology, will allow for Kraft Heinz to enhance supply chain capabilities and ensure product deliverability to be faster than ever. The warehouse will handle distribution of 60% of the company’s foodservice business and about 30% of its dry goods.

“Featuring a fully automated storage retrieval system with the ability to run 24/7, the new distribution center will allow us to drive two and a half more volume for customers,” says Naval. “We have partnered with Daifuku Wynright, a global leader integrated material handling systems to build the end-to-end automation technology, including our Warehouse Control System and a 29-crane Automated Storage and Retrieval System. Robotic technology will enable fully automated selection of Kraft Heinz products.”

This facility investment is just one example of how the company plans to transform its traditional logistics operations moving forward. Automated technology plays a vital role in streamlining this process for years to come, while aiding the company in reducing its environmental footprint in



the state. Construction on the project will begin soon, as the company anticipates it to be fully operational by 2025, creating 150 new jobs at the site.

“We are very excited that Kraft Heinz will bring its worldwide reputation for quality products and services to our community,” said DeKalb Mayor Cohen Barnes. “The construction and post-construction employment opportunities they bring will have a positive and lasting impact on our residents, and this positive impact is compounded by the additional diversification of our tax base, which will spur further interest in DeKalb for many years to come.”

Ferrero will begin producing Kinder Bueno chocolate bars for the first time in North America.

Photo courtesy of Ferrero Rocher USA





Raspberry plants at Tanglefoot Ranch in Simpson, Illinois.

Photo courtesy of Illinois Office of Tourism

Sweeter in Bloomington

While looking to select its first North American site to produce its beloved Kinder Bueno products, Ferrero knew Bloomington, Illinois, would fit the taste of a \$214.4 million investment.

As of now, the company is in the midst of expanding its existing Bloomington site by an additional 169,000 sq. ft. to support production of the premium chocolate bar, creating more than 200 new jobs in the process.

“This investment will fuel our momentum in North America, a strategic growth area for Ferrero. Enhancing our manufacturing capabilities in the market is key to driving our innovation agenda

and advancing Ferrero’s goal of becoming a world leader in snacks and confectionery,” said President and Chief Business Officer of Ferrero North America Alanna Cotton. “We’re grateful for the strong partnerships we have with state and local leaders here, and proud that our expansion is part of Bloomington’s amazing success story.”

Ferrero established the state’s first chocolate processing facility when it acquired its Bloomington site in 2018. The slated 2024 completion of the expansion project for Kinder Bueno production will succeed an additional expansion focused on production of Ferrero’s Crunch,

100 Grand and Raisinets items, among other products in 2023.

Its expansion is supported by an Economic Development for a Growing Economy tax credit, which requires a goal of investing \$103 million while creating 75 jobs over the next two years. The company will additionally open its new Innovation Center in Chicago in 2023. The Center will focus on R&D for its cookies, cones and crusts brand teams.

Tender Support

When it comes to agribusiness and food production, Illinois proves there is room for everyone.

Together, Governor JB Pritzker and the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) announced a new capital grant program focused on strengthening the state's meat and poultry supply chain, boosting independently owned meat processing companies.

The \$6 million Meat and Poultry Supply Chain Capital Grant Program aims to help these companies increase production capacity and retain jobs in the process.

“The idea for this program arose in 2022 when inflation for food in particular was rising sharply. This was caused in part by a lack of sufficient competitive pressure due to a concentration of meat processing capacity in a small number of very large meat processing companies,” says DCEO Policy and Program Development Manager John O’Conner. “In addition, small and medium sized meat processors were among the hardest hit in the early days of the pandemic due to workforce impacts, so they were caught scrambling when demand spiked in 2021 and 2022.”

The program is unique in that it specifically caters to independent meat processors instead of industry leaders such as Tyson, which has several locations throughout the state.

The grant allows for awards ranging from \$25,000 to \$1,500,000 to at least five to 10 companies over a duration of two years. Grants will receive a company match of at least four times the amount awarded. Funding can be used to construct a new production



facility, modernize or expand an existing site or to upgrade manufacturing equipment.

For DCEO, this provides economic development opportunity for rural Illinois. Especially in the western region of the state, though the program is not limited to businesses in those areas. From March 2020 to August 2022 the consumer price index for meat increased by 23%, beef and veal saw a 22.9% increase, while pork saw a 24.6% hike, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

“DCEO saw an opportunity to incentivize the addition of meat and poultry processing capacity among small and medium-sized operators, sustain Illinois’ competitiveness and status as a key national hub in this important sector and perhaps lead to lower grocery bills at the same time,” says O’Conner.

“The Meat and Poultry Supply Chain program is a first-of-its-kind DCEO program specifically targeting meat processing operations.”

— John O’Conner, DCEO Policy and Program Development Manager

“The Meat and Poultry Supply Chain program is a first-of-its-kind DCEO program specifically targeting meat processing operations,” says O’Conner. “We see the program as an opportunity to incentivize meaningful investment in meat processing capacity in Illinois and reduce our dependence on just a few very large industry operators.” 🦅

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Building Out for THE FUTURE



Investments in innovation are paying off.

by GARY DAUGHTERS

Illinois is in the midst of a manufacturing resurgence. Manufacturing output during the rebound year of 2021, the latest for which federal figures are available, jumped an impressive 12% to \$115 billion, according to the National Association of Manufacturers, with Illinois' manufacturing employers adding thousands of jobs that pay an average wage of more than \$97,000. Gains like these are poised to accelerate, given not just the momentum of manufacturing nationwide but an auspicious, statewide push to inject Illinois' traditional assets — its central location, sprawling infrastructure and robust industrial workforce among them — with aggressive investments in technology, innovation and worker training.

Last September, Illinois awarded the first in a series of incentives packages under its newly established Reimagining Energy and Vehicles Act (REV Illinois Act), which serves as a cornerstone of Gov. JB Pritzker's vision to make Illinois "the best place in North America to manufacture an electric vehicle." TCCI, a worldwide maker of automotive compressors based in Decatur, Illinois, plans to leverage the package to invest some \$20 million to shift production of its EV compressors to the home front.

"Thanks to the REV Act, Illinois



Manner Polymers is expanding in Illinois.

Photo courtesy of Manner Polymers

beat out international competition to bring this deal home,” Pritzker said. “That means new jobs and jobs that would have gone overseas are staying right here.”

Richard Demirjian, president of TCCI Manufacturing, said, “This is a significant moment for TCCI, the City of Decatur and the State of Illinois, as we embark on new programs to transition our industry toward widespread electrification.”

In addition to the REV incentive, TCCI is to benefit in a very large way from Rebuild Illinois grants totaling \$21.3 million recently awarded to Decatur’s Richland Community and the City of Decatur to create an EV Cluster at TCCI’s global headquarters. Plans for the cluster include an EV Component Manufacturing Facility, a Climatic Center for Research & Innovation and an advanced training center for EV engineering and software technology.

“Together we are establishing a new model for Illinois that sets the stage for how education, research and industry work together to cohesively advance us faster, invest in our people and grow our economy,” Richland Community College President Cris Valdez said. “This state-of-the-art

facility will provide world class training in electrification and a registered apprenticeship program, along with immersive industry partnerships and testing available to the electric vehicle industry.”

A Big Win for Southern Illinois

Based in McKinney, Texas, Manner Polymers announced plans in June to build a \$54 million advanced manufacturing plant in the small town of Mount Vernon, deep in southern Illinois. The company plans to power its operations with an on-site solar farm. Manner develops and produces flexible PVC compounds that can eventually find their way into electric vehicles, among an array of other products.

“We turn oil resins into little bitty plastic pellets that can be turned into anything you can imagine,” says controller Matt Love, “from a cover on a wire to a seal around a door to just about any little widget.”

Like TCCI, Manner Polymers is a recipient of REV tax credits, part of a package of federal, state and local incentives totaling \$9 million, says Love. As part of the package, the state of Illinois is to pay \$2.5 million toward the construction of a 1,000-foot rail spur to link Manner’s new plant to the mainline of Union

Pacific Railroad, which supplies Manner's raw materials. The city is to cover the costs of road and water main extensions, and a local utility will pay for electricity and gas lines.

"The state of Illinois," Love says, "was very aggressive with their incentives compared to other states we were looking at. That was a major factor."

