

ILLINOIS



INVESTMENT GUIDE
2026-2027

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ILLINOIS
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION



C O N T E N T S



12

08

Business Climate Overview

A 31-day period in the first quarter of this year showed why Illinois performs at an elite level in economic development.

12

Interview with the Governor

Investing into incentives, site readiness programs and workforce development has turned Illinois into a top contender, says Gov. Pritzker.

16

Illinois EDC Interview

The state got serious about economic development and energy policy in 2021, says Christy George. Five years later, that shift is paying off.

20

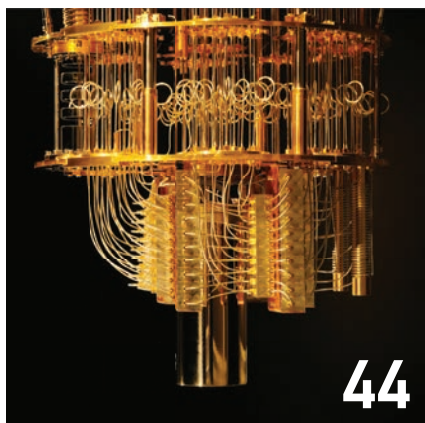
Statistical Profile

The Illinois economy by the numbers.

22

Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Interview

Kristin Richards leads a state agency bent on delivering results statewide.



44

26

Incentives Overview

From EDGE to REV, we break down the programs helping businesses grow in Illinois.

29

Regional Spotlights

From Chicago to Carbondale, every region of Illinois is packed with economic opportunity, ready sites and qualified workers.

42

Testimonials from Business Leaders

CEOs speak out on why they chose the Land of Lincoln as the best place to build their businesses.

44

Illinois Quantum and Microelectronics Park

Want to know why Illinois leads America in quantum computing? Check out what's happening at IQMP.

48

Site Readiness

It takes more than good fortune to build a shovel-ready site. It takes investment, patience, hard work and thoughtful planning.



61

54

FDI

Why is the world coming to Illinois? Deliberate outreach strategies pave the way to open new global doors.

56

Workforce Development

Programs don't perform jobs; they enable the training of skilled workers who do.

61

Universities and Research

From the University of Illinois to SIU-Edwardsville, the Land of Lincoln delivers world-class education and research.

65

Incubators, Innovation and Entrepreneurs

Illinois has a roster of incubators, accelerators and hubs for innovation that cater to an entrepreneur's specific goals.

68

Investment Profile: City of Mattoon:

Welcome to the best small town for economic development in Illinois.



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smart energy solutions at
AmerenIllinois.com/EcDev





70

70

Next Generation Agriculture, Ag Tech, and Food Processing

From soybeans to horseradish, Illinois grows the crops that feed the world.

76

Advanced Manufacturing

Why do the world's most advanced manufacturers choose Illinois? A highly skilled workforce is at the center of their decisions.

80

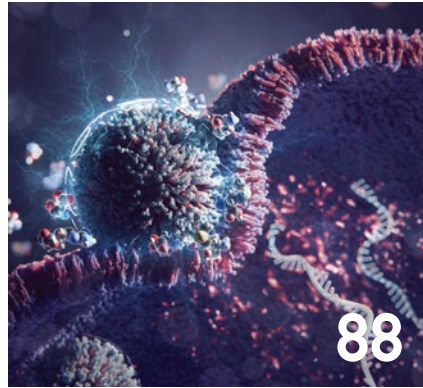
Clean Energy Manufacturing and Production

Going clean and green is the new mantra in Illinois; and here's where that work is taking shape the fastest.

84

Logistics and Transportation Infrastructure

Waterways, highways, airports, rail lines, seaports and bridges form the backbone of the No. 1 state for logistics.



88

88

Life Sciences

From AbbVie to CSL, life-changing medicines and therapies are being developed and produced daily throughout Illinois.



90

90

Growth in Central and Downstate Illinois

Mount Vernon is Continental's largest tire plant in the U.S. and a hub in its Americas supply chain. Here's why.



103



94

94

Technology

Inside the Teklab expansion in Collinsville in Metro East in Southwest Illinois.

97

Film and TV

From Chicago PD to Dark Matter, Illinois is home to many of the best shows on film and television.

100

Hospitality and Tourism

Tourists flock annually to the Windy City, the scenic byways of the Mississippi and the historic towns of Route 66.

103

Quality of Life

When it comes to measuring what makes for a good life, Illinois has an edge.

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254,000	Skilled Workforce
8.75 million	Square Feet of Available Industrial Space

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5 for 5: ILLINOIS REAPS RECORD HAUL IN 31 DAYS

by **RON STARNER**

When Illinois recently secured five high-profile project wins in five weeks, the flurry of activity only confirmed what most site selectors already knew: When it comes to advanced manufacturing, Illinois is a juggernaut.

From February 23 to March 25, 2026, Illinois landed major capital investments from AbbVie, DMG MORI, CSL, Hyundai Translead and Mars Snacking.

AbbVie announced February 23 that it will invest \$380 million to build two active pharmaceutical ingredient manufacturing facilities at the company's campus in North Chicago, creating 300 high-wage jobs. Combined with an earlier announcement, AbbVie is up to \$575 million in new investments at this campus.

A day later, DMG MORI announced a \$40.5 million investment to establish an advanced manufacturing and R&D facility

in Chicagoland and create 74 full-time jobs. James Nudo, chairman of DMG MORI Federal Services Inc., said the new plant “will expand our North American R&D capacity, advanced additive manufacturing and automation technologies, and power production of dual-use and defense applications.”

On March 9, CSL announced a \$1.5 billion investment to create a manufacturing facility at its campus in Kankakee County, creating 300 jobs and retaining 1,200 others. The facility is supported by an Illinois EDGE incentive deal and will produce immunoglobulin therapies.

Hyundai Translead then announced March 16 that it will invest \$450 million into two new Illinois manufacturing facilities in Will County, creating 2,500 full-time jobs while redeveloping former Caterpillar and Lion Electric sites.

Finally, Mars Snacking announced March 25 that it will invest \$100 million and create 600 jobs in an expanded global

The Chicago skyline reflects the progress made by the Windy City — the No. 1 U.S. Metro for corporate projects for a record 13 straight years, per *Site Selection* magazine.

Photo courtesy of Enjoy Illinois

headquarters in Chicago.

That amounts to five major projects, totaling \$2.4705 billion in investment and 3,774 new jobs, in only 31 days.

In Illinois, that's just another month. Consider that over the past five years, Illinois has tallied 2,863 capital investment projects — an amount second only to Texas in that span. Moreover, Illinois increased its haul each year, rising from 480 corporate facility deals in 2021 to 487 in 2022, 552 in 2023, 664 in 2024, and 680 in 2025.

If the first half of 2026 is any indication, Illinois is well on its way to securing yet another top-two finish in the nation. Commenting on the surge in investment in the first quarter of 2026, Gov. JB Pritzker said, "Since taking office, I have been on a mission to attract more businesses to Illinois, grow our economy, and give us a competitive edge. From rebuilding our infrastructure, strengthening our workforce, and investing in education from cradle to career, we have laid the foundation for sustained growth and prosperity. This progress is a clear indication of what Illinois is capable of."

This progress was measured and charted by the newly formed Illinois Economic Development Corporation's (Illinois EDC) Economic Research Center in the recently published 2026 State of Business Report. The study was conducted to review the state's economy and place Illinois' performance in national and regional context over the past year. The report examined 16 key metrics and found that business establishments in Illinois grew in 2025 and Illinois-based employers outperformed U.S. hiring trends.

Key Findings of Illinois Study

"Growth across the state's focus industries, alongside sustained entrepreneurship and investment

activity, reflects a diverse and active economic base," the report stated. "These trends indicate that Illinois entered 2026 with solid fundamentals and expanding opportunities tied to innovation, investment and technology adoption."

Other Takeaways:

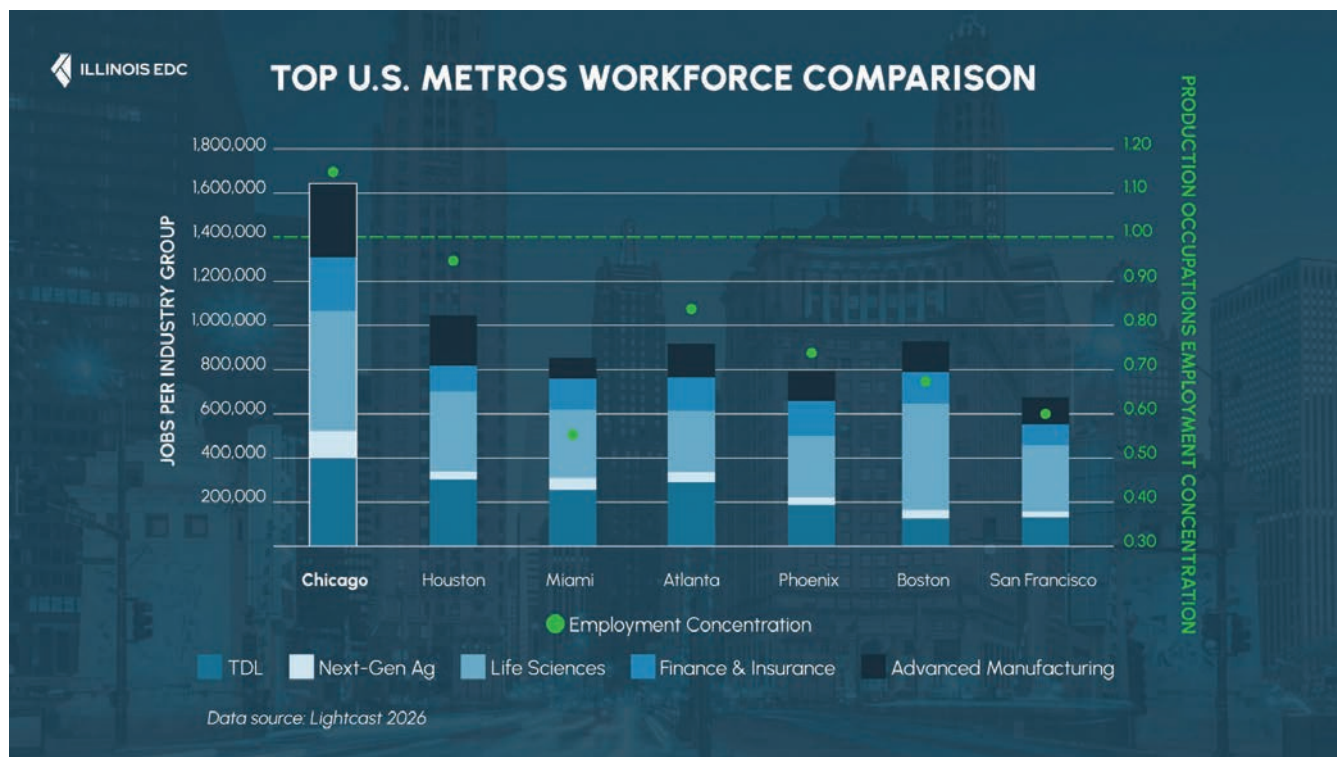
- Illinois' economic growth exceeded U.S. performance in 2025, with state GDP rising 5.85% year-over-year.
- Illinois outperformed U.S. hiring trends as hires increased 7% year-over-year, and Illinois closed the year with 200,000 job openings statewide.
- Inflation pressures eased in 2025, and prices in Illinois' largest metro areas remained well below the U.S. city average.
- Private capital supported company scaling, including eight IPOs and strong early-stage investment activity, at 427 deals in 2025.
- Illinois experienced job growth in all focus industries, and diverse job growth across regions reinforced Illinois' momentum.
- Entrepreneurship remained strong with roughly 189,000 new business applications filed in Illinois during 2025.

Another sign of economic strength was reflected in continued high employer demand for workers across Illinois. The state's labor participation rate of 63.4% remained a full 1.3 points above the U.S. average. Illinois employed roughly 6.2 million workers as of December 2025.

While new hires nationally fell 1.32% in 2025, they increased by

“Since taking office, I have been on a mission to attract more businesses to Illinois, grow our economy, and give us a competitive edge. From rebuilding our infrastructure, strengthening our workforce, and investing in education from cradle to career, we have laid the foundation for sustained growth and prosperity.”

— Gov. JB Pritzker



7.45% in Illinois. Meanwhile, Illinois' population of 12.72 million in 2025 remained steady, even ticking up slightly at 0.13%.

Job growth remained strong across all focus industries in Illinois, led by 12% gains in life sciences, 11% gains in next gen ag, 9% growth in clean energy jobs, and 9% growth in logistics jobs.

Where the Dollar Goes Further

Employers will also be encouraged by declining inflation in Illinois. Prices in Chicagoland and the Metro East portion of Greater St. Louis (Southwest Illinois) remained well below the national average. Across the All Items Inflation Index, prices in Chicagoland tracked closely with the rest of the Midwest while remaining considerably below average prices in the U.S. — nearly 20 index points lower than the national average in 2025.

The Greater St. Louis region, which includes Metro East in southwestern Illinois, saw lower overall price levels than the U.S.

city average in 2025, averaging 26 index points below the national level.

Independent media outlets took note. In July, CNBC reported that Illinois rose to its highest ranking in the annual Top States for Business report, as Illinois ranked No. 12 — a jump of 18 spots from when Gov. Pritzker took office.

Furthermore, CNBC ranked Illinois No. 7 in education; No. 12 in access to capital; No. 12 in technology and innovation; No. 3 in infrastructure; and No. 23 in cost of doing business.

Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Director Kristin Richards commented, "As the years go on, Illinois continues to solidify its reputation as a global economic powerhouse under the leadership of Gov. Pritzker. CNBC's rankings are further evidence that business is booming in Illinois, and DCEO is committed to supporting the state's world-class workforce while bolstering local economies in every corner of Illinois." 



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Leading by Example

Gov. Pritzker shows America how to build a globally competitive state.

When Zero Point Cryogenics announced on July 22 that it would establish its first U.S. location at the Illinois Quantum and Microelectronics Park (IQMP) on Chicago's South Side, the news reinforced exactly how much the Illinois economy has changed since Gov. JB Pritzker took office on January 14, 2019.

This is not your grandfather's Illinois anymore. Rather, it is a state that leads from the front of the pack in technology, quantum computing, life sciences, advanced manufacturing and other forms of knowledge-based capital investment.

"Illinois is building the world's leading quantum ecosystem by bringing together the companies, researchers, manufacturers and suppliers needed to turn breakthrough discoveries into real-world technologies," Gov. Pritzker said at the announcement. "Zero Point Cryogenics' decision to establish its first U.S. location at the Illinois Quantum and Microelectronics Park is another example

by **RON STARNER**

of that strategy delivering results. Their investment strengthens the supply chain that supports quantum innovation, creates high-quality jobs, and reinforces Illinois' position as the global capital of quantum technology."

With support from the State's Manufacturing Illinois Chips for Real Opportunity Act (MICRO) Program, ZPC will establish its first U.S. location at the IQMP, co-locating its U.S. research and development, sales and service operations. Additionally, as a supplier of cryogenic hardware, ZPC will support the needs of companies locating at or collaborating with the IQMP, strengthening the park's growing quantum ecosystem.

In the following interview, we catch up with Gov. Pritzker to learn more about the changing nature of the Illinois economy and how his administration is preparing to lead America into the next decade of high-tech progress.

Gov. Pritzker volunteers at the Central Illinois Food Bank.

Photo courtesy of the Governor's Office of Illinois

With 680 corporate facility investment projects last year, Illinois placed second in the nation but easily outdistanced all other states in total project performance. Illinois, in fact, has finished second or third in the country every year since 2020. What factors enable your state to consistently perform at this elite level in economic development?

GOV. JB PRITZKER: It starts with the fundamentals. Illinois has one of the best workforces in the country, unmatched transportation infrastructure, world-class universities and a location that gives companies access to markets across the nation and around the world.

But we've also been very intentional about building on those strengths alongside our economic development partners. We've made our incentives more competitive, invested in getting sites ready for development and expanded workforce programs so companies know they'll have the talent they need to grow here.

And we approach economic development as a team. My administration's Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) and Illinois Economic Development Corporation (Illinois EDC), as well as our local and regional partners, work together to make the case for Illinois, both here at home and through our international trade missions. That coordination has helped us consistently compete for and win major investments in every part of the state.

A lot of people credit Greater Chicago for this effort, but Illinois actually performs very competitively in every region. How did you build a network of economic development leadership statewide?

GOV. PRITZKER: Chicago is obviously a tremendous economic engine, but Illinois' economic strength extends across the entire state. We have a deep manufacturing base in communities large and small, one of the nation's strongest agriculture and food-processing sectors, and regional economies built around industries like logistics, life sciences and advanced manufacturing.

Our approach is to build on the strengths

that already exist in each region. Through the team at Illinois EDC and DCEO's Regional Economic Development Team, we work directly with local economic development organizations, utilities, colleges and universities, community leaders and businesses. Those partners understand their local workforce, industries and opportunities better than anyone.

Team Illinois brings those partners together so companies see a unified state ready to help them find the right site, connect with workers and suppliers, and navigate available incentives. Whether it's a manufacturer expanding in Central Illinois or an agriculture-related business investing downstate, our goal is to make it as easy as possible for companies to invest, hire and grow in Illinois.

You have been a big backer of EV production and alternative energy projects. How is that sector growing in Illinois today?

GOV. PRITZKER: I've always believed that the transition to clean energy is not only an environmental necessity; it's also a generational economic opportunity. And you can see that opportunity taking shape in communities across Illinois.

Bloomington-Normal is a great example. Rivian's continued investment and its new supplier park are helping turn the region into a major center for electric-vehicle manufacturing. Companies like OPmobility are locating nearby to serve Rivian, bringing additional investment and jobs to the region. That creates an entire economic ecosystem around the plant, supporting suppliers, workers and local businesses.

But this growth extends well beyond one company or one community. Wieland is making a \$500 million investment in advanced copper manufacturing in East Alton, supporting a material that is essential to electric vehicles and renewable-energy infrastructure. Pure Lithium is investing \$46 million to establish battery manufacturing operations in Chicago. And in Decatur, TCCI is developing an electric-vehicle innovation center and workforce training academy.

That is exactly what we envisioned when we worked with the General Assembly to

“The biggest misconception is that Illinois is still the state it was a decade ago — fiscally unstable and unable to compete for major business investment. That story may have been grounded in real challenges, but it no longer reflects where Illinois is today. We’ve balanced eight consecutive budgets, earned 10 credit upgrades, eliminated the bill backlog and rebuilt our Rainy Day Fund.”

— Gov. JB Pritzker

create REV Illinois. We aren’t simply trying to land individual projects. We’re building the full clean-energy supply chain here — from vehicle assembly and batteries to critical materials, component manufacturers and workforce training.

Illinois has the skilled workers, manufacturing heritage and infrastructure to lead this industry. These investments show that clean-energy manufacturing is already becoming an economic engine for communities across our state, and we intend to keep building on that momentum.

What were the most impactful pieces of economic development legislation that you managed to push through and sign into law this year?

GOV. PRITZKER: Our eighth consecutive balanced budget was probably the most impactful. Responsible budgeting gives businesses confidence that Illinois is stable, reliable and prepared for the future. Companies making long-term investments want certainty, and our balanced budgets, improved fiscal position and 10 credit upgrades demonstrate that Illinois is a dependable partner.

When companies are deciding where to locate or expand, they need confidence that they’ll be able to find qualified workers. That’s why we’re continuing to invest in workforce development programs

that prepare Illinoisans for in-demand jobs, including Area Career Centers, Manufacturing Training Academies and Illinois Works. These programs provide hands-on training, connect employers with skilled workers and create pathways into apprenticeships and good-paying careers.

We’re also building on years of investment in site readiness. Last year’s budget included a historic \$500 million commitment, and this year we’re investing another \$100 million through Site Ready Illinois. When companies are deciding where to build, they need sites with the necessary infrastructure, utilities and transportation access, and they often need them quickly. These investments allow communities to prepare sites in advance so Illinois can compete for large-scale domestic and international projects.

Taken together, we’re giving businesses greater certainty, building the skilled workforce they need and ensuring communities across Illinois are ready to capitalize on the next major investment opportunity.

Governors in other states often chirp about how they recruit Illinois companies to relocate to their states. Yet Illinois still maintains a very strong roster of Fortune 500 headquarters and other major operations. What keeps your state’s competitive position so strong?

GOV. PRITZKER: Governors are always going to compete, and I don’t blame them. I see one of my most important roles as serving as the chief marketing officer for Illinois, and I’m constantly making the case for why businesses should invest, expand and create jobs here.

The truth is that Illinois offers a combination that is difficult to match: a highly skilled workforce, world-class universities, modern infrastructure and one of the best transportation networks in the country. Companies can reach their customers, find the talent they need and build for the long term here.

Our incentive programs are an important tool, and so far in 2026 they have helped attract more than \$2.5 billion in private investment from global companies. But those projects represent only one piece of Illinois’

broader economic momentum. Many businesses choose to locate, expand and hire here without receiving state incentives because the fundamentals make Illinois the right place for them.

We're proud of our progress, but we're not taking it for granted. I'm going to keep telling Illinois' story and competing for every company, every investment and every job.

What is the biggest misconception that some people have about Illinois?

GOV. PRITZKER: The biggest misconception is that Illinois is still the state it was a decade ago — fiscally unstable and unable to compete for major business investment. That story may have been grounded in real challenges, but it no longer reflects where Illinois is today.

We've balanced eight consecutive budgets, earned 10 credit upgrades, eliminated the bill backlog and rebuilt our Rainy Day Fund. We still have work ahead of us, particularly when it comes to our long-term pension obligations, but we have made enormous progress and restored stability and predictability to state government.

Businesses are recognizing that change. Illinois consistently ranks among the top states for corporate investment projects, and companies continue to locate, expand and create jobs here. The Illinois of today is fiscally stronger, economically competitive and investing in the workforce and infrastructure businesses need to succeed.

My job is to make sure people understand how far we've come — and that they take a fresh look at everything Illinois has to offer.

Many people believe that access to water and energy will be the great differentiator for states in the coming years. How is Illinois positioned to be a national leader in these two critical resources?

GOV. PRITZKER: Illinois is exceptionally well positioned because we have both abundant freshwater resources and a large, diverse energy portfolio.

On water, we border three major rivers and Lake Michigan, and we have significant groundwater reserves. Illinois is part of



Gov. Pritzker in 2023 signed a bill banning assault weapons in Illinois.

Photo courtesy of the Governor's Office of Illinois

a region containing roughly one-fifth of the world's surface freshwater. At a time when many parts of the country are facing water scarcity, that gives our communities and businesses an important long-term advantage — and a responsibility to protect and manage those resources wisely.

On energy, Illinois is already one of the nation's largest electricity producers and generates more nuclear power than any other state. We also have rapidly growing wind and solar industries and regularly produce more electricity than we consume.

But we know demand is increasing, so we took action to bring more energy resources onto the grid while protecting affordability and reliability. The Clean and Reliable Grid Affordability Act builds on the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act by accelerating energy storage, expanding energy-efficiency programs and improving long-term planning for our power needs. It puts Illinois on a path to add three gigawatts of storage by 2030, allowing us to store energy when it is abundant and deploy it when demand is highest.

We also lifted the moratorium on the construction of large nuclear reactors, opening the door to new nuclear development as we continue expanding renewable generation. Together, these actions will help Illinois meet growing demand from families and businesses while maintaining our clean-energy goals. 🌱



How Illinois Extends Its Competitive Edge

George: Strategic investments pay off for every corner of the state.

by RON STARNER

When you run one of the most successful economic development organizations in America, it can sometimes be a challenge to top last year's performance.

For Christy George, president and CEO of the Illinois Economic Development Corporation (Illinois EDC), the challenge was met and surpassed when Illinois increased its total corporate facility project tally from 2024 to 2025. One year after finishing second in the nation with 664 projects, Illinois upped that total to 680 in 2025 and again captured the No. 2 ranking.

How significant is this performance?

Consider this: Illinois easily bested third-place finisher Ohio, which had 467 projects last year, and every other state in the East North Central Region of the U.S. In fact, if you combine the tallies of the states that finished third, fourth and fifth in the region — Indiana, Michigan and Wisconsin — you would still be more than 200 projects shy of Illinois' total.

Over the past five years, Illinois has finished either second or third in the nation each time. It is a testament to the hard work put in day in and day out by George and her relentless team at Illinois EDC. In the following interview, we sit down with George and take a closer look at this performance and how Illinois EDC achieves it.

DMG MORI Federal Services is investing \$40.5 million to build a new advanced manufacturing and R&D facility in Chicago's Goose Island corridor. Illinois EDC President and CEO Christy George speaks at the official announcement.

Photo courtesy of Illinois EDC

What have been your state's biggest economic development wins of 2026?

CHRISTY GEORGE: We've had an incredible year, with major wins across several of Illinois' priority industries.

Hyundai Translead is opening its first U.S. manufacturing plants in Will County, investing more than \$450 million and creating more than 2,500 new jobs.

Existing Illinois companies are also doubling down. IBM is establishing its FutureNow Chicago innovation and delivery center at the 128-acre Illinois Quantum and Microelectronics Park on Chicago's South Side. The new hub will create 750 full-time jobs in AI, cybersecurity, data science, and other technology fields and will serve as an anchor tenant in the park's new Quantum Works building. IBM is also developing an apprenticeship program with City Colleges of Chicago to help build its workforce. This is a fantastic showcase of how Illinois' ecosystem is building.

We're seeing similar momentum across the broader quantum ecosystem, with a growing number of companies establishing operations and hiring talent in Illinois.

Life sciences is another area of significant growth. CSL announced a \$1.5 billion investment in Kankakee County that will add more than 300 highly skilled pharmaceutical jobs while retaining another 1,200. AbbVie is also making more than \$575 million in investments in Illinois.

And the momentum extends well beyond those sectors. Pure Lithium is investing \$46 million and creating 50 jobs in Chicago, while ADM is investing \$103 million to modernize and expand its North American headquarters in Decatur.

What's exciting is, this growth isn't limited to a single sector or region. These investments show the breadth of Illinois' momentum and the confidence companies have in growing here.

Which industries are growing at the fastest rate in Illinois now, and why?

GEORGE: Illinois is growing in all of our key industries: advanced manufacturing; next-generation agriculture, agtech, and food processing; clean energy production

“The state's economic development strategy is working. It is happening because **we recognized that you have to first invest in yourself.** We did that in 2019 with an investment of more than \$50 billion in infrastructure.”

— Christy George, *President and CEO, Illinois EDC*

and manufacturing; quantum computing, AI, and microelectronics; life sciences; and transportation, distribution, and logistics.

Quantum is growing rapidly while the life sciences have seen the strongest percentage growth among Illinois' priority sectors, with employment increasing 12% since 2021. But the broader story is that Illinois has been deliberate about investing in the assets companies need to grow. That starts with infrastructure. Since 2019, Illinois has committed more than \$50 billion to infrastructure investment. We also have one of the nation's largest community college systems and utility partners working to provide a reliable energy grid.

Illinois became much more intentional about economic development and energy policy beginning in 2021, and we are now seeing the results. From 2021 to 2025, Illinois added 368,000 jobs. That kind of growth comes from aligning infrastructure, workforce, energy, and economic development work around a common strategy.

How does Illinois support innovation and entrepreneurship?

GEORGE: At Illinois supports innovation by pairing significant public investment with world-class research, talent, and private-sector partnerships.

One fresh example: The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity will administer the new X-Labs Fast Fund, which will help attract and support teams working on breakthrough technologies.

Quantum is a great example of that broader strategy. Illinois is betting big on innovation with quantum — more than any other state in the nation. Recent announcements include Inflection's Chicago Quantum Innovation Center, Zero Point Cryogenics launching a Chicago hub, and



Christy George speaks at a recent Aspen Ideas Climate Conference.

Photo courtesy of Illinois EDC

a longtime Illinois manufacturer, Ability Engineering Technology (AET), modernizing and expanding to develop and scale the development of quantum hardware.

Illinois has made major investments in the ecosystem since 2019, and we are seeing that commitment translate into companies establishing operations, collaborating with our universities and national laboratories, and building new technologies here.

Greater Chicago recently claimed yet another national No. 1 Top Metro Award from Site Selection Magazine for having more corporate facility projects than any other MSA in the country last year. What enables Greater Chicago to outpace all other American cities so consistently?

