

# 2009 Economic Development Update

## Blackhawk Hills RC&D takes on the Broadband Issue.

In January, 2009, Blackhawk Hills RC& D hosted a regional CEDS meeting with the goal of determining the most important regional economic development goals. Pat Leitzen Fye facilitated a discussion of regional economic development professionals at which broadband – high speed, high-quality internet access –was clearly identified as the foremost development need in the entire 6-county region. A task force was formed, research completed and partnerships created; in August of 2009 BHH submitted a grant proposal for \$72M to the IL DCEO for funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act's (ARRA) Rural Broadband effort. Good news continued as IL DCEO in August committed \$5 million to the project, pending funding from ARRA. Additionally, Governor Patrick Quinn named the Blackhawk Hills Fiber Optic System as one of only 18 on his priority short list of the 140 applications submitted. This effort is a prime example of regional collaboration. The project, if funded, will benefit the entire six-county BHH region, including both Jo Daviess and Carroll Counties.

## County Board approves EPA Brownfields Grant application.

The County board approved a contract with Freeport's Fehr-Graham & Associates to complete an application to the USEPA for identification, prioritization and assessment of potential brownfields sites in the county. If awarded, the grant will allow the county to locate and plan for assessment and eventual remediation of brownfield sites. Remediation of hazardous sites creates development opportunities and provides clean, useable sites for new construction and job creation. The County will receive notice as to the status of the application in Spring of 2010.

## Renewable Energy

Two years ago our summit topic was renewable energy in the region. Today, Acciona North America's Eco-Grove Wind Farm is operating on the edges of our county while working to expand further into the county with the Wolf Creek Wind Farm. Jo-Carroll Energy's biofuels project to be located in neighboring Carroll County is on track. Further discussions will be held regarding the production/shipping/storage of other renewable feedstock as we move into 2010.

## Agricultural Impact Study Completed

The Development & Planning Committee approved the Agricultural Impact Report in September which found that agriculture remains the number one economic driver in the county, just ahead of tourism. The full report can be found online at [www.jodaviess.org/economicdevelopment](http://www.jodaviess.org/economicdevelopment).

## Area Mirrors Nation-Wide Economic Stress.

Layoffs and shift changes have been hampering business locally. In just a small sampling of industrial locations, 172 full-time workers were laid off between late 2008 and early 2009, with shift reductions and reductions in hours also occurring. The nation-wide downturn has certainly impacted local employers and employees alike. Unemployment continues to creep up, and remains high in the region:

County	September 2009	August 2009	September 2008
Jo Daviess*	8.1%	7.9 %	5.1%
Carroll*	10.5%	10.7%	6.2%
Stephenson*	11.6%	11.3%	6.8%
Winnebago*	15.5%	15.2%	9.0%
Dubuque, IA**	5.9	6.5%	4.1%**

\* IL Dept of Employment Security, not seasonally adjusted \*\* Iowa Dept. of Labor

## Economic Incentives in Place and Working.

In our continuous efforts to bring the county to a level playing field, we've added and enhanced our development incentives:

### Tax Increment Finance Districts (TIF)

- Stockton, created 2006; 477 acres; \$2,513,500 in investment, 41 new/20 retained jobs
- Elizabeth, created 2008, 200 acres; \$1.2M in investment, 24 new jobs
- Scales Mound, 250 acres; to be finalized 2009
- Galena, 1986, completed redevelopment plan; 75 acres, \$13M investment; nearly \$1M in revenues to taxing bodies this year
- East Dubuque:
  - Downtown, 2007; 80 acres, \$1.7M investment
  - Highway 35, 2008; 200 acres, \$2.3M investment, 30 new jobs between the two TIFs
  - Highway 20, commercial/industrial, residential. 500 acres; to be finalized 2009

**Enterprise Zone** (Freeport-Stephenson County) was expanded in 2007 for Rentech Energy Midwest (formerly Royster-Clark) with another expansion in the works in East Dubuque. The EZone is located in:

- Village of Hanover, entire municipal boundaries
- Rentech property, within the County outside of East Dubuque
- East Dubuque, overlay on Highway 20 TIF, to be finalized 2009

### Revolving Loan Fund

The Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) was the subject of review and revisions in 2008; new criteria and application package published online. Additional revisions made in 2009. Visit [www.jodaviess.org/economicdevelopment](http://www.jodaviess.org/economicdevelopment) for complete information.

- \$230,000. loaned over life of fund to five businesses;
- Last two loans (2007, 2008) created 30 jobs