But not the only factor. Mount Vernon's central location and the access it offers to multiple transportation modes played a role, as well.

"One of the strengths of our area," says Tony Iriti, executive director of Jefferson County Development Corporation, "is that we have three Class I railroads that come directly into Mount Vernon and converge on a single location and then connect to two other Class I railroads. Interstate 64 goes east and west, and Interstate 57 goes north and south, and they cross right here in Mount Vernon. So, we're a crossroads," he says.

With its orientation toward solar power and electric vehicles, plus the company's pledge to create 60 well-paying jobs in southern Illinois, Manner, says Iriti, "touches every hot button in Illinois," making it a major win for the state. As if to underscore the project's importance, Gov. Pritzker intervened personally to guarantee funding for the rail spur, which served to put the deal over the top.

"Throughout the entire process," says Love, "city and state officials were great about quickly addressing challenges and coming up with an equitable solution to make the site work for us."

Overseas Investor Gains an EDGE

In calendar year 2022, companies taking part in Illinois' Economic Development for a Growing Economy Tax Credit Program (EDGE) committed to more than

\$1 billion of investment. EDGE provides annual corporate tax credits to qualifying businesses for capital investment and job creation. Germany-based Flender, a leading global supplier for mechanical and electrical drive systems, announced plans in early 2023 to utilize EDGE tax credits to help create 50 new full-time jobs and retain 140 existing positions at its facility in Elgin. The suburb west of Chicago has hosted the company's U.S. operations since 1967.

"Chicago is a major transportation hub, and with Flender being a global manufacturer across multiple industries it gives us the ability to import, export and domestically

“... city and state officials were great about quickly addressing challenges.”

— Matt Love, Controller, Manner Polymers

transport products that weigh as much as 100,000 lbs.," Flender CEO William Galdo told the Daily Herald in April. "As much as the federal government has done to support our industries that we serve, it's the local and state governments that have awarded us the opportunity to be successful in a very competitive market."

Flender's new investments will enable the company to expand its manufacturing operations — including gear boxes for wind turbines — thus bolstering Illinois' focused effort to grow clean energy manufacturing.

"Flender's expansion is a win for both Elgin workers and our clean energy economy," said State Sen. Cristina Castro (D-Elgin). "Illinois has smartly positioned itself to be a hub for innovation and manufacturing in the clean energy sector, and we aren't stopping now." 🍌



Summit Ridge Energy and ComEd began operations at Speedway Solar in February 2023.

Photo courtesy of ComEd

The Switch That's Right For You

by ALEXIS ELMORE

How you select your energy source is your prerogative. But in Illinois, the movement toward electrifying with clean energy is proving to be a cost effective one.

Each year the state increases its renewable energy portfolio, moving away from its traditional fossil fuel production and consumption. As of now, the state has installed 2,201 megawatts (MW) of solar and 7,037 MW of wind capacity.

Around the state, projects like Summit Ridge Energy and Commonwealth Edison's (ComEd) Speedway Solar have begun collecting its 2.495 MW of solar power, while Swift Current Energy's Double Black Diamond Solar Project gears up for commercial operation in 2024.

These projects join the growing number of solar developments taking place in the state over the past five years with no signs of slowing down.

"While we saw a significant growth in community solar in 2021, there's a bunch of projects that are in development right now but have not come online just yet," says ComEd VP of Strategy and Energy Policy Scott Vogt. "One of the things that makes Illinois attractive to developers and customers for adopting

solar is the significant amount of incentives that are available through the state's renewable portfolio standard program."

The Renewable Portfolio Standard program requires 25% of electric sales be made up of renewables by 2025. Through the program customers and businesses alike can earn incentives and electric bill credits for the solar energy they produce.

The transition to clean energy, though beneficial, offers utility providers the opportunity to educate consumers on how connecting to a renewable grid or installing a solar system can save on power bills.

ComEd provides electricity to over 4 million customers in Northern Illinois, roughly 70% of the state's population. Although ComEd does not build or install solar panels, the company can play a vital role in informing its customers that a renewable switch doesn't necessarily equate to an expensive switch.

In 2022, the company received 19,292 applications from residents, communities, businesses, industrial and utility scale users to connect to its solar grid. Just six months into 2023, over 9,330 applications have been received. Data shows that residential, community and commercial users, respectively, lead

the transition. The company created its solar calculator application in 2017, which encompasses marketplace dynamics, cost of solar systems, availability of tax credits and state incentives. By plugging in a home address a customer can learn how much power a home is using and provide an estimate of how much solar production can come from its roof. In turn these estimates show an individualized payback period, cost to install and overall savings, similar to what one can expect from meeting with a developer.

As the state remains steadfast in its goal to attain 100% clean energy by 2050, policies are in place to ensure an equitable shift. While the up front cost of installing a system that operates on solar power can be expensive for low-income customers, its long term payout is enticing.

"Solar on a low income house has the potential of completely eliminating their power bill. If it can be paid for in a year through incentives, it takes a huge burden off that customer," says Vogt.

The Residential Solar program, offered through Illinois Solar for All, provides income-eligible households solar installations with no upfront cost. This is made possible by incentives available to approved

vendors who install these systems. Vendors sell Renewable Energy Credits (REC), which reflects the environmental value of electricity generated from solar panels. In turn, they receive payment through REC sales and pass savings to the homeowner.

Moving forward, the state and utility providers like ComEd are exploring more ways to even the playing field so residents and its businesses can take advantage of savings by transitioning to a renewable source of electricity.

“I’m looking at this as a huge growth opportunity and it helps combat climate change,” says Vogt. “It’s very exciting that we can be this impactful on customers’ lives and climate, and our business is going to be the source of it.”

Nuclear Lives On

The nation’s largest producer of carbon-free energy, Constellation Energy, has plans to increase its nuclear output at two Illinois plants. In February 2023, the company announced that an \$800 million investment would be made at its Braidwood and Byron locations

focused on new equipment infrastructure.

Together these generating stations’ nuclear reactors produce 4,733 megawatts (MW) of zero-emission energy. That alone has the potential to power about 3.5 million homes.

As of now, construction is in the midst of replacing the main turbines currently in place on both sites. The new, highly efficient turbines will aid the company in generating an additional 135 MW output by 2029, creating 1,200 direct jobs. The power generated as a result of these upgrades adds the capacity to support 100,000 homes year-round.

For many years, Illinois has led the U.S. in nuclear energy generation, accounting for 12% in 2021. This investment comes off the back of both the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) and Inflation Reduction Act, which not only saved the company’s seven Illinois plants from retirement but further supports nuclear energy generation.

It represents one of the many upgrades Constellation has had in the books for over 10 years, which were scrapped as the U.S. pursued cheaper energy through natural gas.

The company also plans to apply for operating license renewals at its Clinton and Dresden plants.

“It is gratifying to see new long-term projects at our nuclear facilities getting the green light. This is an exciting time for our industry as we continue our investment in the future of our plants,” said Constellation Chief Nuclear Officer Dave Rhoades. “Our workers stand at the ready to welcome new employees for these projects as we continue building upon creative new efforts that provide additional clean energy to the communities we serve across the nation.”

Working Toward The Future

The transition to clean energy is one that requires skilled hands on deck, and a lot of them.

As the industry continues to grow around the state, leaders are focused on strengthening existing and new talent’s skills as new roles are produced by clean energy projects. In June 2023, Governor JB Pritzker and the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) announced the launch of the Energy Transition Navigators Program. 🧑🏫

ComEd System has 639 MW of Installed DG Capacity as of July 1, 2023



Over the past three years ComEd has rapidly increased solar and wind capacity. Confidential Information For Internal Use Only 3
Chart courtesy of ComEd



The Next Era of Transportation Comes Together in Joliet, Normal and Decatur

by ADAM BRUNS

Guests at Lion Electric's grand opening in Joliet enjoy a ride on a Lion C1 bus on the site of the largest all-electric U.S. plant dedicated to medium and heavy-duty commercial vehicle production.

Photo courtesy of Lion Electric

Zero-emission vehicle maker Lion Electric CEO and Founder Marc Bédard recently observed that Lion had increased its delivered electric trucks, buses and minibuses for the sixth quarter in a row. The company did so thanks to facilities ramping up in his home province of Québec and in Joliet, Illinois, where commercial production of the company's LionC zero-emission school buses has begun.