GEORGE: Chicago has a combination of assets that is difficult to replicate. Its corporate community is deeply civically engaged, and companies have access to a large and diverse workforce, world-class universities, national laboratories, and strong innovation and technology ecosystem. It's exceptional connectivity.

Chicago also has an enormous professional-services talent base and a quality of life that helps companies attract and retain workers. The city's diversity and central location also make it attractive. Taken together, those advantages give businesses confidence that they can scale and grow here for the long term.

Talent wants to live here, work here,

and stay here.

Those opportunities don't stop at Chicago — we have communities and economic centers with distinct strengths across the state.

What are three little-known facts about Illinois that you wish more people knew and understood?

GEORGE: One is that Illinois has an extraordinarily diverse economy. Manufacturing is a major strength, but so are agriculture and a range of other industries, and our manufacturing legacy supports supply chains and other sectors across the state. No one industry dominates the state's economy, which allows for both stability and opportunity. Second, Illinois has tremendous depth in skilled and technical talent, including engineers, welders, and workers trained through our building trades and labor unions. That workforce is a real competitive advantage. Third, Illinois is one of the country's strongest innovation economies. Our universities, national laboratories, research institutions, and private-sector partners create an environment where new ideas can move from research toward commercialization. Illinois universities are engines of innovation.

How do you engage in FDI promotion and attraction — and how is your state performing in that area?

GEORGE: Foreign direct investment is a major focus for Illinois, and partnerships are foundational to that work.

Our team travels internationally to build relationships with companies and investors, working alongside DCEO, Illinois' international offices, consulates, and other partners. Trade missions also give us an opportunity to make the Illinois case directly in key global markets. Our team has recently traveled to London, Mexico City, Taiwan, and Tokyo.

Illinois has six regional trade offices across the globe, which work to encourage international companies to invest in Illinois. Many international companies see Illinois as a gateway to the North American market. Our central location, transportation network, workforce, and diverse economy give companies the ability to establish a U.S. presence and grow from here.

**Illinois is a big state for agribusiness.
What's new in your state in this field?**

GEORGE: Agriculture has faced real headwind over the past two years, but we continue to see significant investment across the sector.

ADM announced more than \$100 million in new investment at its Decatur headquarters, and Incobrasa Industries opened a \$250 million soybean-processing facility in Gilman that doubles the company's production capacity to nearly 100 million bushels annually. Rural King, the farm supply store chain, is investing \$75 million in a new headquarters project in Mattoon, in Central Illinois.

We're also building strength in agricultural innovation. The Illinois Fermentation and Agriculture Biomanufacturing Tech Hub, or iFAB Tech Hub, is helping grow biomanufacturing and precision fermentation

Life sciences saw the highest percentage job growth at 12% with nearly 75,000 new jobs added since 2021.

Source: Illinois EDC

in the Decatur and Champaign-Urbana region. And in Southwest Illinois, the 15-mile Ag Coast is one of the assets helping Illinois producers reach domestic and global markets — this stretch along the Mississippi River is a supercenter for grain and fertilizer transportation and logistics.

So while the industry is navigating challenges, we're seeing investment and innovation across the entire agriculture value chain — from production and processing to biomanufacturing and logistics. 🌱

Comcast powers growth and innovation across Illinois by delivering fast, reliable, and scalable Internet. Through continued investment in America's smartest broadband network, Xfinity and Comcast Business are helping residents and businesses thrive in an increasingly digital world.



A trusted partner delivering the technology and connectivity businesses and communities depend on today and for the future.



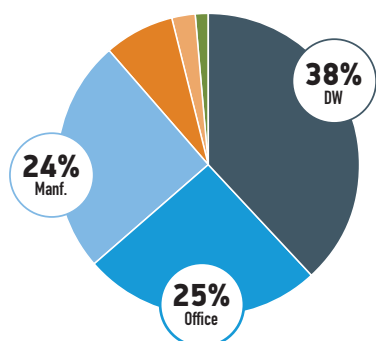
ILLINOIS *by the Numbers*



Top 20 Projects, July 2025 - June 2026

Company	City	Sector	Category	Investment \$M	Jobs
Microsoft Corp.	Plano	IT & Comm.	New	2,000	200
Equinix	Elk Grove Village	IT & Comm.	New	2,000	25
Cyrusone	Yorkville	IT & Comm.	New	2,000	50
Cronus Chemicals	Tuscola	Chemicals & Plastics	New	2,000	130
CSL	Kankakee	Life Sciences	Expansion	1,500	300
Tyson Foods	Rochelle	Food & Beverage	New	740	
Entegris	Aurora	Electronics	New	700	200
Hut 8 Corp.	Batavia	IT & Comm.	New	500	
Abbott Laboratories	Chicago	Life Sciences	Expansion	500	200
CyrusOne	Sangamon Cnty.	IT & Comm.	New	500	
Hyundai Translead	Joliet	Metals	New	450	2,500
Fuyao Glass Industry Group Co.	Decatur	Mach., Equip. & Const.	Expansion	400	
AbbVie	North Chicago	Life Sciences	Expansion	380	300
Vetter CM USA	Des Plaines	Life Sciences	New	285	50
Tract	Morris	IT & Comm.	New	250	100
Stack Infrastructure	Elk Grove Village	IT & Comm.	New	250	20
Monarch Energy	Rockford	IT & Comm.	New	250	100
Powerhouse Data Centers / Hillwood Development Co.	Joliet	IT & Comm.	New	250	100
Equinix	Minooka	IT & Comm.	New	250	100
Edged Energy	DeKalb	IT & Comm.	New	250	100
Aligned Data Centers	Coal City	IT & Comm.	New	250	100

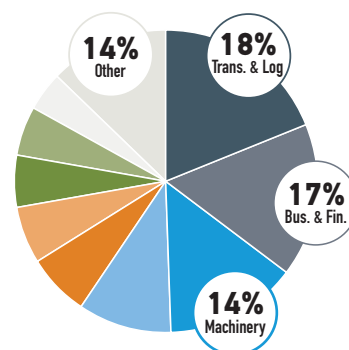
Top Projects by Type



TYPE	PROJECTS
● Distribution Warehouse	355
● Office	232
● Manufacturing	226
● Headquarters	71
● Data Center	31
● Research and Development	13

Source: Conway Projects Database

Top Projects by Sector



SECTOR	PROJECTS
● Transport & Logistics	152
● Business & Financial Services	142
● Machinery, Equip. & Const.	119
● Food & Beverage	81
● IT & Comm.	61
● Chemicals & Plastics	46
● Life Sciences	44
● Consumer Products	42
● Electronics	34
● Other	113



RECORD \$13 BILLION IN CAPITAL INVESTMENT

EDGE and REV – the State of Illinois' most active incentive programs – continued to drive strong results, with companies committing 2,900 new jobs and retaining 3,700 existing jobs.



Illinois Ranks No. 1 for Workforce Development

in the Midwest and No. 3 in the U.S.

Source: Site Selection Magazine, January 2026



Illinois Ranks No. 2 for Corporate Expansion

for the Fourth Consecutive Year in the U.S.
Chicago Ranks as No. 1 Metro for the 13th
Straight Year in the U.S.

Source: Site Selection Magazine, March 2026



Illinois ranks as No. 12 in the Top States for Business in the U.S., up from No. 30 in 2019.

Source: CNBC 2026



No. 7 for Education



No. 12 for Access to Capital



No. 3 for Infrastructure



No. 12 for Technology & Innovation

Source: CNBC 2026, Top U.S. States for Business



ILLINOIS RANKS NO. 1 IN THE U.S. IN NUCLEAR ENERGY

Source: American Nuclear Society



No. 7 in FDI



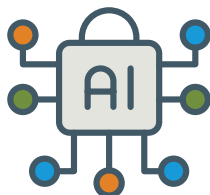
No. 4 in Agtech



No. 5 in Exports



No. 3 in Food Processing



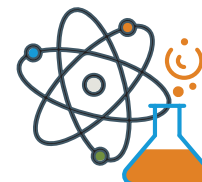
No. 8 in AI Job Hubs



No. 7 in Cybersecurity Talent



No. 6 in Solar Power



No. 9 in MedTech & Medical Devices

Source: Business Facilities, 2026 U.S. State Rankings



How to be a Positive Change-Agent for Growth

by ADAM BRUNS

DCEO Director Kristin Richards brings more than two decades of experience in state government to bear on everything from STAR bonds to startups.

Raised in Belleville in southwestern Illinois near St. Louis, educated at Millikin University in Decatur and now residing in Chicago, Kristin Richards knows the terrain of her home state well — including the halls of the State capitol in Springfield, where among other accomplishments she guided bipartisan negotiations that led to the Illinois Jobs Now comprehensive infrastructure investment program. More recently, she worked with the Office of the Governor and the State legislature to pass sweeping enhancements to State incentives that support business attraction and development.

In summer 2026 she responded to a few questions from Site Selection Editor in Chief Adam Brunns. What follows are excerpts from that exchange.

This spring I had the pleasure of touring mHUB in Chicago, one part of the state's award-winning startup ecosystem. How does your team approach supporting entrepreneurs and startups and also extending that ecosystem into every corner of the state?

KRISTIN RICHARDS: While some of the nation's largest companies call Illinois home, we're also seeing numerous small businesses

DCEO Director Kristin Richards provides remarks at the CSI expansion announcement

Photos courtesy of Illinois EDC

and startups choosing Illinois. DCEO is consistently building on established support for startups and small businesses. DCEO established the EDGE for Startups program that allows new companies without a corporate income tax liability to claim EDGE credits against their withholding liability, which supports emerging companies when they need it most. Additionally, the Advantage Illinois Loan Guarantee Program increases capital options available to small businesses, and the Illinois Innovation Venture Fund (INVENT) is critical for reversing inequities that startups face when pursuing a loan or investment. Support is also offered to entrepreneurs through Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs), which have expanded by almost 50% since 2019, enabling us to reach thousands more small businesses. DCEO has economic development professionals in each of the 10 economic development regions across the state through our Regional Economic Development Team (Team RED). This team provides local support for businesses to provide them information on available programs, identify regional needs, and work on business retention and attraction efforts.

In the first quarter of 2026 you saw more announced job creation from companies qualifying for EDGE incentives than all of last year with EDGE and REV (Reimagining Energy and Vehicles) combined. How will the advent of Workforce Pell help to fill the workforce pipeline these companies need?

RICHARDS: EDGE and REV — Illinois' most active incentive programs — continue to drive strong results with companies committing to creating and retaining thousands of good jobs for Illinois families. These record-breaking investments and growth continue to strengthen our position as a global economic powerhouse. By expanding access to short-term, high-quality training programs through Workforce Pell, we're helping more Illinoisans gain skills and credentials while also strengthening the talent pipeline that supports business growth statewide. DCEO has informed the process of creating this program in Illinois, using

feedback from employers about workforce needs across the state. Opening access to training through Workforce Pell is just one more example of Illinois' commitment to connecting people with good-paying careers and ensuring employers have the skilled workforce they need to compete and succeed in Illinois.

DCEO encompasses the State's Office of Tourism. Describe how you see the intrinsic connections between tourism and the attraction of corporate end-user investment and job creation.

RICHARDS: Illinois celebrated record-breaking tourism achievements in 2024. We welcomed 113 million domestic and international visitors who spent a record \$48.5 billion — an increase of 500,000 visitors and \$1.3 billion in spending from 2023. This tourism surge also led to a new all-time high in hotel tax revenue figures in FY25, totaling \$367 million — a 14% increase over the previous record set in FY24. This boost in revenue has stimulated Illinois' economy while directly supporting more than 282,000 jobs in our tourism and hospitality industry. Every visitor in Illinois — whether they're coming from near or far — spends their money in Illinois hotels, restaurants, small businesses and attractions. From offering new and legacy tourism grant programs to an award-winning tourism campaign, the State is making investments that are driving longer stays from visitors who boost our local economies.

As Illinois positions itself as a must-visit destination for travelers from around the globe, businesses are also taking notice that there's something for everyone in our state. Companies seeking locations to expand their operations take into consideration the quality-of-life locations will offer their workforce, and that includes access to cultural assets, parks and trails, sports, restaurants, small businesses, quaint main streets and other world-class attractions that establish communities as places where people want to work and live. DCEO's tourism programs promote these assets and shine a bright light on why Illinois is a destination of choice for hundreds of millions of visitors year after year.

Earlier this year, after a record year in film and TV production in the state, DCEO introduced the first incentive in the nation for sustainable film productions. Describe the uptake so far.

RICHARDS: The phones in DCEO's Illinois Film Office have not stopped ringing since we launched this first-in-the-nation incentive. The expansion reflects our commitment to growing Illinois' economy in a way that's both competitive and sustainable. We're attracting world-class productions while building the infrastructure and workforce needed for a cleaner future, ensuring that the benefits of this growth are felt statewide. Illinois is already a premier destination for film and television productions, as seen by our record-breaking expenditures, and now we're paving the way toward a greener future in our film industry that will be felt by generations to come. It's not only possible but popular to promote both economic opportunity and sustainable productions hand in hand.

Many productions were already close to if not already meeting many of the criteria needed to be recognized as a "certified green production," and now they have the resources and guidance to pursue this tax credit uplift.

The Illinois Film Office is busy supporting existing productions that are ready to become more sustainable and we're hearing about projects that are considering locating in Illinois because of this incentive. Whether productions are choosing Illinois because of our leading green uplift, expanded Film Production Tax Credit, or successful Film and TV Workforce Training Program, Illinois is a world-class destination for award-winning productions and momentum is only growing with this new incentive.

February saw the expansion of the State's STAR bond program. Describe the types of projects being supported by the program, and how you see these projects enhancing the quality-of-life appeal of certain regions of the state.

The State Capitol Building in Springfield.

Photo courtesy of Illinois EDC





“...The common thread across all of these divisions is **harnessing State tools to make the lives of Illinoisans better.**”

— Kristin Richards, *Director, DCEO*

RICHARDS: Through the STAR bond program, the State aims to support communities in every corner of Illinois by promoting revitalization, development and job creation. This program was designed to support economic growth with financing options to develop and revitalize communities through major tourism, entertainment, retail and destination-based projects in STAR bond districts. Governor Pritzker’s expansion of STAR bond eligibility to include municipalities statewide is empowering municipalities throughout Illinois, providing them with additional financing options to meaningfully invest in capital projects that will attract visitors and spur additional revenues in local economies. Encouraging large-scale development projects will generate both immediate and long-term employment opportunities by supporting construction jobs, permanent positions in tourism, entertainment and retail, and related employment.

With dozens of notices of intent already submitted to DCEO, if all eligible STAR bond projects are completed, they could eventually generate at least \$1 billion in sales and create more than 5,000 new jobs across Illinois.

You have been engaged in many levels and arms of state government policy over the course of your career. Which policy or legislative achievement you’ve been attached to do you think has had the greatest impact on Illinois citizens?

RICHARDS: With more than two decades of experience in Illinois state government — in both the legislative and executive branches — I’ve had the opportunity to shape state

policy at multiple levels. I’ve also seen the very best of Illinois. That background gives me a deep understanding of how Illinois works, how businesses interact with government, and what it takes to build meaningful, lasting economic growth. It also allows me to approach challenges with a clear sense of what tools, partnerships, and strategies actually lead to solutions and investment.

After years in which the state wasn’t fully maximizing its role in business development, under Governor Pritzker’s leadership we have transformed Illinois into a proactive, coordinated, business-focused partner.

DCEO is redefining how a state’s economic development agency can engage employers. We are modernizing incentive structures, improving workforce alignment, and ensuring our processes are efficient and responsive.

When I joined DCEO in 2023, I brought the experience built throughout my career in public service to the agency. My focus has been on strengthening the entire economic development ecosystem: aligning state agencies, federal partners, local governments, and workforce providers so companies get seamless, effective support. This coordinated approach is one reason companies that once overlooked Illinois are now actively pursuing opportunities here.

Across DCEO’s more than two dozen divisions our goal is simple: use every state tool to make Illinois the best place to live, work, and do business. The results speak for themselves. Companies consistently tell us that Team Illinois gives them something they don’t find elsewhere: unified support, clear communication, and a genuine commitment to their long-term success. This feedback makes me proud and tells me that our strategy is working. 📌

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE THE MENU?

Illinois continues to update and expand its array of incentive programs based on industry and community needs.

by ADAM BRUNS

On the last day of May 2025, passage of a seventh consecutive balanced budget by the Illinois

General Assembly included headline investments in economic development in addition to major healthcare and education commitments. Among the measures:

\$500 million in funding for historic site readiness initiatives (Surplus to Success and DCEO Site Readiness Initiative) to make more sites across Illinois ready for business, including remediation of State-owned sites as well as efforts to market and recruit out-of-state businesses to call Illinois home

Advancing Innovating Manufacturing for Illinois Tax Credit (AIM Illinois), a new incentive program providing tax incentives to companies making large facility and equipment investments in Illinois. The program provides a 3% credit on qualified investments of \$10 million–\$50 million, a 5% credit on qualified investments of \$50 million–\$100 million and a 7% credit on qualified investments exceeding \$100 million

Enhancing Key Incentive Programs: “The bill makes improvements to the several incentive programs based on industry feedback, including EDGE and REV Illinois,” explained

a release from the office of Gov. JB Pritzker. EDGE is expanded to provide additional incentives to companies investing \$100 million or more and retaining 500 jobs, and REV has been expanded to include additional EV supply chain industries.” Specifically, eligible sectors for REV (Reimagining Energy and Vehicles) now include electric and hybrid vehicle and parts and charging equipment manufacturers, electrical transformer manufacturers, and nuclear energy technologies and products manufacturers.

Capital Investment Programs: “In addition to the site readiness capital initiatives, the FY26 budget funded several capital programs that invest in the state’s workforce,” the State explained, “such as manufacturing training academies (\$24 million); incentive programs that keep Illinois competitive like the Enterprise Fund (\$50 million) and Prime Sites Capital Grant Program (\$75 million); and funding for the Made in Illinois program (\$1.5 million), which supports small and mid-sized manufacturers.”

In addition, an update to the Illinois Apprenticeship Education Expense Tax Credit program meant a \$3,500 credit for each eligible apprentice, support for specialized

training and expanded eligibility for training costs. The High Impact Business incentive, which offers tax credits for qualifying projects that invest \$12 million and create 500 full-time jobs or invest \$30 million and retain 1,500 full-time jobs, expanded its eligibility to High-Voltage Direct-Current (HVDC) converter stations. And the cities of Sterling and Alton were included as pilot nominees for new River Edge Redevelopment Zones, which provide tax-based incentives to revive and redevelop environmentally challenged properties adjacent to rivers in Illinois.

The updates only improve a quality menu of incentive programs that include the following:

- The Manufacturing Illinois Chips for Real Opportunity Act (MICRO) provides incentives for manufacturers of microchips and semiconductors as well as component parts manufacturers in this high-tech sector.
- The Illinois Angel Investment Tax Credit Program encourages investment in innovative, early-stage companies to help companies obtain working capital needed to grow in Illinois.
- The Illinois Film Office, located in the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, offers a 30% tax credit to film in Illinois.
- Illinois Opportunity Zones provide an incentive for investors to invest in areas that need investment to help create jobs and investment.
- The Blue Collar Jobs Act (BJCA) program supports large-scale economic development activities by providing corporate income tax credits to companies that make substantial capital investments in Illinois.
- The Illinois Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program provides state income-tax credit equal to 25% of a project’s qualified expenditures to owners of certified historic structures
- The Illinois Enterprise Zone Program stimulates economic growth and neighborhood revitalization in economically depressed areas of Illinois through state and local tax incentives, regulatory relief and improved governmental services

Photos courtesy of Enjoy Illinois





- “\$20 million for the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program to expand Illinois’ pipeline of qualified, diverse workers in the construction and building trades.”
- “\$20 million for Manufacturing Training Academies (MTA) to align workforce training capacity with industry demand through the creation of additional academies.”

Further line items directed toward the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) include:

- “\$35 million capital investment in the Rebuild Illinois Downtowns and Main Streets program to revitalize business corridors and support small businesses.”
- “\$200 million for public infrastructure capital grants to strengthen and modernize roads and bridges, sewer and water mains, and public transportation.”
- “\$100 million investment in Site Readiness Illinois (SRI) to advance critical capital infrastructure improvements and ensure Illinois remains competitive for large-scale domestic and international projects.”
- “\$65 million investment in Prime Sites funding to support companies relocating to or expanding operations in Illinois to assist with large scale capital investment projects.”



- The Music and Musicians Tax Credit and Jobs Act provides tax credits to qualified music companies that produce, distribute or promote music in Illinois, incentivizing job creation, economic growth and diversity in the music industry.
- The Quantum Enterprise Zone (QEZ) program provides qualifying companies with exemptions on various state taxes such as those on utilities and building material.

What would state government do for a follow-up? When the FY2027 budget was signed in June 2026, costs for every one of the state’s citizens were the top priority. But that didn’t mean a loss of focus on what industry needs. Under the label “Making Illinois a Beacon of Economic Opportunity,” these three funding line items aim to do exactly that:

- “\$50 million for the new Area Career Centers capital grant program to modernize facilities and strengthen high-quality career pathways.”

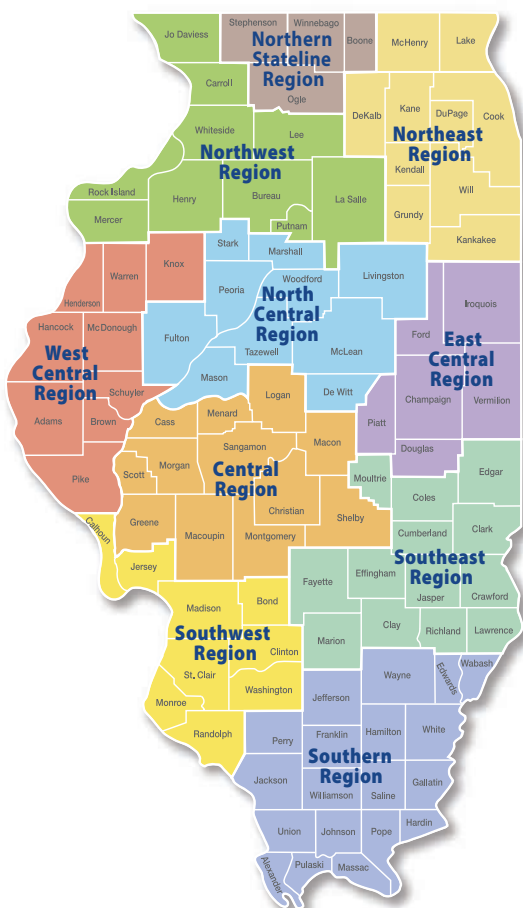


**For more information,
visit dceo.illinois.gov.**

A STATE OF DISTINCT ADVANTAGES

Across Illinois, regional economies create different paths to investment and expansion.

by SAVANNAH YAWN



Illinois is often viewed through the lens of Chicago, but the state's economic story is much more expansive. Across 10 regions, different combinations of talent, infrastructure, industry and geography have produced places with their own business identities.

In Northeast Illinois, global headquarters and major research institutions operate alongside manufacturing, life sciences and emerging quantum technologies. Farther south and west, agricultural production feeds large-scale processing, ingredient manufacturing and distribution networks. University communities are turning research into commercial technology, while generations of industrial knowledge continue to shape aerospace, automotive, machinery and metalworking centers.

The following profiles examine the employers, investments and local advantages shaping each regional economy. Together, they show how much of Illinois' economic strength comes from the differences between its regions.

All photos courtesy of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. Enjoy Illinois, unless otherwise noted.



NORTHEAST *Illinois*

Big Bets in the Nation's Third-Largest Market

Anchored by Chicago and extending through the city's suburbs and surrounding seven counties, Northeast Illinois offers an economic scale few regions can match. Corporate headquarters, financial services, technology, life sciences, food production, transportation and one of the nation's deepest manufacturing bases all converge here, supported by a population of more than 7.65 million.

That scale is amplified by the region's global connectivity. O'Hare and Midway international airports, extensive freight and passenger rail networks, interstate highways and access to the Great Lakes give companies direct links to markets across North America and around the world. Chicago is also home to 13 Fortune 500 company headquarters, more than 150 higher education institutions and a workforce of over 4.8 million, according to World Business Chicago.

Recent announcements span transportation equipment, food brands and pharmaceutical manufacturing.

Hyundai Translead announced a \$450 million investment to establish new trailer manufacturing facilities in Will County, creating nearly 2,500 new full-time jobs. A subsidiary of South Korea-based Hyundai Motor Company, Hyundai Translead manufactures transportation equipment including dry and refrigerated van trailers, flatbeds, truck bodies and dollies.

Mars Snacking announced plans to create

600 new jobs while expanding its global headquarters presence in Chicago. The company will add its North America Region, Accelerator Division and Global Functions to its Chicago operations, including a new North America regional hub in Fulton Market with capacity for more than 1,000 associates. The expansion builds on an existing regional footprint that supports more than 4,000 Mars Snacking jobs, produces more than 20 iconic brands and includes the company's Global Innovation Center.

AbbVie announced a new \$380 million investment to construct two active pharmaceutical ingredient manufacturing facilities at its North Chicago campus. The facilities will integrate advanced manufacturing technologies with artificial intelligence to support production of the company's next-generation neuroscience and obesity medications. Construction started in spring 2026, with both facilities expected to be fully operational in 2029. AbbVie plans to hire 300 engineers, scientists, manufacturing operators and lab technicians.

The region is also central to Illinois' push into quantum computing and microelectronics. The Illinois Quantum and Microelectronics Park on Chicago's South Side is being developed as a place where researchers, manufacturers, suppliers and technology companies can move emerging technologies toward commercial scale.

Few regions can match Northeast Illinois' combination of international reach, research capacity or large-scale production.



NORTH CENTRAL *Illinois*

From Caterpillar Country to EV Land

North Central Illinois encompasses 10 counties, connecting Peoria's deep manufacturing expertise with the university communities of Bloomington-Normal and the agricultural economy that surrounds them. Its population of more than 650,000 and workforce exceeding 300,000 are employed across heavy equipment, electric vehicles, food production, healthcare, insurance, logistics

WOOD DALE: WHERE STRATEGIC LOCATION MEETS OPPORTUNITY

Located just three miles from O'Hare International Airport and 23 miles from downtown Chicago, Wood Dale continues to strengthen its position as a key player in the O'Hare industrial submarket — one of the nation's premier hubs for manufacturing, warehousing, logistics, and distribution.

Within just five square miles, Wood Dale supports more than 10.4 million square feet of industrial and flex space, over 800 businesses, and approximately 5,200 households. Its industrial corridor generates a significant daytime workforce and maintains high occupancy levels, reinforcing its reputation as one of the most active industrial areas in DuPage County.

Connectivity remains one of Wood Dale's greatest advantages. The community offers convenient access to I-290, I-355, and IL Route 83, with regional mobility set to expand further through the extension of IL-390 and construction of the I-490 Tollway, scheduled for completion in 2027. These infrastructure investments will provide more direct access to O'Hare's cargo facilities, interstate corridors including I-90 and I-294, and major freight and distribution hubs throughout the Midwest.

Wood Dale's industrial base includes a diverse mix of global headquarters, advanced manufacturers, and logistics operators. Nippon Express, a worldwide logistics provider, has established its primary U.S. office in Wood Dale. Other major employers include nVenia, a manufacturer of advanced packaging systems, and an Amazon Fresh Warehouse, supporting critical last-mile distribution services.

Recent investments in the industrial district signal continued confidence in the market. These include CyrusOne's ongoing construction of a 1.4 million square-foot data center campus — one of the most significant recent investments in the community — as well as Wiegel Tool Works' \$5.5 million expansion supporting electric vehicle and renewable energy technologies.

Wood Dale's growth is guided by intentional municipal leadership. The City has prioritized strategic land acquisition, site preparation, and the active marketing of underutilized properties to position key areas for reinvestment. This proactive approach is exemplified by Northwood Station, a four-story, fully amenitized luxury apartment community bringing 150 new residential units to the

Town Center Business District and advancing the area's ongoing revitalization.

Beyond its industrial strength and proactive economic development approach, Wood Dale offers a high quality of life that supports workforce attraction and retention. Home to approximately 14,000 residents with a median household income of \$90,500, the community combines a diverse economic base with small-town stability. Recently recognized as one of the safest cities in Illinois, Wood Dale provides a secure and welcoming environment for families and businesses alike.

