

# THE SANGAMON COUNTY PROJECT

Economic Development Strategies Past and Present

Looking Toward the Future

**VISION – AUTHORITY - LEADERSHIP**

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Presented by:



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## PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Development Consortium, Inc. (TDC) was engaged in the third quarter of 2016 by Sangamon County Government to review and evaluate past and current economic development practices in the Sangamon County region. The second phase of the project included benchmarking current efforts with other regions. Phase III involved a review of past economic development and planning studies.

## PHASE I DESCRIPTION

Between September 2016 and May 2017, TDC staff interviewed nearly 130 individuals, employers and business leaders, organizations, developers, contractors, educators, unions, government agencies, local and state government officials, national and regional site selection consultants and other interested parties. These 60-90 minute sessions afforded us the opportunity to gather confidential input on a range of subjects specific to the interviewee's particular sectors of expertise and spheres of influence. They also frequently led to additional questions related to perceptions of the long-term regional development strategy; education and workforce development leading to filling the worker pipeline; infrastructure; business climate locally and in the state; racial and economic equality; and opportunities and challenges for the future growth of Sangamon County.

During the interviews, specific examples of successes and challenges faced in growing or developing businesses were brought forward by the interviewees and rapidly set the tone for the contents of this report and for the conclusions drawn.

Springfield and Sangamon County have many long-term, multi-generational residents who are committed to the area. This close-knit community traditionally has been known as the home of state government; a tourist destination for all things Lincoln; a wonderful place to raise a family; and relatively free of crime. As this report developed, it became clear these perceptions are changing.

Common themes emerged in the interview process. The interviewees were straightforward in their assessments and in articulating specific reasons and rationale for their impressions and experiences. Throughout Phase I, TDC interviewers stressed that total confidentiality would be maintained and that no comments would be attributed to specific individuals or organizations unless they wanted to be identified. None chose to be specifically attributed.

***Ultimately, how the community reacts to these findings and takes action will set the tone for the economic future of the Sangamon County metro region for the foreseeable future.***

## PHASE II DESCRIPTION

TDC reviewed the economic development programs and structures in a variety of successful communities. While there appears to be a recent trend which contemplates moving traditional economic development functions to government and away from third party service providers, the clear majority of organizations still fall into the category of public private partnerships.

TDC looked at Illinois locations and found that few stand out, with the exception of Renew Moline, which is a benchmark for many other communities due to its uniquely focused, placemaking strategy fostered almost three decades ago, and the EDC of Central Illinois in Peoria which takes a multi-County regional approach to development, assisting multiple communities with varying tasks and responsibilities.

The Economic Development Council of Bloomington-Normal recently joined with other regional entities to create a new economic development delivery system which looks promising, but it's too new to meaningfully determine results. The Economic Development Corporation of Decatur and Macon County is also unique in the way they position themselves in their respective countywide regional development processes, especially as it relates to community branding and the Midwest Inland Port LLC.

Other organizations throughout the state were also reviewed and none were deemed exceptional in their ability to transform a community.

Out of state organizations which excelled at development were concentrated primarily in the southern and southeastern parts of the United States. Few were operated and primarily driven by government. The clear majority were stand-alone public private partnerships, often separate from local chambers of commerce. Their primary functions were business attraction, retention, workforce development, entrepreneurship, placemaking and marketing.

A key point to make is that, typically, in a benchmarking exercise, there is a model that is transferable to another location or company or process with minor adjustments. ***Economic development, however, is increasingly becoming less templated in terms of organizational structures. At the February 2017, International Economic Development Council (IEDC) Leadership Summit in Jacksonville, Florida, speakers clearly sent the message that there is no "one size fits all" model. Dynamic organizations take the best of all worlds and make it fit in the context of specific local goals and challenges.***

When viewed in total, it is the opinion of TDC that while it is a valuable exercise to look at other examples of organizational structures, it is more beneficial to look at which pieces and parts might work best in Sangamon County and incorporate them into a model in which all parties involved in the development process can provide input into and ultimately support.

***We believe this is an important distinction because when it's time to make a final decision as to the future direction of the community and its economic development efforts, the same people, organizations and community leadership currently involved in business retention and attraction; marketing; entrepreneurship; placemaking; and workforce development will still be involved in the process tomorrow. There must be consensus and buy-in or organizational structure won't matter.***

### **PHASE III DESCRIPTION**

TDC felt it was important to better understand where Sangamon County has been, as well as delve into the frustration expressed about consultant plans and studies at the Strategic Leadership Council meeting where this study was introduced. Considerable time was spent reviewing many of the studies and planning strategies conducted in the Springfield and Sangamon County region over the past few decades. This was done after the personal contacts with the interviewees was complete.

***The troubling part of this phase of the project was, and remains, that very little of what we were told by local stakeholders represents new information.*** As far back as the 1980's, studies were being done to formulate the future vision of Springfield. As an example, ***the 2002 Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT) Study laid out an aggressive strategy*** to have "...better planning in the downtown, improve directional and visual cohesiveness and improving linkages between downtown Springfield and its neighborhoods."

When you read further into the report, some of the recommendations were enacted, but the transformational ideas were largely discarded or ignored. Placemaking strategies were discussed in detail, but few were implemented. ***Fast forward 15 YEARS to 2017, the same discussions are being had in the community,*** and, as in 2002, many people want to see progressive new and vibrant development strategies and placemaking initiatives.

The same thing was true in many of the other studies.

Nearly everyone interviewed by TDC said things need to change in Springfield and Sangamon County if the long term economic vitality of the area is to be retained.

**This raises two simple questions:**

- 1) If evaluation of what needs to happen has been a priority over the years, why hasn't implementation/change been a priority for regional community leadership to date?, and;**

**2) WHO CAN AND WILL LEAD ACTIONABLE CHANGE INSTEAD OF JUST TALKING ABOUT IT?** The region has been talking for more than 20 years without tangible results.

## SANGAMON COUNTY – AN OVERVIEW

In 2017, Springfield and Sangamon County is most often identified as the State Capital of Illinois and a tourism center focused on former President Abraham Lincoln. Ask anyone on the street, or in the interviews conducted for this report, and that is generally what they tell you. History shows a minimally growing and stable economy with lower than average (compared to other Illinois locations) unemployment rate and a relatively stable wage base.

The largest area employers are mostly found in the public sector and include the State of Illinois, the University of Illinois at Springfield, Lincoln Land Community College and related entities and Public School District 186. There are a few stellar Tier One local private sector brands such as the Bunn Company, Brandt Consolidated, LRS and H.D. Smith. These are supplanted by a scattered base of tech-oriented companies such as Hanson Information Systems and Henry Technologies; engineering firms with national and global impact such as Hanson Engineering and Crawford, Murphy Tilly; and other economic stalwarts including Springfield Electric, Dickey John, Simplex, Standard Aero and Mel-O-Cream, among others. The insurance and banking industries also play key roles in the local economy with Horace Mann Insurance, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Wells Fargo and a plethora of national and community banking entities having a presence here.

Several small to mid-sized manufacturing operations including some mentioned above are not located within the Springfield city limits and dot the landscape throughout the County. Many, like MD Designs, Richardson Manufacturing and Selvaggio Steel, have had a presence in the area for years, but have largely flown under the radar.

The medical cluster, composed of nationally recognized operations including Memorial Health Systems, the Southern Illinois University (SIU) School of Medicine, Hospital Sisters Health System (HSBS) and the Springfield Clinic and their associated operations and vendors, is recognized as a regional asset. ***While this has been identified locally as THE primary growth sector for today and tomorrow, it has its own challenges in the rapidly changing world of national health care and insurance, not to mention skills shortages and challenges attracting quality workers. In fact, these once stable institutions are also having problems attracting and maintaining doctors, especially those in certain specialty areas.***

Additionally, the area has many long-term developers and contractors, as well as some newcomers. The newer ones appear to operate a bit differently than the old-line companies, both in terms of strategy and marketing as well as project implementation.

## ORGANIZATIONS – THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SILOS

A large portion of the interview process undertaken in Phase I was dedicated to gathering input on perceptions about organizations who are involved, or are perceived to be involved, in the current regional economic development process. No leading questions were asked to steer responses; however, once an interviewee made their thoughts known, further questions were asked to attempt to document specific organizational impressions and performance perceptions. **The open-ended questions asked by TDC were simply: “Who is the leading economic development organization in the County and/or who advocates for economic development in the County?”**

***Responses were not what was expected. Answers varied from “I don’t know” to “the Chamber”, “Downtown Springfield”, “the City and the County”. Many interviewees mentioned specific brokers or developers as well. One even mentioned their accountant.***

**Nearly 80% of the interviewees first answered, “I don’t know” or “I guess the City”. The remaining 20% specifically mentioned the Chamber of Commerce/Q5 or other entities described above.** There was a direct correlation between the respondents who immediately said, “the Chamber” and their involvement with that organization as a Board Member, a member of the Strategic Leadership Committee (SLC) or the Q5 Initiative. Those interviewed who were not significantly involved in these entities did not place the Chamber or Q5 as the leading economic development entity.

TDC also asked the interviewees where a business prospect should be brought to help with locational selection questions and decisions if nothing was known about Springfield and Sangamon County. The majority named specific real estate brokers or developers and contractors. When we pressed further and asked who is the best single point of contact to help us with a potential project in the area, there was no consistency in responses. The answer was usually “I think.....” followed by the Chamber, Downtown Springfield, the City or the County. ***Again, this is concerning as successful communities across the country have a single point of contact and everyone knows who it is and what capacities and capabilities they bring to the table, including effectively carrying out the role of project ombudsman with all area entities necessary to complete the project.*** When asked simply “Are they successful as an economic development entity?,” regardless of whom they thought the lead entity was, a significant majority of the answers were “No” or “I’m not sure.”

The most common positive comments related to the perception that Sangamon County government operates efficiently and effectively, but no specific reference related to economic development activities were made. Comments were of a more general nature and reflected the perceived efficiency of County government as a whole.

**A sentiment from a company which formerly employed large numbers of people in the region seemed to set the stage for what we heard throughout the interviews. They stated that they constantly re-evaluate where to grant funds to get the most**

return on that investment and that it is increasingly difficult to make those decisions in Sangamon County. The principal interviewee stated, “There are simply too many silos here. And they don’t play well together. They do plan a lot, but it’s easy to do studies and plan. It’s much harder to take action, and that’s what I don’t see here.....action.”

## **THE GREATER SPRINGFIELD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

The Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce (the Chamber) has been in existence for more than 60 years. Some form of the economic development function of the community was coordinated under the Chamber umbrella since the beginning, ultimately evolving into the Q5 Initiative. After some initial successes, the effort was caught in the national recession of 2008 and never reached the job or investment goals that had been originally established. As a result, Q5’s priorities evolved into many areas that do not necessarily relate to primary job creation and retention.

***Various restarts dealt with critical issues of the region, but never appeared to fully develop Q5 or related activities into a comprehensive, actionable regional development strategy.*** The vast majority of TDC interviewees indicated that in recent years the Chamber has been operating without a true vision and mission. One interviewee said, “If the Chamber doesn’t have a vision for business and growth, who does?”

Generally, there is a universal feeling that the Chamber is trying to be all things to all people and isn’t focusing its efforts consistently in the right areas. That said, it is also important to note that previous Chamber management took the brunt of most of the dissatisfaction during our interviews.

***People nearly always had positive things to say personally about current Chamber CEO Chris Hembrough and Director of Business and Community Development Josh Collins,*** especially when compared to previous leadership. The concerns remain, however, that the Chamber is taking on more than it can reasonably be expected to manage with current staffing and other resource capabilities and capacities.