"With manufacturing operations at both our Joliet vehicle plant and our battery factory [in Mirabel, Québec] now underway, we are focused on achieving profitability and are putting the right elements in place to achieve this objective," he said.

In Joliet, that means a lot more than columns, walls and machines. It means enough talent — around 1,400 positions eventually — to produce up to 20,000 vehicles a year when the facility reaches full scale. Lion was the first company to deliver zero-

emission buses under the \$5 billion EPA Clean School bus Program. And there are a couple thousand more on order where those came from. The company now has more than 1,100 vehicles on the road with more than 10 million miles driven.

Lion expects to have infrastructure in place in Joliet for production capacity of 2,500 school buses on an annual basis by year-end 2023. As of May, the company had invested around \$91 million in the complex and anticipated investing \$14 million more by the end of the year.

In the summer of 2023, an official grand opening was held at the site, which Lion calls the largest all-electric U.S. plant dedicated to medium and heavy-duty commercial vehicle production. The company has said it “chose Illinois for the state’s resources, its central proximity to customers and the domestic supply base, and for its vision that aligns with the state’s common goals for a more sustainable future.”

“We are at the forefront of a manufacturing rebirth in the United States, and together with Governor JB Pritzker and his team, industry stakeholders and EV advocates, we are creating the next era of transportation in the Midwest, with a critical need to reduce carbon emissions, strengthen the region’s economic vitality, and support sustainability,” said Bédard at the opening, which featured a “ribbon”-cutting where the part of the ribbon was played by a diesel fuel hose.

Talent and Breakthroughs

The groundwork for that next era in Illinois has been partially laid by the state’s Climate and Equitable Jobs Act, which commits Illinois to 100% reliance on clean energy by 2050. Talent cultivation is an essential plank in that program, which is why attendees in Joliet included nearly 150 students from the Boys & Girls Club of Chicago and ComEd’s Youth Ambassador

Program who learned about future job opportunities in the sector.

“As a partner on their plans to grow in Joliet from day one,” said Gil C. Quiniones, CEO of ComEd, “ComEd shares Lion’s commitment to expanding access to electric transportation options that will help lower pollution, enhance air quality and stimulate new jobs and economic growth for the communities of Illinois.”

Also on hand in Joliet were

In addition to a workforce development initiative, the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act incentivizes Illinoisians to purchase EVs through consumer tax rebates as part of its goal of putting 1 million EVs on the road by 2030.

representatives from Argonne National Laboratory and Joliet Junior College, which are partnering with Lion on workforce training and development as well as research. Having a national lab and an array of top-notch universities in its back pocket is an incomparable advantage for the state.

In fact, three days after the Lion ribbon-cutting, Argonne and University of Chicago researchers announced they were using machine learning to develop a new algorithm to help schedule and manage the charging of a diverse set of EVs so as not to overtax the electrical grid. Employee cars charging at the Argonne’s Smart Energy Plaza are the first test subjects.

Revvin’ at Rivian and Beyond

Trucks are a big part of Lion Electric’s growth plan, with early sales to a little outfit called Amazon. As it happens, Amazon is also a customer of Rivian, whose plant in Normal, Illinois, continues to churn out the company’s innovative electric trucks, delivery vans and SUVs.

Now a clean transportation



Rivian's R1T tophat and skateboard are married at the start of the trim build at the company's plant in Normal, Illinois.

Photo courtesy of Rivian

option is running its manufacturing operation even cleaner.

Rivian and Apex Clean Energy recently announced a power purchase agreement (PPA) for 50 megawatts of electricity from Apex's proposed 300-MW Goose Creek Wind farm in Piatt County, Illinois, within an hour of Rivian's plant in Normal. Rivian's first large-scale renewable energy procurement, along with other renewable sourcing and on-site generation, will allow Rivian to power as much as 75% of its Normal plant operations with carbon-free energy on an hourly basis.

That on-site generation includes a large new wind turbine and a 783-kilowatt solar canopy at the plant's outbound charging yard, which allows newly assembled vehicles to be powered by renewables for their first charge.

"The PPA will also contribute to the company's commitment to power its Rivian Adventure Network and Waypoints charging with 100% renewable energy," Rivian said. "Importantly, this is Rivian's first major renewable energy purchase and a critical investment in Illinois — supporting homegrown jobs, economic development, tax

revenues, and clean energy in the Prairie State."

"About a third of global greenhouse gas emissions come from transportation, with nearly another third from electricity generation," said Rivian Director of Renewable Energy Andrew Peterman. "We have a tremendous opportunity at Rivian to help tackle emissions beyond the tailpipe to support decarbonization of manufacturing and charging of electric vehicles."

The EV profile of Central Illinois grew more pronounced in September 2022 when Gov. JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) awarded the first Reimagining Energy and Vehicles in Illinois Act (REV Illinois) tax incentive package to TCCI Manufacturing in Decatur less than 10 months after signing into law the Climate & Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) and the REV Illinois Act, which aim to make Illinois the best state in the nation in which to drive and build an electric vehicle.

In addition to REV incentives valued at \$2.2 million, the state's FY2023 budget appropriated \$21.3 million in capital grants to the City of Decatur and Richland Community College to create a research and innovation facility and training program in partnership with TCCI. Richland Community College and TCCI are working in partnership with the University of Illinois (UIUC) Grainger College of Engineering and Northern Illinois University on a training academy, which will offer a new workforce training and development program with a focus on EV advanced engineering, software technology, a STEM pathways program, and accredited apprenticeship programs that offer world class training in electrification. The state's FY2024 budget includes strategic investments of \$10 million in EV and advanced manufacturing curriculum development at community colleges,



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Rivian's plant in Normal is powered in part by wind and solar energy generated on site and, soon, at a new wind farm within an hour's drive.

Photo courtesy of Rivian

as well as \$10 million in EV-focused vocational training through a new Clean Energy and Technical Education pilot program.

Headquartered in Decatur, TCCI

until that point manufactured a variety of compressors suited for combustion vehicles at its Decatur manufacturing facility, while manufacturing compressors for electric vehicles at its facilities abroad in China and India. Now the company is investing more than \$20 million to retool its Decatur facility to transition to electric compressor manufacturing, which will create more than 50 new jobs, while retaining 103 positions of its current workforce for a minimum total of 150 positions.

"This is a significant moment for TCCI, the City of Decatur, and the State of Illinois, as we embark on new programs to transition our industry toward widespread electrification," said Richard Demirjian, president of TCCI Manufacturing. 🇺🇸

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Illinois Beats Out Over 58 Competitors for Highly Coveted Project



Meta co-founder Mark Zuckerberg and his wife, Dr. Priscilla Chan, believe that we will be able to cure, prevent or manage all diseases by the end of the century. This belief forged an ambitious mission that led the couple to create the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative (CZI), which “works at the intersection of philanthropy and technology” to instigate collaboration and accelerate scientific discovery.

In March, CZI revealed that it had chosen Chicago as the home for its next biomedical research hub. The Midwest city beat out over 58 applicants, including San Diego and New York. The \$250 million project will be the CZ Biohub Network’s second location; its first is located in San Francisco and launched in 2016.

Much of CZ Biohub San Francisco’s success has been

Why did the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative choose Chicago for its new biohub?

by **LINDSAY LOPP**

CZ Biohub Chicago is leasing 28,200 sq. ft. of wet labs and office space at Fulton Labs’ 400 N. Aberdeen facility.

Photo courtesy of Trammell Crow Company



“The world-class science at our partner universities was **key to our decision** to pick Illinois. So is the abundance of talent from other universities around the state and in the burgeoning life science community in Chicago.”

— Victor Colunga, Chief Financial Officer, Chan Zuckerberg Biohub Network.

attributed to its collaborative research model that cultivates a team of top universities. CZ Biohub Chicago will feature the same setup. Three of Illinois’ leading research institutions, the University of Chicago, Northwestern University, and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, have been chosen to partner with the organization.

“When we decided to launch a second Biohub, to build on the success of our first Biohub in San Francisco, we issued a Request for Proposals from which we received responses from across the nation,” says Victor Colunga, CFO of the Chan Zuckerberg Biohub Network. “Given that researchers from all three universities will be active participants in this initiative, the city of Chicago, with all its many resources, was an easy choice.”