Local school districts provide comprehensive educational programming, including free early childhood education and dual-language opportunities. Fenton Community High School District 100 was recently recognized by U.S. News & World Report as a 2025-2026 Best High School, reflecting a strong emphasis on career exploration and college readiness.

An extensive park system, recreational facilities, and year-round programming supported by the Wood Dale Park District further enhance the community's appeal. Paired with a diverse mix of local dining, national retailers such as Target, Jewel, and Starbucks, and two full-service hotels — Courtyard by Marriott and DoubleTree — these amenities contribute to a well-rounded environment for residents, employees, and visitors alike.

With unmatched proximity to O'Hare International Airport, major infrastructure investments underway, a strong and established industrial base, competitive tax advantages, and an excellent quality of life, Wood Dale offers businesses a rare combination of access, opportunity, and stability. The City actively partners with developers and business owners through a range of economic development tools, including tax rebate agreements, a façade improvement program, and Tax Increment Financing (TIF) for qualifying projects. An online permitting portal and streamlined development review process further support efficient approvals and predictability — key considerations in today's development environment.

We would welcome the opportunity to share more about why your business belongs in Wood Dale. Contact us at (630) 766-5133 or visit www.LandinWD.com to learn more.

LAND IN WOOD DALE
ILLINOIS
& WATCH YOUR BUSINESS TAKE OFF!



Community Development
Director Staci Springer
630-787-3737
sspringer@wooddale.com

WHY WOOD DALE?

- Proximity to O'Hare & Highways
- AA+ Bond Rating
- Partnerships with the business community
- Low crime & dedication to safety
- Tax rebates: sales & property
- Facade improvement funding
- TIF Districts
- Low taxes
- High quality of life
- Municipally-owned properties



SCAN ME





and professional services.

Peoria's industrial identity was shaped in large part by Caterpillar, whose presence helped cultivate generations of engineering, machining and production expertise. Caterpillar employs more than 17,000 people across Illinois, including at major manufacturing sites and the company's downtown Peoria offices. In July, the company announced the Illinois launch of its workforce commitment, the latest investment in its five-year, \$100 million Building the Future Workforce Initiative. With an allocation of up to \$10 million, the effort aims to prepare workers across Illinois for the modern manufacturing and industry technician jobs of the future.

In Bloomington-Normal, Rivian has established a major electric-vehicle manufacturing operation and is continuing to expand its regional supply chain. In May, the company announced that it is constructing a new 1.2 million-sq.-ft. supplier park in Normal. Rivian will invest nearly \$120 million in the development and create nearly 100 new direct jobs. The park is expected to attract electric-vehicle suppliers and generate hundreds of additional jobs while strengthening the manufacturing ecosystem surrounding Rivian's Illinois operation. Construction is underway and expected to be completed in 2026.

Transportation manufacturing is only part of the picture. Ferrero and Nestlé add major consumer-product operations, while Beer Nuts, Country Financial, Growmark, OSF Healthcare and State Farm maintain headquarters in the region.

Higher education institutions help sustain that range of industries. Illinois State University, Bradley University, Illinois Central

College, Heartland Community College and the University of Illinois College of Medicine contribute technical, professional and healthcare talent. Peoria's growing healthcare and innovation ecosystem also includes the 48,000-sq.-ft. Peoria NEXT Innovation Center, which supports entrepreneurial and technology-focused businesses.

Regional transportation assets connect North Central Illinois to major Midwest markets. Bloomington-Normal's Amtrak station is among the busiest in the region, linking the area to Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Louis. Central Illinois Regional Airport provides commercial passenger service and air cargo operations, supported by major carriers and FedEx logistics infrastructure.



Decatur Doubles Down on What It Does Best

Central Illinois is a 12-county region where agriculture, manufacturing, government and transportation intersect. Decatur and Springfield play different but complementary roles. Decatur anchors the processing and manufacturing economy, while Springfield contributes government, healthcare and professional services. Across the surrounding counties, food manufacturing, heavy machinery, energy, packaging, healthcare, business services and transportation contribute to a broad economic base.

The region sits in the heart of Illinois' agricultural belt and the country's corn belt, giving businesses direct access to the crops and other inputs needed for large-scale food production and biomanufacturing. More than

10,000 people work in food manufacturing and fabricated metal manufacturing, while paper manufacturing, printing and related support activities are 20% more concentrated than the U.S. average.

ADM's longstanding presence in Decatur connects the region directly to global agricultural and food markets. In June, the company announced that it will invest over \$103 million to modernize key facilities at its North American headquarters, where ADM has maintained a presence since 1939. The investment will create 50 new full-time jobs and retain over 1,000 existing full-time jobs, reinforcing Decatur's role as a global center for agriculture and manufacturing.

Primient has also continued to invest in plant-based ingredients, fermentation and more efficient production at its Decatur operations. Founded in the city in 1906, the company was recently recognized by the Illinois Manufacturers' Association as a Centennial Manufacturer, a designation honoring Illinois manufacturers that have operated for 100 years or more.

ADM and Primient operate within a larger processing economy supplied by Illinois farms and connected by rail, highway, utilities and the Illinois River system.

Transportation infrastructure extends that reach. Central Illinois provides access to 90 million people within a day's drive and is served by multiple airports, including Decatur Airport, one of four components of the Midwest Inland Port. These assets help connect agricultural products, manufactured goods and industrial inputs with customers and markets beyond the region.

Central Illinois has a population of more than 550,000 and a labor force of almost 270,000. The University of Illinois Springfield, Millikin University, Richland Community College and Lincoln Land Community College help prepare workers for manufacturing, government, healthcare and professional services.

Springfield adds particular strength in healthcare and business services. Healthcare employs 55,000 people across the region, and the city is home to the Mid Illinois Medical District.

That service-sector base is reinforced by major corporate headquarters, including CCB Credit Services, Horace Mann, Levi, Ray, & Shoup and Bunn-O-Matic Corp.



Where the Farm Becomes the Lab

East Central Illinois brings together six counties, some of the world's most productive farmland and a major research university. Across Champaign, Urbana, Rantoul, Danville, Tuscola and surrounding communities, research and development operate alongside manufacturing, distribution, healthcare, food processing and agriculture.

At the center of that economy is the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, consistently ranked among the top public universities in the nation. Research in engineering, computer science, agriculture, medicine and energy moves toward commercial application through partnerships with companies, entrepreneurs and public institutions. Champaign-Urbana's international university community also gives East Central Illinois a cultural and recruiting profile that stands apart from many comparably sized Midwest markets.

The University of Illinois Research Park is where much of that research meets the private sector. Home to more than 120 companies, the Research Park supports more than 2,100 employees and 800 student interns working across corporate innovation centers, startups and university-affiliated ventures. Companies located there gain access to faculty expertise, laboratories and a large pool of students trained in technical disciplines.

That environment has helped Champaign-Urbana earn recognition as one of Silicon Prairie's top five startup cities and rank among

the nation's top 10 cities for the number of venture capital firms per capita.

One recent arrival puts that university-industry relationship into practice. In 2025, Mondelez International, one of the world's largest snack companies, opened an innovation center at the University of Illinois Research Park, its first on a college campus. FutureLab provides interns with campus resources, flexible innovation processes and support to help materialize their innovations. FutureLab opened with a small team of research and development professional leaders from within the company and will host a team of University of Illinois student interns working year-round.

In May, Combe Inc. announced that it will invest \$30 million in its Rantoul facility as it relocates operations from California to Illinois. The project will create more than 20 new full-time jobs and retain more than 100 existing full-time jobs, expanding and securing the company's manufacturing presence in East Central Illinois.

In late 2025, Cache Energy announced a \$2.5 million expansion at its 10,000-sq.-ft. manufacturing facility in Champaign, creating 20 new jobs and retaining its current workforce. Supported by a Reimagining Energy and Vehicles (REV) in Illinois agreement, the startup develops long-duration clean energy storage technology using limestone as its feed material. Its thermochemical process converts lime powder into pellets that can store renewable energy for months under ambient conditions and release heat when exposed to water.

In East Central Illinois, university research does not stay on campus for long. It moves into farm fields, startups and manufacturing facilities across the region.



Rockford's Next Manufacturing Chapter

Centered on Rockford and extending through Winnebago, Boone, Ogle and Stephenson counties, Northern Stateline Illinois has built its identity around precision manufacturing. Its population of 436,000

and workforce of 228,600 support strong concentrations in aerospace, automotive production, metalworking, fasteners, machinery, food processing and logistics.

Rockford's aerospace cluster is one of the region's most distinctive strengths. The metropolitan area has the sixth-largest concentration of aerospace employment in the nation, with more than 250 aerospace companies located within a 90-mile radius. Major employers and suppliers include Collins Aerospace Systems, GE Aviation and Woodward, connecting Northern Stateline Illinois to significant commercial and defense aviation programs.

The same aerospace base is now being used to test future propulsion systems. In 2026, Collins Aerospace began testing a megawatt-class hybrid-electric powertrain at The Grid, the company's electric-power systems laboratory in Rockford. The work supports the development of more efficient hybrid-electric propulsion systems for future aircraft and demonstrates how the region's established manufacturing capabilities are being applied to emerging aviation technologies.



The Rockford metropolitan area is home to more than 4,000 engineers (30% more than the national average) with more than 56,000 engineers located within 90 miles. Northern Illinois University, Rock Valley College, Highland Community College, Rockford University and the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Rockford contribute to the region's talent base. Together with regional workforce organizations, these institutions provide education and training in aviation maintenance, manufacturing, healthcare and the skilled trades.

Belvidere will soon restore another pillar



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Centrally located and just minutes from downtown St. Louis, Southwestern Illinois offers the best of both worlds: small-town affordability paired with big-city infrastructure. Here, businesses and communities grow together, supported by strong leadership, deep talent, and unmatched access to markets.



of the regional manufacturing economy. Stellantis has announced plans to invest more than \$800 million to reopen the Belvidere Assembly Plant and expand production of the Jeep® Cherokee for the U.S. market. With an initial production launch expected in 2028, the project is anticipated to create around 3,300 new jobs.

In Rockford, another investment is preserving a manufacturing operation with roots extending back more than 170 years. Four former employees of Gunit Corporation have formed Rockford Brake Manufacturing and are investing \$6.6 million to purchase and reopen the historic factory after Gunit's parent company, Accuride, closed it in February 2025.

The company plans to restore production of brake components and cast parts for the heavy-duty trucking industry at a site that began operating as a foundry in 1854. Rockford Brake Manufacturing will operate one of the Midwest's most vertically integrated foundries, providing end-to-end production under one roof.

Rockford Brake Manufacturing is also expected to become one of Illinois' largest recyclers. Some 85% of its products will be made from recycled materials, and 100% of its finished products will be recyclable.

The region's manufacturing base is supported by extensive transportation infrastructure. Chicago Rockford International Airport is home to the second-largest UPS air cargo hub in the United States. Northern Stateline Illinois also offers access to five international airports, seven Class I railroads and four interstates.



NORTHWEST
Illinois

Moline Turns Industrial History Into New Technology

Northwest Illinois is bordered by the Mississippi River and its rich farmland, as well as the industrial legacy of the Quad Cities. Across the 10-county region, riverfront cities and manufacturing communities are closely tied together, supporting an economy built on agricultural equipment, metals, defense, logistics and other forms of industrial production.

John Deere & Company's world headquarters

in Moline anchors this manufacturing network. The company's Illinois operations connect equipment production with engineering, technology, parts distribution and customer support for markets around the world. At Harvester Works in East Moline, John Deere invested \$149 million to renovate 385,000 sq. ft. and introduce advanced equipment used to produce the John Deere X9 combine. The company also completed a \$10 million, 60,000-sq.-ft. expansion of its John Deere Seeding facility in Moline, improving workspaces and visitor experiences.

John Deere is part of a large industrial base that gives the Quad Cities region a presence of 150 Fortune 1000 companies and the highest concentration of production workers in the U.S. KONE is another major regional employer, with the KONE Center in Moline serving as the company's home for U.S. operations.



Photo courtesy of John Deere

One of Moline's best-known industrial landmarks may now help launch the elevator industry's next generation. The city is collaborating with Silicon Valley startup Hyprlift, Inc., and the National Science Foundation to convert the historic Montgomery Elevator test tower into a hub for vertical-mobility innovation. Constructed in 1966, the tower will be used to test and certify Hyprlift's next-generation elevator systems as part of the Moline River Front + Centre redevelopment plan.

In exchange for access to the tower, the City of Moline became Hyprlift's commercial partner in the successful receipt of a National Science Foundation Technology Enhancement for Commercial Partnerships award. The collaboration brings federal innovation funding to Moline while preserving a structure tied to the city's industrial history. Montgomery Elevator Company, founded as Moline Elevator

Co. in 1892, operated in the community for more than a century.

Manufacturing in the Quad Cities also extends into national defense. The Rock Island Arsenal is located on a 946-acre island in the Mississippi River. The active U.S. Army installation connects Northwest Illinois to federal defense, logistics and advanced-manufacturing operations and supports 7,000 federal and contractor employees.

Those operations are connected by an unusually broad transportation network. Interstates 39, 88, 74 and 80 connect Northwest Illinois to the North American market, while three Class I railroads, one Class II railroad, Quad Cities International Airport and the Mississippi River Ports of Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois provide access by road, rail, runway and river. The region is also a U.S. Customs Port of Entry, and distribution centers can reach 80% of U.S. households within a 24-hour drive.

Public investment is supporting the region's next phase of development. The Illinois Department of Transportation is delivering nine Quad Cities projects representing more than \$44 million, while Moline's River Edge Redevelopment Zone makes projects across about 3.4 square miles of downtown eligible for incentives intended to reduce development costs and attract private investment.

With a population of 475,667 and a workforce of more than 247,000, Northwest Illinois offers more than industrial capacity alone. Manufacturing communities along the Mississippi coexist with productive farmland, smaller historic towns and Galena's tourism economy. That combination gives the region both manufacturing depth and a recognizable river identity extending well beyond the Quad Cities.



A Crossroads Between Two Rivers

Southern Illinois occupies a strategic position between the Mississippi and Ohio rivers, giving the region a natural role in several key industries including transportation, distribution, manufacturing and agriculture. Interstate highways, Class I

rail service, inland ports and regional airports connect its communities with major metro areas like neighboring St. Louis, Memphis, Nashville and markets throughout the Midwest and Southeast.

That access has helped manufacturers in automotive components, tires, filtration products, food production and other industrial sectors establish operations throughout the region. Recent investments in Mount Vernon show how Southern Illinois' traditional strengths in manufacturing and logistics are being adapted for a more automated and energy-conscious industrial economy.

Continental plans to invest approximately \$76 million in a highly automated finished-goods warehouse at its Mount Vernon manufacturing campus. Designed to store roughly 500,000 tires, the facility will strengthen the company's North American distribution network while building on more than five decades of tire production in Southern Illinois.



The project connects two of the region's most important advantages. Continental can continue manufacturing from an established Southern Illinois operation while using the new warehouse and the region's transportation network to move finished products to customers across a multistate market.

Mount Vernon is also home to a new manufacturing investment tied to electric vehicles. Manner Polymers has invested in a 108,000-sq.-ft., 100% solar-powered manufacturing facility that will produce electric vehicle PVC compounds, components for solar panels and materials used across a range of industries.

The facility will expand the company's production capacity to 100 million pounds

and create more than 60 high-quality jobs in Southern Illinois. It also represents a notable sustainability milestone as a first-of-its-kind solar-powered PVC compounding plant using clean energy generated on-site. Manner Polymers will produce a wide range of flexible PVC compounds at the facility.

Together, the Continental and Manner Polymers projects point to a shift that's underway in the regional economy. Southern Illinois remains a place where companies can manufacture and distribute products at scale, but new facilities are also bringing greater automation and cleaner energy to emerging supply chains.

Carbondale provides the region's principal research and higher-education anchor through Southern Illinois University. Regional community colleges complement that role by training workers for manufacturing, transportation, healthcare and the skilled trades. Those institutions help supply the technical and operational talent needed by both longstanding employers and newer industrial projects.

Southern Illinois is also distinguished by a landscape unlike much of the rest of the state. The Shawnee National Forest, river lowlands, wooded hills, lakes and smaller communities create a setting more closely associated with the Upper South than the flat prairie terrain often linked with Illinois.



Rural King Builds for Its Next Generation

Rural King began in Mattoon in 1960. More than six decades later, the farm and home retailer is preparing a \$75 million headquarters

investment that will retain 719 full-time jobs in Coles County and create 100 more.

The project fits the economy around it. Southeast Illinois is a broad rural region where agricultural businesses operate alongside manufacturers, food processors, warehouses and trucking companies. Its population of more than 272,400 and workforce of over 121,600 are connected to Midwest markets by Interstates 70 and 57, rail service from Canadian National and CSX, and multiple public-use airports.

Eastern Illinois University and Lake Land College provide education and customized training in business, technology, healthcare, education and the skilled trades.

Rural King's \$75 million investment will go toward constructing a new Store Support Center Campus in Mattoon. The campus will house the company's leadership and support departments, including merchandising, IT, finance, operations, marketing, human resources, legal and other key business functions. By the end of 2026, Rural King will operate more than 160 stores across 18 states. The company currently employs more than 9,500 associates nationwide, including more than 400 employees at its existing Store Support Center and 270 employees at its attached distribution center and transportation hub in Mattoon.

Public infrastructure improvements will support the new campus and continued growth in the surrounding area. In addition to support from the State's Economic Development for a Growing Economy (EDGE) program, the Illinois Department of Transportation is working with the City of Mattoon to provide grant funding to extend Swords Drive north from Broadway to Dewitt Avenue, providing access to the development.

IDOT is also anticipated to break ground later this year on an \$82 million reconstruction of the nearby Interstate 57 interchange with Illinois 16. The Rebuild Illinois project is intended to improve traffic flow and safety while increasing clearances for freight and commercial vehicles.

About 70 miles southwest, Centralia is landing a very different kind of expansion. Intermountain Electronics announced that it will invest more than \$15 million to add more than 108,000 sq. ft. of manufacturing space. The expansion will create 60 new full-time

jobs, retain the company's current workforce and bring total employment at the Centralia location to more than 200.

"This expansion is a massive win for Centralia's economy and our local workforce," said City of Centralia Economic Development Director Rob Jackson. "By bringing 60 new full-time, high-wage jobs to our community, and expanding their total workforce at the Centralia location to over 200 employees, IE is proving that Centralia has the infrastructure, the business-friendly climate and the skilled workforce necessary to compete on a national level. We have thoroughly enjoyed working with Tim, Brenda and the rest of the team at IE, and look forward to a continued partnership."

The project will significantly increase Intermountain Electronics' capacity to produce Power Distribution Units, critical infrastructure components supporting renewable energy integration and artificial intelligence applications. The company's units help deliver consistent, clean power by leveling fluctuations from renewable sources such as wind and solar.



SOUTHWEST *Illinois*

Metro Access, Industrial Power

Southwest Illinois occupies a strategic position on the Illinois side of the St. Louis metropolitan area, giving companies access to a major labor market with ample available space for large-scale operations. The region's economy is built on long-established industries including metals, aerospace, logistics, agriculture, warehousing and advanced manufacturing.

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE), Southwestern Illinois College

and Lewis and Clark Community College contribute talent and workforce training across engineering, healthcare, logistics, cybersecurity and aviation.

Within the St. Louis metropolitan labor market, communities including Edwardsville, Belleville, East St. Louis, Granite City and Alton offer companies a range of operating environments.

Alton is also using new infrastructure and university partnerships to support entrepreneurship and the digital economy. In 2025, The Wedge and Southern Illinois University Edwardsville launched "The Wedge Powered by SIUE," a partnership centered on a 55,000-sq.-ft. social impact hub, research lab, think tank and workspace.

The project builds on AltonWorks' community revitalization efforts while bringing SIUE research, programming and talent into closer contact with businesses, local agencies and community organizations.

The Wedge is supported by a \$20 million 10G fiber network made possible by State of Illinois funding, giving the project digital infrastructure intended to support research, data analytics, technical assistance and new business activity.

Industrial strength and innovation

Southwest Illinois lies within 500 miles of one-third of the nation's population. That market access matters, but the region's case rests on more than proximity. It offers the industrial sites, infrastructure, multi-modal connections and technical workforce required for major manufacturing, while investments in laboratories, fiber infrastructure and university partnerships are creating room for new forms of growth.

That combination is visible in East Alton, where Wieland broke ground in 2025 on a \$500 million modernization of its copper operation. The project will install advanced production equipment, including a new hot-rolling mill, while retaining approximately 800 manufacturing jobs. The investment reinforces the region's longstanding role in metals production while upgrading the facility for a new generation of industrial demand.

Galesburg Adds Capacity for the Long Haul

West Central Illinois is a place where

agriculture still sets the rhythm of daily life, but it is far from the whole story. In communities including Quincy, Galesburg, Macomb and Monmouth, farm production connects directly to a larger network of food processing, equipment manufacturing, transportation, healthcare and professional services. Together, these industries support a population of more than 213,370 and a workforce of 95,000, forming an economy that is both deeply local and connected to national markets.

Companies including Dot Foods, Titan International, Smithfield Foods, The Maschhoffs and Niemann Foods connect the region's agricultural base with national manufacturing, food production and distribution markets.

Moving products to market is one of West Central Illinois' clearest advantages. West Central Illinois offers access to interstates and four-lane highways, the Mississippi and Illinois rivers, Class I and short-line rail service, commercial airports and an established trucking network. Adams County alone is home to more than 20 trucking firms, allowing products to reach two-thirds of the U.S. and parts of Canada within a three-day period.

Quincy serves as a regional commercial and healthcare center along the Mississippi River, while Galesburg's rail history and industrial infrastructure continue to support manufacturing and distribution. That rail capacity is now receiving a significant upgrade as part of BNSF's \$3.6 billion capital investment plan for 2026.

Galesburg has been central to BNSF operations since the 1850s and is home to the second-largest hump yard on the company's 32,500-mile network. At the hump yard, railcars are sorted and reassembled into outbound trains serving destinations across the network.

BNSF is adding a second hump lead track to increase switching capacity and improve the terminal's overall performance. Once completed, the upgraded yard will be able to process approximately three additional trains per day, or about 300 cars. The added capacity is intended to improve terminal fluidity and support more consistent merchandise service across the BNSF network.

Additional industrial development opportunities are available at a BNSF certified site southeast of Galesburg. The industrial park provides convenient access to the railroad's mainline and nearby highway infrastructure.

The available site and expanded yard capacity give Galesburg room to accommodate additional industrial and freight activity.



Learning on the Job

West Central Illinois' workforce is strengthened by Western Illinois University, Knox College, Monmouth College, John Wood Community College, Carl Sandburg College, Quincy University and Spoon River College.

In Macomb, Spoon River College's new campus is designed as a modern hub for education, career training and community engagement. Its academic and vocational offerings include general education courses, healthcare certifications and technical training, supported by updated classrooms, labs and student resources.

The campus also strengthens connections among the college, local businesses and area schools. Those partnerships are expected to expand workforce-development opportunities and dual-credit programs for high school students while improving access for both traditional and non-traditional learners.

John Wood Community College and regional employers are creating another direct pathway into the workforce through the Great River FAME program. Students divide their time between technical instruction and paid employment with companies including Dot Foods, Knapheide and Titan International. They graduate with an associate degree as well as practical experience in robotics, industrial maintenance and lean manufacturing. 📍



JOLIET *A Great Place for Business!*

Located at the Crossroads of Mid-America

Joliet, Illinois is a Great Place to Start and Grow a Business:

Joliet's business community is thriving.

- **Business-friendly environment**, with resources such as the Joliet City Center Partnership and the Will County Center for Economic Development providing marketing, advice, grants, and support.

Businesses are attracted by low taxes and fees, affordable real estate, and the ease of doing business in Will County.

- **Incentives for businesses**, including Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and Historic District Tax Credits, and more.
- **Strategic location** along major transportation routes, making it ideal for logistics, distribution, and manufacturing businesses.
- **Educational resources** like Joliet Junior College's Entrepreneurial & Business Center and the University of St. Francis business incubator, which offer advising services and support for startups.
- **Strong business network**, with local organizations such as the Joliet Region Chamber of Commerce & Industry, fostering collaboration among businesses.

Thriving Business Community:

Joliet's economy is diverse, with key industries such as transportation, healthcare, retail, and manufacturing driving its growth. The city provides a range of resources for entrepreneurs, including:

- **Access to a skilled workforce**
- **Support for startups and established businesses**
- **Strategic location**

Quality of Life:

- **Jobs and employment opportunities** across a variety of industries, including healthcare, education, manufacturing and retail.
- **Easy access** to major highways such as I-55 and I-80, and public transportation options through the [Gateway Transportation Center](#), connecting Metra, Amtrak, and Pace. Joliet is known as the Crossroads of America.
- **Recreational opportunities** with parks, golf courses, sports facilities, and plenty of options for shopping, dining, and medical care.
- **Cultural attractions** such as the historic Rialto Square Theatre, Joliet Area Historical Museum, the Illinois Rock & Roll Museum and Route 66 attractions, making the city vibrant and engaging.

Joliet is the county seat of Will County. Will County is the home of the largest inland port in North America, served by five Class 1 railroads, three intermodal facilities, four interstate highways, three navigable waterways and 1,500 miles of pipeline.



Please reach out to
our team at 815-724-4060
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BUSINESS LEADERS BRAG *On Illinois*

Our expansion to Illinois represents years of planning and a shared vision for long-term growth. This investment reflects our confidence and commitment to building products, workforce development and partnerships that endure. We're proud to work alongside state and local leaders to create meaningful economic opportunities while expanding our manufacturing footprint that serves our customers and communities. — SEAN KENNEY, CEO, Hyundai Translead



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



IBM is pleased to partner with the Governor to further the state's technology and innovation ecosystem. IBM's FutureNow Chicago delivery center will support new jobs, expand our Chicago delivery capability for IBM's clients, and together, we will build the future of technology talent and create sustained economic growth. — ARVIND KRISHNA, Chairman and CEO, IBM



Illinois EDC is a huge asset to the state of Illinois. GAF was my first interaction working a project start to finish with them. They are a really good resource. I'm not always keen on having an extra layer. They were impressive. — DENISE MULLIS, Senior Vice President, J.M. Mullis Inc.



Illinois' central location to our other markets in the Midwest and the strong workforce made Illinois the perfect spot for breaking ground to bring customers more bargains. — ERIC VAN DER VALK, Exec. VP & COO, Ollie's Bargain Outlet Inc.



Our new facility in Chicago aligns with the company's long-term operational goals and growth strategy. This is a decisive step in the company's transition from pure R&D to scaling up for commercial production. This requires different technologies, different facilities and different skillsets. This move allows us to construct a semi-automated battery pilot line vertically integrating our lithium metal reactor, and the incentives assist in funding critical pilot equipment, accelerating our timeline to market. — EMILIE BODIN, Founder and CEO, Pure Lithium



The Chicagoland area offers the best of all worlds for Mars Snacking — a vibrant urban environment, strong communities and access to world-class talent. We are proud to deepen our roots here, advance the Mars Snacking business and continue our long-standing commitment to community engagement and responsible business. — ANDREW CLARKE, Global President, Mars Snacking



Teklab proudly announces the opening of its new state-of-the-art laboratory facility in Collinsville, Illinois. This move marks a major milestone in the company's continued growth and long-term investment in advanced technology, expanded capacity and talent. With this new facility, Teklab is positioned to drive continued growth in the Midwest while expanding its expertise nationwide. The project was made possible through the support of the State of Illinois, particularly DCEO, along with valued partners ARCO Construction and the Bank of O'Fallon. Teklab also extends its appreciation to the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency for working with the Teklab team to ensure all laboratory accreditations remained fully intact throughout the transition. — JOHN RILEY, CEO, Teklab Inc.



We chose Chicago because of the city's exceptionally strong talent network. And with our Chicago office, we can expand our key relationships with great Midwest universities while providing meaningful opportunities to a seasoned, high-quality workforce. — ANDREW ELSENER, Co-Founder, Spot Inc.