One person stated. “Just because you’re busy doesn’t mean you’re doing anything that provides long term value to the community.”

***It was also noted repeatedly that there is no consistent proactive effort to sell or market the region and that everything being undertaken appears to be reactive to a survey or to the crisis of the day or, most notably, activities which allow the Chamber of Commerce to raise money.***

The last statement is not atypical of Chamber operations nationally. Many are feeling the pinch financially and are looking for ways to generate ongoing and incremental revenue. In the Chamber industry, problems develop when an organization isn’t perceived to be

utilizing funds efficiently or, in cases where public money is involved, not using it to benefit the taxpayers of the region.

From the perspective of this study, it is troubling that most employers we interviewed did not have the Chamber or Q5 at the top of their list as someone to call if there was a potential project or if there was a business-related problem that needed to be solved. The outreach that was generally deemed to be more effective was contacting and dealing with a real or perceived political power in the region.

In personal interviews conducted between the Chamber and TDC it was clear that senior staff, notably Mr. Hembrough and Mr. Collins, are aware of the issues facing the Sangamon County region. They have taken the lead in attempting to address certain concerns and funding certain initiatives agreed to by the Strategic Leadership Council and the Chamber Board of Directors. ***But the fact remains that two, or even three, people cannot possibly handle the intricacies of operating a regional economic development program, and, at the same time, deal with the myriad of other issues they are running through the SLC, Q5 and regular Chamber operations.*** It is not feasible or efficient as currently structured and will not move the economic needle any time soon.

This is not to say that Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce isn't doing its job. They have many efforts underway that are attempting to address opportunities and challenges faced by the County business and employer base. Some of the related projects in which they are or have been involved are helping set the stage, including:

- Relocation of near-downtown rail freight
- Start-up funding for entrepreneurial programs
- Starting phases of a business retention program
- Trying to analyze industry clusters

The question is, ***are these efforts part of a greater, coordinated, economic development vision for the region which considers long-term goals and objectives; or are they simply working on the "issue of the day?"***

The other challenge faced by the Chamber is that although they identify as the ***Greater Springfield*** Chamber of Commerce, ***none of the communities outside of Springfield that we interviewed viewed the Chamber as an asset or true partner in the economic development process.*** They frequently cited the need to have additional assistance in their local economic development programs.

Except for a Chamber staff member employed there ten years ago and a previous employee of the Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission, no one could cite examples of how the Chamber or anyone else locally proactively assisted them in their efforts. One interviewee commented, "I get it. Springfield is where the money is, so they cater to them, but we need help out here too."

That comment encapsulates the over-all theme of the interviews. ***There is no one currently proactively managing and executing a comprehensive regional economic development strategy in Sangamon County.***

### **DOWNTOWN SPRINGFIELD INC.**

***For the last several decades there has been no cohesive regional vision or strategy for making downtown Springfield a vibrant destination with amenities sought by younger demographics and people who either move here from out of town or may be experiencing a life-change and want the residential lifestyle a vibrant downtown affords.***

Under the current leadership, Downtown Springfield, Inc. (DSI) is working to evolve itself from an events-focused organization that works with downtown retailers to more of a hybrid model that also emphasizes its role as a placemaking economic development entity. This goal is commendable as a strong and vibrant downtown has a positive ripple effect on the whole community.

To be successful in this space, DSI will need strong public and private sector direction, buy-in and financial support. The organization's current financial model shows that almost 80 percent of its funding comes from the Taste of Downtown event with the other 20 percent coming from membership and grants, and, those are mostly for work done on the Farmers' Market. The City's current investment is minimal and is specifically directed to a downtown art program.

With thousands of square feet of suitable space available for either retail or residential development, DSI recognizes the role it could and should play in redeveloping it. They have been advocates for new Tax Increment Finance policies and in advocating for consistent City interpretation of zoning and code rules and enforcement.

Robust planning will be key to these efforts as will prioritization of areas of initial focus and an aggressive implementation strategy. And, the community will have to have long-term commitment to carry the vision forward.

***DSI has been primarily operating in a vacuum, mostly not of its own creation. As a needed placemaking organization, it needs to be part of the overall regional economic development strategy and included as a partner.***

### **INNOVATE SPRINGFIELD**

Since its inception in 2015, Innovate Springfield (iSPI) has worked to provide not only reasonably priced physical space and technology for new start-ups but also access to business education opportunities and, maybe most importantly, mentors. The space also allows for open collaboration between the businesses who utilize it.

Cultivation of the creative class and work to grow their ideas into flourishing businesses is an important part of a comprehensive economic development strategy. Many people

with good, or even great, ideas have no idea of how to take it from concept to the marketplace. iSPI provides them with the space and support to help enable that.

The organization is supported by the Land of Lincoln Community Foundation and has a diverse board of community leaders but needs some entrepreneurs to be part of this policy group. The Chamber of Commerce is a funding partner through the Strategic Leadership Council and the City is a non-funding partner. The University of Illinois at Springfield (UIS) plays an integral role and provides instructors and mentors on-site for the entrepreneurs.

iSPI works closely with Downtown Springfield, Inc. – its “graduates” can logically become new businesses in downtown when they are ready to take that next step into space of their own.

***Initiatives like iSPI are crucial to the future of Sangamon County and Springfield. The bigger question is how does this fit into the coordinated regional economic vision.***

## **CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU**

The Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) is the attraction, event and tourist marketing and support organization for Sangamon County. The Lincoln sites, including the Presidential Museum and Library, as well as Route 66 sites are significant attractions to the area.

The CVB does a good job attracting conventions and conferences to the area, citing more than \$388 million in economic impact from tourism activities on an annual basis. More convention space, specifically at the Prairie Capital Convention Center, is needed to attract even more. The Illinois State Fairgrounds has been an asset in the past but now the grounds and buildings are in disrepair, so what can be done there is limited.

The CVB is completely publicly funded, receiving monies from the City of Springfield and from hotel/motel taxes and grants from the State of Illinois. Most of the sites and attractions in the area are government run and usually lack the resources for marketing so that additional responsibility falls on the CVB.

***Tourism is one of the strongest economic drivers in the region. It is important to continue to support and potentially expand new tourism opportunities as a part of a comprehensive strategy.***

## **ABRAHAM LINCOLN CAPITAL AIRPORT**

The Abraham Lincoln Capital Airport serves as the region’s primary air transportation access point and as a center for aviation industry in the County. The airport is home to many major tenants that include the Illinois Air National Guard, Illinois Department of Transportation’s (IDOT) Division of Aeronautics, Lincoln Land Community College’s Aviation Maintenance Training Center, StandardAero and Stellar Aviation. There is little

doubt that this facility is important in terms of direct and indirect job generation as well as a supporting facility to the casual and business traveler.

From a transportation standpoint, the airport was frequently mentioned by employers as an easy to navigate and convenient, because of its proximity to their homes or businesses, way to travel throughout the continental United States and beyond. Passenger numbers have increased, according to the Springfield Airport Authority, for each of the past four years. This is thanks to American Airlines flights to its Dallas hub and United Airlines flights to its Chicago hub along with direct vacation and work destinations in Florida and ongoing modifications to the United and American feeder schedules.

***There is, however, an underlying frustration for the business traveler and frequent comments were made by interviewees about the convenience of connecting flights to and from Springfield as well as the on-time and dependability factors associated with early morning and late evening flights.***

More than 60% of the employer-based interviewees expressed frustrations of cancelled flights and the need to drive home from Chicago or of being stranded in Dallas. These incidents have led many business flyers without access to private aircraft to regularly schedule flights out of St. Louis or Bloomington-Normal to ensure consistent on-time performance.

***TDC agrees with comments made by Mark Hanna, the airport's Executive Director, that much of the scheduling difficulty or perceived difficulty is not controllable locally.*** The airlines dictate landing slots and availability based on use and passenger volume. Until those increase consistently, there will be little room for improvement. This situation also shows why it is important that efforts continue to attract travelers from other regional locations surrounding Sangamon County and to take advantage of cooperative synergies with other neighboring cities.

As an example, Decatur is currently home to a U.S. Customs and Border Protection facility and can clear travelers on private aircraft into the country. The Customs facility, in partnership with the Decatur Airport, already has an agreement in place with Willard Airport in Champaign-Urbana to provide Customs clearance services. For private aircraft owners and users, Springfield could provide the same services with a similar arrangement with Decatur.

From an economic development perspective, there is also opportunity to work with the Decatur Foreign Trade Zone to acquire Sub-Zone designation to benefit employers who import raw materials or product into Sangamon County. These types of multi-County regional synergies are critical if the Central Illinois region as a whole is to thrive in the future.

Additionally, the 150-acre Airport Commerce Park is a potential location for business seeking direct highway access and access to potential air freight operations. From our

interviews, it appears that most people do not think of the airport property as a top of mind development opportunity. This appears to be due to a lack of aggressive marketing of the property by the regional economic development leadership as well as potentially inaccurate assumptions made by some as to the viability of the property.

***In short, these development opportunities and tools are present, but as noted in many other sections of the report, they are not factored in as part of a cohesive and coordinated regional strategy and vision for growth.***

### **UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS – SPRINGFIELD**

The University of Illinois at Springfield (UIS) is one of three campuses of the University of Illinois system. **This campus has the potential to be a major asset to the community but is frequently undervalued.** Employing over 1,100 full and part-time faculty and staff and over 500 hundred students and graduate interns/assistants, UIS is one of the fastest growing campuses in the Illinois university system and houses the potential to help the region transform itself, reshaping its future.

***Nearly 20% of the students are from out of the country, providing a nucleus of incoming talent potential and cultural diversity that has been lacking in Central Illinois, but they, like their peers, rarely stay in the area after graduation.*** Focused not only on education but on the economic impact the campus can have in the community, UIS staff was instrumental in starting the Innovate Springfield project to foster entrepreneurial activities. This and future interactions with the community is critical in order for Sangamon County to become relevant in development and global innovation.

Additionally, UIS provides graduate level programs in many areas and is especially known for its Masters in Public Administration and Public Affairs Reporting programs. ***Growth is planned in Information Technology instruction and related activities to meet the ever-increasing demands for people to operate and manage the “Internet of All Things” and Cyber Security now and in the future. This has huge potential upside if the region can make it a part of the long-term vision in the coming years.***

More than 300 current State of Illinois employees are enrolled in UIS programs, and other plans are under consideration of development in order to more fully integrate the campus into the fabric of the community. To the extent that UIS can expand its presence into the downtown areas of Springfield, prime opportunities for dynamic partnerships with business and government can more easily happen, with the additional economic impacts of having students learning, working and living in the City’s core. It would be a real game changer for the landscape and vitality of downtown Springfield.

## **LINCOLN LAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

Lincoln Land Community College (LLCC) serves nearly 16,000 students annually through credit and non-credit classes at several locations – the main campus in Springfield, Taylorville and the new training facility at the Abraham Lincoln Memorial Airport. They offer 161 degree and certificate programs in all between those taught in the classroom and on-line.

***The school fills a worker training niche for local employers who utilize their services.*** A prime example of this is the fairly recent partnership between LLCC and area fixed wing carrier, Standard Aero, to train current and potential Standard Aero employees on plane repairs and refurbishments on-site at the airport. This partnership shows how Springfield leaders can and have stepped up to fill a need. In this case, Richard Levi and the Levi Foundation substantially paid for the training center to be built. Another example is the mentorship program started for young African American men.