According to Commercial Café, the Chicago region is ranked No. 6 in the nation for life sciences companies and No. 2 for producing talent in Cell and Molecular Biology, Biomedical Science and Immunology.

“The world-class science at our partner universities was key to our decision to pick Illinois. So is the abundance of talent from other universities around the state and in the burgeoning life science community in Chicago,” says Colunga. “We selected the group of Illinois universities based on the

scientific strength of their proposal to better understand the biology of inflammation and its role in many human diseases, and the strength of the teams who would do that research.”

The research conducted at CZ Biohub Chicago will focus on developing technologies to make precise, molecular-level measurements of biological processes within human tissues. Once engineered, this platform will give insight into how immune cells malfunction and cause disease. Ultimately, the CZ Biohub Network aims for this research to unlock an understanding of and treatment for the inflammatory states that underlie many diseases.

Space to Innovate

When it came time to choose a location for CZ Biohubs’ Illinois operations, Colunga stated that, among many factors, “geographic proximity to our partner universities and other organizations so we could both participate and contribute to expanding the life science community in Illinois” was most important.

“Government incentives were not part of the decision-making process,” said Colunga. “However, when we announced the selection of Illinois, Governor Pritzker made a very generous commitment to help us build out our research



facilities with a \$25 million award. This assured us that we had made the right choice in selecting Illinois and that our efforts to expand the life science community in Illinois would be well received.”

The organization selected Fulton Labs, a newly developed two-building life sciences campus in Fulton Market, for this project. After signing the initial lease, the biohub quickly realized it needed more room. With 750,000 sq. ft. of wet labs and office space, Fulton Labs was eager to accommodate their request. Though the organization’s footprint at the initial facility couldn’t be expanded, a solution was found. As of July, CZ Biohub Chicago houses operations in both on-campus buildings, occupying 25,698 sq. ft. at 1375 West Fulton and 28,200 sq. ft. at 400 N. Aberdeen.

Facilities similar to Fulton Labs are popping up across Illinois. Many of these facilities are a direct result of the \$15.4 million investment Rebuild Illinois made through its Wet Lab Capital program in October 2021. This funding supported the creation of eight new public and private

wet lab centers.

Among recent projects, Hyde Park Labs, a 302,000-plus-sq.-ft. commercial lab facility, is expected to be complete in late 2024. The University of Chicago has already leased one and a half floors of the 13-story facility. While part of UChicago’s acquired space will house researchers from the Pritzker School of Molecular Engineering, 20,000 sq. ft. has been dedicated to the university’s latest venture, a life sciences incubator.

UChicago announced in June that it had entered a partnership with Cambridge Innovation Center (CIC), a company that builds and operates rentable lab and office space, to create this opportunity for life sciences entrepreneurs and startups. The facility, which features wet labs and office space, will primarily house startups created by UChicago faculty members. This will be the CIC’s third U.S.-based wet lab facility and ninth global location.

With various wet lab facilities expected to open in the upcoming years, Illinois offers life sciences companies what few states can: space to grow. 🍌

Co-founders and co-CEOs of the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, Priscilla Chan and Mark Zuckerberg.

Photo Source: CZI



Quantum Prairie

The capital of the computing revolution

by LINDSAY LOPP

Argonne Director Paul Kearns welcomes guests to the Argonne Quantum Foundry ribbon cutting.

Photo courtesy of Argonne National Laboratory

Quantum computing has captivated the world. As countries across the globe gear up for the latest race to innovate, Illinois is well prepared with its arsenal of research assets.

Chicago, the third largest city in America, is home to a robust ecosystem of resources for quantum companies. The Chicago Quantum Exchange (CQE) is at the heart of this sector's rapid growth. As an intellectual hub working to advance the science and engineering of quantum information, the CQE focuses on fostering industry partnerships, research and development, and education and training opportunities.

This mission led the organization to launch Duality, the nation's first accelerator program dedicated to quantum startups, with the University of Chicago's Polsky Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation in 2021. Since its founding, Duality has hosted 11 companies across two cohorts. Those chosen to join the 12-month accelerator receive \$50,000 in funding, access to high-tech facilities, mentorship,

entrepreneurial training and networking opportunities.

"For innovation in quantum science, it is critical that we forge connections between industry, academia and government agencies," said CQE Director David Awschalom in April. "By sharing knowledge and making our capabilities available to the scientific community broadly, we're promoting U.S. competitiveness in this rapidly growing area of research."

The Argonne Advantage

Awschalom wears many hats in Illinois' quantum community. In addition to his role at CQE, Awschalom is also an Argonne senior scientist, the director of Q-NEXT, which is one of five National Quantum Information Science Research Centers, and the Liew Family Professor of Molecular Engineering and vice dean for Research and Infrastructure at the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Molecular Engineering (PME).

In April 2023, Awschalom was among six other scientists, officials, and executives to participate in the ribbon-cutting for Argonne

National Laboratory's latest expansion, the Argonne Quantum Foundry. The 6,000-sq.-ft. research facility is a unique asset in the Midwest and will serve as a national source of materials and data to accelerate quantum research and technological development.

"There are few places in the country dedicated to creating high-quality, standardized materials for quantum technologies, and we are pleased that one of them is now here at Argonne," said Awschalom.

Through this expansion, Argonne will provide a national need, a domestic supply chain of materials, primarily semiconducting devices, for foundational science and industry research. The foundry features facilities for developing, testing and fabricating semiconduction qubits. Another asset this new location boasts is a silicon-based quantum computer prototype, which is designed to run simulations that aid in material development. With the data researchers collect, the foundry plans to establish a national database cataloging materials and their properties.

"Our foundry will spur advances to quantum information science and technology for the benefit of the nation," said Argonne Director Paul Kearns in a press release. "With this world-class facility, Argonne is empowering quantum research to maintain U.S. scientific leadership and economic competitiveness."

Teeming with Tech

Long before Chicago attracted attention for its quantum network, the city had a reputation as a world-class tech center. More than 11,200 tech companies, including industry big names such as Salesforce, Lyft and LinkedIn, run operations in the Windy City.

According to CompTIA's 2022 State of the Tech Workforce Report, around 245,000 Chicagoans are

“With this world-class facility, Argonne is empowering quantum research to maintain U.S. scientific leadership and economic competitiveness.”

— Paul Kearns, *Director, Argonne.*

employed by tech companies. In 2022, this city's net tech employment grew by 3,468, a 1.4% increase.

Google currently employs more than 1,800 Chicago-based employees at its two-building campus in Fulton Market. The multinational technology corporation established its first Chicago office in 2000 with only two employees.

In the 23 years since the company opened in Illinois, Google has yet to slow down. In July 2022, it announced plans to expand into the Central Loop district. Alongside its existing facilities, Google now owns the James R. Thompson Center (JRTC) after purchasing it for \$105 million. Set to undergo exterior and interior renovations, Google and JRTC Holdings, LLC, have entered a build-to-suit agreement and expect the redevelopment to be completed by 2026.

The acquired property previously served as a secondary capital for the State of Illinois and housed offices for the state government. It is the only building in Chicago where six L train lines converge, connecting the city's South, West and North side. With this infrastructure, Google is eager to provide its employees with "unparalleled public transit access" for their commute.

"With one of the top locations in downtown Chicago, we knew after the planned renovation that the iconic building would attract world-class tenants," said Michael W. Reschke, manager of JRTC Holdings, LLC. "These transactions are transformative for the State and the City and will create key anchors for the future success of Chicago's downtown district and LaSalle Street for many more generations." 🏡

Where the TDL Talent Pipeline Is FULL



Rendering of a CJ Logistics large-scale logistics center — two are to be built in greater Chicago.

Image courtesy of CJ Logistics

The Land of Lincoln is in the midst of its biggest makeover in the state’s history. In June 2019, Governor JB Pritzker signed Rebuild Illinois into law, a \$45 billion, six-year capital plan designed to revitalize communities across the state. Nearly three quarters of that — \$33.2 billion — is earmarked for transportation infrastructure that will add to Illinois’ appeal as a location for logistics operations.