Illinois Quantum and Microelectronics Park Is Only The Beginning

by ADAM BRUNS

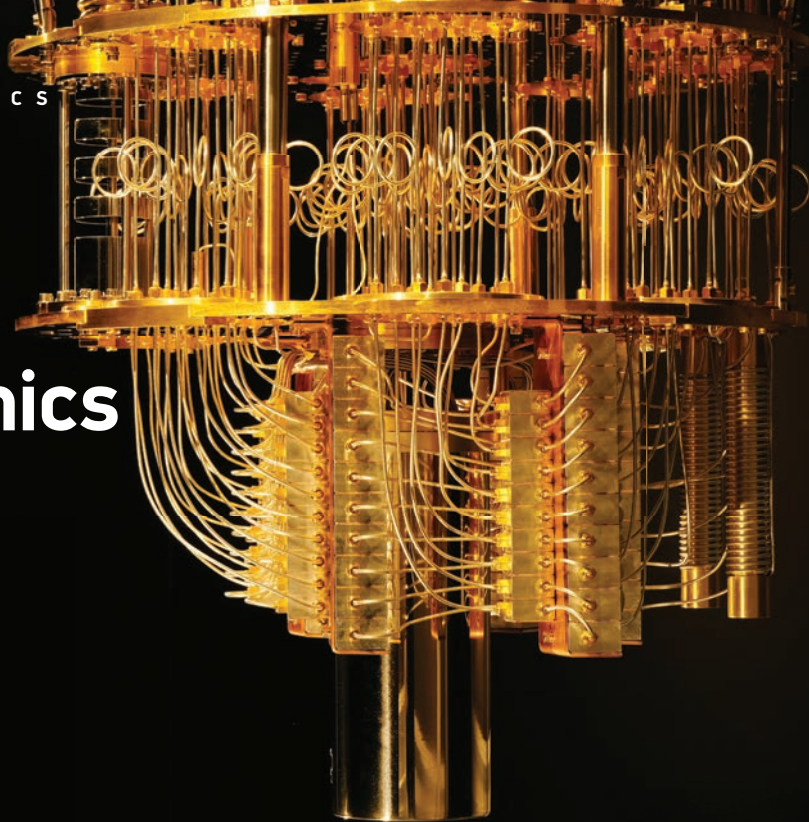


Photo courtesy of IBM

If you ever have doubts about the materiality of the quantum computing world, go to the place that specializes in putting high-falutin' ideas into physical form: mHUB, the hardtech incubator, accelerator and all-around workshop in the West Loop of Chicago that calls itself a "launchpad for the physical future."

In summer 2025, mHUB announced a \$590,200 grant from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) to build a new 4,000-sq.-ft. Deep Tech Lab that has specialized infrastructure and equipment for developing and scaling technologies in quantum, energy and microelectronics. In early 2026, the Illinois Quantum and Microelectronics Park (IQMP) announced its OnRamp program will serve as an anchor tenant, alongside Quantum Machines, Bluefors, and Diraq. "mHUB is a proud catalyst for Chicago's emerging quantum ecosystem," the organization stated in its annual report, "building the infrastructure, industry connections and commercialization pathways needed to attract and retain quantum startups to the region."

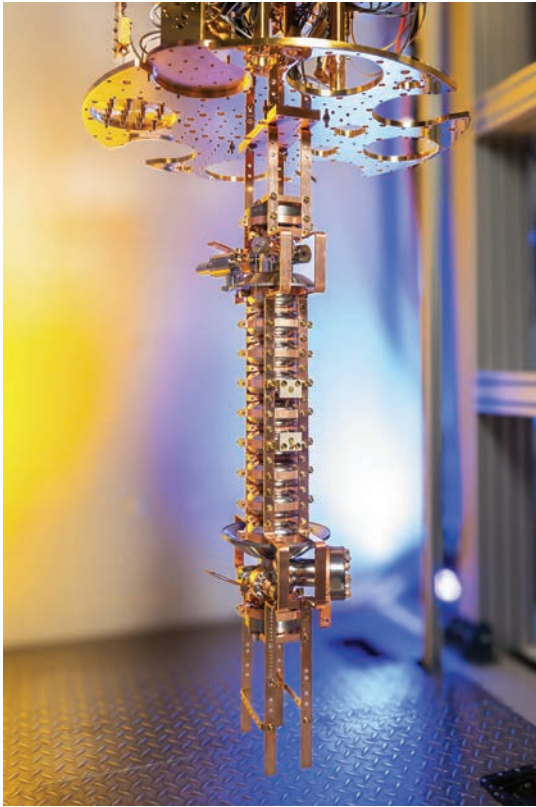
Keeping track of the quantum connections in Illinois is nearly as challenging as tracking quantum itself. Here are a few glimpses that capture the power of a sector that JLL's recent analysis of 240 quantum facilities across 35 countries reported had attracted \$9.3 billion

in private and public investment in 2025 — more than five times the 2024 total.

Start with Bluefors itself, a developer of cryogenic measurement systems for quantum technology which originally joined mHUB in February 2025, installing its LD400 dilution refrigerator system. The company also made an additional installation at Hyde Park Labs. In September 2025, innovators from San Francisco-based Conductor Quantum began to run experiments with the Bluefors system. By the end of 2025, mHUB reports, Conductor's AI software platform "had been deployed across 64 different quantum devices. The company has since launched Coda, a natural language interface for quantum computing, supporting quantum computers from IBM and IonQ."

IQMP Transforms Industrial Legacy into Tomorrow's Crown Jewel

IBM is a major investor in IQMP, the 128-acre development that broke ground in fall 2025 and aims to provide infrastructure and resources to support the development and commercialization of quantum technologies, hardware, software and applications. IBM is anchoring the National Quantum Algorithm Center through its installation of an IBM Quantum System Two in Chicago by late July 2026, which will eventually move to the IQMP. Governor JB Pritzker and IBM in April announced the company's new FutureNow Chicago delivery center at the IQMP. As part of



(LEFT) A prototype nine-cell superconducting radio-frequency (SRF) cavity-qubit system installed in a dilution refrigerator at Fermilab SQMS labs. **(BELOW)** A rendering of the Superconducting Quantum Materials and Systems Center's planned 100-plus-qubit SRF quantum processor, designed to demonstrate scalable, high-coherence quantum computation, communication and sensing within a single dilution refrigerator.

Photo by Ryan Postel courtesy of Fermilab; rendering courtesy of SQMS



FutureNow Chicago, IBM will create 750 new full-time jobs in AI, cybersecurity, data science, quantum and more. IBM also has committed to hiring at least one-third of qualified program graduates from a paid five-year, 500-apprentice pipeline developed in partnership with City Colleges of Chicago.

The company's commitment to Illinois quantum isn't confined to Chicago's shorefront. IBM has quantum ties with the University of Chicago, members of the Chicago Quantum Exchange and the U.S. Economic Development Administration-designated Bloch Quantum Technology Hub. And its reach extends beyond Chicagoland as well.

In April 2026, IBM and the Grainger College of Engineering at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) announced an expansion of the IBM-Illinois Discovery Accelerator Institute.

"This includes deploying quantum-centric supercomputing to Illinois innovators through the integration of UIUC's National Center for Supercomputing Applications (NCSA) Delta and DeltaAI supercomputers with IBM quantum computers," stated UIUC in a release. "Launched in 2021, the Discovery Accelerator Institute has 20 current, ongoing projects

across hybrid cloud, AI, quantum computing, materials discovery and sustainability, and its members have published more than 230 research papers.

"Quantum-centric supercomputing represents IBM's vision for the future of computation, where quantum processors (QPUs) work alongside high-performance classical systems powered by CPUs and GPUs to solve complex problems in science and industry," the university explained.

The Institute will also launch Algorithms-to-Silicon-to-Systems (AS2), a new research area to accelerate the integration and implementation of algorithms into silicon for specialized systems. "AS2 will represent a shift toward a unified, AI-native design paradigm, where algorithms, silicon and systems software are co-evolved, rather than developed in isolation," UIUC stated. "The results will be a step change in productivity, accessibility and scalability to enable the rapid creation of complex, high-performance systems with strong guarantees of correctness, robustness and real-world usability."

In an exclusive two-part contribution to Site Selection magazine's Online Insider in summer 2026, Wendi J. Gedzun, senior



(ABOVE) L-R: Rashid Bashir, Vice Chancellor for Chicago Strategic Partnerships, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and Dean, The Grainger College of Engineering; Illinois Governor JB Pritzker; Jay Gambetta, Director of IBM Research and IBM Fellow.

Photo courtesy of The Grainger College of Engineering, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

(RIGHT) The National Quantum Algorithm Center at the Illinois Quantum and Microelectronics Park will be fueled by IBM Quantum System Two.

Photo courtesy of IBM

director, Solutions Development, at JLL, saw the IQMP site as the embodiment of future-oriented economic development with the past and the community firmly in view.

“What is striking about IQMP is not the capital and not the technology. It is the quiet sophistication of the community choreography around them,” she wrote. “More than 100 acres of expanded parkland. Recreational paths threading the campus into Steelworkers Park, Park 566, and the ore walls themselves, which are being treated as features to design with rather than around.” A new 53-bed Advocate Health Care hospital at the north end of the broader 440-acre site anchors a \$1 billion commitment to South Side health investment over 10 years, she noted.

In Gedzun’s view, IQMP is emblematic of a new way of thinking about corporate facility site selection and development that takes into account neuroscience, i.e., evaluating all aspects of a project’s impact on a community’s psyche and perceptions. Through the project’s various permutations and partnerships — just like at mHUB — what starts as a concept quickly takes physical, meaningful form.



The IQMP’s partnerships and programs are building in parallel to the structures themselves:

In July 2026, IQMP and the Quantum Strategic industry Alliance for Revolution (Q-STAR) announced a new partnership memorandum of understanding to strengthen collaboration between Japanese companies and Illinois’ quantum ecosystem. “Quantum technology is entering a new phase where global collaboration is essential to accelerate commercialization and create real-world impact,” said Taro Shimada, chair of Q-STAR. “Through this partnership with IQMP, we look forward to strengthening connections between Japan’s and Illinois’ quantum ecosystems and creating new opportunities for companies, researchers and entrepreneurs on both sides.

The agreement comes after the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) in March 2026 organized a delegation to Tokyo, which included representatives from the IQMP, the Illinois Economic Development Corporation (Illinois EDC), the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), IQMP anchor tenant PsiQuantum, and others. In June 2025, a Japanese delegation came to Chicago to meet with DCEO, IQMP, Illinois EDC and others. Gov. Pritzker led a similarly focused delegation trip to Japan back in October 2024.

Also in July, Gov. Pritzker and DCEO announced the X-Labs Fast Fund to encourage U.S. National Science Foundation X-Labs teams to choose Illinois as the place to pursue technical breakthroughs in the quantum technology sector. The X-Labs Fast Fund is a \$3 million capital fund to augment federal funding for teams focused on quantum technologies and awarded under Phase o of the federal X-Labs opportunity. Teams

pursuing a federal X-Labs award may write their intention to pursue Illinois funding into their application.

“The State of Illinois has committed approximately \$200 million to attract federal funding for quantum and already demonstrated an ability to quickly deploy those funds,” the organizations stated. “If awarded by NSF, teams will be able to apply to DCEO and receive the grant within months.” The Chicago Quantum Exchange, P33, Polsky Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation and mHUB will add \$250,000 in funding, immediate access to elite lab space and advanced prototyping facilities, and access to the IQMP’s technical infrastructure, including cryogenic, test and measurement equipment, and experimental research facilities.

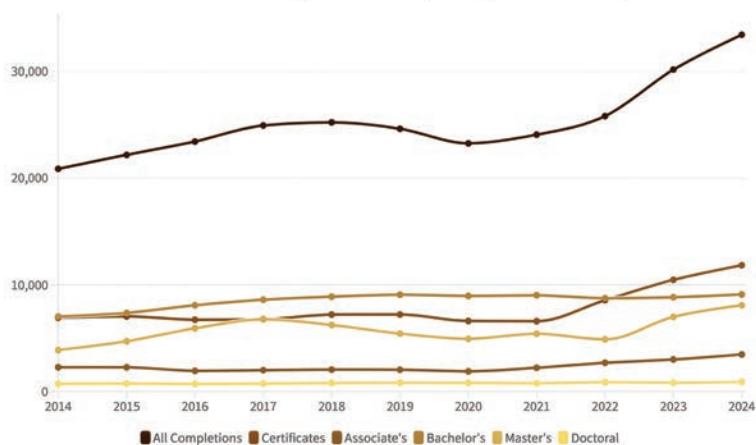
“The State of Illinois’ \$3 million X-Labs Fast Fund will attract new talent to Illinois, giving entrepreneurs the opportunity to take advantage of our world-class facilities and opportunities for growth,” said DCEO Director Kristin Richards. “With each new investment, Illinois is cementing its reputation as the leading hub for quantum innovation.”

“Mapping Illinois’ Quantum Talent Pipeline: A Framework for Defining Quantum-Relevant Degrees and Certificates,” released in May 2026 by the Illinois Science and Technology Coalition (ISTC), Illinois EDC, IQMP and Chicago Quantum Exchange, found more than 33,000 quantum-relevant degrees and certificates were awarded in Illinois in 2024 alone — a 33% increase since the passage of the National Quantum Initiative Act in 2018 and a 60% increase over the last decade. Among other findings:

- Illinois accounted for nearly 5% of all quantum-relevant program completions nationally.
- Quantum-relevant certificate programs represented the single largest category of completions statewide.
- Illinois’ master’s-level computing pipeline is among the strongest in the nation, with nearly 3,000 computer science master’s degrees awarded in 2024 alone.

In November 2025, The U.S. Department of Energy Office of Science renewed the

Illinois Graduates in Quantum Computing-Relevant Programs



Superconducting Quantum Materials and Systems Center (SQMS), hosted by Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory in Chicago, with \$125 million over the next five years to accelerate breakthroughs in quantum information science. SQMS, founded in 2020, is one of five DOE National Quantum Information Science Research Centers created under the National Quantum Initiative Act.

“The center is rooted in Fermilab’s expertise in superconducting radio-frequency (SRF) cavities, materials and cryogenics — technologies originally developed for particle accelerators — and in the lab’s mission to explore the universe at its most fundamental level,” said a Fermilab release.

Illinois is also home to three more federally funded quantum research centers: Q-NEXT, led by Argonne National Laboratory and funded by the U.S. Department of Energy; the Hybrid Quantum Architectures and Networks (HQAN) institute, led by UIUC; and the Quantum Sensing for Biophysics and Bioengineering (QuBBE) institute, led by the University of Chicago. HQAN and QuBBE are funded by the National Science Foundation.

“This renewal allows us to build on that foundation and take the next leap — moving from discovery to deployment,” said Anna Grassellino, director of the SQMS Center. “Together with our partners across national labs, universities and industry, we’re poised to scale quantum systems to a level that will unlock powerful new tools for science, technology and society.”

ILLINOIS RAISES ON SITE

by LISA BASTIAN

When states compete to land major corporate projects, making the initial short list is the most difficult hurdle to clear.

Increasingly, the states and regions achieving the greatest success are not only investing in comprehensive site-readiness programs; they are also applying proven practices from across the country.

The strongest programs do more than identify available land. Rather, they show that properties have been carefully evaluated and/or prepared, site data is current and reliable, and development teams are ready to move quickly to close deals.

For site selectors juggling multiple states on tight deadlines, that level of attention makes all the difference. By reducing uncertainty, such site-readiness programs allow companies to identify leading communities faster, and with greater confidence.

Illinois has fully embraced this customer-centric approach. After studying what works best nationwide, the state is now applying those lessons to better prepare, fund and market its own sites for future investment.

Illinois Launches Historic Initiative to Spur Economic Development

In 2025 alone, the state recorded 680 qualifying corporate expansion and relocation projects and ranked No. 2

nationally for the fourth consecutive year. Illinois' nominal GDP grew 5.85% year over year. The state also ended the year with 200,000 job openings, while hires increased 7.45%.

Those results prove Illinois already is generating strong business demand. The next challenge is converting that momentum into more projects across more communities.

To expand its ability to capture future investment, Illinois committed \$500 million in FY26 to the largest site readiness initiative in state history. The funding moves idle or underprepared properties closer to development readiness, allowing more communities to compete for projects that drive statewide growth.

The half-billion-dollar site-readiness investment is more than a one-time infusion of grant dollars. Rather, it represents a structural shift in how Illinois prepares sites and competes for investment through two major initiatives.

The "Surplus to Success" program, operated by the Illinois Department of Central Management Services, receives \$300 million to prepare underused state-owned properties for private development.

"Site Ready Illinois," administered by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, receives the remaining \$200 million for planning, infrastructure and industrial site development across the state. Abby Powell

THE BAR READINESS

The 92-acre Kraft Farm Vetted Site is at the intersection of Business 51 and County Road 1850 North in Normal in McLean County, Illinois.

Photos courtesy of Illinois EDC

of the Springfield Sangamon Growth Alliance says this initiative is important as it helps Illinois communities “compete on a national scale.”

One key component, the “Illinois Regional Site Readiness Program,” offers two distinct avenues to readiness. Its \$61.5 million is made available to Illinois communities, economic development organizations and landowners to prepare industrial properties for future investment. The advantage for site selectors? They gain access to a larger inventory of credible, better-prepared sites much earlier in the search process.

Site Readiness Program Accelerates Decision-Making Process

The \$60 million Capital Ready track moves promising properties closer to full development readiness by supporting improvements in grading, roads, rail connections, drainage, utilities and water/sewer infrastructure. In April 2026, Illinois announced the first seven Capital Ready awards, totaling \$25.9 million.

The \$1.5 million Planning track supports environmental reviews, engineering, utility studies, surveys and site plans. This work answers critical questions about infrastructure, access, environmental conditions and development constraints.

For example, the City of McHenry received \$120,000 to conduct environmental due diligence on about 235 acres planned

for industrial development. This project illustrates that site readiness begins long before roads or utilities are installed.

For businesses working under tight deadlines, the Regional Site Readiness Program offers significant advantages by addressing development risks before any capital is committed. They appreciate gaining access to more Illinois sites with due diligence completed, infrastructure needs identified and major development obstacles already addressed.

The timing of these investments is strategic. Illinois recorded about 189,000 new business applications in 2025, an 11% increase. From 2021 through 2025, its economy added 368,000 jobs, with gains across every focus industry.

Companies attracted by that momentum still require sites capable of supporting investment without costly delays.

“Winning large-scale, generational projects requires an economic development strategy that balances short-term adaptability and long-term growth,” says Christy George, president and CEO of the Illinois Economic Development Corporation (Illinois EDC). “And that’s what Illinois is doing with the Regional Site Readiness Program. It’s simplifying and accelerating the site selection process for businesses and decision-makers.”

(continued on page 52)



WHERE INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT MOVES FASTER

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Industrial growth today isn't just about finding the right location — it's about how quickly a project can move. At Pekin's Riverway Business Park, the groundwork is already done. Utilities are in place. Access is established. The sites are ready for development. That means companies don't have to spend time solving basic infrastructure challenges before they build. They can move from site selection into planning and construction with fewer delays and more certainty about what comes next.

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CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAY-SERVED SITE | IMMEDIATE ACCESS TO I-74 / I-155 / I-474

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- **WATER** – 1 MGD capacity / 2 MGD capacity at treatment plant (Illinois American Water)
- **ELECTRIC** – 13.2kV, 69 kV, and 138 kV (Ameren Illinois)
- **GAS** – 4", 8", and 16" mains (Ameren Illinois)
- **HIGHWAY** – Adjacent to IL-9 and IL-29
- **INTERSTATE** – I-474 five miles away / I-155 11 miles away
- **RAIL** – CN Railway through park
- **RIVER** – Illinois River terminal in Peoria
- **AIR** – Peoria International Airport 10 miles away

Why Investors Are Choosing Pekin

- **SPEED TO MARKET**
Utilities already in place
(power, water, sewer, gas)
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to major Midwest distribution markets
- **ROOM TO SCALE**
Large contiguous acreage designed
for phased expansion and long-term
industrial growth
- **WORKFORCE DEPTH & PIPELINE**
Established labor base supported
by technical training programs and
manufacturing workforce history
- **INCENTIVE ADVANTAGE**
Enterprise Zone designation and eligibility
for state and local development incentives
- **PROVEN INDUSTRIAL MOMENTUM**
Existing manufacturers and logistics
operators confirm long-term industrial
viability of the corridor

Immediate Development Options

Riverway Business Park offers several ready-to-go options for developers, owner-users, and industrial investors — including shovel-ready sites and existing buildings within a fully serviced industrial corridor.

AVAILABLE SITES

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- **33.9-ACRE PARCEL** – City owned
- **160-ACRE SITE** – Privately owned
- **312-ACRE SITE** – Privately owned
- **FLEXIBLE CONFIGURATIONS AVAILABLE**
for larger contiguous users or phased buildouts
- **ZONED** for manufacturing, logistics, laboratories, and office



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Contact Josh Wray, City of Pekin Director of Economic Development, to learn more at jlwray@ci.pekin.il.us.



PEKIN
ILLINOIS
YOUR PLACE TO GROW

(continued from page 49)

Third-Party Vetting Narrows a Much Larger Inventory

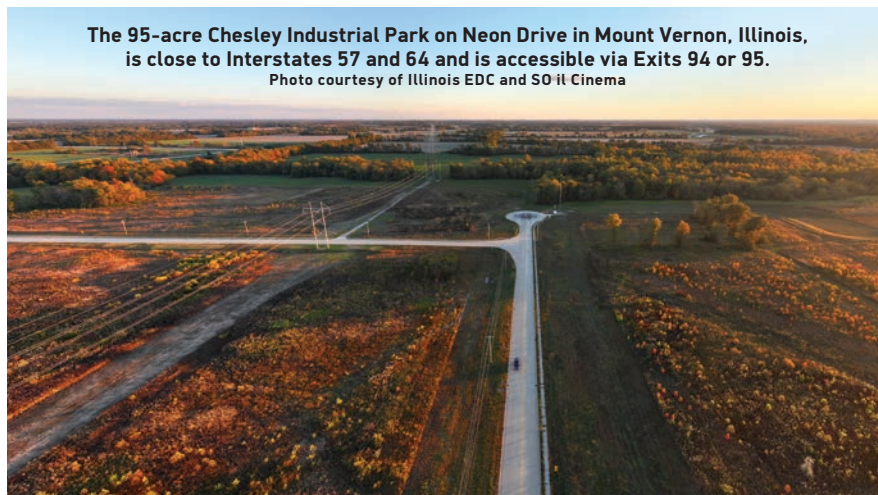
Before investing potentially millions of dollars, a company needs reliable facts about the land on which it may build. Illinois EDC helps site selectors begin that search with a statewide database containing over 1,650 available properties. Within that broader inventory, over 70 have earned designation through its Vetted Sites program. Each of those sites is evaluated across eight characteristics: acreage, utilities, logistics, permitting and entitlement, workforce, ownership, incentives, and environmental and topographical conditions.

Illinois EDC retains independent experts to examine the properties, then organize their findings into detailed site packages. The process gives companies with fast-moving projects the solid data they need while identifying improvements communities can make to strengthen a property's overall market competitiveness.

"[The experts] do a deep-dive analysis, and then we market the sites," explains Paulina San Millan, senior vice president of business development for Illinois EDC. "We know that in the global economy today, if you don't have the sites, you can't compete for projects."

For site selectors, the Vetted Sites program clarifies property conditions, speeds comparisons, and makes it easier to identify the strongest locations for further consideration. The 70 designated properties offer diverse acreage and usage options for different project sizes and industries.

Smaller sites include Bourbonnais Industrial Gateway, a 180-acre site in Kankakee County with heavy industrial zoning, rail access and strong proximity to I-57. In the St. Louis metro, the 330-acre University Park at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville is one of the stronger, more established



sites in the program for tech, R&D, light industrial and corporate users. Then there's the 416-acre I-80 Logistics Park in Grundy County. It offers an excellent logistics location along I-80 and proximity to Chicago.

Over two dozen properties are designated as "megasites" because most exceed 500 acres and are best-suited for large manufacturing projects. For example, the 500-acre Hartford Industrial Center offers strong utility capacity plus excellent access to interstates, rail and river transportation. Another is the 1,000-acre Dual Rail Megasite in Rochelle, served by BNSF and Union Pacific, with another 500 acres available for expansion. In Hennepin, the 3,300-acre Marquis Industrial Complex provides on-site rail, barge access and more than 100 megawatts of electric capacity.

Utility Partnership Adds Another Layer of Preparation

Ameren Illinois delivers electricity to 1.2 million customers and natural gas to more than 800,000 customers across Illinois.

In December 2025, the company gave Illinois' broader site-readiness strategy a utility-led component when it launched the Ameren Site Acceleration Program (ASAP).

ASAP addresses one of the biggest sources of project delay: unanswered utility questions. It

front-loads due diligence, utility and infrastructure analyses, conceptual site plans and industry targeting so foundational work is completed before a prospect calls.

Ameren funds the work, while Illinois EDC and regional partners market each property to industries best matched to its capabilities. Interested prospects use this utility information to quickly determine if sites can support proposed projects.

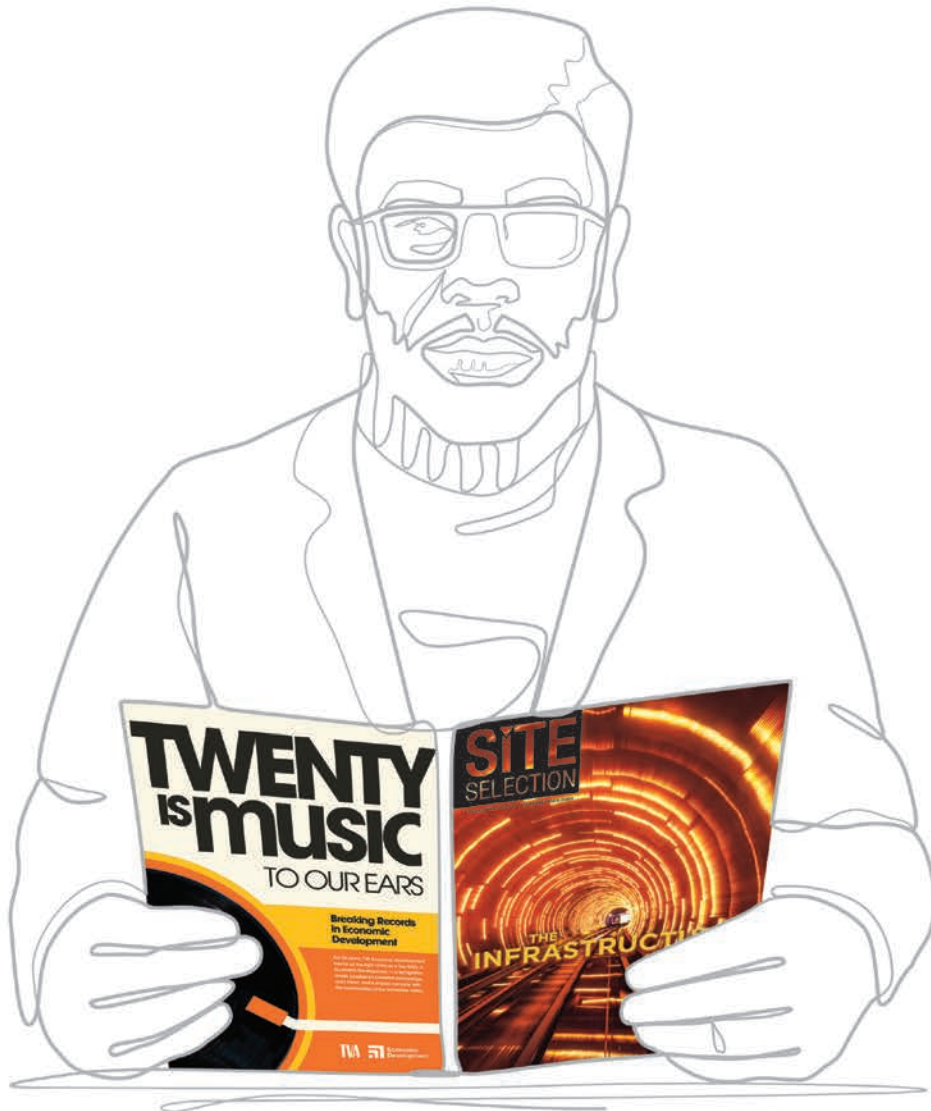
Still in pilot phase, the program currently focuses on three high-potential properties in Champaign, Decatur's Commerce Park and Ottawa Industrial Park.