LLCC also provides the instruction for many students wishing to obtain an associate's degree or certificate and works closely with local unions on apprenticeship programs; however, there are some businesses creating their own apprenticeship programs. The school is a pipeline for students who wish to complete a 4-year degree at the University of Illinois at Springfield, or another 4-year college or university. They share concerns about student readiness as they transition from high school to employment or the next step in their education. Sixty percent of all LLCC students take at least one remedial education course to catch them up before their program instruction can begin.

LLCC is also home to the regional Small Business Development Center (SBDC). Due to delays and reductions in payments from the State of Illinois, SBDC services are basically self-funded through LLCC. That has made the mission of the office challenging, but ***solid startup assistance capacity is in place, and when partnering with Innovate Springfield, a nucleus of resources is available that many other communities lack.***

***It is apparent from conversations with LLCC and other educational institutions in the region that there is no single point of coordination for regional workforce development activities.*** A logical place to start would be a stronger collaboration between LLCC and the County's Workforce Investment Board. Sangamon County, as the pass-through funding entity for the Workforce grants, hasn't done particularly well in this arena and could have a much greater impact in workforce development than it has in the past. One of the results is that there is local duplication, and, in some instance, too many institutions and other entities trying to carry out the same programs, often times without credentials. An entity that brings all of these groups together to coordinate workforce development initiatives to meet a regional vision and goals is essential in business attraction and retention efforts.

## CITY OF SPRINGFIELD

***Some of the most prevalent comments regarding the City of Springfield revolved around the lack of consistent community vision and policy implementation strategies across multiple Administrations and City Councils.*** Many feel this lack of long-term consistency has hurt the City and kept it from evolving into a dynamic economic powerhouse. It was refreshing to hear Mayor Jim Langfelder address this issue before it was brought up in conversation. He has indicated that he would like to move toward creating internal mechanisms which will stay in place regardless of who is Mayor, and he should be commended for that thought process.

However, as referenced in other parts of this report and in numerous interviews, ***the City of Springfield is generally seen as being less than business friendly.*** There are several reasons which will be outlined further below, but they all generally revolve around a lack of consistency of process, consistency of policy, consistency of rules interpretation and lack of an efficient mechanism to deal with project reviews and issues related to overall project development. The other major issue most frequently mentioned was related to the increasing rates and peak demand charges at City Water, Light and Power (CWLP).

Developers and contractors cited frustration with the way the City works as compared to other central Illinois locations and similar-sized metro areas throughout the Midwest. TDC interviewers were frequently told that the initial permitting process in Springfield can easily take six to eight weeks for smaller projects and longer for large ones, while many other metro areas in Illinois can do the same process in three weeks or less.

Additional frustration expressed by nearly everyone interviewed related to inconsistent rulings on zoning changes or annexation and the length of time it takes to process building permits. Multiple developers and builders who do work locally and also operate outside of Sangamon County, expressed frustration at the inspection process in particular. There were several anecdotal stories about one inspector saying something was okay to do, only to have a different inspector come into the project later and ask for changes to what the previous inspector had approved. To have a successful development environment, policies should be clearly defined and interpretations should be consistent across inspectors, unless unusual circumstances are involved.

Interpretations of these staff discrepancies usually added delays and, more often than not, also added extra unbudgeted costs to the projects. As with other issues related to the City, this is not just a current challenge but rather appears to have gone on for years across multiple Administrations. It is our understanding that the Chamber and the current City Administration are working to try to address these operational inconsistencies and move towards a one-stop permitting process. Some Aldermen also expressed a desire to address this perception. However, as this report is being drafted, it does not appear that meaningful change has yet occurred. If Springfield, in particular, is to be competitive with other locations, it is imperative that these basic and fundamental procedures be fixed as soon as possible.

Related to this topic, ***it was stated on multiple occasions that if problems develop during a development project, it is best to utilize the influence of aldermen and executive staff at City Hall to “move things along.” Instead of fostering the perception of favoritism, internal processes should be able to handle problematic situations in a timely manner, without the need for elected officials’ intervention.***

***Most national site selection firms view a four to six-week permit processing timeline for major development projects as being on a slower than acceptable track.*** This viewpoint is driven by ever-decreasing project timelines and the need for rapid approvals to accommodate these timelines. According to senior, Chicago-based, national consultants, projects that previously had a nine-month location decision window are now frequently being compressed into three-month decision timelines. That adds pressure to efficiently and effectively deliver local regulatory processes to potential facility locations being considered for these projects. ***Communities who have figured out aggressive and streamlined pre-permitting processes and can deliver final permits in less than three weeks are the gold standard.***

***CWLP was a frequent source of frustration as well.*** Nearly every business, with significant electric utility needs, interviewed was concerned about the ongoing increases they have faced in their electric rates, to the point where some are paying higher kilowatt/hour rates than the highest rates in other areas of Illinois. Other comments reflecting added demand charges for businesses were prevalent. Most high usage customers view the charges as excessive and, in many cases, counterproductive to their profitability and long term local viability.

It appears that much of the CWLP increases can be attributed to the costs associated with the recent construction of the new generation facility, and miscalculations about the amount of revenue the new facility could generate through open market power sales. Negotiated wind energy contracts and promised subsidies for those contracts from the State of Illinois, which apparently haven’t been paid to date, further impacted the fiscal condition of the utility. ***As an example, one business said their electric bill increased by \$60,000 per year, without increased demand or usage,*** placing a significant strain on their cash flow. Another major factor in increased rates is the debt load the utility has been forced to carry because of non-payment from the State of Illinois while its leadership continues to struggle to pass a budget.

***This is all a significant departure from the days when CWLP was a major asset for the City, providing reliable electricity with significantly lower than average rates. For many years, the rates were among the lowest in the State of Illinois and competed favorably with the typically low rates in the southeastern United States, putting Springfield and areas around the City served by CWLP in an excellent position.***

These low electric rates were one of the reasons Springfield used to be home to a robust manufacturing presence which were high use and high demand clients. Since the

1980's, manufacturing facilities have been moving out of the area, not to be replaced, in part because the region made a determination not to try to replace them. This likely indirectly changed the focus of the utility, costing the utility users and longer term revenue.

***That said, once costs stabilize and long-term debt diminishes, CWLP remains a unique asset which should ultimately benefit the City and the entire Sangamon County region.***

***Other comments from interviewees showed concern about the condition of the City's aged public infrastructure and how needed ongoing improvements will be funded.*** This is going to be a long-term issue and will impact the City's finances for many years. Additionally, many interviewees spoke of the challenges and costs faced by developers when they are required to install water, sewer, storm water retention and other infrastructure at their own cost.

Many people commented that these expenses can often make or break the profitability of a development project and have even put some projects on hold indefinitely. When pressed further, ***TDC was repeatedly told anecdotally that mandated regional infrastructure costs were and are higher than nearly every other area in the state. This has not been verified but should be a concern even if the perception is present.***

The City's Office of Planning and Economic Development (OPED) received mixed reviews. Most employers were not able to identify the primary mission of the office and had questions as to what the Office actually did on a day to day basis. From our interviews and conversations with the City OPED and the Chamber, it appears that the Chamber works with the City OPED to manage Request for Information (RFI) responses from business prospects and the City in general, and the OPED in particular, focuses on neighborhood redevelopment and incentive management, such as administration of the Enterprise Zone and the multiple Tax Increment Financing Districts. OPED staff also indicated that they help development projects move through the City bureaucracy, which is a critical function to the community's success. Front line staff received many compliments on their ability to assist when necessary.

As mentioned above, it is our impression that Mayor Jim Langfelder has strong ideas and visions for the City and nearly everyone we spoke with stated strong personal regard for him. However, there was concern frequently expressed during the interview process for this study that the current City staff may not have the skill sets and relationships necessary to adequately implement his vision, or the City Council's wishes. TDC is not in a position to comment further and only includes this information so that it may be taken in context with the findings of the rest of the report.

## **SANGAMON COUNTY GOVERNMENT**

***Sangamon County Government received nearly universal praise as an efficient and effective local government entity.*** The comments were generally related to keeping the budget under control; consistency of policy and its implementation; and a perception that when problems arise, regardless of the topic or issue, steps are taken to address the situation. There was notable support of County government in the outlying communities and a feeling that resources, whether human or capital, were generally made available to help them with issues and situations which develop over time.

Numerous positive comments were made about the leadership and action-oriented style of Board Chairman Andy Van Meter and his administrative staff. ***It appears obvious, when compared to other local governments, that the main reason for this is continuity of leadership and absence of shifting dynamics of major administration changes that comes from that.***

From an economic development perspective, the County was occasionally referenced as a place to go for development assistance and many held a belief that the County, or more precisely, the Springfield Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission (SSCRPC), were solid resources for guidance and support of local community development initiatives. SCRPC is discussed a more detail below.

Some of the development related comments about County government were from interviewees in the City of Springfield, but the majority were from those in the outlying communities and unincorporated areas of the County. ***The overwhelming majority of local government officials we spoke with said they felt they had a good working relationship with County government and that there was generally progress made on issues of mutual importance to the region.***

## **SPRINGFIELD SANGAMON COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**

The SSCRPC provides overall planning services related to land use, housing, recreation, transportation, economic development and environmental protection, as well as conducting special projects and programs as necessary.

The group received generally high praise from local government interviewees for its service to their particular jurisdictions. They also were commended for their ongoing assistance in matters related to planning, information and data assistance and insights into development issues throughout the County. The Commission is staffed with knowledgeable individuals with a passion for planning who maintain consistency of process and strong ideas for process implementation.

That said, it was interesting that many interviewees mentioned the Commission as a potential source for economic development assistance. When TDC pressed for specific examples, few were cited within the City of Springfield, but outlying communities and

employers in those areas talked about staff assisting them in dealing with potential development projects and helping them understand the issues they needed to address in order to compete for primary job developments and projects which could impact the local tax base.

***When this is positioned against the perception of the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce as not being a strong ally in helping outlying communities with development issues, it reinforces the earlier stated concerns about the lack of an economic development vision and strategy for the region. This doesn't diminish the assistance provided by the Commission, but if an effective regional collaboration existed, the Commission could focus on planning and not have to fill the gaps of an ineffective regional development program.***

## LOCAL LEADERSHIP AND ISSUE ADVOCACY

Sangamon County is home to people who care about the community. Whether they are involved by serving on boards of local organizations or they simply fund projects of interest to them or their organizations, it seems there are many people who do and will become involved in activities that appear to promote the betterment of the community.

But, there are also many that are in the mode of participating for the sake of participating. Many of the interviewees indicated they go to meetings because that is what is expected. ***Few people indicated they are openly willing to be a transformational force for change and progress.*** This is not unique to Sangamon County. Many communities across the country can identify with this phenomenon.