“With this historic \$45 billion capital plan, we’re fixing decades-long problems, creating good jobs, improving communities for the next generation — and doing it together, across party lines,” said the governor upon signing the legislation. “The Rebuild Illinois plan transforms our state’s approach to transportation infrastructure, finally treating

our roads, bridges, and railways like 21st century investments and not relics of the past.”

More than 20,500 transportation, distribution and logistics (TDL) companies employ more than 331,000 people in Illinois and contribute nearly \$39 billion in economic output. According to numbers from Intersect

Illinois, more than 82,000 students complete programs applicable to work in TDL each year, and the state is home

to the fifth largest TDL talent pipeline in the nation. In addition, according to the agency, Illinois’ community colleges graduate more than 2,700 people each year with certificates catered to TDL career opportunities.

As for logistics infrastructure, Illinois has all seven Class I railroads, seven Interstate highways, the country’s largest inland port,

by MARK AREND

in Joliet, and two of the busiest cargo airports in the U.S. — Chicago O’Hare and Chicago Rockford International. In 2023, MidAmerica St. Louis Airport’s \$31 million, 41,000-sq.-ft. terminal expansion opened. The airport has an annual economic benefit of more than \$3 billion.

Korean Investment in Logistics Centers

Two Chicagoland communities are among three locations that will see new, large-scale logistics centers take shape in the coming years. In June, CJ Logistics, a supply chain and technology company in South Korea, announced a strategic partnership with the Korea Ocean Business Corporation (KOBC) to construct the logistics centers through a public-private collaboration. They will prioritize handling the import and export cargo of global and South Korean companies, facilitating their overseas expansion and trade activation.

Under the partnership, known as the “North American Project,” CJ Logistics will operate the logistics centers, and KOBC will secure funding for them. Construction is scheduled to begin in the first quarter of 2024, with a phased completion targeted from the first half of 2026 to 2027.

“We are committed to supporting our North America customer base, South Korean companies and e-commerce sellers as they enter the U.S. market,” said Sin-ho Kang, CEO of CJ Logistics, at the joint venture announcement. “By utilizing our cutting-edge logistics infrastructure and operational capabilities, we aim to increase customer value, serve as a strategic partner to our customers who can benefit from global and multimodal solutions, and expand the ‘K-Wave’ into the business sector.”

The Illinois locations for the logistics centers are Elwood, 40 miles southwest of Chicago, and Des Plaines, north of O’Hare International Airport. The Elwood site is adjacent to BNSF and Union Pacific rail terminals, and efficient nationwide transportation and delivery within one

to two days are enabled via road and rail networks.

With the development of these strategic hubs, the company is “optimizing its global logistics model to meet customer needs for integrated, end-to-end supply chain solutions. It will generate synergy by connecting the newly constructed logistics centers with its existing network of 57 operational logistics centers across the U.S.”

TRANSPORTATION, DISTRIBUTION & LOGISTICS BY THE NUMBERS

- 331,709 people employed in TDL at 20,502 companies
- \$38.6 billion in economic output
- 26% higher job concentration than the national average (7th in nation; Chicago MSA is the 2nd largest TDL workforce cluster in the nation)
- 4th in U.S. for number of transportation and warehousing establishments
- Chicago has the most TDL firms in the U.S., including 24 of the top 25 third party logistics providers
- New and expanding transportation and warehousing businesses created 40,000 jobs in 2020 in Illinois, 4th most in the nation

Source: Intersect Illinois

Another Destination for TDL Talent

Princeton, in Bureau County, is the location of a new distribution center being built for Ollie’s Bargain Outlet, America’s largest retailer of closeouts and excess inventory. Announced in October 2022, the \$68 million facility will create 145 new jobs over the next three years. The 600,000-sq.-ft. center, expected to be completed in 2024, will service more than 150 Ollie’s stores across the Midwest. As part of the expansion, the company received an Economic Development for a Growing Economy (EDGE) tax credit, which stipulates a goal of investing \$68 million and creating 148 jobs over the next three years.

“We are excited to make the next key step in our nationwide expansion happen by building our fourth distribution center in Princeton,” said Ollie’s Executive Vice President and COO Eric van der Valk at the project announcement. “Illinois is one of Ollie’s fastest growing states with 10 stores and counting to open in the upcoming months. Its central location to our other markets in the Midwest region and the strong workforce made Illinois the perfect spot for breaking ground to bring customers more bargains.”

Transportation, distribution and logistics is a key growth industry for Illinois and focus of Governor Pritzker’s 5-year economic plan. Ollie’s investment is a prime example of how companies that need to move products efficiently are finding facilities that meet their TDL needs in Illinois. 📍

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THE FIELDS STUDIOS



Bright lights are no stranger to the city of Chicago and neither is star power.

When it comes to film and television production, the city holds an impressive roster of industry favorites such as “Ferris Bueller’s Day Off,” “Home Alone” and “The Dark Knight.” Since 2010, more than 85 films and over 100 television shows have selected Chicago as their home base.

In March 2023, Governor JB Pritzker and the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) announced that the state had broken its record for film production expenditures in 2022 at a whopping \$691 million. The industry has amassed continued success over the past three years, beating out pre-pandemic expenditure in 2019 by \$131 million.

However, such an established presence within the industry does not preclude space for firsts.

For New York-based real estate developer Knickpoint Ventures there was an industry need not yet met in Chicago. In turn, the company is introducing the city’s first purpose-built studio at the former Marshall

by ALEXIS ELMORE

Field’s Wholesale Warehouse.

The site was acquired in 2018, before receiving city council approval in February 2021. Construction began eight months later on the \$250 million project, which is set to become operational in spring 2024.

“There were only a few providers of studio space in Chicago and from what we found they were fully occupied in spite of being conversions of warehouse buildings. The new era of film production happens in purpose-built studios that are specifically created to house the technological needs of productions in the future,” says Knickpoint Ventures Founder and Managing Partner Zain Koita. “We thought that we could really grow the production base here in Chicago by adding this kind of product to the market.”

Koita notes the company looked into studio development for the last several years. The sheer size of the more than 100-year-old property, physical location and logistical assets prompted its purchase and led

Chicago Takes Center Stage

The Fields Studios will introduce nine sound stages ranging from 5,000 to 18,000 sq. ft.

Photo courtesy of Knickpoint Ventures.



redevelopment will introduce retail and residential offerings.

This project represents the first studio investment by Knickpoint Ventures, whose portfolio consists of residential, self-storage, industrial and office real estate. With over 25 years of motion picture and television studio development experience, Knickpoint Ventures Partner Shawn Papazian is spearheading its creation under the newly established Knickpoint Studios.

“I think what’s different now is the evolution of virtual production, so we’ll be accommodating the need for that as technology grows and becomes more commonplace,” says Papazian. “What’s more important, now more than ever, is the idea of tax credits and how one can make content for the same quality but at a lesser price in the United States. Obviously, in states where that tax credit and the type of infrastructure needed is top quality it provides a prime opportunity, and that’s why I’ve chosen Chicago.”

The Fields Studios adds to Chicago’s expanding film industry, which holds over 1.8 million sq. ft. of studio space over the city’s 60 sound stages. Hopes for the purpose-built studio aim to not only grow Chicago’s production base but provide a one stop shop for film production.

Producing More for Less

While the state could be considered the motherland of several of the nation’s film classics and favorite onscreen talent, it is also making waves in attracting new productions.

Before it was announced that Illinois film production expenditures reached an all-time high in 2022, Governor Pritzker had extended the Illinois Film Production Tax Credit for the next decade.