Coordination Strengthens Illinois' Investment Case

"Site readiness is a crucial step in redevelopment that creates jobs for hardworking Illinoisans and breathes new life into communities," says Gov. JB Pritzker. "By expanding the number of Illinois properties ready for development, we're setting the stage for long-term economic growth, revitalization and opportunities for the entire state."

Recent rankings already position Illinois as "one of the best states in the country for business," adds Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton. Through these new site investments, she says, "we're doubling down on that success. This is how we build an economy that works for all of us." 

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BRINGING THE WORLD TO ILLINOIS

by JOHN MCCURRY

Illinois is building strong FDI momentum with a mix of traditional industries, such as manufacturing and the promising field of quantum computing. In 2025, the Chicago metro area attracted approximately \$674 million across 26 FDI projects, with promises of more than 2,000 jobs, according to World Business Chicago. Projects included companies involved in advanced manufacturing, food production, clean energy, logistics, business services and quantum computing.

Karla Orozco Toledano, vice president of economic development for World Business Chicago, observes that foreign companies are increasingly seeking a physical presence closer to their U.S. customers. That could begin with a sales office or a showroom, but lately there is growing interest in distribution, assembly and

manufacturing.

"Companies are no longer asking only 'Where is the lowest-cost location?' They are asking 'Where can we operate reliably, reach customers and protect our supply chain?' especially with everything that is going with trade policies," she says.

Chicagoland is seeing robust FDI activity at the intersection of traditional industries like manufacturing or food and beverage with technology. Another trend is companies choosing to enter the market in stages. For example, a company may begin with a showroom facility near customers, and later add employees, warehousing and production.

Orozco says foreign companies are increasingly evaluating locations through the lens of values, as well as economics.

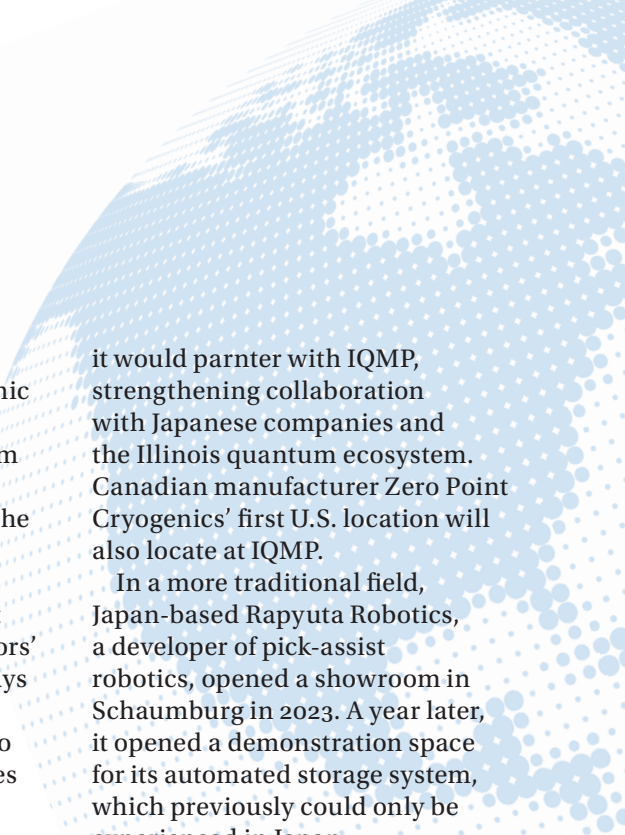
Human rights, climate policy, workforce inclusion and broader social responsibility are now part of the investment equation.

"Cost and revenue still matter, of course, but they are no longer the only variables," Orozco says. "Companies want to operate in places that reflect their values and help them attract the talent and support for their long-term sustainability goals. This is definitely an area where Chicago and the region have a very strong story to tell."

Illinois backs this values alignment with real financial commitment. The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) administers the Reimagining Energy and Vehicles (REV) Program, which offers tax credits to companies that manufacture EVs, EV components, or renewable



Bluefors opened a second Chicago lab in 2025 at the University of Chicago Science incubator at Hyde Park Labs.



energy technology. This supports the State's own goal of 100% clean energy by 2050. For foreign investors who share that sustainability priority, REV turns strategic and values alignment into concrete financial support for their Illinois expansion.

Quantum computing is a burgeoning sector for FDI in Illinois. While the category is not an FDI leader in terms of number of projects, it is a leading strategic sector for the coming years. Orozco says it has the potential to create an entirely new cluster and attract investment across areas such as semiconductors, advanced materials, control systems, high-performance computing and specialized manufacturing. She describes it as moving rapidly from research to commercialization.

"It is fair to say quantum is still a sector defining itself," she says. "We know the core science and its enormous potential, but the commercial applications, business models, industry standards, workforce needs and supply chains are still shaping."

Compute This: Come to Chicago

Darin Buelow, global location strategy leader with Deloitte in Chicago, says one can count on one hand the number of states that have "legitimate bona fides" when it comes to quantum research, and Illinois is one of them.

"They've got Argonne [National Laboratory] and Fermi [National Accelerator Laboratory], and there's a lot of quantum research happening there. If you're a quantum company looking to deploy, you're literally looking at only a couple of states that have assets like that."

One potential building block for the quantum sector is

Bluefors, a Helsinki, Finland-based manufacturer of cryogenic measurement systems and other product lines for quantum technology. Bluefors opened a second Chicago lab in 2025 at the University of Chicago Science incubator at Hyde Park Labs.

Sauli Sinisalo, vice president and general manager for Bluefors' North American operations, says the main deciding factors for Bluefors were the easy access to talent through local universities and an active quantum and startup ecosystem, as well as a knowledgeable and supportive environment through the Illinois EDC, P33, DCEO and Chicago Quantum Exchange.

"The UChicago Science Incubator had its new premises in Hyde Park Labs open for business in June last year," Sinisalo says. "Bluefors moved in in November and we got the first test measurements with the lab completed in January. The Bluefors Lab Chicago is currently open for customers and looking forward to helping the local quantum community with easy access to cryogenic infrastructure for quantum technologies development and R&D."

Recent FDI wins in the quantum field for the Chicago region include plans by Israel-based Quantum Machines to establish a flagship hub at the Illinois Quantum and Microelectronics Park (IQMP). Quantum Machines develops control products for quantum computing. Pasqal, a France-based company that builds and commercializes quantum computers powered by neutral atom technology, is developing its U.S. headquarters, also at the IQMP. The Quantum Strategic Industry Alliance for Revolution (Q-STAR) also announced

it would partner with IQMP, strengthening collaboration with Japanese companies and the Illinois quantum ecosystem. Canadian manufacturer Zero Point Cryogenics' first U.S. location will also locate at IQMP.

In a more traditional field, Japan-based Rapyuta Robotics, a developer of pick-assist robotics, opened a showroom in Schaumburg in 2023. A year later, it opened a demonstration space for its automated storage system, which previously could only be experienced in Japan.

Buelow says Illinois' FDI future is bright, pending navigation of variables such as interest rates and tariffs. If tariffs stay in place, that could motivate some foreign firms to establish production in the U.S.

"A trend here is more manufacturers are figuring out how to use robotics and take the labor cost disadvantage of the U.S. out of the equation. As they automate more, you're reducing the share of the total cost pie that's labor, so logistics costs become more important, supply chain costs become more important, tax becomes more important and speed to market becomes more important. That means there should be more foreign direct investment into the U.S. if they can automate some of these factories. I don't expect things to drop off a cliff. I don't expect things to skyrocket up either."

Buelow says Illinois has more shovel-ready sites than its neighboring states, presenting a short-term advantage. Other states with depleted site inventories are retooling, so he says that advantage won't last forever. But the current portfolio of sites is therefore compelling to foreign investors. 📍

Jobs, Innovation & Opportunity Collide in Illinois

Workforce opportunities reach every corner of the Prairie State.

by KELLY BARRAZA



The quantum science workforce in Illinois will soon see a boost thanks to the Illinois Quantum and Microelectronics Park, currently under construction.

Photo courtesy of Argonne National Laboratory

What makes Illinois one of the best places for workforce development in the United States? A statewide commitment to providing and creating new programs, training opportunities and resources for those seeking professional development certainly helps.

Illinois ranked No. 3 in Site Selection magazine's 2026 Workforce Development Rankings. In the Midwest region, the state finished first. "As our economy continues to succeed and expand, we're making sure that no one is left behind," said Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton in January 2026. "By investing in workforce development and expanding access to education and training, we're ensuring that opportunity reaches every corner of our state — and that we succeed together."

A (Quantum) Leapfrog Moment

South Side Chicago received a boon in the field of quantum computing technology last year in September with the groundbreaking of anchor tenant PsiQuantum at the Illinois Quantum and Microelectronics Park (IQMP). PsiQuantum will be home to the first utility-scale, error-corrected quantum computer at IQMP, according to a press release from Illinois Governor JB Pritzker's office. Illinois

has spent decades building the foundation for a thriving innovation ecosystem, says Harley Johnson, CEO of IQMP.

"Governor Pritzker recognized early that quantum computing is a once-in-a-generation technology with the potential to reshape the global economy and everyday life," Johnson says. "He knew Illinois was uniquely positioned to lead because of our world-renowned national laboratories, top-tier research universities, global transportation access, a thriving business community and eager workforce supported by a robust talent pipeline."

The State has invested hundreds of millions of dollars in building Chicago's talent pipeline. These investments include \$200 million for the Chicago Quantum Exchange's education and training programs, \$500 million in the Discovery Partners Institute and the Illinois Innovation Network and \$500 million for IQMP. A 124-mile quantum network with supercomputing centers at the Argonne Leadership Computing Facility and the University of Illinois' National Center for Supercomputing Applications adds to the state's R&D and commercialization infrastructure in quantum tech.

Notably, Illinois awards almost 40,000 degrees and certificates in quantum-related fields, including almost 12,000 from

community colleges. According to analysis conducted by the Boston Consulting Group in 2024, as many as 191,000 quantum tech jobs are predicted in the Illinois-Wisconsin-Indiana region by 2035.

South Side Chicago will house IQMP at what once was a U. S. Steel facility that closed in 1992 and stayed vacant for 30 years. Johnson observes that “building the IQMP on the former South Works site provides an opportunity to turn the neighborhood’s industrial history into new prosperity: The location offers unmatched access to universities, national labs and transportation for local, regional, national and global connectivity. This is a generational chance to transform a site that once fueled the city’s, state’s and nation’s 20th-century economy into the epicenter of the quantum industry in America in the 21st century.”

The list of quantum-related workforce development programs in Illinois is staggering. IBM’s FutureNow Chicago delivery center will take advantage of City Colleges of Chicago’s “Moonshot” apprenticeship program, supported by philanthropy and the State of Illinois, which will recruit and train 500 apprentices over five years and graduate students from the two-year program with associate degrees. IBM has committed to hiring one-third of the program’s qualified graduates.

In April 2026, Quantum Across Illinois brought quantum industry employers to 10 public university and colleges in the state: College of DuPage, Harper College, Olive-Harvey College, Governors State University, Wilbur Wright College, College of Lake County, University of Illinois Chicago, Western Illinois University, Northern Illinois University and Illinois State University. PsiQuantum, Infleqtion, IBM, Pasqal and Quantum Machines were all IQMP tenants involved in the statewide initiative and worked together with IQMP, Illinois EDC and the Chicago Quantum Exchange to educate more than 1,000 students on the local careers and opportunities in quantum.

“We were encouraged to see how much genuine engagement the program generated,” says Johnson. “Many students were energized by the chance to explore future career paths



“Some students already had familiarity with quantum, and they told us that the biggest surprise was a new sense of community. Those students told us that they met peers who shared the same research interests and left feeling connected to the growing industry.”

— Harley Johnson, CEO, IQMP, on Quantum Across Illinois, a statewide workforce and educational initiative

and excited to learn about opportunities they hadn’t considered before. Some students already had familiarity with quantum, and they told us that the biggest surprise was a new sense of community. Those students told us that they met peers who shared the same research interests and left feeling connected to the growing industry.”

Saturday Morning Quantum* (SMQ*) is yet another quantum education program in Illinois that’s been running for two years. Chicago Public Schools and Fermilab (Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory) modeled the free, 10-class course for high schoolers after Fermilab’s Saturday Morning Physics program, which has been running for over four decades. The rising “quantum scholars” in SMQ* spend 10 Saturdays learning directly from Fermilab scientists and experts in a hands-on, active learning approach that involves visiting Fermilab’s campus in Batavia and seeing firsthand all the cutting-edge tech the space has to offer. More than 80 students in two cohorts have participated in SMQ*.

Manufacturing Success

The state of Illinois has been working toward developing its entire manufacturing vertical. The Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center (IMEC) got its start in 1996 and works with over 3,500 Illinois manufacturers annually to optimize and grow business operations and compete globally. This involves providing training programs, workspace simulations, on-site and classroom learning and designing apprentice programs for specific companies and trades. In 2025, IMEC helped create or retain 6,871 jobs among its clientele and had an aggregate



Illinois has invested heavily in being a leading force in quantum R&D, infrastructure and workforce training. Gov. JB Pritzker spoke at the groundbreaking of the IQMP, located at Quantum Shore Chicago. Photo courtesy of Related Midwest

impact of over \$905 million to the Illinois economy. Some of those clients include hazardous material storage company Safety Storage Inc., tooling manufacturer Header Die and Tool Inc. and security tech company Giesecke+Devrient.

In January 2026, Gov. Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) announced \$24 million in grant funding to establish six Manufacturing Training Academies (MTAs) at community colleges in Illinois' downstate regions, another chapter in the state's leadership and participation in the historic manufacturing scene that defined most of the Midwest's economies for the past century. The funding will support facility and equipment upgrades that will prepare a generation of workers in the fields of advanced manufacturing, clean energy production, cryogenics science and more.

"Illinois community colleges are uniquely positioned to help power the state's manufacturing future," said Brian Durham, executive director of the Illinois Community College Board, when the MTA expansion was announced. "Through programs like the Manufacturing Training Academies, we're connecting education and industry to deliver hands-on, high-tech training that meets the evolving needs of employers and opening opportunities to well-paying careers for Illinois residents."

Manufacturing companies seeking to

grow in Illinois can also turn to the Illinois Manufacturers' Association (IMA), a trade association that got its start in 1893. The IMA Education Foundation funds workforce programming in school districts and all levels of higher and vocational education. The IMA also provides grant funding up to 50% to cover hard-skill training costs incurred by manufacturers through their Employee Training Investment Program (ETIP), which had 150 companies and over 30,000 employee participants involved in 2025; the State of Illinois funds IMA's ETIP program.

DMG MORI Federal Services Inc. (DMG MORI) announced earlier this year that it would spend \$40.5 million on a new advanced manufacturing R&D facility in the Chicagoland area. The global machining manufacturer's new site will also have a dedicated partnership with City Colleges of Chicago, connecting students to desirable jobs in the industry.

Illinois EDC President and CEO Christy George said in February 2026 that "this expansion advances additive manufacturing and automation while creating accessible pathways to high-quality careers. Through its partnership with City Colleges of Chicago, DMG MORI is helping expand opportunity, strengthen talent pipelines and ensure more Illinoisans can participate in the future of manufacturing."

Many Paths for Illinois Workers

Chicagoans have many options to choose from when looking for refining and adding to their skillsets. Take, for example, Xchange Chicago, which is jointly run by the Comer Science & Education Foundation, IT consultancy and technology-based managed services provider SDI Presence and nonprofit P33, which aims to drive inclusive tech and innovation growth in the Chicagoland area. Xchange Chicago opened a \$20 million tech training hub at Greater Grand Crossing in November 2025, offering to train individuals in IT-based skills at the 28,000-sq.-ft. site that also aims to collect commercial tenants. Xchange Chicago provides apprenticeships and jobs for trainees at local employers, wrap-around services and other workforce development-based training. The project, backed by the City of Chicago, is expected to create up to 8,000 new tech jobs and have a



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“Xchange has already created dynamic career pathways and economic opportunities for more than 50 South Side residents in just over a year. The partners who brought Xchange to life, and the customers who believed in the vision, have made this beautiful new tech facility in Grand Crossing a reality.”

— Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson at the Greater Grand Crossing opening

\$160 million economic impact locally.

“Xchange has already created dynamic career pathways and economic opportunities for more than 50 South Side residents in just over a year,” said Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson at the Greater Grand Crossing opening. “The partners who brought Xchange to life, and the customers who believed in the vision, have made this beautiful new tech facility in Grand Crossing a reality. Together, their mentorship, training and supportive resources are helping to build a stronger Chicago and paving the way for thousands of life-changing technology jobs here on the South Side.”

Corn Belt Ports, which comprises four inland regional port districts in western Illinois and handles almost 100 million tons of

freight each year across 50 riverfront counties in five Midwest states, has found partners in the higher education and skilled trades field to further maritime workforce development.

Western Illinois University, together with Corn Belt Ports, announced in April 2026 the establishment of the Corn Belt Ports Rural Logistics & Maritime Training & Education Consortium, which involves several higher education institutions from four states: Black Hawk College in Moline, Illinois; Carl Sandburg College in Galesburg, Illinois; Culver-Stockton College in Canton, Missouri; Eastern Iowa Community Colleges; Illinois Central College in East Peoria; John Wood Community College in Quincy; Northeast Iowa Community College in Peosta, Iowa; and the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse and Western Technical College, both in La Crosse, Wisconsin.

Another success from Illinois is the apprentice opportunities borne out of the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA), signed into law by Gov. Pritzker in 2021. CEJA’s Craft Apprenticeship Program focuses on funding accredited to or established programs for workers looking to enter the electrical and clean energy trades, especially pre-apprenticeships and youth-focused training in designing, installing and maintaining solar and electrical equipment.



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 **Naperville**
Development Partnership

by ALEXIS ELMORE

Illinois Universities Leverage AI And Institutional Partnerships for Student Success

New programs and partnerships formed by Illinois higher education institutions aim to move beyond traditional structures that define a student's learning experience. Shown here is the arboretum at the University of Illinois in Champaign County.

Photo courtesy of Enjoy Illinois

How can a University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) student gain an adequate understanding of an international culture without physically moving through its various communities?

Traditionally, study abroad programs have been key to immersing students in international environments, acquainting them with the people and daily life of diverse global locations. UIUC Clinical Food Science Professor Toni Gist recognized that the ability to study abroad for many students is hindered by obstacles such as cost, work commitments or lack of flexibility as they move through their degree. She and UIUC College of ACES Study Abroad Director Ali Freter began discussing collaborative online international learning (COIL) opportunities.

"UIUC has a passion for making sure our students have the ability to interact with other individuals and learn from them in a collaborative way," Gist says. "They learn

cultural competence through either studying abroad, partnering with other institutions or research that builds bridges between different schools.”

The concept of leveraging video and virtual reality technologies to form educational partnerships with international institutions intrigued Gist, who has been teaching this course for over 25 years. It not only presented the opportunity for students to interact with foreign students but also to get a feel for the cultural differences that separate us.

Gist first connected with National Taiwan University Institute of Food Science and Technology Chair and Professor Yi-Chen Lo, as the international institution reflected the shared sense of global connection and supported a diverse student body. She flew to Taiwan to build a roster of videos designed for virtual reality use, recording a walk through a Taiwanese food market and food offerings delivered within worship temples. The same process was repeated at home in Champaign County, such as highlighting an array of food offered at a UIUC tailgate.

A pilot cohort launched with 10 students in the 2024-2025 semester, limited based on the availability of VR headsets, while 20 students participated from the National Taiwan University. Throughout this process, language barriers between the two institutions were eased by Zoom’s AI translation features, enabling students to form authentic relationships.

“Those groups created a food and culture handbook,” says Gist. “Oftentimes, these individuals who are at UIUC or in Taiwan want to create global connections and travel abroad in the future. Showing the similarities and then learning from the differences can help students feel comfortable participating in a culture

without feeling like they’re doing something wrong.

“I have to give a huge shout-out to the College of ACES because they helped fund this project, as well as the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning because they allowed us into their design studio,” she added. “Each week they set aside time for us to take over their space and didn’t charge us a penny to use it because they echoed the learning goals of the project.”



U of I and National Taiwan University students in the program observed cultural cuisine differences and how these environments shape international food practices.

Photo courtesy of University of Illinois

After the pilot cohort wrapped, Gist set out to expand the collaborative scope, turning to Universidad Veracruzana Clinical Chemistry, Biochemistry and Toxicology Professor José Antonio Palma Jacinto. The two decided to zone in on health disparities impacting Mexico, such as a rise in Type 2 diabetes. Due to a high density of impoverished areas in the country, food stability

often relies on highly processed foods. The new COIL cohort focused on food science, creating informational videos highlighting how to read nutrition labels and interviewing locals about dietary patterns to serve as public service announcements.

The Mexico cohort launched in the 2025-2026 academic school year, welcoming 15 UIUC students and 30 Universidad Veracruzana students. While the Taiwan project took an observational approach to understanding food and culture, as students witnessed Mexico’s farm-to-table practices, market vendors and plantation farmers were eager to talk through processes such as making coffee or tequila. In turn, these VR 360 interactions led to a different learning opportunity.

“If there’s one message I hope readers take away, it’s that technology has the potential to make global education more accessible, more equitable and ultimately more human,” says Gist.

The prospect of sharing thousands of miles apart in a shared virtual classroom such things as cooking practices, perceptions of nutrition and how international environments shape ways in which food is gathered and prepared has been a gamechanger. Gist says she hopes to establish this educational connection across each continent in years to come, exploring new avenues to apply VR technology.

“One of the most meaningful outcomes also wasn’t something we originally planned,” she says. “As students built relationships, they began checking on one another during political unrest, natural disasters and other world events. Faculty did the same. Those moments reminded me that global learning isn’t simply about understanding another culture — it’s about genuinely caring for the people who live within it.”

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Advancing AI+ Skills

Beginning in the fall 2026 semester, Southern Illinois University (SIU) will unveil its Bachelor of Science degree in Artificial Intelligence Plus (AI+). The public university will be the first in the state to offer the pathway, while representing one of the few universities in the nation to hold the bachelor's degree.

"Artificial intelligence technology is advancing rapidly," said SIU College of Engineering, Computing, Technology and Mathematics Dean Xiaoqing Liu. "Many students are expressing that they want to learn this technology in a systematic way. This program will fill an educational need in Illinois, particularly Southern Illinois."

SIU pursued an all-hands-on-deck approach over the past three years to craft this program, encompassing the School of Computing and other partnering programs on campus. It will add to SIU's current computing curriculum with an added emphasis on AI and machine learning. The AI+ degree program aims to teach students how to apply AI technologies within a selected 12-hour credit minor such as advertising, business analytics, computer science, construction management, geographic information systems, information technologies, marketing, mathematics or sustainability.

"This is unique because not only will students take AI classes, but they also need to think about how to apply this technology to the public domain," noted Liu.

The degree will be available to all SIU students, regardless of whether they're enrolled in the SIU College of Engineering, Computing, Technology and Mathematics. In years to come, SIU plans to expand the program to include more minors for application, create

an online version and introduce an AI+ minor, certification and graduate degree.

One anticipated impact would be increasing a student's opportunity to land an internship or full-time employment within leading industries such as IT & communications, aerospace & defense and construction.



University of Illinois Clinical Food Science Professor Toni Gist

Clear Career Pathways

Phi Theta Kappa recently released its 2026 Transfer Honor Roll, which highlights institutions that demonstrate exceptional success in creating pathways for community college students seeking a bachelor's degree. The list was a combination of 275 four-year colleges and universities around the nation, 25 of which are located in Illinois.

Illinois State University (ISU) was among those on the Honor Roll. The recognition builds upon a partnership the university formed with Heartland Community College earlier this year, as the duo look to ease the transition special education and engineering students encounter as they prepare to shift into Illinois State.

In the upcoming fall 2026 semester, the institutions

will launch new articulation agreements that aim to simplify a student's transfer process, reduce coursework redundancy and create a structured transfer route. The first program introduced under these agreements is the Paraprofessional Unlocking License in Special Education (PULSE) program. Heartland students with a minimum of two years of classroom experience qualify for the program, which is designed to take them through earning a bachelor's degree, a Professional Educator's License with a Learning Behavioral Specialist 1 endorsement. ISU offers the PULSE program online, enabling students to earn paraprofessional experience while earning a degree.

Two more agreements center on moving Heartland students directly into the final two years of the university's Engineering and Mechanical Engineering bachelor's degree programs. Students moving through these programs build skills that can apply to automotive, aerospace, energy systems and advanced manufacturing industries. One added feature of the initiative includes a dual-enrollment opportunity for Mechanical Engineering students in their final semester at Heartland, offering designated Illinois State courses prior to transferring.

"Strong partnerships between community colleges and universities are essential to meeting workforce needs and expanding opportunity for students," said ISU Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost Dr. Ani Yazedjian. "These agreements create clear, affordable pathways for learners to advance their education while staying connected to our region. Together with Heartland, we are preparing the educators who support every learner and the engineers who will design what comes next." 🌟

Innovation Aligns Through Illinois-based Partnerships

by ALEXIS ELMORE

Qolab received \$75,000 in the Illinois Innovation Voucher Program's third round, selecting Northwestern University to support its quantum R&D activities.

Photo courtesy of Qolab, Inc.

Where can an idea take an Illinois entrepreneur? Before catapulting into the global marketplace, that concept often begins with locating an ideal launchpad.

Whether a startup's needs are

centered around cultivating a strategic business plan, pursuing product development, locating venture capital or connecting to research expertise, Illinois has a roster of incubators, accelerators and hubs for innovation that cater to an entrepreneur's specific goals.



Over nearly a decade, mHUB has seen the hundreds of startups it's fostered raise more than \$2.3 billion in capital, launch 1,852 products and create 7,251 jobs.

Photos courtesy of mHUB



Options are far from limited, as Illinois is home to a variety of innovation centers aligned with diverse industries. The Chicago metro area alone supports almost 100 incubators and innovation facilities, including Hyde Park Labs, mHub, the University of Chicago Polsky Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, the Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science Helix 51 Incubator and the Illinois Quantum and Microelectronics Park (IQMP).

Last year, about 189,000 new business applications were welcomed by Illinois, according to data from Illinois EDC's newly formed Economic Research Center. It's a signal defining the level of entrepreneurial activity impacting Illinois.

Forging a Quantum Partnership

Silicon Catalyst, based out of California, is widely recognized as the only accelerator in the world dedicated exclusively to the semiconductor industry. Last year, it announced plans to launch a new quantum-focused program, attracting new In-Kind Partnerships from six vendors and service providers, notably bringing in the IQMP.

Selected participants in the 24-week program will benefit from IQMP infrastructure such as lab space, equipment and



quantum computing expertise in the pursuit of building, validating and commercializing quantum systems. This includes access to IQMP's National Quantum Facility, which holds a dedicated cryogenic plant and will also welcome the Illinois-DARPA Quantum Proving Ground.

"Quantum is shaping up to be one of the largest technology shifts of the next decade outside AI. McKinsey forecasts nearly \$100 billion in quantum revenue by 2035, with over \$2 trillion in broader economic value created. Although there is a lot of overlap of tools and supply chain needs for spin-qubit quantum technologies, there are other specific quantum requirements and other modalities that we want to support," said Silicon Catalyst Managing Partner of Strategic Initiatives James Loughheed. "That scale and these special requirements are why we launched this new quantum vertical."

Silicon Catalyst's program will also leverage the software and hardware capabilities of other partnering quantum companies: Nanoacademic, Quantum Brilliance, SDT, sureCore and Zero Point Cryo.

Months after this initiative was unveiled, it was announced that IBM would be partnering with IQMP to establish the FutureNow Chicago center. The facility is

designed to serve as an innovation and delivery hub, creating an accessible pathway to high-growth tech careers. IBM has said it also plans to generate 750 new roles surrounding AI, cybersecurity, data science, quantum computing and other advanced technology fields in the region.

FutureNow Chicago will be housed in IQMP's Quantum Works building, allowing IBM clients and industry partners room to find solutions to complex challenges while driving real-world impacts. Its positioning in the park further builds upon the collaborative spirit of the Quantum Works facility, which additionally supports programs from the National Quantum Algorithm Center and the Discovery Partners Institute of the Grainger College of Engineering at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

IBM plans to hire one-third of the over 700 roles from the City Colleges of Chicago's new apprenticeship program, Project Moonshot, which the company is helping build. The program seeks to support 500 apprentices within advanced technology fields over the next five years.