Like most regions, board membership or leadership roles often tend to be filled by the same people in the region. Often, it is organizational musical chairs. Few in the region want the volunteer leadership responsibility and fewer want to “rock the boat” or push specific agendas because it takes a considerable time commitment and, more importantly, impacts the time they have available to run their own company or organization. ***It was also brought to the attention of TDC interviewers on numerous occasions that people who disagree with the status quo or want to push for dramatic change aren’t taken seriously or, worse yet, are encouraged to remain silent, thereby stifling progress and innovation.***

What was expressed throughout the interview process was that historically, a few people in the County made all the decisions, and ***newcomers or people with different viewpoints were not, and, many believe, still are not welcomed.*** Assuming for the time being that is true, ***it helps explain the inability of the region to reimagine itself by creating a long-term vision based on a diverse economy and population point of view.***

***There are perceptions that a “closed system” exists in the County, or in other words it’s a system of “it’s who you are and who you know” that drives what you can do. Concerns were expressed that if you are not in the “power group”, as one interviewee noted, it’s hard to get anything done.***

***Another topic which was raised somewhat frequently was the presence of perceived and real racism in the region. This concern wasn’t raised only by the minority community members we interviewed, but by numerous business and organizational leaders as well.***

TDC pressed for specific examples and due to concerns about being “labeled” or “ostracized” as being too direct or politically incorrect, few were willing to share details. While TDC would typically dismiss comments on any topic that can’t be backed by shareable examples or definitive and actionable trend histories, this issue should be a cause for community-wide concern. It was voluntarily raised often enough to be considered a real issue that needs to be addressed.

***In any area, there are usually a handful of people who are TRUE CHANGE AGENTS with the drive and MORAL AUTHORITY to move things forward. For truly catalytic, regional change to happen, those few community leaders - the ones who are respected enough to allow them to drive and lead change and who will also vocally and aggressively push for a long-term community vision and implementation strategy - need to be integrally involved and have their influence and resources utilized strategically.***

***They are the key to Sangamon County's success.***

## **WAGE AND EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES**

***A consistent theme among primary employers and entry level employers was ongoing concerns about the current and future availability of workers. Local primary employers are facing significant challenges hiring and retaining engineers; information technology professionals in hardware maintenance and implementation and software development and distribution arenas; and individuals with strong finance and business backgrounds.*** The medical community faces these challenges in addition to the challenges of finding, hiring and retaining employees who are in the medical service delivery fields such as nurses, CNA's and even physician specialists.

Some of the office operations executives we interviewed expressed challenges in finding people "who want to work." This was also expressed by employers in certain manufacturing settings and in areas where manual or daily physical labor is involved. Restaurants and retailers anecdotally mentioned the same things.

***Some of this is not unusual to Sangamon County*** and tends to be dependent on the age range of the employee group. In other projects TDC has dealt with over the years, and, in the course of dealing with many companies across multiple sectors, there is a generational gap between employer and employee expectations. This has been a national trend.

Interestingly, interviewees at some of the more progressive companies and the at the post-secondary education institutions made a counter point. They believe that employers who adapt their operations to the work styles of younger workers will ultimately benefit by bringing innovative ideas and progressive work habits to the marketplace. This attitude has worked in some major metro areas and has drawn large numbers of younger workers who seek employers who meet their expectations for flexible work schedules and telecommuting options.

***The medical occupational challenges are also not unique to Sangamon County, but they are magnified by the increasing real and perceived dependence on the medical sector as an economic driver for the area.*** With three major private sector medical facilities and the Southern Illinois University School of Medicine operating in the County,

there is a drumbeat of support for the medical industry here, making staffing an ongoing priority. Absent that priority, the long-term prosperity of the sector will be increasingly challenged.

There is great promise in the desire to develop more of the community around healthcare and medical services industry, but like the days of manufacturing, the industry itself is not unique to Springfield and Sangamon County. Peoria and other regional locations are home to the OSF medical system, Champaign Urbana has the Carle system and Chicago has numerous nationally renowned facilities. Additionally, the University of Illinois College of Medicine has multiple locations in Central and Northern Illinois including Urbana and Peoria near Sangamon County.

In short, medical growth is a function of aging baby boomers. ***What happens in 10-20 years when the generational shift occurs again and technology advances to the point where doctors don't need to be on site and diagnosis and surgeries can be done remotely. It sounds farfetched, but it's happening in other parts of the country today. In a few short years, the industry will be vastly different. During the time this study was taking place, some of the medical institutions have begun to consolidate services to avoid duplicate programs. We don't see this changing any time soon.***

***The medical industry is definitely important to the future of the community, but should not be deemed the sole replacement for state government as a primary economic driver.***

We encourage the region to build on the inherent strengths of the area and to remember ***the goal should be to create a vibrant, diverse and transformational community that welcomes innovative ideas, new visions and new investors from the outside.***

***This has not happened in the past 40 years and the County and its residents have paid the price for the stagnation of new ideas and ongoing satisfaction with the status quo.***

This is especially noteworthy when taken in context of the interviewees who expressed concerns that their own children and grandchildren are leaving the area. ***A vibrant community with a robust business and entrepreneurial climate and that provides the cultural, educational and recreational opportunities that make for a "cool community" are what are needed to stem this tide. The community must strategically work together to make that happen.***

## ***ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IN SANGAMON COUNTY***

Over the past 45 years, the State of Illinois has been a microcosm of the United States and has enjoyed both periods of growth, and, by all accounts, a recent history of long term decline.

Throughout the turmoil and constantly shifting economic sands, a small number of communities and counties have shown consistent stability and an apparent unwavering ability to “weather the storm” of changing economic realities. Upstate suburban communities like Naperville, Bolingbrook and Romeoville and counties like Lake and DuPage effectively and consistently took advantage of regional efficiencies and the shift from parochial local economies to that of regional and globally-influenced economies. They also drew new and expanding businesses and the related opportunities that came with that success. All because they risked reinventing themselves.

Over the past 30 years, downstate communities and regions like Danville, Peoria, Decatur, the Quad Cities, Metro East and Mt. Vernon struggled with the implosion of traditional manufacturing and energy sector jobs and struggled to reinvent themselves with varying levels of success. Other downstate communities like Bloomington-Normal, Champaign-Urbana, Quincy, Effingham and Springfield remained relatively stable or grew based on a diversity of quality employers and business sectors.

Most of the time, Illinois witnessed the battle between the manufacturing communities and the perceived white-collar communities, and, in most cases, the stability of white collar employment consistently won out. Early in this period, Springfield and Sangamon County enjoyed the best of both worlds, with large manufacturing operations such as Fiat Allis, Pillsbury and Hobbs Stewart Warner. They and many other businesses such as local stalwarts like the Bunn Company and Sangamo Electric provided balance to the white-collar jobs offered by companies like Franklin Life, Horace Mann, Memorial Medical Center, St John’s Hospital, Springfield Clinic, major national and community banking establishments and the State of Illinois.

But then something happened that, depending on who you ask, either deliberately or accidentally set the foundation for the challenges that are faced today in the Illinois Capital’s metro economy. The larger old-line manufacturers began to disappear and no efforts appear to have been made to stop the impacts of their loss.

***During the TDC interviews, numerous long-term residents told us that decisions were made to step away from manufacturing and related industries to focus on making Sangamon County and Springfield the home of white collar employment, anchored by growing government employment at the State of Illinois.***

It was determined that “the state would always be here because we’re the capital, and that’s all we need.” As is so often the case, ***a seemingly well-intentioned shift in philosophy failed*** to look beyond immediate opportunities and ***did not take the time to***

**formulate an executable long-term vision for the County.** Complacency and the status quo reigned.

The state did continue to grow for a while but then budgetary uncertainty starting in the 1990's forced increases in efficiencies in state agencies which meant decreases in employees in order to stabilize. The decreases have continued as state government continues to work on being leaner and more efficient. ***There is a local belief, that during Governor Blagojevich's terms in office, state jobs were moved to Chicago and could be moved back at any time. However, a study requested by State Representative Sara Jimenez and conducted by the State of Illinois Department of Central Management Services, paints a far different picture. Many jobs were moved but many more were lost due to retirements and attrition. One of the findings of the CMS study was that there are potentially 500 state employee positions, in a best case scenario, that might return to the Capital City in the coming years.***

The Springfield Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission's 2015 study entitled "Reviewing Economic Growth Trends in the Springfield-Sangamon County Economic Area" reinforces the TDC findings. In summary, the Commission found that:

**Population Growth is Slipping.** Most notably this is occurring in the under 19 age group, which is critical to the long-term workforce development capacity.

**Growth of Personal Wealth is Gaining, but Weakly.** "Sangamon's statewide rankings showed it lagging behind its Central Illinois peer benchmark counties in recent years, moving it away from the middle of all Illinois counties."

**Job Growth is Slipping.** "The study found job growth in the area to be toward the mid-range of all Illinois counties from 1970-2013, but below that of its peer, comparison counties. It found declines of 5% or more in half of the 16 industry sectors that make up the regional economy for which data was available."

**Business Growth is Lagging.** "..... the results show the area falling behind state and national averages as well as peer counties in recent decades. One finds, for example, that real industry earnings have continued to fall in the economic area since the 1990's, and to do so noticeably."

**High Technology Business Growth is Questionable.** "Overall the Planning Commission found:

- That the economic strength of the area had eroded over time, but this erosion had not been sufficiently noticed.
- The area showed strength in such areas as Biomedicine and Biotechnology, but weakness in other core sectors and clusters.
- The rate of population growth was slowing, which will be inter-twined with the area's long-term economic success."

***The Springfield Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission Study findings are important in the context of the TDC report as they represent another in a series of studies which have identified trends for the region, which have not been acknowledged or addressed by the regional leadership or economic development organizations.***

## **THE INTERNAL PERCEPTIONS**

One of the primary goals of this exercise was to evaluate the responses to our standard questions and try to identify patterns based on size of the employer, type of employer, government opinions versus private sector opinions, opinions of workforce development partners and educational institutions versus those from union or skilled trade representatives and so on.

***The one thing that stood out in nearly every instance was the consistency of responses, regardless of the source. There is an overarching feeling in nearly every segment of the interview pool that, despite some positive opportunities, Springfield and Sangamon County are on the wrong track and are not taking adequate steps to position the region for long term economic success and prosperity.***

***The short-term views are being driven almost totally by the real and, in some cases, perceived impact of the fiscal health of the State of Illinois.*** Business owners and employers fall into two basic categories. Those who do business or have done business with the state and are owed money for services provided, and those whose businesses and profitability are driven by consumer demand and the availability of disposable income, which are decreasing as state government shrinks.

***The first group includes employers from nearly every sector and totals, from informal polling during the interview process, nearly \$1 billion in lost or delayed payments.*** Many of those entities are having to find other business opportunities just to carry their daily operational costs and keep the doors open, while at the same time borrowing money to carry the delinquent balances owed by the State of Illinois. In reality, even after the passage of a budget, past due payments will not be made immediately. This reality will continue to exist even after the settlement of the recent two plus year state budget impasse. The multiplier effect of these delayed payments is staggering, especially in a region like Sangamon County which has previously shown little interest in diversifying its economy beyond government.

***The latter group feels the impact of a population who is concerned, if not scared, about their personal futures.*** They are frequently electing to stay home and not spend money at local retailers. This impacts everything from car dealerships to electronics stores, appliance and home improvement material sales, office equipment and clothes in addition to food and restaurant sales and other similar areas where disposable income drives sales. It even appears to many business owners we interviewed that retirees from state government are pulling back to save money in the event pension payments are halted or reduced due to the ongoing budget debacle. It is also important to note the impact of online sales through outside sources like Amazon and others. Traditional brick and mortar outlets are struggling regardless of location.

Home sales and prices are flat to decreasing and the impact of the ever-decreasing Equalized Annual Valuation is being felt by local taxing bodies. As recently as April 3,

2017, some local retailers aired commercials speaking of the downturn in the economy locally and encouraging people to come see them and support local business. This strategy was unheard of in the region in recent memory and truly illustrates the perceived downward spiral of the regional economy.