In comparison to New York and California, the state doesn’t have a cap on film and television tax credits, a notable incentive to both

Illinois Film Production Expenditures

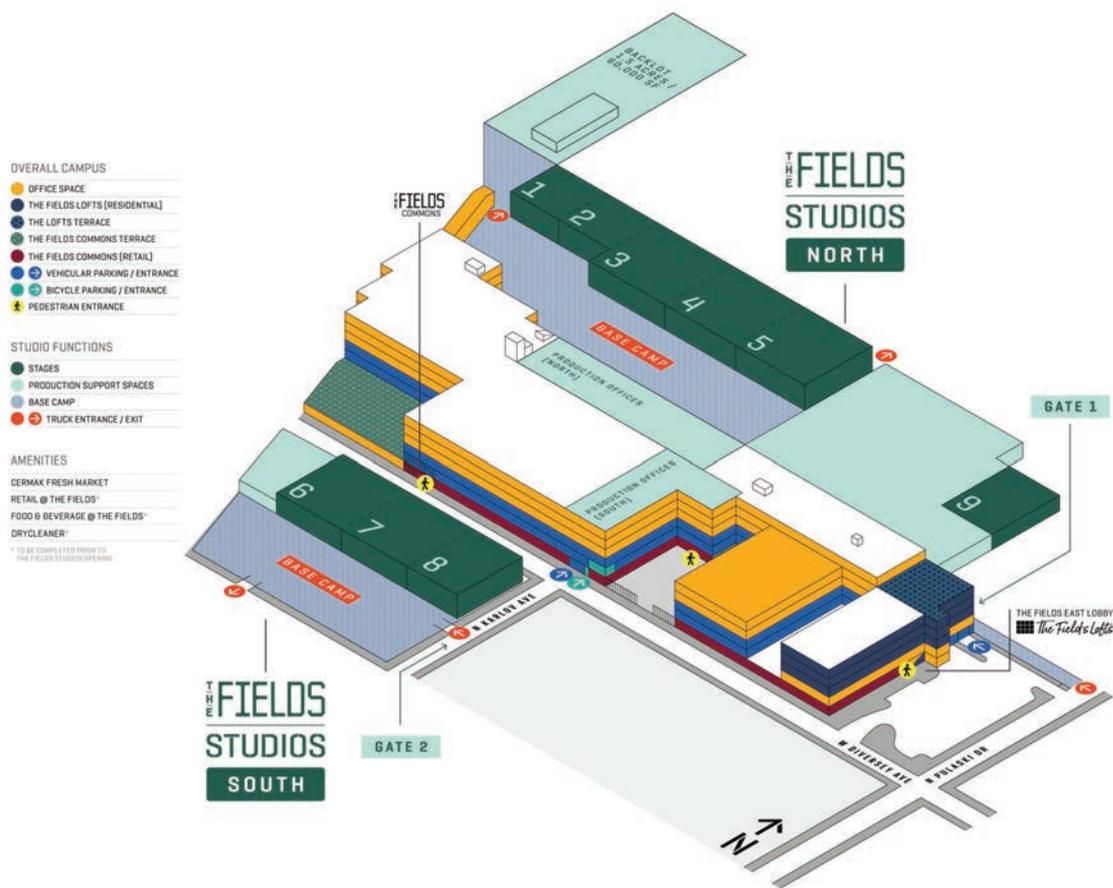
YEAR	EST. EXPENDITURES (\$M)	EST. WAGES (\$M)	EST. HIRES (NON-EXTRAS)
2019	\$560	\$350	15,200
2020	\$362	\$230	7,800
2021	\$631	\$373	13,800
2022	\$691	\$403	15,400

Illinois film production expenditures in 2022 surpassed pre-pandemic estimates by \$130 million.

Knickpoint Ventures to cultivate its own film studio plan.

“We’re kind of continuing down that path with a modern day manufacturing facility that’ll hire people locally,” said Koita. “It’s located in a great neighborhood halfway between the airport and downtown so it works well for transportation logistics, but also for attracting stars and executives that want an urban environment in addition to making high-quality content.”

Appropriately named The Fields Studios, the 23-acre site will be transformed to house 132,000 sq. ft. of sound stages and more than 350,000 sq. ft. of production and office space. A total of nine sound stages will be available on the redeveloped site, featuring one 5,000-sq.-ft. insert stage and eight stages ranging from 12,000 to 18,000 sq. ft., with operational walls connecting four of the stages for larger production capacity. In addition, the mixed-use



established and independent film makers. The incentive provides a 30% tax credit on qualified expenditures which includes production spending and salaries. Furthermore, productions can receive an additional 15% credit for salaries of talent who live within economically disadvantaged areas.

“Our success in the film and TV production industry is more than just a set of revenue numbers. It means thousands of good-paying jobs,” said Governor Pritzker. “I was proud to extend the Illinois Film Production Tax Credit through 2033, guaranteeing a prosperous decade ahead for producers, writers, directors, designers, editors, actors, camera operators, and production assistants alike. Our film and TV production industry is a boon for our entire economy, bringing stability to Illinois’ booming film industry and the workforce that fuels it.”

Just as it was for Knickpoint Ventures, the state’s Film Production Tax Credit has proven itself to be the most enticing incentive drawing in companies and productions.

Its expansion in 2022 contributed to 1,561 film permits from the Chicago Film Office.

Prepared for Growth

“I’m estimating that we’re going to be a billion dollar a year industry by 2025. The more we grow, the more we need crew,” says Illinois Film Office Director Peter Hawley.

On average and depending on the project’s size, 180 to 250 crew members are required to support a film production. Talent equipped with knowledge of on set operations, various crew positions and overall safety training is a fundamental step growing the industry that the state is set out to address.

In doing so, the Illinois General Assembly created the Film Workforce Development Fund which will support its Film and Television Workforce Training Program. Through the program, Illinois aims to not only grow its entry level crew base but increase access to solidify a diverse talent pipeline.

“The goal here is that if we do this consistently year after year,

which the program is set up for over the next decade, we’ll get 2,500 to 3,000 people into the industry,” says Hawley. “The goal is people will start in entry level positions and work their way up the ladder to department heads.”

In the pilot program that took place last year, 175 students received hands-on training working on a small production, shadowing and gaining mentorship from working crew members. In gaining this experience, 80% of the programs grantees moved into paid production roles following graduation.

The biggest piece at play for the state is avoiding a “brain drain” of talent looking to get involved on set. With an ample number of productions eyeing the state, a ready-made talent base is key to getting projects like The Fields Studios in full swing.

“Talent in Illinois can look around and say, ‘Hey, I can have a great union job here in Illinois and I don’t necessarily have a college degree and I certainly don’t have to go to another state to find work,’” explained Hawley. 🍌



The Middle Of Everything

A boost in funding continues to support Illinois' legacy as a top tier tourist destination.

by LINDSAY LOPP

The Windy City has certainly taken the world by storm. Nestled among the skyscrapers, each street leads to a new adventure with infinite museums, restaurants, and live entertainment venues to explore. Chicago is a city where boredom does not exist. Whether it's your home for years or only for a weekend, the list of things to do and see never ceases.

For six consecutive years, the readers of Condé Nast Traveler have voted Chicago the No. 1 Best Big City in America. Nearly 49 million domestic and overseas tourists

visited the Windy City in 2022, a 60% increase from 2021, according to Choose Chicago. With attractions such as the Art Institute of Chicago, The Bean at Millennium Park and Wrigley Field and various shopping sectors, it's easy to see how the city amassed an estimated \$16.9 billion in tourism spending in 2022.

Chicago's uptick in tourism has spread beyond the city limits. In April, Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) awarded \$22.5 million from the Tourism Attractions and Festivals Grant Program to 89 projects throughout the



Illinois has approximately 86,076 miles of river, according to National Wild and Scenic River. Photo courtesy of Enjoy Illinois

state. This funding supports Illinois' tourism industry by providing grants to localities, organizations, and businesses for a wide range of tourism-related activities, events, and improvements. Of the allotted amount, \$5 million was reserved for festivals, with \$17.5 million funneled into a wide range of attractions, museums, and live performance venues.

"Investing in tourism throughout Illinois is not just a fantastic way of spurring our already thriving economy, it's also a way of encouraging families to explore our state's lesser-known attractions," said State Rep. Michelle Mussman, D-Schaumburg, in April.

89 Must-Dos

The projects the Tourism Attractions and Festivals Grant Program selected highlight many of the state's hidden gems.

Outdoor enthusiasts can look forward to new opportunities to explore two of the state's most prominent waterways. Of the 89 projects that received funding, the Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau was awarded \$184,000 to purchase 10 self-serve kayak kiosks and interpretive panels that will be installed at various sites along the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers.