Illinois Backs New Innovation

In February 2026, Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity announced \$2.4 million would be distributed across 34 companies through the third round of the Illinois Innovation Voucher Program. By industry, selected awardees in this round span education, healthcare, space tech, clean tech, energy, quantum, manufacturing, fintech, semiconductors and transportation & logistics.

Awards up to \$75,000 in funding support research and development projects in partnership with a qualified Illinois higher education

institution. By connecting with Illinois universities and research institutions, these companies can pursue technology validation, streamline product development and strengthen commercialization pathways with up to 75% of research engagement costs covered.

Qolab, Inc., a superconducting quantum hardware manufacturer, was among the eight recipients that gained the max funding amount this round. After becoming the first quantum computing startup to emerge from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2022, the company joined the Chicago Quantum Exchange as a corporate partner in 2025. That move will aid Qolab's goal of building a utility-scale quantum computer that produces higher-quality superconducting qubits alongside industry and academic partners.

The company's application to the Illinois Voucher Program sought partnership with Northwestern University, which served as the anchor research institution for 11 of the new awardees. Qolab CEO

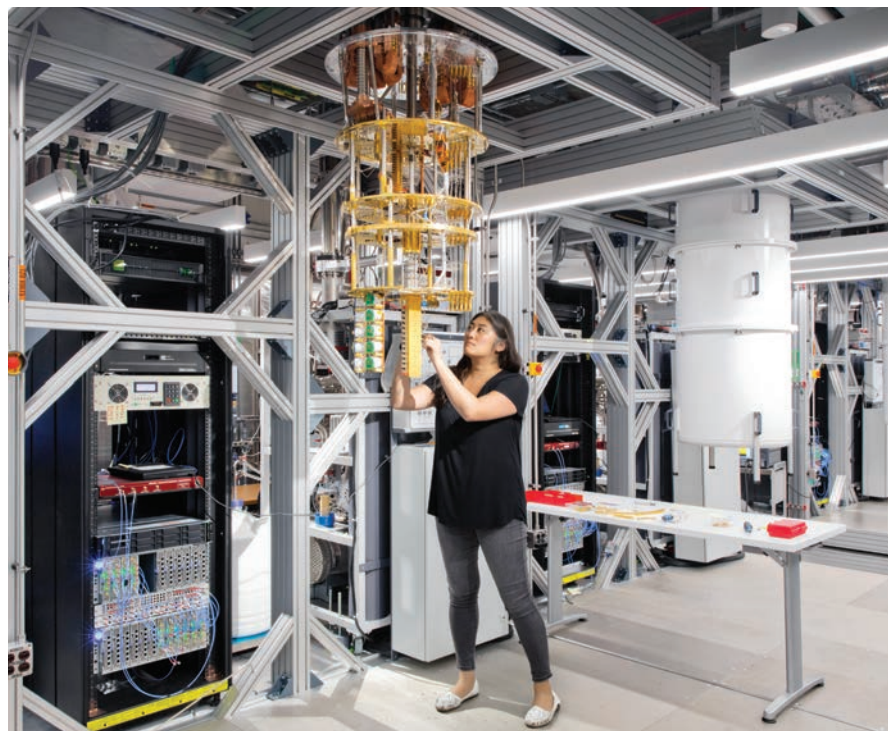
and Co-founder Alan Ho says that Northwestern's Assistant Professor of Computer Science Kate Smith and Professor of Computer Science and Computer Engineering Nikos Hardavellas are central to the project.

"Northwestern has many quantum systems researchers on the software and algorithms side. Namely, we are collaborating with a team led by Kate Smith and Nikos Hardavellas," says Ho. "The NU team will use the Qolab's processors to design novel pulse-level techniques that improve the performance of quantum computers."

He notes that State support has helped Qolab catalyze fruitful research partnerships with scientists in the Chicago area, in addition to accelerating the company's collaboration with Northwestern. 🌱

In May 2026, IBM announced plans to establish a FutureNow Chicago innovation and delivery hub at IQMP to pave clear pathways to high-growth tech careers.

Photo courtesy of IBM





The annual Run for the Bagel race draws 500 runners to downtown Mattoon as part of Bagelfest.

Photos courtesy of City of Mattoon

RACING TO WIN IN CENTRAL ILLINOIS

Small town packs a big punch in the corporate real estate game.

by **RON STARNER**

An estimated 500 runners competed in the annual Run for the Bagel road race in Mattoon, Illinois, on July 18, part of the 40th annual Bagelfest celebration in this blue-collar town of 17,000 people in East Central Illinois.

Beyond the ribbons and medals bestowed to top finishers, though, the real winners were the mom-and-pop shops and other merchants in this Coles County community whose first settlements took

place 200 years ago.

Today, Mattoon is thriving due to the commercial and industrial success of employers who continue to invest here because of the character, work ethic, productivity and ingenuity of its people.

A report in the March 2026 issue of Site Selection magazine confirmed that the micropolitan area of Charleston-Mattoon ranked No. 25 out of 542 micros in the U.S. with four corporate real estate projects in 2025 — the second straight year this

micro area placed in the top 100. It also ties Charleston-Mattoon for the top spot in Illinois.

“This performance is attributable to the work of our partnerships,” says Mattoon City Manager Kyle Gill. “People here work together to accomplish initiatives. It goes back to our heritage of volunteerism. People give their time to make Mattoon a better place. We are down to earth. We are willing to do the work. We figure out ways to say yes.”

Case in point: the 150-acre Emerald Acres Sports Connection — a \$70 million multi-use athletics complex that was developed by Rural King and opened in December 2024. With 20-plus mixed-use fields and courts, the venue hosts a dozen major competitions each year, generating 580,000 visitors and \$238 million in economic impact.

“Rural King saw what a youth sports complex did for other cities,” says Gill. “The nearest youth sports complex to Mattoon was 60 miles north. We were always known as a baseball and softball town; now we are back in the game.”

Alex Melvin, owner and chairman of Rural King Farm & Home Store and RK Real Estate and Development, says the impetus for the creation of Emerald Acres “was around future growth and the heart of our people. We’re trying to deliver

a great place to live. The only way to attract shopping and restaurants was to do something like Emerald Acres. We now bring out-of-state people to Mattoon, where they stay and spend their money.”

Chick-fil-A, Texas Roadhouse, Ross and Sierra soon followed. RK Real Estate recruited these major national brands to sign leases at Emerald Acres.

“We’re going on our third hotel,” says Melvin, whose \$3 billion sales empire boasts 165 stores nationwide and just announced a major distribution center in Virginia. “Sarah Bush Lincoln Hospital is growing like crazy. People now see Mattoon as a better place to locate a business. I believe people will see all the great work we are doing in Coles County. This has a long tail to it.”

Site readiness grants from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) will enable even more growth, say Gill and Dr. Darci Cather, assistant to the city manager, grants and strategic initiatives. “The City, in partnership with Coles Together, secured a \$2.3 million grant to upgrade the substation at our industrial park,” says Gill. Our Community Development and Planning Director Alex Benishek and Dr. Ronda Sauget, executive director of Coles Together, partnered with Ameren and Agracel to make this grant happen. Before, companies

were bypassing Mattoon and choosing other sites because of electrical capacity constraints. The upgrades will be done by 2026, and we can then locate new businesses and expansions in the park.”

Cather says the city recently received a second DCEO site readiness planning grant for the park and the 1000 North Corridor. “That will enable us to complete water and sewer studies,” she says. “It will enable us to build out capacity.



People in Mattoon work together to accomplish initiatives. People give their time to make Mattoon a better place. We are willing to do the work. We figure out ways to say yes.”

— Mattoon City Manager Kyle Gill

Employers will be ready to go.”

Located roughly in the middle of St. Louis, Indianapolis and Chicago, Mattoon rests in the sweet spot of the Midwest industrial corridor. With a median age of 40.8 and median household income of \$51,597, Mattoon supplies a ready and qualified workforce.

“We have a robust workforce,” says Gill. “People will drive 45 to 50 miles to work here. People who live in the suburbs of Chicago will commute to a job in Mattoon.”

Cather says, “Lake Land College

is a tremendous workforce-development partner, providing customized training and upskilling that help local employers remain competitive,” Cather says. “The strength and dedication of Mattoon’s workforce consistently earn praise from our employers. When another state recently attempted to recruit a Mattoon company, the company chose to remain here largely because of its skilled, reliable workforce, approximately 80% of whom live

locally. Now, instead of relocating, the company is considering bringing additional operations and employees to Mattoon. That speaks volumes about the workforce and business environment we have built here.”

Melvin says other employers should contemplate the same. “We are pro-growth in Mattoon,” he says. “If a business wants to do something, we are here to help them. We are a place for entrepreneurs. We feel like we can compete with anyone in the world. Rural King is a \$3 billion retailer, and we compete against the best in the world. It goes back to the people of rural America. We have a hard work ethic and a can-do attitude. Rural American culture is still thriving. One day, Rural King will serve people in 1,000 communities. That is our vision — and it all starts right here in Mattoon.”



This Investment Profile was prepared under the auspices of the City of Mattoon. For more information, go to <https://mattoon.illinois.gov/> or email Economic & Community Development Director Alexander Benishek at benisheka@mattoonillinois.org.

Growing Season Brings Mighty Yields in Illinois

Come hungry for agtech and food manufacturing investment in the Prairie State.



Illinois is the top producer of soybeans in the United States.

Photo Credit: Getty Images/Sanya Kushak

Soybeans, pumpkins and horseradish all have one thing in common and it's where they take root — in Illinois. The state is the No. 1 producer of this tasty spread of crops. It's also No. 2 for corn, No. 4 for hogs and No. 10 in wheat. Over 71,000 farms populate the perfectly nicknamed Prairie State, which has an agricultural sector valued at about \$26 billion and exports between \$11 billion and \$14 billion in agricultural products yearly.

The local food supply chain in the state is also receiving investment — the Illinois Department of Agriculture awarded nearly \$4 million to support Illinois farms, agrifood businesses and nonprofits for FY2026 under the Local Food Infrastructure (LFI) grant program, which was developed to strengthen local Illinois producers and food businesses.

"The Local Food Infrastructure Grant reflects our commitment to supporting Illinois agriculture," said Illinois Department of Agriculture Director Jerry Costello II when

by **KELLY BARRAZA**

the funding was announced in late July 2026. "These awards will help farmers, food businesses and community partners expand their capacity and reach new markets. When we invest in local food infrastructure, we are creating economic opportunity for businesses while ensuring Illinois residents have greater access to fresh, locally grown foods."

The recipient of the largest sum from the LFI program this year was NeighborSpace, a nonprofit urban land trust in Chicago that preserves and sustains gardens for local communities. The organization received \$205,000 from the LFI grant. Other FY2026 LFI recipients include the Chicago Chesed Fund, which will use its \$127,500 in LFI funding to address local food insecurity; Alto Vineyards in Union County; Arrow Farm Meats in Stephenson County; the Eastern Illinois Foodbank and Dandee Flowers in Mercer County.



Fertile Ground for Business

Among the factors contributing to Illinois' abundant success in agriculture and food: Over 70% of the state's total land area is farmland with almost 89% of that considered prime farmland due to its extremely nutrient-rich soil. And a world-class multimodal logistics infrastructure enables the shipping of large quantities of food product.

The Ag Coast of America, for example, spans 15 miles on the Mississippi River, and has 16 high-capacity barge transfer sites. The logistical corridor supports the movement of crops from St. Louis Metro Ports to the southwestern part of Illinois. Suppliers and other agribusiness and food industry stakeholders are also supported by the local transport options: four U.S. interstate highways, all major Class I freight railroads, five airports and a large mesh of river port systems all connecting to the Ag Coast of America corridor. Half of U.S. crops and livestock come from within a 500-mile

radius of the St. Louis region, where the corridor converges, according to St. Louis Regional Freightway.

One major development for Illinois' bioeconomy recently came in the form of a \$2 billion fertilizer plant in the central part of the state last year. Cronus Chemicals LLC will create 130 new jobs in Tuscola, a significant investment for the state's agricultural sector that will also strengthen the domestic supply chain of ammonia for fertilizer markets and farmers throughout the Midwest.

Agtech R&D

Central Illinois has another strength when it comes to agtech — the Illinois Fermentation and Agriculture Biomanufacturing Tech Hub (iFAB), led by the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, partners with the University's Integrated Bioprocessing Research Laboratory (IBRL) and operates in the Champaign-Urbana and Decatur regions of the state.

IBRL received financial backing from iFAB for its upcoming IBRL 2.0 expansion, which includes a new 35,000-sq.-ft. facility that will nearly double the lab's size and enhance its ability to conduct research and industry training in biomanufacturing. The lab will see an increase of 20 to 50 full-time employees, will grow its student training base from 35 to 100 annually and also up its industry trainees from 80 to 180 per year.

iFAB itself is also seeing growth — the hub announced in November 2025 it would double its management team size to meet the growing needs of industry. Seated at the heart of Illinois' corn and soybean country, iFAB got its start in October 2023 after it was chosen as a Regional Innovation and Technology Hub by the U.S. Economic Development Administration. iFAB, which received a \$51 million grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce in early 2024 and \$30 million from Illinois overall, has a consortium of 35 members across the precision fermentation and agricultural biomanufacturing industries. iFAB focuses on the "lab-to-line" scaling of local crops and feedstock into sustainable products with multiple commercial applications (i.e., industrial chemicals, alternative proteins,

(continued on p. 74)

Growing Autonomously in Illinois

In 2020, The Illinois Autonomous Farm (IAF) was launched at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, run by the Center for Digital Agriculture and the Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering as a research and innovation testbed for emerging farming technologies. It's located in Central Illinois, one of the world's highest producing agricultural regions.

Current IAF work includes autonomous field vehicles, robotics, AI-based perception systems, remote sensing, edge computing, wireless connectivity, digital twins and generative AI for agricultural decision support. Advancements in computer vision, sensor fusion and machine learning allow machines to navigate fields, identify crops and weeds, monitor crop health and perform other agricultural operations with increasing levels of autonomy.

"The implementation of digital agriculture technologies depends on reliable wireless connectivity across production systems," says Center for Digital Agriculture Executive Director John Reid. "Faculty are advancing this capability by improving wireless communication infrastructure while developing sensors that operate seamlessly within these networks. The farm currently hosts a multi-modal connectivity testbed that integrates CBRS private wireless, LoRa and Starlink satellite networks, providing a platform to evaluate connectivity solutions under real-world agricultural conditions."

The IAF investigates complete autonomous production systems from sensing and planning through field execution and decision-making. AI-enabled perception, autonomy and generative AI are noted to have particularly strong commercial potential.

One startup company commercialized an under-canopy phenotyping robot developed at UIUC and validated at the IAF testbed, and

a student capstone project involving an over-canopy phenotyping robot demonstrated what autonomous systems can do on stand-alone farm production systems.

"Commercially available autonomous machines also inhabit the IAF testbed," says Reid, noting that researchers are currently testing a fully autonomous, solar-powered spot-spray robot that utilizes RTK GNSS stacked with computer vision and AI to navigate the field and control weeds. The robot is commercially available to Illinois farmers and can currently be used for crop imaging and live demos.

Software company EarthSense has worked with the IAF as testing ground for its field phenotyping platform and precision sustainable farming solutions. The IAF's proximity to the University of Illinois Research Parks keeps EarthSense's engineering and field teams tightly connected. The IAF enables EarthSense and other companies like it to design plots exactly as needed to meet testing requirements, and a field-adjacent office with 24/7 access means robots can stay connected, charge and be accessible to research and development teams at any time.

Drone technologies are also being leveraged to validate pest and disease detection models at the IAF as well as attain radar-based soil moisture estimates. Drones are also used to survey horseradish crop (Illinois is the No. 1 producer in the United States) and photograph weeds and crop rows of the root vegetable to see how evenly the plants have grown. This allows horseradish growers to catch unevenly emerging crop before it costs them product and financial losses. This kind of technology exists already for other crops like corn, soybeans and cotton.

"One observation has been that the



The Illinois Autonomous Farm was launched as a testbed for emerging farming technology. Photo courtesy of Center For Digital Agriculture/University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

greatest value of digital agriculture often comes not from automating a single task, but from the data that technologies generate," says Reid. "Another important finding is that many of the foundational digital technologies for large-scale production agriculture have matured significantly. Capabilities such as automated guidance, machine connectivity, precision sensing and variable-rate applications have already demonstrated substantial improvements in productivity and operational efficiency, and many commercial equipment manufacturers now offer proven solutions that farmers use every day. The next frontier is integrating these technologies into more intelligent, autonomous production systems."

IAF stakeholders expect agriculture to become increasingly intelligent, connected and autonomous, with autonomous equipment performing repetitive field operations while farmers supervise fleets of machines rather than operating individual tractors. The future means AI systems integrating data from machinery, drones, satellites and field sensors in a continuous stream, finding ways to optimize yield and reduce the use of labor, fuel, fertilizer, crop protectant and water.

There is also potential for smart technologies to protect bystanders and machine operators from farming hazards and improve traceability throughout the food supply chain, helping processors and consumers better understand how their food was made and handled.

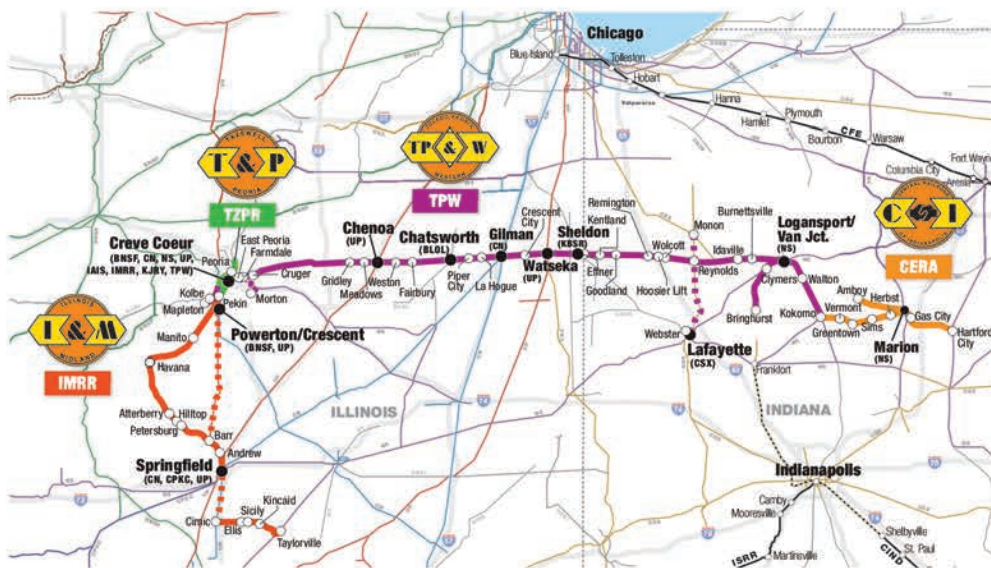
— Kelly Barraza



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The iFAB Tech Hub, led by the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, partners with the University's Integrated Bioprocessing Research Laboratory (IBRL) and operates in the Champaign-Urbana and Decatur regions of the state.

Image courtesy of iFAB Tech Hub/IBRL

(continued from p. 71)
textiles, functional materials).

Peoria in Central Illinois is home to the USDA National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research (NCAUR), which focuses on researching new industrial and food uses of agricultural commodities. Sometimes, in the pursuit of science, the scope of discovery goes beyond everyday findings. Dr. Korey Brownstein, a NCAUR chemist and researcher, spent three years with his team of investigators isolating and identifying molecules from a substance found in industrial hemp root. Brownstein's team partnered with researchers at the Pediatric Oncology Laboratory at the University of Illinois College of Medicine Peoria, who together showed that the isolated hemp root molecules were moderately effective in destroying pediatric cancer cells in a lab.

"We believe this new discovery offers industrial hemp growers a potential new revenue stream from a part of the plant that was previously overlooked," said Brownstein in January 2026. "Unlike crops such as corn or soybeans, which have multiple uses, hemp has been limited in scope. But if we treat

hemp as a multi-use crop, we can expand its applications and market — paper, grain, fiber, and now, potentially, pharmaceutical compounds from the roots. The discovery of these compounds adds value to this commodity."

Sweetening the Deals

Those with a sweet tooth for corporate expansions would be wise to look at Chicago, which had two developments by major food firms announced in early 2026. Mars Snacking will expand to its global headquarters in the city, which will bring 600 new jobs and add the company's North America Region, Accelerator Division and Global Functions to the office space.

The North America regional office hub will locate in Chicago's Fulton Market district, and the Accelerator division's global office hub will be in downtown Chicago, replacing the former Kellanova global and North America headquarters. Mars Inc. acquired Kellanova, the food and snacking manufacturing multinational corporation formerly part of the Michigan-based Kellogg Company, in a \$35.9 billion deal. Kellanova

brands now under the Mars Inc. banner include Pringles, Cheez-Its, Pop-Tarts, Eggo and Rice Krispies Treats. The acquisition of Kellanova was announced in August 2024 and completed in December 2025.

“The Chicagoland area offers the best of all worlds for Mars Snacking — a vibrant urban environment, strong communities and access to world-class talent,” said Andrew Clarke, global president, Mars Snacking, when the new hubs were announced. “We are proud to deepen our roots here, advance the Mars Snacking business and continue our long-standing commitment to community engagement and responsible business.”

The Kellogg Co. also saw a split in 2023 with the branch of WK Kellogg Co., which held the company’s iconic cereal brands. In September 2025, chocolate and confectionery company Ferrero SpA acquired WK Kellogg for a little over \$3 billion. In April 2026, Ferrero celebrated a new production line at its \$75 million Nutella plant in Franklin

Park near Chicago.

The brand’s first new flavor, Nutella Peanut, will be made at the site. The product is made with hazelnuts from Oregon and peanuts from Georgia and other Southeastern states, supporting domestic agriculture. “We’re thrilled to see Nutella Peanut roll off the line right here in the U.S.,” said Ferrero North America President and Chief Business Officer Michael Lindsey at the new production line unveiling.

In 1996, Germany-based food company Silesia established the first U.S. sales office in Elk Grove, Illinois. A Silesia production facility in Hoffman Estates was built in 2001, which makes liquid sweet flavors for confectionery, bakery, beverage and dairy products. Silesia Flavors announced last year that it would spend \$41 million to open its second U.S. facility in Huntley, Illinois, where it will produce both sweet and savory flavors in both liquid and powder forms. The company broke ground at the new 120,000-sq.-ft. site in June 2025. 🏗️



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Prysmian will spend \$101.7 million expanding its facility in Du Quoin, Illinois. Photo courtesy of Prysmian

Many Factors Drive Advanced Factory Growth Statewide

by CAROL BRZOWSKI

Site Selection Magazine recently named Illinois No. 2 for corporate expansion and relocations for the fourth consecutive year, with Chicago named the No. 1 metropolitan area for the 13th consecutive year.

There are many reasons for this dominance, but corporate site selectors typically focus on these location factors, per the Illinois Economic Development Corporation:

- **Unmatched talent pool:** Illinois boasts a highly-skilled labor pool, with 39% of Illinoisans holding a bachelor's degree or higher. The state boasts a total manufacturing workforce of just over 578,000, ranking third in the Midwest and fifth nationally.
- **Competitive infrastructure:** Illinois' central location and world-class infrastructure

For example, Hyundai Translead will invest \$450 million to establish two new trailer manufacturing facilities in Illinois, creating nearly 2,500 new full-time jobs.

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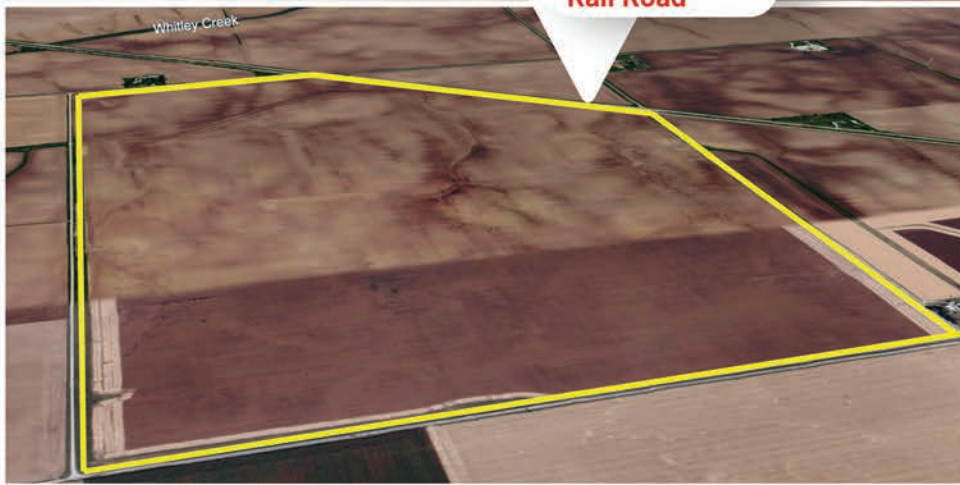
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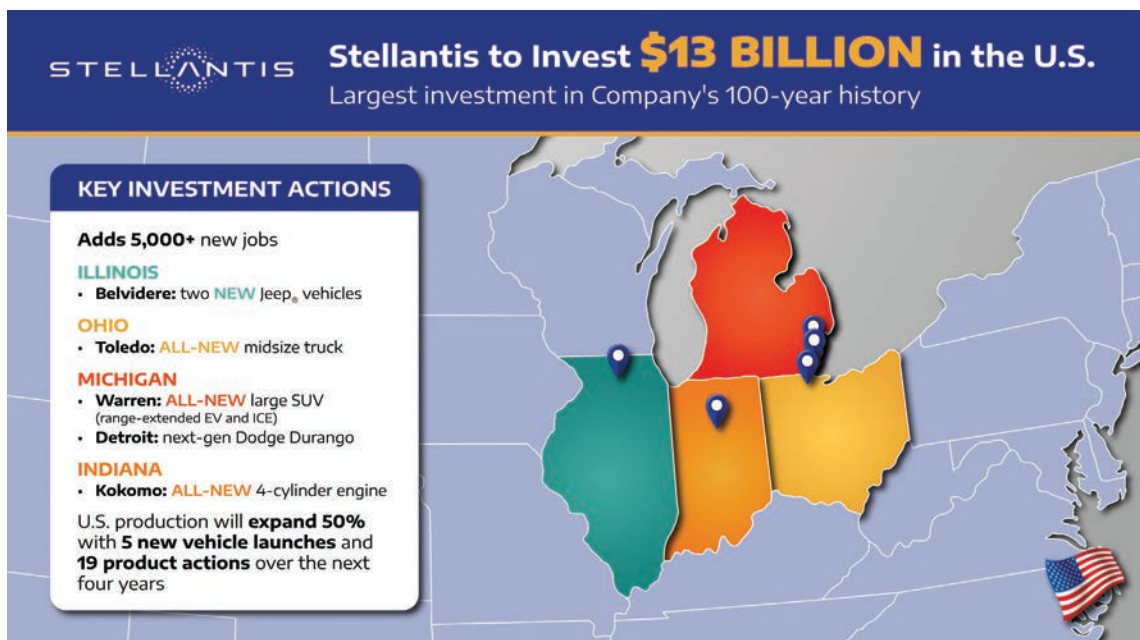
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The facilities will be on the former sites of Caterpillar's heavy equipment operations and the previous Lion Electric operation site in Will County.

"Our expansion to Illinois represents years of planning and a shared vision for long-term growth," says Sean Kenney, Hyundai Translead chief executive officer, of the investment guided by Illinois' Economic Growth Plan.

Stellantis idled its Belvidere Assembly Plant in February 2023 and agreed to reopen the plant following negotiations with the United Auto Workers, notes Stellantis spokesperson Jodi Tinson.

The reopening includes an \$800 million investment to expand Jeep Cherokee U.S. market production, which will be the first U.S. vehicle assembled on the STLA One platform. An initial launch is expected in 2029 and will create around 3,300 new jobs. Antonio Filosa, Stellantis CEO and North America COO, noted that "launching the next-generation Cherokee on STLA One allows us to deliver a more competitive product while leveraging the strength of our U.S. manufacturing operations."

DMG MORI announced a \$40.5 million expansion establishing a new advanced manufacturing and R&D facility in Chicago, creating 74 new jobs and launching a workforce development program with City Colleges of Chicago.