***The current consumer mindset and cautious approach to spending is becoming the new normal and is reflected in lower sales tax revenues for local governments across the County. It is trickle-down economics in the reverse and ultimately reflects the negative side of long-held over-confidence held by the region that “things could never go bad here because we have state government.”***

***It is also important to note that many long-time businesses, defined here as primary job generators, do not view Springfield and Sangamon County as critical to their future success.*** This is a fundamental problem which must be addressed immediately. Those companies who rely heavily on engineering, product design and development, and information technology, universally spoke of the difficulties in finding, hiring and retaining a skilled workforce.

***When we asked the primary job generators to explain what they do if the local worker inventory or the local development processes or incentives no longer meet their needs, the responses were simple. “We go elsewhere”*** to meet the demand of customers and of our business. TDC followed up on these questions and asked if anyone locally had ever pro-actively contacted them to see what customer, supplier or business synergies existed in the community or what opportunities and challenges kept them from expanding or remaining open. 75% of the interviewees said no. Nearly 100% of the employers located outside of the City of Springfield said no.

Follow-up comments usually revealed the perception that anyone who had asked these basic questions was: doing it as a part of yet another survey or as an entree to talk about raising money for an organization or for a particular program the organization asking the questions wanted to develop. ***When asking employers about their challenges and opportunities, consistent follow-up or perceived follow-up needs to occur to build confidence with the employer community. They need to know (1) that someone cares about their issues after the surveys are complete; and (2) that efforts will be made to address them.***

***TDC also asked if anyone circled back with the company because of how they answered questions in a survey or questionnaire to address that employer’s or organization’s issues. 80% said no.***

A real-life confirmation of this issue developed during our outreach process. During the interviews, TDC came across a project that was in the development stage that no one locally knew about. We made the company aware of potential incentives available to them and recommended a course of action to access those incentives, making a Springfield location more financially viable. While this is normally a revenue generating part of our business, we gave the company the information free of charge to avoid any

appearance of conflict of interest. The point is, however, that this employer is a major part of the regional economy with locations in multiple countries. Why no one was aware of the opportunity for the community was a giant red flag and reflects a basic lack of reliable business retention and expansion programs.

***This is a fundamental issue that directly impacts the long-term viability of businesses in the region. The economic development organizational infrastructure must be aware of potential growth opportunities on an ongoing and consistent basis. Being out of the loop or behind the curve in assisting potential development projects severely hampers the ability to access needed incentives in a timely manner and does little to create and/or reinforce the perceptions that the area is employer friendly.***

### **COMMENTS FROM THE INTERVIEWEES**

During the information gathering process, TDC interviewers made it clear to the interviewees that no attribution of comments would be made specifically to any individual, unless they wanted their name attached. Few did and due to the substantial number of respondents who wished to maintain confidentiality, the decision was made to list answers to a few key questions for illustration purposes. This sampling does show the patterns and the thoughts behind these responses and gauges the underlying impressions of the interview pool.

#### **Question: What are the Positive Aspects of Doing Business in Sangamon County and the State of Illinois?**

- None or no response – 15% of the interviewees
- From a state perspective, there are no positives except a central location with access to Chicago, St. Louis and Indianapolis
- Great “product” to sell for a metro area of this size
- Strong potential “creative class” downtown – lots of young entrepreneurs
- Access to legislators
- Central location for associations and meetings
- Hotels downtown and on the perimeter
- Many pieces of the tourism puzzle are present
- Great people, talent and friendly community
- Educated experienced workforce
- High educational attainment
- Solid transportation network with direct access to two major interstates
- Multiple Class 1 rail lines and the Airport
- Home of state government – attracts suppliers and contractors (when the state is paying its bills)
- Strong medical community
- Close-knit community

- Good utilities with lots of water
- You can make a good living here
- It's safe
- Small community at heart
- Wonderful small community
- No traffic congestion
- Lots of activities- all of the time- probably needs to be marketed better
- For its size, it is a very philanthropic community
- Great place to raise a family
- Multiple education and training opportunities
- Honest people here
- 2 to 2½ degrees of separation so you can always contact the right person
- Taxes aren't THAT bad
- Production worker availability is good outside of the City of Springfield
- More automation is coming to our manufacturing process, and, I'm told, there are programs that can help me find people, but I haven't met with anybody yet.
- Lots of multi-generational family businesses
- Culture of good work value/ethic
- Cost of Living is inexpensive
- Central geography
- Comfortable
- Can see your kids at their activities
- Quality of life
- Good services and amenities
- CWLP – own electric
- City also owns water system
- Small big town
- Enough culture
- Honest people
- Loyal workers
- Not like Peoria (in a good way)
- Climate good
- There is underemployment, so good people are available for the right kind of work
- Famous President/history
- State capital
- Great neighborhoods
- Historic buildings
- Art scene
- Music scene
- Food/culture
- Healthy night life

- Tourism – festivals
- Livable communities
- Great regional hospitals

**Question: What are the Negative Aspects of Doing Business in Sangamon County and the State of Illinois?**

*In successful and vibrant communities, the positives far outweigh the negatives in terms of quantity but also consistency. In Sangamon County, the opposite was true in that those interviewed by TDC were not shy about expressing their frustration with the area. There is a distinct undercurrent of dissatisfaction with past and current challenges and development efforts* and the list of negatives below represents only a portion of the negative comments we received. Most became repetitive throughout the interviews, and while that is somewhat reflected below, our intent was to focus on the most commonly mentioned negatives.

**State of Illinois**

- No Budget
- Political Chaos
- No adults in charge
- Workers Compensation is huge problem
- Employers are viewed as a necessary evil, not as a fundamental driver of growth and prosperity
- The state owes too many businesses in Springfield and Sangamon County too much money and it's killing our economy
- This area is branded in the media as being dysfunctional, but it's not us, it's the State of Illinois who just happens to be headquartered here. Unfortunately, we are paying the price in terms of negative publicity

**Springfield and Sangamon County**

- Closed community, hard to break into social circles
- Air travel is challenging
- Not very stimulating community – not venue for new ideas
- “Springfielditis”
- No vibrancy
- Nothing happening
- Development plans in this area are hard to implement
- There is a definite “we and they” mentality here – I’ve never had a “how can we help you” response
- Development community risk adverse – used to fat paydays from the state, got lazy, didn’t update buildings
- Our kids don’t come back here

- We have to decide who is first here, individuals or the community
- Infrastructure is challenging for municipalities
- No one knows how to integrate quality of life into Economic Development
- Sites/attractions are government run, no marketing dollars
- Convention center needs expansion
- Local community doesn't understand extent or potential of assets
- People locally are negative – “why does anyone want to come here?”
- Suitable space is an issue, even with vacancies, inventory is low
- No entity is building relations with building owners downtown to work with them on upgrading the buildings
- Too much unskilled labor
- Property taxes high
- State pensions unfunded
- This area can be, I dare to say, racist. It is not welcoming to outsiders or people who are different
- City regulations are being misinterpreted or are over the top
- City building/zoning department – look for why not vs how can; not welcoming (looking for problems)
- No strong start-up assistance
- No marketing programs
- Navigating City is difficult – needs to be clear
- Parking is limited – at least that's the business perception
- Signage – looks temporary
- Panhandling is a big problem, but non-aggressive
- We're in IL – no state budget; pension crisis
- City has ignored blue collar jobs since Fiat Allis closed
- State Capital – used to be a draw, but now center of disaster
- We belittle Springfield ourselves
- African American males – don't have enough pride in themselves
- Aging workforce
- Most of the time, government doesn't come at it from perspective of business and creating a better community – instead bureaucratic/paperwork driven. Instead we should ask how we can help and get rid of barriers
- No progressive, forward-thinking people to move community forward
- Med District –
  - not utilized;
  - no dollars – biggest excuse for not moving forward;
  - why don't hospitals underwrite – do they believe this is important?
  - Med district commission are political appointees – are they the best to serve?
  - Is worthless
- How do we create neighborhood?

- Lack of having a plan
- Lots of factions
- Chatham v Springfield
- Rochester v Springfield
- County v City
- Who brings it all together?????? “I think that’s the Chamber’s job.”
- City-County-chamber need to get heads together with an integrated plan – currently high speed rail seems to be the only point of integration
- CWLP in financial trouble for 10-15 years
  - Get rid of back door tax
  - Need to keep viable
  - Need guaranteed rates to attract Biz
- Issues with state
- Workers comp
- Unions aggressive/harmful
- Bring back manufacturing – why did the old guys who used to run the place decide to let it go away? That was incredibly short-sighted.
- Need to put together land incentives
- No one is doing any recruitment of major employers
- Springfield is in race to the bottom - “right to work”
- Lots of empty buildings in City
- Just service industry community – sell, don’t produce except for Bunn, maybe Nudo
- Need to create excitement
- Need a very hands on approach
- There is no progress on holistically training
- Area argues about low income housing vs the important things, like creating jobs
- YMCA is a good example – the City owns it; why didn’t they just put a job creator there
- Continued dependence on single industries
- City does not involve taxing bodies in new TIF until very end when they need a letter of support or board vote. It’s not a cooperative environment
- Regulations too intrusive at every government level
- My business is owed \$63 million by state
- An end user told me this is the toughest City they have worked with on permits and site inspectors – there’s inconsistency
- Need to have places ready to develop
- Need to focus on retention
- Need to take care of what we have – keep & help grow – NO one is doing this
- Challenging to work with City

- Need to be more recreationally friendly – for instance, bike paths throughout City
- No build-to-suits going on anywhere
- Glass half empty attitude in community
- Not a lot of collaboration. Church rehab project is exception – City, developers and Chamber
- City hard to do business with – permits hard to obtain
- New ordinance in Springfield – workers on City project must live here
- City not progressive
- Collaboration key – bring all together, starts with Mayor and the Chairman
- Unemployment insurance
- Workers comp
- Pension deficit/retiree healthcare – non-sustainable
- District 186
- Tax base eroded
- Universities not being funded
- Current markets shrinking – outmigration troubling
- Springfield has ego problem as state capital – used to be 18,000 state employees in Springfield, now, less than 10,000
- Too much regulation
- Airport
- High speed/reliable rail
- Finding a restaurant that is open on Sunday or Monday
- Depth of retail is not great
- Springfield is a segregated City
- Ultimately, it is very political here – need to go to alderman or mayor to champion. Don't have same issues in other similar IL markets
- State has beaten landlords up on space
- No potential tenants for downtown
- Need area youth to come back after college – to create more vibrancy
- Now takes 3 years to earn what you could in 1 before in real estate
- Does Springfield have an atmosphere of success? The answer is simple- No!
- Permitting historically difficult – Springfield has reputation of being worse than anywhere else
- Reactive, not proactive in selling our product – the region
- No good vision
- Businesses looking to locate here may believe there are not enough people
- People get excited about a Chick-fil-A while manufacturers are closing. What's wrong with that picture?
- Not much industry for middle class blue collar workers who, contrary to popular opinion – do live here.

- Young leaving – want to live in St. Louis or Chicago or go into military
- No real reason for people to move here. Nothing makes us exceptional
- Lack of payments to med facilities from state has trickle-down effect
- State not updating infrastructure
- Speed of progress is slow
- There needs to be a unified voice instead of individuals
- Some mistrust because of some that keep things close and don't share – government
- Perceived barriers to access
- County harder to work with – specifically planning entity
- Challenged with re-developing around City squares in outlying communities
- No outdoor recreation opportunities in the rural areas
- Not as many dining choices in small towns

**Question: If you were to give a business in your line of work advice if they were considering a new facility here what would it be?**

Most people chose not to answer, but of those who did, the following comments encapsulate their feelings.