"Though Chicago is a world-class destination with an abundance of exciting features, the rest of Illinois has even more for visitors and families to enjoy,"

— Michelle Mussman III, *State Rep. (D-Schaumburg)*

"Bringing outdoor recreation to the forefront in southwest Illinois has been a major driver for the Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau," said Cory Jobe, president & CEO of Great Rivers & Roads Tourism Bureau, when the award was announced. "State funding for the Kayak Kiosk project along the Great River Road is a game changer for the region and will help us provide kayak access to the Mississippi River from locations along the Meeting of the Great Rivers National Scenic byway. Continuing to build our outdoor recreation/nature-based tourism product is key to continued growth in our region."

Kane County Development and Community Service were also allotted \$270,000 to construct new canoe and kayak access points and improve existing locations along the Fox River Trail in Geneva.

This funding follows the creation of the Office of Outdoor Recreation Industry Act. This act establishes a new office of outdoor recreation in Illinois to promote recreational activities throughout the state.

Various organizations affiliated with the



Chicago visitors on cruising yacht enjoying an architectural tour.

Photo by Ashleigh Porter

400, 000 people attended the Lollapalooza in 2022.

Photo courtesy of Enjoy Illinois

arts also received funding. In Northern Illinois, the city of Rockford’s annual interactive art event, CRE8IV, received \$235,000. The “transformational arts and culture festival” fosters community beautification and engagement by allowing local and visiting artists to lead teams in creating vibrant murals and sculptures for public spaces in the city. Since the festival was launched in 2019, more than 30 projects have been completed.

Other must-see tourist attractions that received a portion of the grant include: The National Railroad Hall of Fame in Galesburg, The World’s Largest Monopoly Game located at the McDonough County courthouse, the Imagine Route 66 History building in Springfield, the Edwardsville Children’s Museum, and the Japanese Gardens in Rockford.

Something to Celebrate

Illinois’ tourism industry is already starting to see a return on its investment. When the recipients were announced, the World Wide Technology Raceway in Madison received \$500,000. This funding helped the speedway prepare for the upcoming NASCAR 2023 Enjoy Illinois 300. On the days leading up to, during, and after the race, Madison and the surrounding area were overrun with fans. With a sold-out speedway and not a

single hotel room unoccupied, this race’s economic impact on local businesses, hotels, restaurants, and attractions is estimated to total \$60 million.

Beyond racing, numerous world-famous festivals and events around Illinois are attracting crowds. Taste of Chicago, the largest food festival in the world, amasses more than 1.4 million visitors each year.

According to a study by Angelou Economics, Lollapalooza, a four-day music festival also held in Grant Park, generated \$335.4 million in direct and indirect economic revenue in 2022.

Before the headlining act, J-Hope, performed at the 2022 event, the former mayor, took to the stage to announce that the city had secured the festival for another 10 years.

“That’s 10 more years of music, of arts, of support for the city of Chicago. Four billion dollars in economic impact, 10 more years.”

These events and attractions are only a reflection of the communities and culture Illinois offers year-round. With a population pulled from each corner of the country, Illinois is home to a diverse ecosystem of individuals. Thus, spawning attractions that answer to a myriad of interests. In the middle of America, the middle of everything, there are endless opportunities to explore. 🍷

Jane Lynch

Invites You to Enjoy Illinois

Emmy and Golden Globe award-winning actress Jane Lynch is quite a familiar face. As a scene stealer in hit shows and movies such as “Glee,” “Only Murders in the Building,” “The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel,” “Wreck it Ralph” and “The 40-Year-Old Virgin,” Lynch has brought laughter and life into many homes across America.

Now, as the spokesperson for the Illinois Office of Tourism’s “The Middle of Everything” campaign, Lynch is inviting viewers to leave their couch behind and book a ticket to her home state. In a variety of vibrant commercials, Lynch shows and sometimes sings about the one-of-a-kind adventures available in Illinois. From seeing the perfect sunset at Camel Rock to feeding Alpacas at the Rolling Oak Alpaca Ranch in Makanda to savoring a slice of stringy cheese pizza at Giordano’s, this campaign gives tourists a glimpse into what their next vacation could look, feel and taste like.

Since Lynch’s involvement in the campaign began in April 2022, the Illinois tourism industry has reported record-breaking growth. The state welcomed 111 million visitors in 2022, 14 million more than in 2021. Visitors spending also increased by \$12 billion, totaling \$44 billion.

In celebration of this success, Lynch shared with the Illinois Investment Guide her thoughts on everything Illinois, from its opportunities for actors to her favorite slice in Chicago.

As a native of Illinois, can you share the impact this state has had on you and your career?

JANE LYNCH: I was born in Dolton, Illinois, and went to Illinois State University in Normal, getting an undergrad degree in theater arts. I did theater in Chicago after college, working in a lot of non-equity theater

companies (which means for free), and finally got my equity card touring with Second City and performing in Steppenwolf Theatre shows. In terms of Chicago theater, it’s an actors’ town. Actors come from all over the country to Chicago to create their own work and blaze their own trail. There’s a purity to the arts and theater in Chicago. It’s done for art’s sake.



Illinois’ ‘Middle of Everything’ tourism campaign stars native Illinoisan, Emmy and Golden Globe award-winning actress and New York Times best-selling author Jane Lynch.

Photo Courtesy of DCEO

You have become an enthusiastic spokesperson for the state in those “Middle of Everything” commercials. Can you talk about how that opportunity came about and why you chose to do it?

JANE LYNCH: I started my career working in commercials and I’ve worked with directors in every type of media. I have wanted to be a commercial director for some time, and

this campaign was the ideal beginning. I am a big fan of Illinois and wanted to help promote it. Cliff Grant and the people at STORY made the transition from in front of the camera to behind the camera very easy for me. It’s been an absolute joy to bring to life the ‘Middle of Everything’ campaign in new and exciting ways. Being able to share my passion for all things Illinois comes naturally, and getting to meet and work with so many inspiring people and unique businesses across the state is an honor.

What’s your favorite thing to see or do in Illinois when you have downtime and you just want to relax and unwind?

JANE LYNCH: I spend every Christmas in Chicago and get back there to visit often. Some of my favorite places to visit when I’m in Illinois include:

- Avanti’s Italian Restaurant on the campus of Illinois State University in Bloomington. Come for the pizza bread, stay for the pizza bread.
- The Illinois Shakespeare Festival, a live outdoor summer theater at Ewing Theatre in Bloomington, just off the campus of Illinois State University.
- Anderson Japanese Gardens in Rockford.
- The Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio in Oak Park.
- The architecture boat tour along the Chicago River is exhilarating.
- In the summertime, I try to catch a baseball game at “The Friendly Confines” Wrigley Field, home of the Chicago Cubs in the heart of Wrigleyville.
- Aurelio’s Pizza in Chicago Heights. Hands down, this is the best Chicago-style pizza. Deep dish is for the tourists. Real Chicago pizza is thin crust with tangy, sweet tomato sauce, and no one does it like Aurelio’s.

Rivers Run Through It

And life is good in these five river cities in Illinois.



Naperville's Riverwalk on the West Branch of the DuPage River.

Photo: Getty Images

Some of America's most livable towns and cities can be found along the banks of more than 7,000 miles of rivers that flow through the Land of Lincoln. Rivers have played a profound role in all that is Illinois, from the state's early settlement to its commercial foundations, economic development and rich, Midwestern fabric.

More than ever, Illinois' riverfronts have come to serve as social and economic hubs, hosting as they do businesses, festivals, communal gathering spots and places to simply play. Here are five among the many of Illinois' riverside cities that boast exceptional standards, affordable costs of living and unique cultural offerings.

Naperville Is Accolade City

What better place to begin than Naperville? Nestled along the banks of the DuPage River, the bustling Chicago suburb has amassed a stockpile of national endorsements that only seems to grow by the year. In 2023, Naperville rose to No. 4 on Niche.com's ranking of Best Cities to Live in America. The popular website's annual survey identified Naperville as the No. 1 best city in which to raise a family, No. 1 for

by **GARY DAUGHTERS**

public schools and the third-best city in which to buy a home.

Rounding out Naperville's impressive haul of plaudits, MoneyGeek crowned it as America's safest city in a recent survey.

