

2013 STRATEGIC PLANNING

Quality of Life, Quality Economy & Quality Jobs

The purpose of the GEDC as defined by our By-laws is as follows:

- A. *To promote a growing and diverse tax base to provide quality services for all Grundy County residents.*
- B. *To encourage the creation of quality jobs for current residents and provide employment opportunities for younger residents to remain in Grundy County.*
- C. *To assist in the expansion and retention of current business and industry in Grundy County.*
- D. *To encourage the development of new business and industry and promote Grundy County to enterprises outside of the area.*
- E. *To support a high quality of life through proactive, value added economic development.*
- F. *To improve, support and facilitate a favorable economic climate in Grundy County*

WORK PLAN FOR 2013 AND BEYOND

The GEDC seeks to target specific industry areas and business environment improvement projects for its strategic plan which are both high priority and provide the most efficient use of GEDC capital and resources. The work plan components provided here are designed to meet those goals with an eye toward meeting the charter of the GEDC as described in our By-laws above. These targeted areas are intended to serve as a strategic guideline for the GEDC 2013-2015 work plan, and are by no means intended to be fully comprehensive or exclusionary of other project areas. As the economy and the county continue to change and grow, adaptability will be essential to meeting the economic goals of Grundy County and the mandate of the GEDC.

INFRASTRUCTURE:

- **Route 47**

The expansion of Illinois Route 47 to four lanes throughout the county is a critical project for the continued development of Grundy County. Route 47 spans the county from north to south and forms a center line between its eastern and western borders. It also serves as the link for the two interstates passing through the county, meeting Interstate 80 in the northern portion of the county in Morris, and intersecting with Interstate 55 in the far southern portion of the county, just north of Dwight.

Strategies:

1. Build support for expansion in the region with entities including municipalities, county, IDOT, and state and federal legislators.
2. Identify regions on the projected path best suited for future commercial expansion. Work with the county and villages to limit curb cuts and maintain needed right of way to facilitate future road expansion.
3. Promote incremental expansion of Rt. 47, focusing on the section from Southmor Road to Route 113. This section currently has the highest traffic counts along the roadway that could warrant lane additions.

- **Optimization of Brisbin Road and existing underdeveloped interchanges**

Interchanges on I-55 and I-80 provide local communities the opportunity to attract high impact development from retail, commercial, and industrial development. The Brisbin Road interchange and adjacent Route 6 corridor will be a strong base for new industrial expansion in the northeastern portion of the county and throughout the region.

Coordinated planning between the public and private sectors will be one of the most important steps to ensure ideal growth. Targeted existing interchanges for growth and

development include Interstate 55 exits 233 (Reed Road), 227 (Gardner) and 220 (Route 47) and Interstate 80 exit 105 (Seneca).

Strategies:

1. Be prepared for development with the existence of public and private utilities at the interchanges.
 2. Coordinate with communities to ensure compatible interchange area land use and zoning to optimize its strategic location.
 3. Continue focusing marketing and attraction on interchange development.
- **Illiana Expressway/I-80 Widening/Prairie Parkway**

Grundy County growth in both population and industry has often been contingent upon location. The addition of the outer Chicago loop, including Illiana Expressway, Prairie Parkway, and Interstate 80 expansion will help to solidify the county's position as a hub for future growth and expansion. Support exists at the regional planning level for I-80 widening and the Illiana Expressway while the Prairie Parkway has seen its support diminish significantly. Grundy County needs a voice at the table to both remain apprised of changes in regional planning strategies and to represent the interests of the county. This will help determine the best course of action to maximize regional economic development benefits of the projects.

Strategies:

1. Define county participants in regional planning and secure representation with entities considering projects affecting the county and participate.
2. Work with the communities directly impacted by the projects, specifically Diamond with the Illiana and Minooka, Morris, and Seneca for the widening of I-80.

3. Although support for the Prairie Parkway has diminished, the necessity of the project has not. The GEDC will continue to monitor the project.

- **Railroads**

The movement of freight in our nation, state and county has greatly increased in the last decade. Railroads bring opportunities and in some cases, challenges, to Grundy County. Rail served industrial parks like the Providence Logistics in Coal City, are planned to attract jobs, create tax revenues, and of course, increased traffic.00

Strategies:

1. Monitor and encourage the elimination of paper barriers, specifically on the CSX line. Work with relevant parties to influence the terms of the CSX lease renewal in 2023
2. Support Coal City and others to implement grade separations and quiet zones along highly traveled main lines.

- **Technology Infrastructure**

There exists “dead zones” in Grundy County where the lack of broad band and fiber technology limit development. As the world moves to a more mobile platform, local communities need to have sufficient infrastructure to support their residents and local businesses.

Strategies:

1. Work with local broadband and cellular providers to identify areas of the county currently underserved.
2. Identify strategies to lessen the “dead zones” including potential grants and partnerships such as the LaSalle Technology Program.

INDUSTRY:

- **Energy and Energy Based Manufacturing**

Grundy County has a varied energy picture including wind and nuclear power generation as well as natural gas processing and biofuel production. It is necessary that this be leveraged into future growth. At least in the near term, the future growth in the energy sector is natural gas based. Other energy sectors are stable but not expanding, including both nuclear and renewables.

Strategies:

1. Review the supply chain of incoming renewable energy firms to determine developable cluster growth opportunities.
2. Advocate Grundy County in the federal Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future discussion of nuclear fuel reprocessing.
3. Identify and promote additional businesses to enhance the growing renewable energy cluster.

- **Transportation and Logistics**

Grundy County has a significant competitive advantage over other local regions in the logistics and transportation industry due to its favorable location and relatively inexpensive land costs. The necessary challenge will be to incorporate additional aspects of the business beyond the simple moving of goods. With the increased corporate emphasis on supply chain management, as well as increasing sophistication and variety in the industry, Grundy County is in an excellent position to achieve this goal.

Strategies:

1. Work to improve overall industry job quality through cluster development by reviewing supply chain opportunities with the transportation and logistics market.
2. Continue building relationships with REITs, developers and brokers to effectively market and fill space as market conditions improve.

- **Life Sciences**

Health care and life sciences have been a significant job growth sector in the county over the past decade. Predictions from EMSI Complete Employment anticipate even higher growth for Grundy County, predicting 55% overall growth from 2008 – 2018. The business development role of the county will include seeking desirable new ventures that will serve as a benefit both with respect to employment and the regional health environment.

Strategies:

1. Solicit input from retail health facilities regarding future employment needs, expansion efforts, and required assistance.
2. Seek growth in the cluster beyond population-driven services, including specialized and residential care facilities.

HIGHER EDUCATION:

Grundy County enjoys an excellent track record for positioning its students to complete high school and go on to college when compared to state and national levels. However, Grundy is significantly lower than the remainder of the Chicago metropolitan area when it comes to higher education attainment. This is a challenge from an economic development perspective, as educational attainment is often a factor when choosing between competing locations for site development with the Chicago area.

Strategies:

1. Continue to seek partnerships with 4-year institutions to provide opportunities for Grundy students.
2. Work with industry to identify programs of study best suited for future staffing needs.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:

Planning for future growth cannot take place in a vacuum at any level. Sustainable growth that maintains the current standard of living in the county will require collaborative efforts between both public and private entities.

Strategies:

1. Develop a systematic structure for communicating information related to comprehensive planning, transportation, infrastructure and zoning between the communities and the county.
2. Leverage existing GEDC relationships with state and federal entities to provide needed planning, development and funding assistance to local communities.
3. Encourage greater political activity at the local, state and federal levels by community leaders and county officials to promote area objectives.