The facility will house a new Government Solutions Center that will support projects. The investment will also support the

production of high-speed, high-accuracy optomechanical scanners and metal additive-manufactured components. James Nudo, DMG MORI Federal Services chairman, notes the facility will expand the company's North American R&D capacity, advance additive manufacturing and automation technologies, and power production of dual-use and defense applications.

Manner Polymers is establishing a new 108,000-sq.-ft., 100% solar-powered facility in Mount Vernon to manufacture electric vehicle (EV) PVC compounds and solar panel components, creating more than 60 jobs.

The facility serves as a first-of-its kind solar-powered PVC compounding plant using clean energy generated onsite.

Bolstered by a Reimagining Energy and Vehicles in Illinois incentive package, Manner Polymers invested \$54 million to support the facility's construction.

That incentive — combined with the state's workforce and commitment to expanding the clean energy economy — led the company to choose Illinois, which also provided \$2.5 million for a new rail spur for direct access to southern Illinois' rail network to move goods nationwide.

Prysmian established a \$101.7 million expansion project, adding 100,000 sq. ft. and 80 new jobs to its existing Du Quoin plant for increased cable production in Illinois to meet growing demand for high-performance cables for renewable energy projects and EV infrastructure.

The expansion implements an energy management system within the facility. The project includes a new solar farm, generating approximately 50% of the power needed to produce product.

Andrea Pirondini, Prysmian North America CEO, notes, “These new lines position us to meet the urgent needs of utilities, grid-hardening initiatives and the rapidly growing AI and data center economy.”

Prysmian’s Du Quoin facility produces custom CL Advantage medium voltage collection cables used to conserve energy by reducing line loss during transmission. The cables are used for wind and solar energy applications and are a key component of underground substation and distribution systems.

Prysmian’s Illinois plant also manufactures key components for various solar energy systems and specialized cables delivering electricity to EV charging stations and energy- and grid-efficient modernized homes.

Rockford Brake Manufacturing invested \$6.6 million to reopen a historic Rockford factory, bringing in 150 jobs. Four former Gunit Corporation employees created a new business to save Rockford’s longest-standing factory since parent company Accuride closed Gunit’s doors in February 2025 following Chapter 11 bankruptcy.

The 619,000-sq.-ft. factory on 41 acres

includes a grey iron foundry and machine shop specializing in manufacturing brake drums for commercial vehicles.

The company supports the state’s clean energy goals, with 85% of its products made from recycled materials and 100% of finished products being recyclable. Foundry byproducts are sustainably recycled by local municipalities as road de-icers, fill dirt and concrete.

The tax credit from Illinois through its Economic Development for a Growing Economy (EDGE) for Startups is critical to the company’s launch and future success, says CEO Paul Wright.

Tangent Technologies — recently acquired by Platinum Equity — is expanding and consolidating U.S. manufacturing operations in Illinois, relocating its Canadian and Aurora, Illinois, operations to Montgomery, Illinois. With EDGE assistance, Tangent Technologies has committed to making a \$50 million investment, creating 110 new full-time jobs and retaining 485 jobs. Tangent Technologies develops new ways to transform recycled material into durable, weather-resistant, environmentally conscious products. The 1.5 million-sq.-ft. facility will advance waterfront decking and fencing products with high potential for national retail distribution and install 50 new extrusion lines at its new central manufacturing hub. ♦



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Clean energy projects strengthen state's resiliency and efficiency.

by KELLY BARRAZA

Since the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) was signed into law in September 2021, Illinois has supported the development of more than 6 gigawatts (GW) of renewable energy, and an extra 6 GW are currently underway. The state has also seen a diverse supply of clean tech and manufacturing projects occupying its landscape. The Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program, also known as the "CEJA Workforce Hubs," includes 14 locations across the state that offer training, certification preparation and other professional development opportunities for entry-level jobs in solar, wind, energy efficiency and EV maintenance.

Governor JB Pritzker's signing of the Clean and Reliable Grid Affordability Act (CRGA) in January 2026 also aims to lower electricity costs for Illinois residents and adds more cost-efficient and clean sources of energy to the state's portfolio. Under the CRGA, the

Illinois Solar Bill of Rights was also enacted, preventing the ban of rooftop solar installation by local governments and preserving residential and small commercial customers' rights to connect renewable systems to their structures.

Case Studies in New Tech

About 50 miles south of Chicago is Manteno, Illinois, where lithium-ion battery manufacturer Gotion's \$2 billion facility is helping power the state's clean energy future by creating battery technologies supporting electrification and energy storage, says Andrew Wheeler, director of public affairs at Gotion Illinois.

"Beyond that, Gotion is helping shape a sustainable future by providing mobile and stationary energy storage solutions," he adds. "But our contribution goes beyond what we make. We're also investing in workforce training, STEM education and partnerships with schools and universities to

Under the Clean and Reliable Grid Affordability Act passed in January 2026, the Illinois Solar Bill of Rights was enacted, preventing the ban of rooftop solar installation and preserving residential and small commercial customers' rights to connect renewable systems to their structures.

Photo Credit: Getty Images/Lisa-Blue

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Rivian is investing into a 1.1 million-sq.-ft. plant expansion in Normal, Illinois, designed to support R2 production and scale capacity to 155,000 vehicles per year.

Photo courtesy of Rivian

help build the next generation of clean energy professionals. As one of the state's largest clean energy manufacturing investments in recent years, we're proud to play a role in strengthening Illinois' leadership in this space."

Gotion chose Manteno for many reasons: Its central Midwestern location offers access to major transportation routes, customers and suppliers in North America. A large industrial site in the community (housing the company's 1.5-million-sq.-ft. manufacturing facility) supports current operations and future expansion. And the company has a strong partnership with local leadership, including Illinois Economic Development Corp. (Illinois EDC).

"Illinois EDC's commitment to manufacturing, workforce development and clean energy innovation aligned closely with Gotion's long-term vision of innovation," says Wheeler. "We also were able to convert an empty warehouse into a modern manufacturing plant which boosted the local economy and tax base."

Gotion Illinois specializes in

advanced lithium iron phosphate (LFP) battery technology used in energy storage and electric mobility applications, supporting residential energy storage systems to large-scale commercial and utility projects to EVs. Grid resilience, renewable energy integration, commercial transportation and other emerging electrification technologies are also on the docket for the company. Gotion Illinois also plans on transforming its new site into a major innovation hub and chose the facility with growth in mind. "As demand continues to rise for energy storage solutions and electric vehicle technology, having a strong manufacturing presence in Illinois allows us to produce closer to our customers while building a more localized and resilient supply chain," explains Wheeler.

Another company pushing for a no-emission future is Motive Power Resources, who manufactures battery-electric locomotives designed by Innovative Rail Technologies (IRT) in Minooka, Illinois. The Governor announced Motor Power Resources' Reimagining Energy and Vehicles

Act incentives to support their work last fall as they were readying a locomotive they built as part of a resiliency project for Fort Hood, a U.S. military base in Texas, in collaboration with Dominion Energy, with the capability of pulling Abrams tanks and providing 2.4 megawatts of backup emergency power. IRT has also been able to localize many parts of their supply chain with other Illinois companies.

In October 2025, vertically integrated battery technology company Pure Lithium relocated its headquarters from Boston to Chicago's West Loop neighborhood. The company's lithium metal vanadium (LVO) battery aims to replace lithium-ion batteries.

Pure Lithium invested \$46 million to produce the product in Illinois, pivoting into the commercialization phase of battery production. The technology developed by Pure Lithium removes the need for graphite, cobalt, nickel and manganese — meaning less strain and more simplicity in the critical minerals supply chain. Applications of Pure Lithium's technology include drones, energy grid storage, consumer electronics and EVs. The company received an \$8.5 million inventive package from Illinois, including from the Reimagining Energy and Vehicles in Illinois (REV Illinois) program.

Energy Projects Rev Up

NANO Nuclear announced in late 2025 that it would establish an R&D hub in the Chicagoland area, investing \$12 million in the site and creating 50 new full-time jobs. The property includes a 23,537-sq.-ft. facility and 7,400-sq.-ft. area for non-nuclear demonstrations. Nuclear engineers, component manufacturers, researchers and other employees will work closely with the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign on NANO Nuclear's nuclear energy system,

dubbed the “KRONOS MMR.” The investment was made possible with the support of the REV Illinois program.

Clean energy storage tech start-up Cache Energy also announced last year that it would expand its manufacturing operations in Champaign with a \$2.5 million investment under the REV program. Cache develops long duration, clean energy storage technology using limestone as its feed material and a thermochemical process involving steam generation to produce electricity.

“I’m proud to stand with my team and the State of Illinois as we launch this great partnership,” said Cache Energy Founder Arpit Dwivedi when the expansion was announced in Central Illinois. “Together, through Cache, we’re creating high-quality jobs and advancing cutting-edge energy projects right here in Illinois. This further strengthens our commitment to a fully domestic energy supply chain, reinforcing both Illinois’ and America’s leadership in energy security and resilience.”

Global manufacturer of engineered solutions and green

energy products Richardson Electronics will expand in Kane County and is spending \$8.5 million over four years, with support from REV Illinois. The capital investment will help retain almost 200 skilled employees, create 54 new full-time jobs and allow for equipment and structural upgrades to support R&D and produce next-generation battery energy storage systems that will strengthen grid resilience, reduce brownouts and electrical costs and support the integration of renewable energy systems into Illinois power infrastructure.

Rivian Grows in Normal

In spring 2025, electric car manufacturer Rivian announced its intention to invest almost \$120 million to build a 1.2-million-sq.-ft. supplier park near its manufacturing plant in Normal, Illinois. Light manufacturing, assembly and warehouses will be located there and will support production scaling of the R2 SUV.

The project is receiving \$16 million in state incentives, including a 20-year tax credit from REV Illinois. Some of Rivian’s partnering suppliers include

Adient and OPmobility. Adient, which is headquartered in Ireland but bases its manufacturing in Plymouth, Michigan, is the largest manufacturer of automotive seating in the world. The company has a facility in Normal, assembling seat components for Rivian.

OPmobility also established its first facility in Illinois. The French automotive supplier leads in sustainable mobility and technology and makes bumpers at its Normal plant for the Rivian R2. OPmobility has 150 industrial sites and 40 R&D centers across the world, developing everything from exterior and lighting systems to energy storage, battery and hydrogen electrification solutions for automotive applications.

“This step reflects OPmobility’s commitment to scaling innovation and delivering value across key markets,” said OPmobility Exterior & Lighting’s President of North America Thibaut Stern when the partnership was announced last year. “The U.S. is a key pillar of our strategy, and we’re excited to deepen our presence in a market that continues to shape the future of mobility with this facility in Illinois.”

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Mississippi Palisades State Park is a 2,500-acre public recreation area along the Great River Road on the Mississippi River just three miles north of Savanna, Illinois, in the state's scenic Northwest region. The river serves as a major throughfare of commerce for Illinois and the entire central U.S.

Photo courtesy of Enjoy Illinois

Ready *to* Roll

With multiple transportation and logistics assets, Illinois is a state on the move.

by PATTY RASMUSSEN

Illinois is the nation's undisputed transportation and logistics hub, thanks in part to bold public and private investments in infrastructure, including a recently proposed 15-year, \$26.5 billion tollway upgrade. The proposed Driving Connections capital program, which would begin in 2027, would deliver improvements across all five tollways, covering the entire 12-county Illinois Tollway system region. But the impact of additional recent investments speaks for itself.

Come Fly With Me

In April, Chicago's O'Hare International Airport (ORD) reclaimed its spot as the busiest airfield in the world according to data compiled by Airports Council International (ACI) World. In 2025, O'Hare recorded 860,015 aircraft operations, a 10.8% increase over 2024, or the equivalent of one takeoff or landing every 37 seconds around the clock every day of the year. O'Hare is currently undergoing a massive \$8.2 billion transformation dubbed ORDNext, which includes construction of two new concourses, a new Global Terminal, and upgrades to systems and technology throughout the airfield.

Meanwhile, Chicago Rockford International Airport (RFD) also set a new record, serving more than 310,000 passengers in 2025, and

processing 3.4 billion pounds of total landed weight, a 9.25% increase over the previous year. In a statement, Zack Oakley, executive director of RFD, credited the strong cargo performance to expanded international partnerships and high market demand for greater operational efficiencies in the Midwest.

“Our cargo business is built on consistency, speed and trust,” said Oakley. “That’s why long-term partners continue to invest here, and why RFD continues to play an outsized role in the national supply chain and our regional economy.”

MidAmerica St. Louis Airport, located in Mascoutah in southwest Illinois, is classified as a primary commercial service airport, the same category as O’Hare. Located just 25 miles from St. Louis, Missouri, MidAmerica served a record-breaking 384,000 passengers in 2025, 25.3% higher than 2024 totals, thanks in part to expanded routes to beach destinations throughout Florida and the addition of a twice-weekly flight to Gulf Shores, Alabama. MidAmerica expects even more operational improvements and efficiencies after completion of a new 25,277-sq.-ft. Federal Inspection Station building in spring 2027.

Regional airports play a crucial role in Illinois’ transportation and air cargo operations. Stretching from Waukegan National Airport (UGN) in the northeast to Veterans Airport of Southern Illinois (MWA) in Marion, serving communities in the state’s south-central region, these multi-county, sometimes multi-state airports provide affordable, convenient options for travelers and businesses in the areas they serve.

Transformational Rail Investment

Illinois is the largest and most important freight rail hub in the U.S., with 25% of all freight and 50% of all intermodal trains passing through Chicago. It’s the only state in the U.S. where all six Class I railroads meet in two locations — Chicago and East St. Louis.

In June 2025, Canadian National (CN) Railway announced a \$170 million capital investment to build the Chicago Logistics Hub, an intermodal terminal and logistics park, on land adjacent to the communities of Minooka and Channahon in Grundy County, Illinois. The two-part project includes the development of a truck-train intermodal facility serviced by the CN rail line. Construction of the first phase began in early



2026 and is estimated to be operational in 2027.

The second phase, a traditional logistics/business park near the intermodal facility, is more complex. The project requires review and approvals by the Village of Channahon Planning and Zoning, and approval by the Village Board of Trustees. No timeline has been issued for completion.

The project’s economic impact is substantial. The intermodal operations are expected to create 365 permanent jobs, while the logistics side of the operation is expected to create 6,200 jobs. When fully built out and operational, the Chicago Logistics Hub will generate an estimated \$20.9 million in new annual tax revenue for local communities.

Streaming Service

The Mississippi River is a treasured asset for national and global commerce. The river ports and barge network transport millions of tons of produce and manufactured goods annually, offering many Illinois exporters, particularly growers, a cost advantage over rail. Barge transport keeps freight costs low while connecting Midwest producers directly with exporters in the Gulf.

In recent years, climate-related issues such as rising temperatures, changing precipitation patterns and extreme weather events have caused challenges for river shippers. Both low water and severe flooding restrict barge traffic, slowing shipments during harvest season, while high water can shut down locks and disrupt navigation. The result is volatility for industries and individuals looking for predictability.

However, the state made significant infrastructure investments funded by the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability

Chicago’s O’Hare International Airport, the world’s busiest in aircraft takeoffs and landings, is in the middle of a massive \$8.2 billion transformation that will improve passenger experience and upgrade airport systems and technology.

Photo courtesy fly2ohare



The Chicago campus of Canadian National (CN) Railway, currently developing a truck-train intermodal facility serviced by the CN rail line. The first phase of the project began in early 2026 and is estimated to be operational in 2027.

Photo courtesy of Lonnie Wishart

Program. The combination of federal and state funds allowed the state to modernize locks and dams on the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers, expanding capacity and improving reliability. These upgrades, along with resiliency planning and enhanced dredging, position the state to protect its competitive advantage on this valuable resource.

Staying Chill

Anyone questioning Illinois' standing as the premier Midwest cold-storage hub should look

no further than the 78,000-sq.-ft. Container Freight Station (CFS) and bonded facility owned and operated by GEODIS, a leading global logistics provider, which opened near O'Hare International Airport in April. It is the company's first dedicated cold-chain cross-dock facility in the Americas and serves as a critical hub within the GEODIS freight-forwarding network. The facility handles healthcare products exclusively, providing short-term stowage and specialized handling for air and ocean pharmaceutical exports and imports.

Chicago and the entire state have long held an advantage in the cold-storage market as a tier-1 logistics hub with access to outstanding multi-modal transportation assets: railways, highways and airways. That's not expected to change. A 2025 Insights report from JLL noted that, despite disruptions, investors see upward growth trends in industrial assets anchored by cold storage, last-mile grocery and other hybrid uses.

In other words, Illinois remains on the move. 🏡

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Life-Saving Products Find New Life in Illinois

by CAROL BRZOWSKI

An mRNA-loaded lipid nanoparticle (textured sphere) approaches and enters a cell membrane (pink bilayer), surrounded by small molecules representing an amino acid supplement (space-filling chemical structures near the membrane) that enhances cellular uptake and expression of the delivered mRNA.

Image courtesy of Emma Hyde/ ScienceBrush Design

You may not think of Illinois as a lifesaver, but perhaps you should. Illinois has become the first choice for several life sciences operations.

In early March, global biotechnology company CSL broke ground for the expansion of its plasma therapy manufacturing facility in Kankakee.

The \$1.5 billion investment builds on more than \$3 billion already spent on the company's U.S. operations since 2018.

The expansion creates at least 300

new, highly skilled positions and enhances production of plasma-derived therapies and albumin through advanced manufacturing capabilities to help people with rare and serious diseases and other acute medical issues.

The expansion, expected to be operational by 2031, will incorporate CSL's Horizon 2 manufacturing process: a patented, yield-enhancing technology enabling significantly greater production of immunoglobulin from the same base amount of plasma.

“Behind every plasma-derived therapy is a person trying to live a more stable life, and donors who made that therapy possible,” said Gordon Naylor, CSL chief executive officer and managing director. “As the need for plasma-derived therapies continues to grow in the U.S. and globally, expanding our Kankakee site further strengthens this key hub in our supply network. We thank our partners in government and our local community for supporting our mission to serve those who require these essential medicines.”

Illinois Governor JB Pritzker noted, “Illinois is leading the way in life sciences manufacturing, and CSL’s \$1.5 billion investment is a powerful vote of confidence in our state,” adding the expansion will strengthen domestic supply chains for critical therapies.

Illinois will soon grow in the life sciences thanks to the Chan Zuckerberg Biohub Chicago, a newly-established biomedical research center joining leading Chicagoland scientific and technology institutions with the goal of solving large-scale scientific challenges on a 10- to 15-year time frame. Centrally located near its partner universities — the University of Chicago, Northwestern University, and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign — in Chicago’s Fulton Market, the state-of-the-art lab and administrative facility features specialized rooms, engineering equipment, and a space to host scientific presentations.

The goal: Understand the mysteries of the cell and how cells interact within systems.

Its focus is on engineering technologies to make precise, molecular-level measurements of biological processes within human tissues, with the ultimate goal of understanding and treating the inflammatory states underlying many diseases leading to



half of all deaths.

AbbVie Chooses Chicago

AbbVie initiated a new \$380 million investment to build two new active pharmaceutical ingredient manufacturing facilities at its current North Chicago campus.

These state-of-the-art facilities will integrate advanced manufacturing technologies with artificial intelligence (AI) to support the production of AbbVie’s next-generation neuroscience and obesity medications and are expected to be fully operational in 2029.

AbbVie plans to hire 300 people in North Chicago, including engineers, scientists, manufacturing operators and lab technicians.

“This milestone demonstrates further progress against our \$100 billion commitment to U.S. R&D and capital investments over the next decade,” said Robert A. Michael, AbbVie chairman and CEO.

CZ Biohub Going National

Understanding inflammation requires the ability to measure a myriad of interactions at the molecular and cellular level in 3D living tissue, a capability that does not currently exist, according to CZ Biohub.

The CZ Biohub Chicago is the first institution to expand the CZ Biohub Network, building on a successful collaborative model of the first

CZ Biohub in San Francisco and comprising a group of nonprofit research institutes bringing together physicians, scientists and engineers.

Aleks Baranczak, Biohub vice president, partnerships and strategy, says the collaborative effort builds the foundation for “understanding human biology with compute capacity, cutting-edge imaging and measurement technologies, and AI models and data shared openly with the global scientific community.”

Baranczak notes the selection of Chicago came through a 2023 open Request for Applications process drawing 59 proposals from 170 institutions nationwide.

“What set the Chicago proposal apart was the strength of the scientific vision — a genuinely novel approach to measuring inflammation in human tissue — alongside the caliber of the partnering universities and Chicago’s burgeoning biotech ecosystem,” she says.

Addressing how the Illinois workforce measures up, Baranczak notes “Illinois has talent across the full range that our work demands such as basic scientists, bioengineers and computational researchers.”

Baranczak also says the three partner universities alone represent an excellent concentration of expertise from which the CZ Biohub will actively benefit. 📍



Continental Tire's highly automated distribution center in Mount Vernon, Illinois Photos courtesy of Continental Tires the Americas

by SAVANNAH YAWN

Manufacturing Momentum Builds Across Downstate Illinois

When people think of Illinois' economy, the conversation often centers on Chicago. Yet some of the state's most significant manufacturing investments are taking shape hundreds of miles from the Windy City skyline.

Recent announcements from ADM, Combe, Intermountain Electronics and Continental Tire span agricultural processing, consumer products, industrial equipment and automotive manufacturing, underscoring continued capital investment across the state.

One of the largest recent commitments comes from ADM in Decatur, where the company announced plans to invest more than \$100 million to modernize its manufacturing operations while retaining

more than 1,000 jobs. With support from the State's Economic Development for a Growing Economy (EDGE) program, ADM has committed to investing at least \$103 million and creating at least 50 new full-time jobs.

The project will upgrade infrastructure at one of ADM's largest processing complexes, reinforcing Decatur's longstanding role as a global hub for agricultural processing and food production. Rather than constructing a new facility elsewhere, the company is investing in an operation that has anchored the local economy for generations.

"With more than 4,000 colleagues based here, Decatur represents ADM's largest footprint and employee population, making it a vital hub that helps connect U.S. farmers with markets and customers around the world," said Chris Cuddy, president, North America and Carbohydrate Solutions, ADM. "Investments like this strengthen our ability to support customers, drive economic growth and reinforce Illinois' leadership in agriculture."

A Half-Century Commitment in Rantoul

Moving east, another long-established manufacturer is deepening its footprint in Rantoul.

Consumer products company Combe is investing \$30 million to expand and modernize its local manufacturing facility, supported by a \$5 million state investment. The project will increase production capacity, upgrade equipment and reinforce the company's long-term presence in east-central Illinois. The company is relocating operations from California to Illinois, bringing more than 20 new full-time jobs to the region while retaining over 100 existing positions.

Combe first opened its Rantoul facility in 1974, as the company was scaling its global personal care brands. More than 50 years later, the site remains a key part of its global supply chain and a symbol of its continued commitment to U.S.-based production. The company's portfolio includes well-known brands such as Clearasil, Odor-Eaters, Just For Men and Vagisil.

"Investing in Rantoul is not about capacity, but about durability," said Keech Combe Shetty, executive chair of Combe Inc. "Our

roots in Rantoul run deep, and we are incredibly grateful to our dedicated team here, and this commitment ensures that these jobs remain in the community that has supported us for over half a century. We are grateful to the State of Illinois, the Village of Rantoul, and the County of Champaign for their support, allowing us to maintain and grow our operations and keep these essential jobs in the region."

Building the Workforce Alongside the Factory

Farther south, Intermountain Electronics is expanding in step with rising demand from the mining, energy and industrial sectors.

The company plans a \$15 million expansion of its Centralia manufacturing campus, adding more than 108,000 sq. ft. of production space and roughly 60 new jobs. The project will increase capacity for electrical equipment used by customers across North America and further solidify Centralia's role as a regional manufacturing hub.

Since its founding in 1985, Intermountain Electronics has evolved from a small equipment repair operation into a nationally recognized manufacturer of heavy electrical systems and engineered power solutions. Its Centralia facility, which opened in 2012 with just 12 employees, has nearly quadrupled in size and now employs 141 people. Once the expansion is complete, the site is expected to employ about 201 workers by the end of 2028.

The company has also built out a strong pipeline for that growth, working with partners including Kaskaskia College, Centralia High School and the Illinois Department of Employment Security to develop apprenticeship and training programs that support both hiring and long-term retention as production increases.

"Kaskaskia College is excited to see the tremendous growth Intermountain Electronics has experienced over the last decade," said Kaskaskia College Dean of Workforce Engagement & Industrial Career Services Joy Fitts. "The partnership we have established with Intermountain Electronics has created outstanding career opportunities for students in the College's Industrial Technology, Welding, and Electrician



Nik Pearce – Plant Manager, Continental Tire Plant Mount Vernon, Illinois



Continental Tire's warehouse, Mount Vernon, Illinois
Rendering courtesy of Continental Tires the America

programs. Through the development of Registered Apprenticeships and ongoing workforce training collaboration, Intermountain Electronics continues to invest in student success while strengthening the region's skilled workforce pipeline."

Automation Strengthens a Manufacturing Legacy

In Mount Vernon, Continental Tire is investing in a different kind of expansion, one focused less on adding production lines and more on making an already large operation run more efficiently.

The company is putting \$76 million into a highly automated warehouse that will support one of its largest tire manufacturing facilities in North America. The project is designed to streamline material handling and logistics, using automation to better align storage and movement of finished tires with ongoing production needs.

The new facility will span an area larger than six American football fields and hold up to 500,000 passenger car tires. Construction is expected to begin in summer 2026, with operations planned for 2027.

"This investment is a strong signal for the future of our Mount Vernon plant," says Nik Pearce, plant manager of Continental Tire's Mount Vernon tire plant. "It enhances our capabilities, further modernizes our operations, and makes our plant logistics more efficient. At the same time, it strengthens our operations at local level and creates new development opportunities

for our employees."

The Mount Vernon site is Continental's largest tire plant in the United States and a central hub in its Americas production and supply network. In operation for more than 50 years, the facility first opened in 1974 and was acquired by Continental in 1987. Today, it produces tires for passenger cars, light trucks and commercial vehicles. Spanning 3.4 million sq. ft., the plant has an annual production capacity of approximately 11.4 million tires and employs more than 3,500 people.

Confidence in Communities That Build

Taken individually, each announcement reflects the needs of a different industry. Together, they paint a broader picture of manufacturing across downstate Illinois. Agricultural processors are modernizing long-established facilities. Consumer products manufacturers are expanding production. Industrial equipment companies are adding capacity to meet growing demand. Global manufacturers are investing in automation to improve efficiency and strengthen existing operations.

The projects also share another common thread: Each company chose to build on an established Illinois presence rather than relocate production elsewhere. That decision reflects the advantages these communities continue to offer, including experienced manufacturing workforces, multimodal transportation access and industrial sites capable of supporting long-term growth. 

Southern Illinois Brims With a Project and Power Surge

Talk to any economic development leader in Southern Illinois, and you quickly learn that project announcements are happening apace throughout the region.

Deb Barnett, executive director of Southern Illinois Now (SI Now), an organization that serves Illinois' 17 southernmost counties, says projects are occurring across multiple industries and "demonstrate confidence in Southern Illinois' workforce, strategic location, site readiness and business climate. From advanced manufacturing and specialty materials to logistics, food distribution, river commerce and outdoor recreation, the region is translating years of strategic planning into tangible results. Southern Illinois recently secured significant private-sector investments from existing employers and new companies, reinforcing the region's role as a key contributor to Illinois' economic growth."

Among the bigger deals of note were the following:

- Continental Tire is investing \$76 million in Southern Illinois operations through advanced automation at its largest North American facility in Mt. Vernon
- Prysmian is expanding operations through multiple investment phases, strengthening the region's role in supporting national energy and infrastructure supply chains, in Du Quoin. The new 100,000-sq.-ft. expansion is supported by a solar farm that now provides roughly half of the plant's energy. The \$63.8 million investment adds 80 new jobs and positions the facility to support booming sectors — from EV infrastructure to renewable power generation.
- Penn Aluminum is growing

its advanced manufacturing operations and employment opportunities in Murphysboro by adding 50 new jobs at the plant.

- Manner Polymers is establishing a major manufacturing presence that further diversifies the region's industrial base with a \$54 million deal in Mt. Vernon.
- Fare Foods is investing in expanded food distribution and logistics capacity in Du Quoin, where it is adding 66,000 sq. ft. of warehouse and office space.