- Don't come here – there's not enough business for everyone now.
- Make sure you connect with the right political people.
- Don't depend on this area to make you. You'll need to do business outside of the town to succeed.
- Network with the business community.
- Make sure you have your development pre-approved before you decide to come here, or you'll be delayed.

**Question: Who Advocates for Economic Development in the County?**

***In communities with a shared and united vision, there is one answer to this question. In Sangamon County, it is clear no one knows for certain who is the leading the development effort.*** It varies from person to person with those who serve on the Chamber Board or its ancillary operating units typically citing that organization. Others who mentioned the Chamber did so because they seemed to think it was the right answer, often asking TDC interviewers if that was correct. From the majority of other respondents, there is no consistency in the answers. This is a significant indicator which is reinforced by the negative comments above.

- No one – (Cited in more than 55% of the interviews)
- The City and the aldermen

- The County and Chairman Andy Van Meter – The County should be doing more, they're well managed and can handle the small communities currently not being serviced
- The Chamber - I guess....but they're not really a go to
- The Chamber likes to think they are, but no one really knows who is. Q5??? Why housing???
- Q5 hasn't really connected with the community. No one really knows what they do
- Chamber is workhorse
  - Liaison for working toward big projects
  - Work on site location and readiness
  - Brings community minds together
  - Church project – thinks this will help DT with office space, apartments, retail
- Norm Sims/Regional Planning
- Leaders in the community like: Hy Bunn, Satch Pecori
- Chamber likes to think they are but no one really knows who is. Q5? Why housing????
- Q5/Chamber hasn't really connected with the community – no one really knows what they do.
- Not the City – it's a black hole. Disappointed in them in this role – no vision to move community forward; micromanager; E.D. person doesn't know what she's doing (**NOTE: She has since left her position**)
- No one does a good job selling Springfield
- Chamber's focus is small businessman & professionals; definitely not labor
- Business leaders including Corky Joiner and John Fulgenzi
- Not a fan of the Chamber – good social hours, newsletters and seminars but that's about it – lots of glossy paper.
- Hospitals do their own advocacy for businesses
- County, City ED – all should have recruiters – WE NEED ACTIVE recruitment
- No one is doing anything on retention
- Josh at Chamber is go-to guy for info and places to go
- Chamber has identified clusters but not sure how they are working with those
- Chamber I guess but there's not one common voice – City, DSI, Chamber, CVB, PCCC
- No common focus
- Don't know who we are or what we're selling
- Need common marketing message
- Q5 was “transformational” but lots of singles, no home runs

- I guess I'm supposed to say the Chamber but we have a distant relationship. Q5 is not worth investment.
- It's the definition of insanity to keep doing the same thing over and over, expecting different results. I don't know why people here can't see that.
- City's economic development committee is for show, even though it was formed to have greater transparency
- SBDC takes care of small business
- Chamber or the ED office at City
  - Don't always work well together
  - Our company has no need of either entity
- Senator Durbin
- Mayors of the towns
- It's scattered
- Volunteer leader of the economic development entities lead change
- The paid leaders are somewhat involved
- Unknown continued succession if volunteer leaders no longer around
- Might go to DCEO

**Question: Are They Successful? What Do They Do Well? What Needs Improvement?**

- Yes, I'd say so. (TDC pressed for examples and the respondent could not name any).
- Yes, absolutely. Look at Innovate Springfield and that downtown group. What's it called? DSI? They do excellent work.
- Certain initiatives have the potential to be successful, but we don't have a track record of sticking with anything, especially if it's hard.
- No...take my business for example. I can go months without hearing from anybody in the economic development business, and when I do, it is usually because they want something.
- No, even though there's lots of opportunity. Things here are about confrontation not collaboration.
- *Not really. They think too small here. Sangamon County always compares itself to local communities not NATIONAL groups of communities. TRANSFORMATIONAL ACTION IS NEEDED OR THIS TOWN WILL NOT COMPETE IN THE FUTURE FOR PEOPLE AND JOBS! (TDC Interviewer asked to highlight this comment.) Frankly, I don't think anybody here has the guts to do what needs to be done. But here's the story from my perspective, if anyone wants to listen: If you want to locate a business here, you will be a priority here, because as a new business, you can be the beginning of the Story of the Resurrection of Springfield.*
- I don't think so. We're stuck in the past. The City needs to have a more transformational mindset.

- No. The older folks think things are just fine, but they aren't. The real deal is that the old money doesn't listen to the youth or young people in general. The younger generation needs to tap them on the head and say thanks for all you've done, now get out of our way so we can change things for the better.
- That's a stupid question. Look around. What other capital City do you know that has this much vacant space.
- Some things are successful. Look at the medical community. Lots of cool things happening there, unless the state bankrupts them first.
- I think we're doing about average, which doesn't say much does it?
- The Chamber isn't as good as they could be. It's better under Chris. He seems to have a plan. Q5 does a good job of advocating for issues that are important, but I'm not sure how the City and the chamber engages business.
- DSI and Local First are successful because they're new or changing. They're not stale like the other groups.
- The Chamber seems to be able to get us to the right people once I call them and explain my problem.
- I'm not sure. Economic growth is relationship based, and sometimes it takes too long here.
- I'm fairly new here, but I don't see what anyone is doing. They sure don't have a Business Retention or visitation program. (That has since started in a more formal way with the local participation in the statewide CORE BRE initiative via the Chamber).
- No. I don't see a laundry list of successes. Q5 successes don't seem real.
- Q5 is good as long as money comes in to seed activities, but it's not good for large projects. The creation of the CDC can be good if anyone actually knows what to do with it.
- Not in the past. Leadership changes at the Chamber have brought some renewed confidence and hope, but they need to get moving or the businesses are going to opt out again like they did under the old leadership.
- I don't know. The scope of actions are limited and the City and County should really partner more. They can drive the changes we need.
- I don't know. I mean who is in charge? The City and the County and the chamber need to work together to make large projects move like at Pillsbury. It just seems like everybody has separate plans, so I guess that means they're not successful.
- Not really. Manufacturing is pretty much gone. We're basically just a service town. We need more diversification of the economy.
- Meh. There is NO driving force of individuals. There's this perception that Springfield is anchored in history but it's really the opposite. It should be about innovation but what we have now conflicts with the image and dates the town.
- I'm supposed to say yes but here's the reality. Nobody does it well. There's no concentrated effort to bring businesses here. Illinois is a problem, but other places are having success. Why can't we? SLC can drive the process, but we need to figure out what we're best at before we can do anything else.

- It's not a question of yes or no. The economy is bad. This is when we should be planning on what to do when things get better.....if they ever do.
- Doing better than five or ten years ago.

**Question: Over the last 45 years, what has kept Springfield and Sangamon County from developing into an economically diverse and vibrant capital City metroplex like so many others across the country have become?**

- If you compare us to other towns and cities, despite our history, we missed the link to existing history. We knocked down old buildings and replaced them with nothing or with more modern architecture that doesn't reflect the rest of the City. It's all disconnected and not well planned.
- No one had any long-term vision and the strength, or maybe power is the right word, to execute it if they did have one.
- Springfield and Sangamon County doesn't have a strategic plan like say Indianapolis did in the 1990's. That plan was the template for growth. and they followed it. They didn't just talk about it.
- We didn't have a strong downtown-based University. They draw kids in and keep them and their new ideas front of mind. Look at Madison or Columbus or even Des Moines. They got it, years ago. We're still trying to figure out which way is up.
- I haven't been here that long, maybe for 20 years or so, but the attitude of the locals is "ho-hum." We need to do a better job of selling ourselves. I don't think there as ever a focus on attracting a more diversified workforce. That's a real challenge here, and if anyone wants this place to grow, they need to accept that diversity is important.
- It's simple. We're not welcoming; we're closed minded; and we're not business friendly.
- There's been a long-term leadership vacuum, and, frankly, nobody cared about what happened tomorrow. It was all about milking the state for contracts or making a quick dime and moving on.
- There was never a real plan here. Nobody needed a plan; we had the state.
- Politics, institutionalized racism and greed have kept Springfield and really the whole area down, except for a select few.
- There are a lot of reasons:
  - Government drove the economy for too long
  - It's a hard sell because state government has skewed wages up so that middle income paying businesses can't compete for workers.
  - The community isn't marketed to the prospect.
  - We can't tell the Sangamon County story because no one agrees what it is.
  - There have been no strong and consistent incentives.
- Powers that be didn't want the area to grow. Egos drove development away from the east side

- It's simple to me. There's been a lack of consistency in leadership and talent. There are too many politics in everything, and there is absolutely no refreshing of the community vision, if there ever was one to start with. There's just complacency.
- Open-mindedness, creative thinking and forward-looking vision was non-existent. Enthusiasm for the City of Springfield or anywhere in the County hasn't been generated in forever. There's no consistent leadership, and we relied too much on state government.
- The area has had uncontrolled movement, not growth. That has led to stagnation.
- There's a complete lack of a community vision, but even if we had one, who could lead it? No offense, but we've had lots of studies and plans, but no action.
- There's been a long-term brain drain. The unspoken message for our kids is that you have to go away to be successful, and when they leave, they don't want to come back.

**Question: Have you been approached about trying to attract your Suppliers and/or Customers to the Area?**

**Nearly all respondents said no.** The results may be somewhat different today after the beginning of the CORE Business Retention Initiative mentioned earlier.

## **THE EXTERNAL PERCEPTIONS**

TDC reached out to several nationally-prominent, site selection professionals to gather top-of-mind impressions about the Capital City and the County in general as place to do business and as a potential location for new investment for their clients.

***Setting aside their generally negative comments about the State of Illinois, none identified the region as a first choice for location projects.*** This was because they either had no impression of the region or because downstate Illinois is not generally on the radar of major site selection firms.

The downstate factor should not be underestimated when considering how to attract new investment to the area. As the interviews indicate, there are Sangamon County regional perception issues, but there are also perception issues with the general capacity for business in downstate Illinois. Some are true, many are not.

As TDC delved deeper into the comments and reminded people about the clusters of businesses present in central and southern Illinois, it became increasingly clear that in addition to selling Springfield and Sangamon County more effectively, there needs to be a stronger multi-community and multi-County regional strategy as well.

***None of the consultants with whom we spoke could remember having ever been approached by anyone from Springfield or anywhere else in Sangamon County about the merits of doing business locally,*** and, partially because of that, Sangamon County is not top of mind as a location for growth, innovation and opportunity from outside investors.

***Several of the consultants' first thoughts regarding Springfield in particular were that it is a place of dysfunction.*** That is directly attributable to Springfield being synonymous with the chaos at the state capital and due to the different factions associated with the political class. Reporters at the local, state and national level often refer to ***"the dysfunction in Springfield,"*** which further indirectly brands the region. While these impressions may not be fair, they are reality and nothing being done currently or in the past has addressed that fundamental perception issue.