Created in 1981 to honor Naperville's 150th anniversary, the Riverwalk is billed as the city's "Crown Jewel." The two-mile trail trek along the DuPage's West Branch wends past dozens of parks, pavilions, outdoor sculptures, meeting spaces, memorials and recreational spots such as its Paddleboat Quarry and Fishing Pier and a Millenium Wall & Labyrinth. Seasonal celebrations include a summer concert series, July's annual Ribfest and a Halloween Happening each October at the Riverwalk's Grand Pavillion.

Springfield: Not Too Big, Not Too Small

Springfield, on the scenic Sangamon River, is a shining oasis in the heart of Illinois, one that blends small town tranquility with amenities worthy of a major metropolitan. With a congenial population of 113,000 residents, the Illinois state capital boasts an outsized arts and entertainment scene and a thriving startup culture bolstered by Innovate Springfield, a downtown business incubator.

Springfield enjoys a comfortable cost of living that is notably lower than most locations its size, a proposition confirmed by a recent WalletHub ranking that placed Springfield among the Top 10 most affordable cities for homebuyers. Cutting edge medical facilities and providers include Memorial Health System, Hospital Sisters Health System, SIU Medicine and Springfield Clinic.

“With an economic base built on medical services and governmental agencies, and as the home base for several national and international companies, Springfield offers one of the most stable economies in the U.S.,” says Julie Davis, managing broker with The Real Estate Group. “It’s a lifestyle,” Davis said in a release provided by the Springfield Sangamon Growth Alliance, “that fits the single person, young families, empty nesters, and retirees alike.”

The Past Lives in Galena

With its stunning, 19th century architecture, Galena is a trip back in time. The Galena Historic District, named to the U.S. National Register of Historic Places, covers close to 90% of the city and is graced by more than 1,000 buildings constructed before 1900. Its most notable sites include the Ulysses S. Grant Home, Old Stockade on the Cobblestone Street, Council Hill Station and Old Market House.

While Galena is a town that modernization may have skipped, it projects a distinctly forward-leaning vibe. Galena’s Helluva Half Mile counts more than 100 boutiques, restaurants and galleries, all of which serve to foster a famous sense of belonging in the village of fewer than 5,000 people. The Galena River meanders through lush, green fields as it flows toward historic Galena.

Geneva: A Picture of Prosperity

On the tranquil Fox River about an hour west of Chicago, Geneva notched a median household income of \$126,759 in 2021, a whopping 80% higher than the national average. Johnson Controls, North American Logistics, Millard and Houghton Mifflin are among the biggest employers in the tidy city of 21,000 people. Geneva’s thriving local economy blends with postcard perfect parks, inviting neighborhoods and abundant examples of adaptive re-use architecture.

Each June, the city celebrates its Scandinavian heritage during Geneva Swedish



Days, a weeklong festival of carnivals, parades, music, food and locally brewed beer. Held in late July, the Geneva Arts Fair has earned national recognition since its inception in 2002, including a Top 10 ranking among Best Arts Fairs in America by artfaircalendar.com. Festival of the Vine, in September, celebrates “anything grown on a vine,” says Laura Rush, communications director for the Geneva Chamber of Commerce.

Preserving Quincy

Twenty miles north of Hannibal, Missouri on the banks of the Mighty Mississippi, picturesque Quincy is a living display of architectural wonders spanning virtually every notable movement from the early 19th century forward. Home now to the ornate Quincy Museum, the Newcomb-Still Mansion holds down a spot at 18th and Main Streets, identified by National Geographic as one of the 10 most architecturally significant intersections in the U.S.

Once considered the most important river town in Illinois, Quincy is home to not one, but four major historical districts. The city’s East End Historic District, about 10 blocks from the river, features designs from the Italianate, Greek Revival, Romanesque and Queen Anne movements. Quincy Preserves, an outgrowth of the Quincy Society of Fine Arts, works with owners of historically significant structures to restore and maintain them to their original condition. It has provided financial assistance to preserve such landmarks as the town’s Washington Theatre, Woodland Cemetery, John Wood Mansion and the Gardner Museum. 🍷

Geneva’s Festival of the Vine

Photo courtesy of Karen Muehlfelt Keeping Moments Photography/Geneva Chamber of Commerce

ROUTES TO REMEMBER

The Great River Road along the
Mississippi River.

Photo courtesy of Illinois Office of Tourism



Galena's historic Main Street.

Photo courtesy of Illinois Office of Tourism

Interior renovations of THE MART, formerly known as the Merchandise Mart, in downtown Chicago.

Photo courtesy of Skender

The Bean at Millennium Park in Chicago

Photo courtesy of Illinois Office of Tourism

East Moline.

Photo courtesy of Visit Quad Cities





**Navarro Canoe Company in
Rock Island.**

Photo courtesy of Illinois Office of Tourism

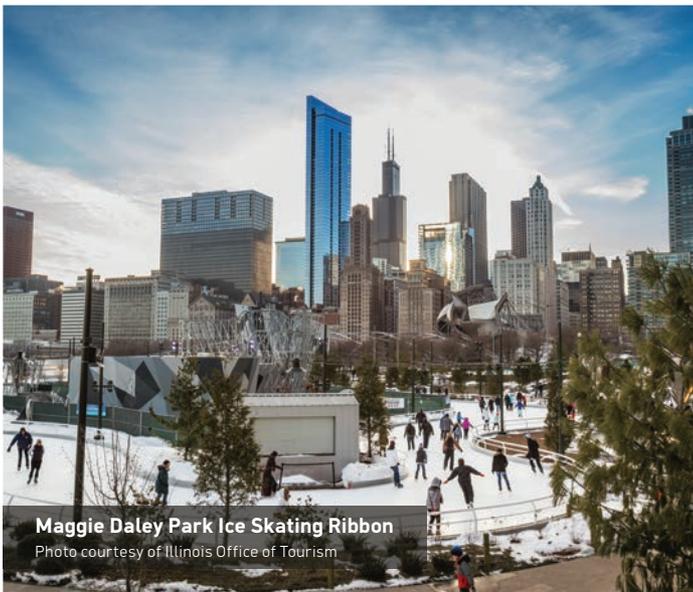


Springfield Music Festival.
Photo courtesy of Springfield Sangamon Growth Alliance



Máximo the Titanosaur at the Field Museum in Chicago.
Photo courtesy of Illinois Office of Tourism

Route 66 Mural in Pontiac.
Photo courtesy of Illinois Office of Tourism



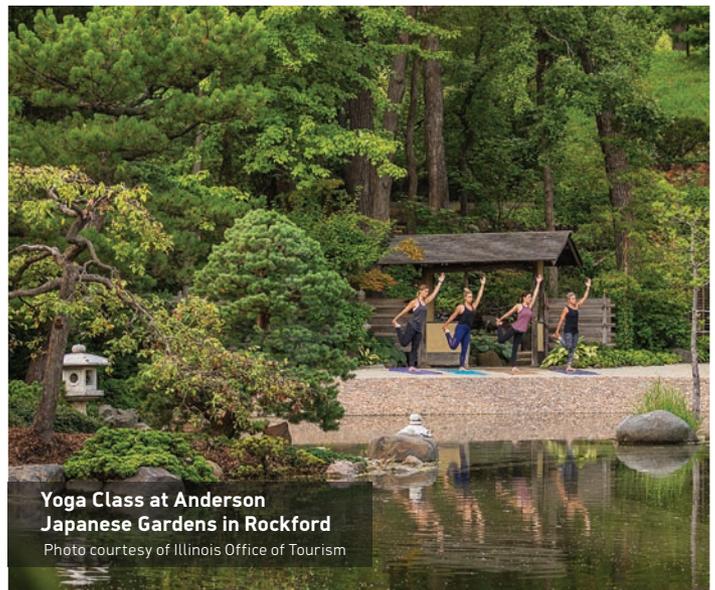
Maggie Daley Park Ice Skating Ribbon
Photo courtesy of Illinois Office of Tourism



Cityscape along the Chicago River
Photo: Getty Images



Cubs Fans at Wrigley Field.
Photo courtesy of Illinois Office of Tourism



Yoga Class at Anderson Japanese Gardens in Rockford
Photo courtesy of Illinois Office of Tourism



A park in Springfield
Photo courtesy of Springfield Sangamon Growth Alliance



Heritage Bicycles, a bicycle shop and cafe located in the Lakeview neighborhood of Chicago.
Photo courtesy of Illinois Office of Tourism

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