Barnett notes that recent large investments into site preparedness are paving the way for even larger deals in the future. "Site readiness success began with a Delta Regional Authority grant of \$129,000 that funded a comprehensive Top 20 Sites assessment in partnership with Global Location Strategies," she says. "The project provided a data-driven roadmap for identifying the region's most competitive industrial properties and prioritizing investments needed to move them toward market readiness. That initial planning effort became the catalyst for more than \$12 million in subsequent state funding, generating an estimated return approaching 100-to-1 while creating a pipeline of sites positioned to compete for nationally significant projects."

Eric Whitfield, economic development director for Ameren Illinois, one of the largest electric utility service providers in the state, says that his firm is "seeing strong activity in advanced manufacturing, food processing, logistics, distribution, agribusiness and technology-driven industries. Companies continue to be attracted to downstate Illinois because of its central location, skilled workforce,

extensive transportation network and competitive cost structure."

To make sure these new plant investments succeed, Whitfield says Ameren is investing millions into upgrading power infrastructure throughout the downstate region. "Ameren Illinois continues to invest in electric and natural gas infrastructure that supports safe, reliable and affordable energy service for our customers. Over the past year, we've advanced projects that strengthen the grid, improve resiliency and enhance service across our communities," he notes. "Looking ahead, we will continue modernizing our infrastructure to meet the evolving needs of customers while maintaining the reliability and affordability that are critical to economic growth and business investment. Reliable energy infrastructure remains a key factor in site selection decisions, and these investments help ensure Illinois remains competitive as companies evaluate locations for expansion and new development."

Whitfield adds that outside of Chicago, some of the fastest-growing areas for new development in Illinois now include Southwestern Illinois, portions of Central Illinois and several communities located along the state's major interstate, rail and river transportation corridors. "We're seeing significant interest from advanced manufacturing, logistics and distribution, food and beverage processing, agribusiness, life sciences, clean energy supply chain companies and technology-related industries," he says. "Communities that offer shovel-ready sites, strong infrastructure and access to workforce continue to attract the most attention from developers and corporate investors."

— Ron Starner

The Infrastructure of Innovation

From Teklab in Collinsville to IQMP in Chicago,
Illinois turns R&D into new opportunity.

by SAVANNAH YAWN

Teklab's Collinsville laboratory analyzes air, water, soil, hazardous waste and other environmental samples for industrial, municipal and environmental consulting clients.

Photo courtesy of Teklab

Technology investment does not always arrive in the form of a software company and a glass office tower. In Illinois, some of the most interesting activity is taking shape in laboratories and advanced manufacturing facilities. It can be found in the sophisticated testing equipment used to protect public health and support environmental compliance, as well as in the specialized systems emerging around the state's growing quantum computing industry.

That breadth gives Illinois a technology story grounded in both research and production. The state is home to approximately 30,000 technology companies employing more than 268,000 people and generating more than \$61 billion in gross regional product, according to the Illinois Economic Development Corporation.

Illinois also ranks among the nation's top 10 states for information technology employment and business locations and has the country's fifth-most-concentrated semiconductor-ready

workforce. That existing base gives the state both the technical talent and industrial capacity to pursue emerging fields while continuing to invest in the practical technologies already supporting businesses and communities.

Environmental Technology Expands in Metro East

Teklab has opened a new 36,500-sq.-ft. environmental testing laboratory in Collinsville, backed by a \$10 million company investment. The facility will create 40 full-time jobs while retaining nearly 100 existing positions, giving the company additional capacity to serve clients across the Midwest and expand its expertise nationwide.

Founded in 1982, Teklab is a veteran- and family-owned environmental laboratory that analyzes air, drinking water, wastewater, groundwater, soil, hazardous waste, oil, sludge and other materials. Its clients span the industrial, environmental consulting and municipal sectors. The company is headquartered in Collinsville and also operates service centers in Downers Grove and Springfield.

For Teklab, remaining in Collinsville meant building on relationships and regional advantages developed over more than four decades.

"Teklab has called Collinsville home for decades, so when it came time to invest in our future, expanding here was the natural

choice,” says CEO John Riley. “The Metro East region provides a strong business environment, access to a skilled workforce, and a central location that allows us to efficiently serve clients throughout Illinois, Missouri and the Midwest.”

The region’s interstate access supports the courier and logistics operations required to collect and transport samples across several states. Teklab also cited proximity to industrial companies, municipalities and environmental consulting firms as an advantage, along with a workforce pipeline supported by area colleges and technical programs. The company currently employs nearly 50 graduates of Southern Illinois University Edwardsville and maintains a partnership with the university.

The new laboratory was designed to accommodate additional analytical capacity, new technologies and testing services as customer needs evolve. Workforce expansion has already begun, and Teklab owns adjacent property that could support further development in Collinsville.

Support from state and local partners helped make the project possible, according to Riley.

“Their partnership throughout the planning and construction process demonstrated a shared commitment to growing high-quality jobs and investing in the region’s future,” he says. “That collaboration gave us the confidence to make the largest investment in Teklab’s history while reinforcing our long-term commitment to Illinois.”

Relocating an accredited environmental laboratory required more than transferring equipment into a new building. Teklab worked closely with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency to validate its instruments and maintain its accreditations throughout the move. The project also received support through the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity’s Economic Development for a Growing Economy program.

The new facility includes purpose-built laboratory space designed to improve safety, efficiency and collaboration, as well as employee gathering areas and a fitness center. As demand for environmental analysis grows, the expansion positions Teklab to add skilled jobs and testing capabilities while continuing to invest in the community where the company began.

For Illinois, the project illustrates a practical

side of technology investment: an established company using new equipment, expanded scientific capacity and regional talent to serve industries and communities across a multistate market.

Building a Quantum Supply Chain

At the other end of the technology spectrum, Illinois is making an ambitious bet on quantum computing and microelectronics.

Illinois’ quantum ecosystem includes top-tier research universities like the University of Illinois, the University of Chicago, and Northwestern University as well as Argonne National Laboratory, Fermilab, the Chicago Quantum Exchange and four of the 10 quantum research centers funded under the National Quantum Initiative Act.

The centerpiece is the \$500 million Illinois Quantum and Microelectronics Park (IQMP) on Chicago’s South Side. The campus, which broke ground in the last half of 2025, is being developed to support quantum companies, researchers, suppliers, and other partners working to facilitate the development and commercialization of quantum technologies. Announced IQMP participants include PsiQuantum, IBM, Diraq, Infleqtion, Quantum Machines, Pasqal and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. With support through Illinois’ Manufacturing Illinois Chips for Real Opportunity, or MICRO, program, Zero Point Cryogenics will establish its first U.S. location at IQMP. The Canadian company plans to colocate research and development, sales and service operations at the park, where its ultra-low-temperature systems will support quantum companies and collaborators.

“Our presence here underscores the essential role cryogenics plays as foundational infrastructure for quantum computing, positioning us directly at the epicenter of this rapidly evolving industry,” said Chris Cassin, CEO and co-founder of Zero Point Cryogenics. “We couldn’t have chosen a better place to open Zero Point Cryogenics’ first international Innovation and Service Hub location than here in Illinois. The region offers an exceptional pool of world-class talent, making it the perfect collaborative community to better serve our thriving U.S.-based clients and partners.”

While Zero Point represents a company entering the Illinois market, Ability



Photo Courtesy of Teklab

Engineering Technology (AET) shows how the emerging quantum sector can create new opportunities for manufacturers already operating in the state.

AET is expanding its 35,000-sq.-ft. operation in South Holland while establishing a presence at IQMP. Founded in Illinois in 1947, AET designs and manufactures custom cryogenic and vacuum equipment for customers in aerospace, energy, industrial gases and scientific research. Its South Holland expansion will include new machinery, improved crane and material-handling systems, structural upgrades and changes to the facility's workflow. At the quantum park, the company will support rapid prototyping, small-scale fabrication, equipment modification and workforce training.

"This expansion builds on that legacy while advancing Illinois' ambition to lead in quantum technology," said Ability Engineering Technology President Eugene Botsoe.

"Investments in our South Holland facility will enhance our ability to deliver the highest levels of quality and capability, while our presence at the IQMP FaQtory places us at the center of Illinois' growing quantum ecosystem, where we can collaborate with leading researchers and innovators."

Illinois is also extending that supplier and commercialization network internationally. In 2026, IQMP signed an agreement with Japan's Q-STAR alliance to connect Illinois companies, researchers and institutions with a network of more than 160 Japanese corporations, startups

and academic organizations. The partnership is intended to support collaborations across research, business development, investor connectivity, and industrial supply-chains.

Building the Quantum Workforce

These investments begin to answer one of the most important questions surrounding quantum development: Who will build the equipment, components and support systems needed to turn scientific progress into a working industry?

They also suggest that the opportunity will extend beyond physicists and doctoral researchers.

In 2026, the Illinois Science and Technology Coalition, the Illinois Economic Development Corporation's Economic Research Center, IQMP and the Chicago Quantum Exchange released the first comprehensive analysis of Illinois' potential quantum workforce. The organizations identified 171 fields of study spanning computer science, engineering, mathematics and data science, advanced manufacturing and precision production. Illinois institutions awarded more than 33,000 quantum-relevant degrees and certificates in 2024, a 60% increase over the previous decade. Certificate programs accounted for the largest category of completions.

"A sustained quantum ecosystem relies on a seamless connection between world-class research, industry and diverse educational pathways," said University of Chicago Professor of Molecular Engineering David Awschalom, director of the Chicago Quantum Exchange. "This new mapping framework demonstrates that our regional talent pipeline extends far beyond traditional labs, investing heavily in certificate and technical programs to ensure future quantum careers are fully accessible to workers without advanced degrees. By establishing this clear baseline, our region is setting a national blueprint for how to build an inclusive and capable workforce for the quantum technology economy."

These investments show Illinois building technology capacity from the ground up: expanding established scientific businesses, attracting specialized suppliers, connecting manufacturers with emerging industries and preparing workers to turn new research into real-world applications. 

HOLLYWOOD MOVES TO THE Middle of Everything



The Illinois Film Office notes the state is a world-class destination for film, television and advertising production and home to a thriving film industry with a nationally renowned crew base, actors and industry vendors.

Locations offer everything from “the beautiful, iconic Chicago skyline and 58-mile lakefront to the gritty back alleys and unique historic neighborhoods. Illinois boasts breathtaking natural vistas, rivers, prairies, industrial centers, picturesque farmland and small towns seemingly frozen in time,” the office points out.

MovieMaker’s annual Best Places to Live and Work as a Moviemaker in 2026 ranks Chicago the third best big city for those working in the film industry, accounting for industry investment, tax incentives, cost of living and general livability.

The Illinois General Assembly in 2025 expanded the Illinois Film Production Tax Credit Act, creating new incentives that include offering producers a credit of 35% of all qualified Illinois spending, which has attracted more than 90% of the state’s film and TV production.

Illinois film production companies spent a record \$703 million in 2025, marking a 25%

How America’s film and TV business migrated to Illinois.

by **CAROL BRZOZOWSKI**

The Chicago Loop is a popular location for filmmaking.

Photo courtesy of Illinois Film Office



"Starz Power Book IV: Force"

La Salle Street and the Chicago Board of Trade double as New York.



increase in film expenditures since before the COVID-19 pandemic onset.

Production companies also supported an estimated 18,000 industry hires, including local caterers, hotels, drivers and skilled union workers.

Peter Hawley, deputy director, Illinois Film Office, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), notes that what makes Illinois the best choice for the film and TV industry over other states is that beyond the tax credit, "Illinois has outstanding infrastructure, soundstages and a deep crew base not just in the Chicago area but Champaign, the Metro East region outside of St. Louis and the Illinois Quad Cities.

"Illinois offers a 5% uplift on Illinois wages for productions filming outside of the Cook County collar counties and most significantly, the first in the nation 5% uplift for a certified sustainable film production."

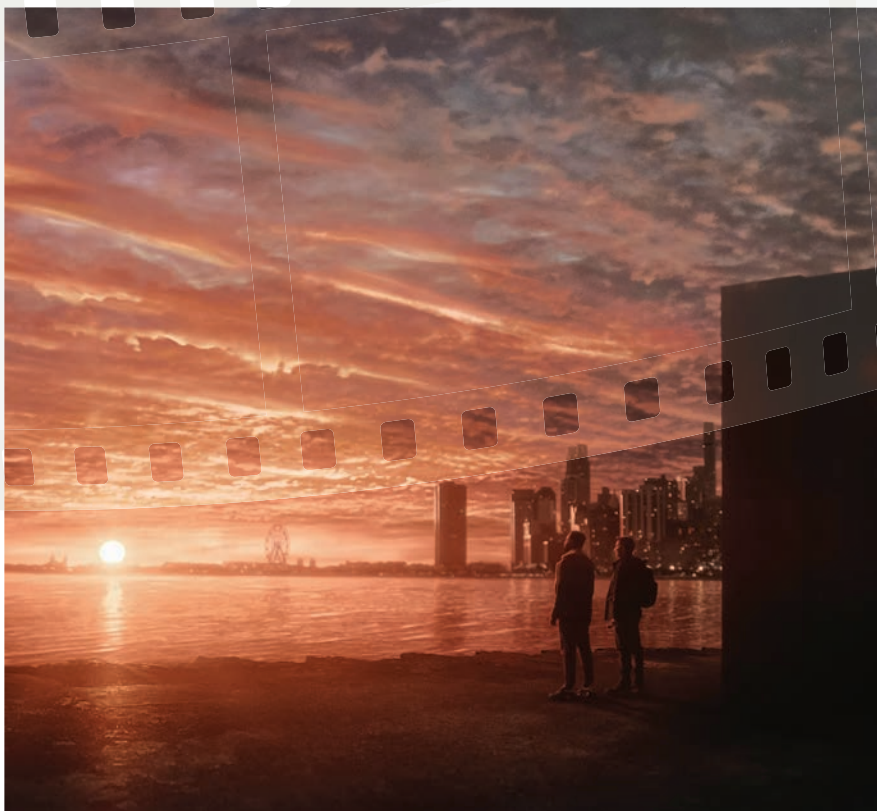
A "certified green production" is one that formally commits to and

achieves recognized environmental sustainability benchmarks, focusing on minimizing waste, reducing energy use and emissions through efficient transportation and equipment, utilizing sustainable materials and implementing responsible food practices.

As productions adapt to meet certification requirements, demand will increase for infrastructure such as battery systems, solar-powered trailers and renewable energy solutions accompanied by new jobs.

On-set changes include transitioning from paper scripts to digital tablets, replacing single-use plastic water bottles with refill stations, and reducing reliance on diesel in favor of cleaner energy alternatives.

Addressing how the Illinois workforce measures up when it comes to providing labor for film and TV initiatives that may have interest in Illinois, Hawley notes the Illinois crew base is at least "12 to 14 deep for major productions, not including the 300-plus TV commercials filmed in the state annually. Illinois crews



can support any size production anywhere in the state.”

In November, Governor JB Pritzker, DCEO and the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees Local 2 Chicago Stagehands marked the opening of their new training center, supported by a \$5 million state grant.

Since the program’s launch, the Illinois Film Office partnered with various organizations statewide to train and hire more than 600 individuals — mostly women and students of color — who are historically underrepresented in the industry.

Illinois has invested \$10 million in funding to construct and upgrade film studio infrastructure through the 2024 Illinois Soundstage Capital Grant Program managed by DCEO.

In January, Governor Pritzker and DCEO joined local leaders at Flyover Film Studios to celebrate the growth of the film industry in Central Illinois. In 2025, the film industry generated \$12.3 million in economic activity in the Champaign County region. With its sound stage, standing sets, and production

spaces, Flyover Film Studios has become a hub of film creation.

Operating out of the decommissioned Chanute Air Force Base, the six-acre studio’s extensive grounds and empty hangars have been used to film and produce everything from a tornado documentary to a heavy metal music video.

The resulting job creation and economic impact made Flyover Film Studios the 2025 Rantoul Area Chamber of Commerce Business of the Year.

According to Film Champaign-Urbana data, film productions based in Champaign, Ford and Piatt Counties generated \$12.3 million in statewide business sales in 2025, driven by \$6.3 million in direct in-state production spending at hotels, catering, transportation providers, rental housing, equipment vendors and post-production services.

The State of Illinois has directly supported the expansion of filming in the region, including a \$1.1 million grant as part of the 2024 Illinois Soundstage Program. 🎬

Apple TV’s “Dark Matter”

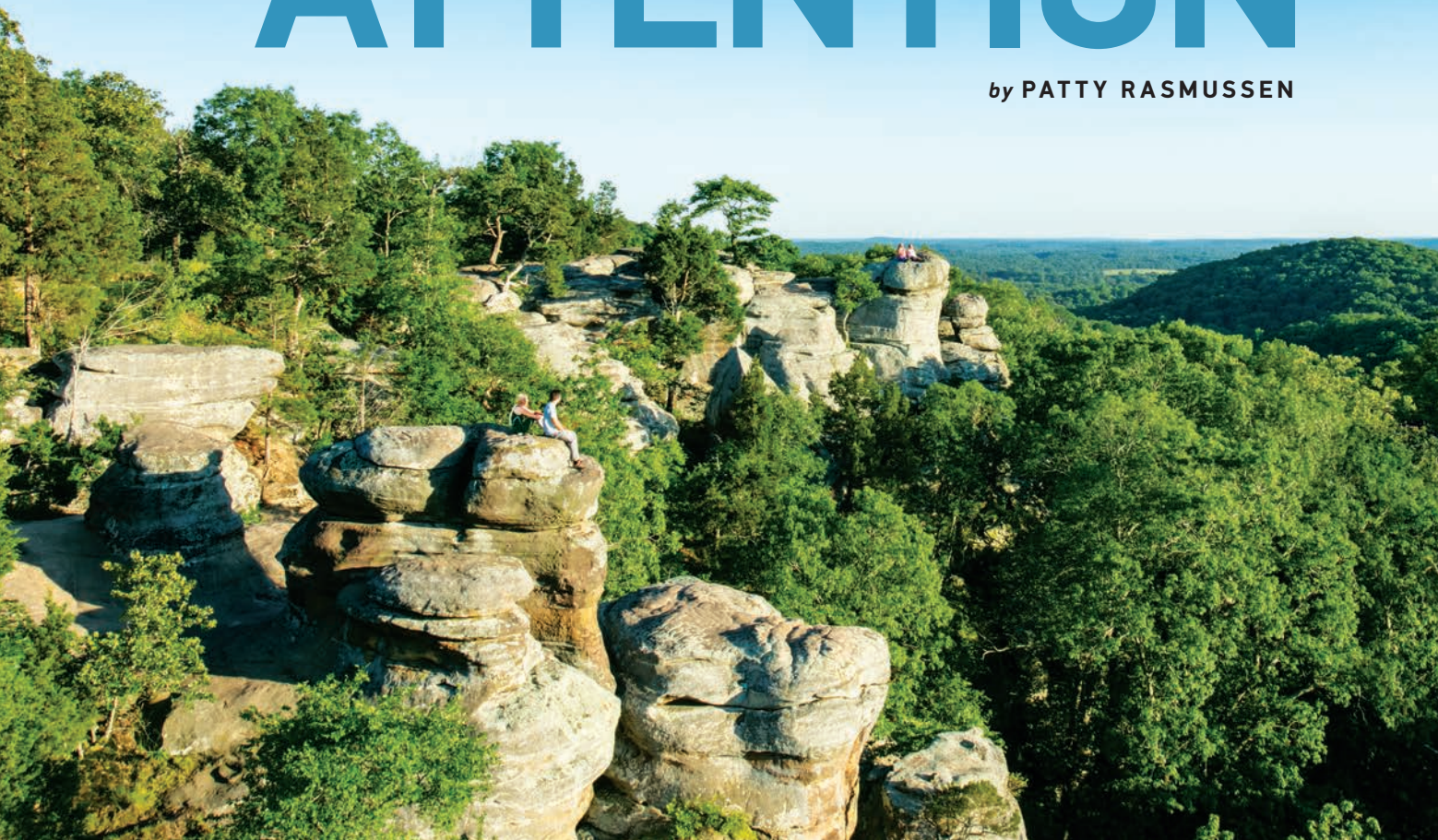
NBC’s “Chicago Fire”

Bridget Everett filming HBO’s “Somebody Somewhere”

All photos courtesy of the Illinois Film Office

Attracting ATTENTION

by PATTY RASMUSSEN



As visitors flock to Illinois in record-breaking numbers, the state attracts events to keep them coming.

Illinois remains a premier vacation destination as tourists from across the nation and around the globe flock to the state in record numbers. In fiscal year 2025, Illinois reached its highest-ever hotel revenue, at \$367 million — a 14% increase over the previous record set just one year earlier.

Take A Tour in Illinois

Eager to capitalize on the momentum, Governor JB Pritzker announced \$4.4 million in tourism grant programs to further

encourage the industry statewide. The funding is available through three programs: the Tourism Attraction Grant Program (\$1.8 million), the Tourism Private Sector Grant Program (\$600,000), and the Tourism Marketing Partnership Grant Program (\$2 million).

The State also expanded the Sales Tax and Revenue (STAR) Bond program to municipalities statewide in February 2026. STAR bonds support economic growth by financing the development and revitalization of tourism, entertainment and destination-

Rocky bluffs in Shawnee National Forest's Garden of the Gods

Photo courtesy of Enjoy Illinois



Where the Wind Blows

If Illinois has a tourism engine, it's Chicago. More than 56.8 million convention visitors came to Chicago in 2025, generating \$21.5 billion in direct spending. The convention planning infrastructure includes such top-tier venues as the McCormick Place campus and convention center and Wintrust Arena, a dazzling array of hotels, world-class transportation services, and professional planners capable of handling any size group.

Several events of note coming to the Windy City:

Wrigley Field, home to the Chicago Cubs, will host the MLB All-Star Game for the first time since 1990. The game will be played on Tuesday, July 13, 2027, and will be preceded by a week's worth of celebrations and events, including the All-Star Red Carpet Show, the All-Star Village, an interactive

fan experience, the Futures Game, and the always-popular Home Run Derby.

NASCAR celebrated Independence Day weekend with the eero 400 Cup Series race at the newly reopened Chicagoland Speedway in Joliet, Illinois, on July 5. Joe Gibbs Racing's Chase Briscoe held off a charge from teammate Christopher Bell to win by .276 of a second.

In honor of the 100th anniversary of Route 66, which has its starting point in Chicago, the city commissioned a mural in the Tri-Taylor neighborhood celebrating the iconic road's legacy, and added new Route 66 signage throughout downtown and along the route. The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) even got into the act, commissioning a special-edition Route 66 Ventra (electronic fare) card.

based projects in specially established STAR bond districts.

"As the State builds upon another record-breaking year in the tourism industry, I encourage eligible applicants to apply for these new tourism funding opportunities," said Kristin Richards, director of the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. "Whether developing tourism attractions, supporting events and festivals, or promoting destinations, DCEO offers funding opportunities that will help our tourism industry remain second to none."



'The Middle of Everything'

There's nothing like exploring smaller cities, towns, state parks and byways. Illinois has it all. Check out the Enjoy Illinois website at enjoyillinois.com to find statewide travel information and planning guides to plan adventures, from the Peoria Blues & Music Festival in September to hiking around the Garden of the Gods sandstone formations in the Shawnee National Forest in southern Illinois.

Presidential history buffs can explore the life of the 16th president at historic sites within the 42-county Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area, or visit the Underground Railroad traveling exhibit, which is moving through communities in central Illinois.

Take time to visit the Cahokia Mounds, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, in Collinsville, in southern Illinois. The largest pre-Columbian site north of Mexico, it covers 2,200 acres, contains 70 mounds and was once home to a thriving, highly structured community. The people who built the structures were not the first to live on the site, and their departure remains shrouded in mystery.

Whatever your pleasure, a quick trip to Chicago for business with an extra day tacked on for fun and shopping or a weeklong family adventure, Illinois offers unforgettable sights and remarkable memories to be made and savored. 🇺🇸

Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge in Marion, Illinois

Giant City Stables Trail Riding, Makanda, Illinois

Paddle boarding on the Fox River in Geneva

Original Historic Route 66 Brick Road near Auburn, Illinois

Photos courtesy of Enjoy Illinois

Quality Of Life: *At Scale*

When it comes to measuring what makes for a good life, Illinois has an edge.

by PATTY RASMUSSEN

What leads a person to one part of the country over another? A job, certainly. Maybe the climate or family beckon. Sometimes it's simply the desire for a fresh start in a new place. Whatever the reason, the phrase "quality of life" almost always seeps into the decision-making process. By nearly every metric in the quality-of-life conversation, Illinois bubbles very close to the top.





Peaceful yoga class in the lush surroundings of Anderson Japanese Gardens. A perfect spot to relax, rejuvenate, and connect with nature amidst vibrant greenery and scenic beauty.

Photos courtesy of Enjoy Illinois

In 2025, WalletHub researchers ranked Illinois No. 3 in its Quality of Life ranking, which includes such metrics as average hours spent working and commuting weekly, the miles of trails for bikes and walking per state land area, access to public transportation, and high-quality entertainment options. Thanks to investments the state has made in quality-of-life determinants such as economic development, education — including workforce education — healthcare, transportation infrastructure and parks and recreation, at every point of the compass, Illinois is tough to beat.

Specific cities are of note. For the ninth consecutive year, Chicago was recognized as Best Big City in the U.S. in the 2025 Condé Nast Traveler Readers' Choice Awards. It's easy to see why. Chicago isn't just a fabulous city to visit, evidenced by the 53.3 million visitors the city welcomed in 2024; it's a historic, livable city. Citing the number of neighborhoods, the cultural offerings, infrastructure and walkability, a study from the Economist Intelligence Unit, which ranked 173 cities across 30 indicators in five categories, found that Chicago was 6th among the top 10 best places to live in the U.S. in 2026.

But it's not just Chicago garnering attention: Thirteen large and mid-sized cities across the state made U.S. News & World Report's Best Places to Live 2026-2027 rankings. The rankings list the 250 best places to live in the U.S. based on several criteria, including affordability, desirability, job markets and quality of life. Many of the communities highlighted below are close to Chicago; others are not, but all have created their own culture and identities.

By whatever metric quality of life is measured — whether it's finding the right job, the right doctor or the right school; whether it's finding a house, a neighborhood or a neighbor — Illinois has it — at scale. These Illinois cities made the list:

- Naperville (26)
- Arlington Heights (32)
- Palatine (46)
- Bolingbrook (71)
- Elgin (72)
- Bloomington (74)
- Schaumburg (94)
- Des Plaines (144)
- Skokie (156)
- Aurora (206)
- Springfield (231)
- Cicero (240) 🏡

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City Colleges of Chicago https://www.ccc.edu/partner	63	Illinois Economic Development Corporation https://www.illinoisedc.org	IFC-1, BC
City of Joliet https://www.joliet.gov/business/economic-development	41	Kane County Economic Development Corporation https://kanecountyedc.com	7
City of Mattoon, IL https://mattooninmotion.org https://mattoon.illinois.gov	68-69	Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois https://leadershipcouncilswil.com	35
City of Pekin https://www.ci.pekin.il.us	50-51	Naperville Development Partnership C&VB https://www.naper.org	60
City of WOOD DALE https://www.wooddale.com	31	Nicor, Inc. https://www.nicor.com	11
Coles Together https://www.colesogether.com	77	Southern Illinois Now https://southernillinoisnow.org	86
Comcast-Greater Chicago Region https://corporate.comcast.com	19	University of Illinois Research Park https://researchpark.illinois.edu	59
ComEd Economic Development Department https://www.comed.com	81	Village of Hoffman Estates https://www.growhoffman.com https://www.visithoffman.com https://www.hoffmanestates.org	5
Economic Alliance of Kankakee County https://kankakeecountyed.org	83	World Business Chicago https://worldbusinesschicago.com https://worldbusinesschicago.com/gala	INSERT
Economic Development Corporation of Decatur-Macon Cnty Mid-Illinois Collaborative https://whymidillinois.com	75		
Genesee & Wyoming Rail Services, Inc https://www.gwrr.com	73		



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Southwestern Illinois (Metro East) is made up of an eight-county area, which includes Madison, St. Clair, Macoupin, Clinton, Monroe, Jersey, Bond, and Calhoun Counties, and is the second largest population center in the State of Illinois.