When pressed further about top of mind thoughts about Springfield as place for business, one national consultant summed up their thoughts very simply. They said. ***"There is nothing about Springfield or the County that makes me think, hey that would be a great place for X type of business. It's like hundreds of other towns across the country. I'm sure it's a fine place, but nothing makes it stand out."***

That is telling as you think about the bigger picture and the responses to the question we asked local people about the positive aspects of doing business here. Less than 5% of the answers related to specific business reasons. The rest of the answers were primarily "It's a nice place to live, the people are friendly, the schools are good and it's safe." These are all good things, but they are to be expected in a quality community. With deference to the respondents, everybody says those things whenever TDC, or any other firm like

ours, evaluates a community. ***So, the question remains. What makes Springfield and Sangamon County unique and positioned to capitalize on business opportunities?***

A senior facility location consultant at a global firm summed it up best when they said the area “shows signs of a good quality of life, but not on a grand scale. It’s not Austin, or Columbus or Madison or even Indianapolis. ***Outside of state government and the Lincoln stuff, I have no idea what’s there.***”

Another stated, “That area is not on my radar. ***I don’t see it as a place of business, I see it as a place of government.***”

A principal representative of an international site selection firm which has considerable experience locating projects in Illinois was much more blunt. He stated, “I literally know more about certain areas of Vietnam and southeast Asia than I do about Springfield, and I live in Chicago.” He also said that ***in the nearly 25 years he’s been working in the business he has never once been approached by or met with anyone representing Springfield or Sangamon County. “I have no idea what makes them stand out. What’s their value proposition? I have no idea what’s there except state government, I have no idea what industry sectors they are targeting, and I have no idea what makes the area any different than a thousand other places across the country.”***

Across the board, additional comments were made about the fact that vibrant, dynamic and successful state capital communities, or even non-state capital communities with the same economic attributes, play off the synergies generated by the presence of a major university. Most referenced the opportunities generated by economic engines such as the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the University of Illinois-Chicago. None of the Illinois or Missouri based national consultants we interviewed knew that the University of Illinois had a Springfield campus, even though it is one of the fastest growing campuses in Illinois. This again, helps one understand the issue with the overall lack of a regional vision or community brand.

***No one we spoke to was aware of the national and international reach of key local employers like Bunn, LRS or Brandt Consolidated. No one knew about other influential players in their respective sectors such as Hanson Engineering, Standard Aero, Springfield Electric, Horace Mann or even Dickey John.***

***All indicated that the region is not easy to get to or easily accessible by national or global business travelers. This is reinforced by a majority of the comments from the regional interview pool.*** Employers in the region with a multi-state or global presence tend to have access to private aircraft or frequently mentioned the need to travel from St. Louis or Bloomington, Illinois, to access more favorable travel schedules.

Other central Illinois communities who have international Fortune 100 corporate presence have also experienced the frustrations caused by the lack of regional air accessibility. Decatur lost ADM corporate offices and Peoria is in the process of losing Caterpillar

corporate positions and the international headquarters identity they bring. Lack of air service, coupled with workforce availability concerns, were the major reasons for these moves.

***TDC also asked the consultants two other primary questions. First, had they ever heard of or did they know anything about the Q5 Initiative. None did, and all wondered how the name Q5 related to Springfield.*** Second was who would be the go to group if you needed information locally. All said they would start with the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) and hope they would know where to start. As a follow-up, DCEO indicated they were not clear who was the lead entity in the County and that they would “probably” start with the Chamber and see what next steps needed to be after that. The agency has had past contact with staff members at the City of Springfield and various local consultants who help the rural communities with development issues.

***Again, this is a fundamental problem locally. Whomever is the lead economic development entity in the region, whether it be the Chamber, the City or the County, all the players need to know who to contact first.*** They need to be the point of contact and coordinator for all project communication and the ombudsman for whatever the company or its consultant needs while working through the steps and stages of the project.

*Author's Note: As we draft the findings of this report, it is not without some degree of concern. Projects like this are challenging even if you have no personal history with a community or with its leadership. But when a region has had such a profound personal impact on us as individuals and the fabric of what is Springfield and Sangamon County has helped shape who we are, it becomes exponentially more difficult to translate the findings of our interviews into a worthwhile exercise.*

*Most people don't like challenging the norm, and most people don't like being a driver for change, but when it's all said and done, if no one leads, what happens to a community, or a company, or an organization or a family? Normally, it all falls apart and nothing is left for future generations. That is what we hope this report sets in motion – a change in momentum.*

*While much of the content of this report may seem somewhat less than positive, we encourage the readers to react to the findings with an open mind and hope that honest dialogue will follow to allow transformational change to begin to occur in the Sangamon County Metropolitan area. Without you, there is little chance of success.*

## **PHASE I RECAP**

**As TDC conducted interviews** with nearly 130 organizations and individuals over the past six months, **it became clear that there is a huge reserve of untapped economic potential located in and around Springfield and Sangamon County.** From groundbreaking and innovative local startups like Levi, Ray and Shoup (LRS), Hanson Engineering and Brandt Consolidated to industrial and sales leaders like Bunn Company and national names like Horace Mann Insurance, Wells Fargo and Blue Cross Blue Shield, the region is home to a variety of employers filled with great opportunities and challenges.

The medical community, while adjusting to the ever-changing regulatory and insurance environment, has remained a steadfast and growing concern, becoming as important, or perhaps more so, to the local economy as state government operations.

Federal, as well as state government, tourism, history and education are also a major part of the past, present and future promise of the region. From the State of Illinois to the Lincoln sites and Route 66, to the University of Illinois-Springfield and the Southern Illinois University School of Medicine, there is a tremendous economic opportunity base.

There are a plethora of business and government service providers, transportation services, design/build firms and contractors with a proven track record of being able to get things done.

**But, as you look back over time, decisions that were made limited the growth potential, stature and external perceptions of the area.** When major manufacturing left town, no tangible effort was made to regain prominence in that sector. Many families whose livelihood and reputation had been made on building things and providing diversity and value-added economic drivers to Sangamon County was lost forever.

Impressions from current business owners about that time in history revolve around negative management and union relationships as well as the feeling in some quarters that Springfield, in particular, was thought to be better than “those jobs.” The impact of those short-sighted actions is still being felt today.

***In the move to transform the economy into a white collar, professionally-oriented metro area, many workers were left behind. Dependence on state government grew, and to a considerable extent, we were told, the area became complacent and lazy.*** At that time, Franklin Life employed thousands of people just south of downtown. Central Illinois Public Service Company (CIPS) employed hundreds as did other employers like the original Springfield Marine Bank, the First National Bank of Springfield and Illinois National Bank. Downtown was more vibrant than it is today, simply because there were thousands more workers present to support downtown restaurants and retailers.

At that time, and up to and including the early part of the 21st century, things were rolling along smoothly. Not dynamically, but smoothly. As a result, there was no perceived reason to change how development and industry diversification was being handled so complacency continued unabated. ***No one had an actionable long-term vision of the region other than it would continue being the state capital and the home to Abraham Lincoln, because they didn't have to.*** There was development, but nothing that made Springfield, Sangamon County and the outlying communities unique. Nearly every cookie cutter region of any size in Illinois and around the country had and has the same amenities as Sangamon County.

Unfortunately, reality began to settle in as the previously unthinkable began to happen. Franklin Life was acquired by AIG, CIPS was acquired by Ameren, the original Marine Bank was acquired by Bank One and then Chase, and many of the other local banks were acquired or merged with larger banking conglomerates. And, then, the really unexpected happened. State government began to lose its way thanks to decades of overspending and mismanagement as layoffs, early retirements and job relocations began to take effect. The white collar economic engine slowed.

***And what did the region do to mitigate the impending white collar declines? Work to move things forward to try to plan for the future? For all practical purposes, the answer was and remains.....nothing.***

The Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) is now no different than thousands of others across the country. The rural areas have been impacted as much as the City as jobs held by commuters vanish. The lower income portions of the City of Springfield, despite best efforts by some minority developers over the years, continued, and arguably, still continue to fall behind the rest of the area in terms of economic vitality.

Towns like Riverton have potential for development of primary jobs due to direct access to the interstate system and the Norfolk Southern railroad, but outside of local efforts within that community, nothing was or is being done to leverage the advantages of the

location. Illiopolis was and is in the same situation. A solid industrial site with rail, heavy utilities and interstate access is available, but there is no cohesive strategy in place to leverage the opportunities. They have engaged outside consulting assistance which is beneficial, but, the fact remains, there was and is no regional strategy to promote and sell what they have to offer. New Berlin can say the same thing. In short, every rural community in Sangamon County has opportunities for development beneficial to their specific location, but no one was or is consistently working to help them succeed and be relevant in the economic development game.

The Springfield school system is challenged financially, and some would say, programmatically, and is impacted by the significant poverty found in certain areas of town. ***Recent studies regarding District 186 show the District is far more progressive and effective than the average citizen realizes. The changes being planned and implemented by the current administration will go a long way to alter current community perceptions about the District.***

Over the years, outlying school districts have reaped the benefits of the outmigration from the City and, as a result, have excellent facilities, programs and curriculums but also an increasing tax burden. In some cases, the suburban schools are now facing growing issues with overcrowding and social issues normally associated with bigger City schools, nullifying what was previously considered advantageous. The parochial school system in the region is strong and has a history of performing well.

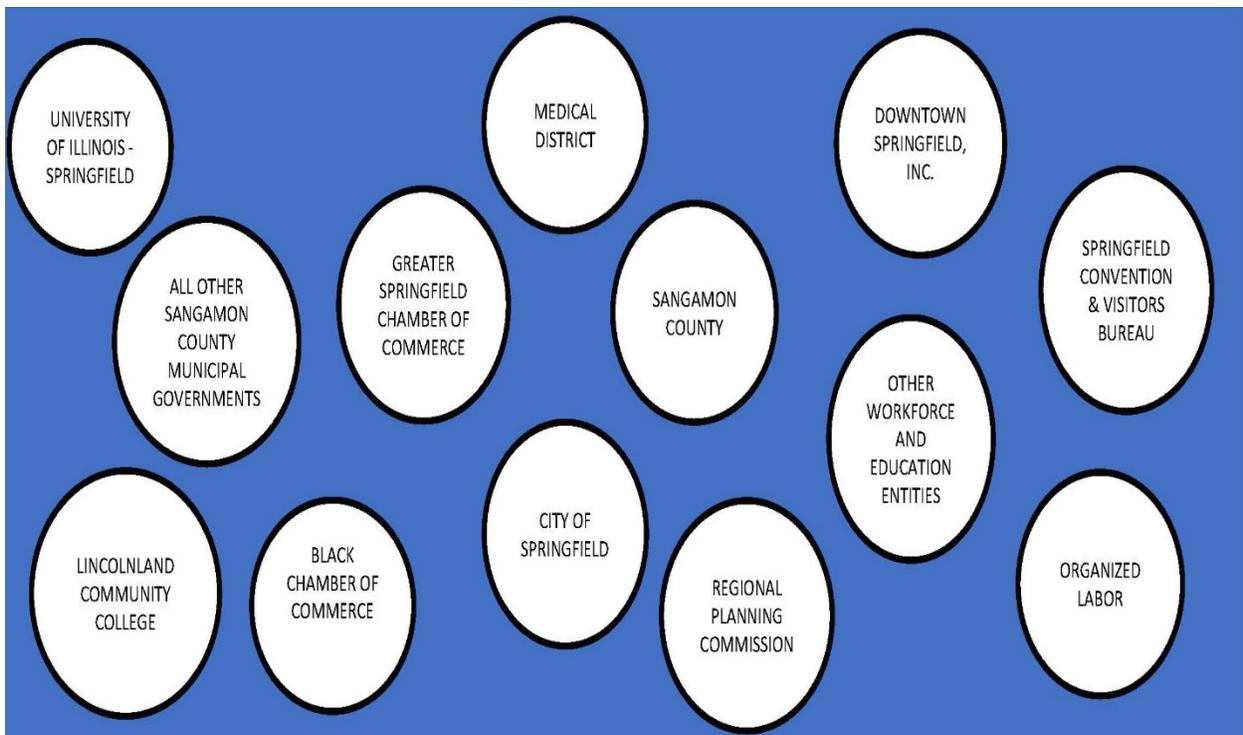
***Lincoln Land Community College and the University of Illinois at Springfield, while being major players on the community, do not appear to be the drivers of progress and change that other college communities have seen over the years.*** It appears this was partially due to the leadership of the organizations in the past and the local perception that "since they are on the outskirts of Springfield, they have been and still are out of sight and out of mind for many residents." ***Most education institutions are economic drivers and leaders and visionaries for change and should be embraced as such.***

***The education factors lead to the workforce issues that were consistently brought up during interviews.*** Many high school graduates have problems with basic reading, math and language skills required to get a job or even attend Lincoln Land or other colleges. Lincoln Land spoke of the number of new students from their multi-County service area who are required to take remedial education classes to get them ready to adequately perform in the school's classrooms. It should be noted that this is not unique to Springfield and Sangamon County, but for a region that has viewed itself as a white collar professional location, it should be an unacceptable outcome.

***The good news is that there are several initiatives present in the region that, over time, should impact change and progress.*** Whether it is business collaboration, downtown redevelopment, entrepreneurial initiatives or workforce and education initiatives, many of the pieces and parts of the puzzle are present. The question is how

they all fit together, and, although separate initiatives, function as one cohesive development ecosystem.

***The bad news is that, for the most part, the initiatives most closely impacting holistic job creation and retention and business investment in the community currently function in separate bubbles, as shown in the chart below. Until this changes by setting goals as a result of creating a true community vision and giving a regional entity focused solely on economic development the authority to provide leadership to all of the currently siloed efforts, things will remain status quo for Sangamon County.***



## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION

Sangamon County is at a critical crossroads.

- First and foremost, the community/County needs to know what it is now; what it wants to be; and embrace that vision whole-heartedly into a coordinated strategic plan to get there.
- Recognize that Sangamon County has been performing below its capacity for development and growth for years and that everyone must work together to realize that potential through an enhanced and, most importantly, coordinated economic development structure.
- The region needs to quit living in the past. Mistakes and miscalculations in strategy were definitely made, but one of the most noticeable traits in this region is its propensity to talk negatively about itself.
- A comprehensive regional development and implementation strategy which addresses the future vision needs to be collaboratively developed. Bridge the silos. Bring the community and County and its communities together.
- Engage all parts of the County as part of the regional development strategy. Provide the suburban areas of the County the development support they need to be successful, and thus create more overall success for the region.
- Recognize economic diversity is integral to economic health. Government nor healthcare nor any one sector can carry a regional economy on its own. Identify key industry clusters in coordination with the community vision and work on strengthening current assets and addressing challenges to having a vibrant atmosphere for those industries to thrive.
- Continue the work started in the last few months to develop and carry out a business retention program. This needs to be consistent and robust and, done right, will be one of the most important efforts in the quest for economic vitality.
- Foster an atmosphere for entrepreneurial enterprises to be able to succeed. Build on the beginning started at Innovate Springfield.
- Understand employers' current workforce needs; their needs for the future; and the needs of employers you want to attract. Truly work on creating this worker pipeline through all levels of education and all venues where this education takes place including the trades and mentorship programs.

- A comprehensive regional marketing strategy which proactively promotes and markets the region to current customers and suppliers of local employers as well as national and international decision makers who are or may be actively seeking new and expanded facility locations needs to be created and executed.
- Placemaking and quality of life improvements needed to attract and retain younger workers and recent graduates, and, really, people in all stages of life, need to be planned for, funded and executed, especially in the downtown, as a long-term strategy with representatives from all facets of life represented in the discussion along the way. Support organizations such as Downtown Springfield, Inc. that are working on this. Quality of place is important to new and long-term residents and visitors alike.
- New ideas from diverse social and economic backgrounds need to be drawn into the discussions about the future direction and opportunities for the region. Interviewee concerns about institutional racism must be acknowledged and addressed.
- Springfield and Sangamon County must transition into becoming a Global Innovation Economy.

## THE WAY FORWARD

After extensive conversations with stakeholders across multiple sectors and other interested parties, the message is simple.

***Current organizational structures do not appear to be adequately staffed in terms of numbers and expertise and/or funded to implement the fundamental change that is required to transform the area and stem the outflow of citizens and employers.***

Nationally, the trend continues to be to operate economic development organizations as stand-alone public-private partnerships (P3). Government as the primary driver in business attraction and retention efforts is decreasing. TDC believes that remains the case in Springfield and Sangamon County with some caveats.

When it's all said and done, it really comes down to these things:

- ***This region has been studied to death, with similar findings each time. Yet, in each instance, although some incremental changes were made as a result, no holistic effort was made to change the way economic development is approached.*** As a result, there has been countywide stagnation and even declines in prosperity.
- ***It is clear there are some good, and, maybe even great, things happening here, but those efforts are often in silos, and are many times understaffed both in numbers of people and expertise and underfunded for what they are being asked to undertake.***
- ***Something must change, and, to make anything new work for the long-term, the entire County has to get behind it. You cannot keep doing the same things over and over, with the same groups of people, expecting different results.***

### What Must Happen to Spark Change

- There must be a singular entity that brings **ALL** of the other development partners together to create the regional economic development **VISION AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY**.

This entity needs to be **THE** manager and coordinator of the regional economic development **VISION**. This entity needs to be recognized and supported as the organization that “steers the ship,” coordinating the exceptional work already underway regionally into a common theme and work program.

It must also identify regional gaps that need to be addressed to accomplish the area's **VISION**, working with the appropriate entities and facilitating their efforts to do that.

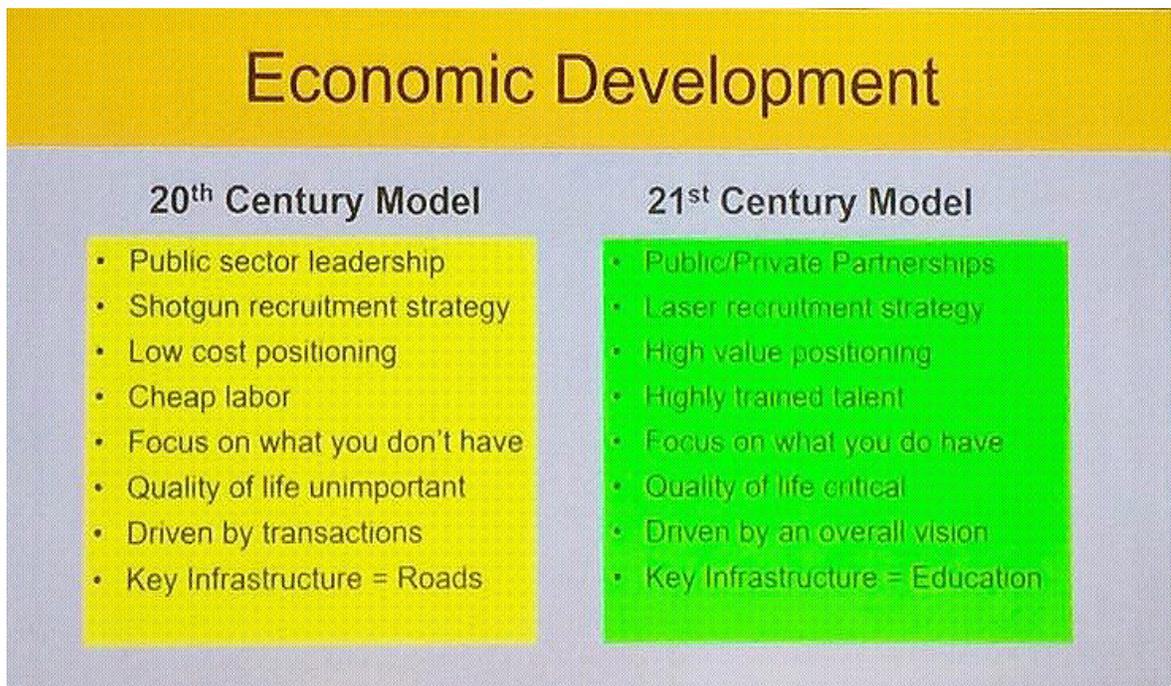
This applies to all aspects of economic development that impact primary job development including business retention, business attraction, workforce development (at all levels from cradle to grave), placemaking development, marketing, tourism and entrepreneurship.

- This entity needs to consistently represent the **ENTIRE** County in matters concerning economic development and **must be granted the AUTHORITY along with the RESPONSIBILITY**.
- The **private sector MUST play a significant role** in any successful effort undertaken by this entity, both as leaders and as funders. This entire initiative is ultimately about them and their businesses and employees. They need to be vested and involved partners.
- **The public and private sector change agents** (as described earlier in this report and specifically below) **need to lead and drive this catalytic change in regional economic development**.
- Most important of all, **this entity must be one that is a doer, not just a talker with glossy brochures**. It must be an organization that is charged with keeping every silo working together to accomplish the vision's goals. Those silo entities include:
  - Employers
  - County government and its development support functions
  - Municipal governments (from across the County) and their development support functions
  - Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission
  - Workforce pipeline entities – primary and secondary school systems; Lincoln Land Community College; University of Illinois – Springfield; the trades; mentoring programs; the Workforce Investment Board, the Springfield CEO program and others
  - Downtown Springfield, Inc.
  - Innovate Springfield
  - Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce
  - Other Chambers of Commerce throughout the County
  - Springfield Convention & Visitors Bureau
  - Abraham Lincoln Capital Airport and its business-related components

## The Structure

- TDC reviewed County-wide structures across the state and across the country.
- Initiatives which are solely government-led are sometimes successful for a while. But, when the elected leader leaves, then, most times, there is a substantial change in philosophy and, ultimately, a change in direction of strategic focus and delivery of service. This is difficult to navigate for an economic development entity, especially, since, inherently, government is a regulatory body and not usually in the customer service business which is what economic development is all about.

This happens at all levels of government and is why many states and regions and even communities have gone to the public-private partnership model to ensure consistent delivery of their economic development effort.



The goal must be that as politics and personalities change, the mission and the implementation strategy does not.

- **To be successful, the keeper of the regional economic development vision which steers the ship, coordinating and facilitating between all the entities that are involved and described above, needs to be a NEW public-private partnership (P3).**

## **SANGAMON SUCCESS 2030 (Name for reference only)**

As noted repeatedly in the study, this region has not had a **VISION AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN THAT LOOKS HOLISTICALLY AT ALL ASPECTS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**. Instead the priorities have been to focus on the pretty and shiny new issues of the day.

Each silo has been doing work, but not along a path that points to a singular direction in alignment with an over-all plan.

**These actions, while potentially valuable, DO NOT REPRESENT A STRATEGY.**

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***The NEW Initiative must be about VISION, AUTHORITY and LEADERSHIP, all of which have been lacking in recent years in the region.***

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**Eliminate the perceived baggage of previous efforts and move all primary job creation and retention efforts into this entity.**

Form a small Board of Directors (10-15 individuals) that represents the leading public-sector drivers and the largest private sector employers. This Board sets the **VISION** for the region, grants **AUTHORITY** to the new organizational structure to implement the **VISION** and provides the **LEADERSHIP** to drive **CHANGE** and **INNOVATION**.

- We recommend, as a starting point for discussion, the following primary political and employer leadership in the region as the new Board of Directors:

|                      |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| ▪ Rick Brandt        | Brandt Consolidated  |
| ▪ Hy Bunn            | Bunn Company         |
| ▪ Todd Green         | Green Family Stores  |
| ▪ Dale Smith         | H.D. Smith           |
| ▪ Geoff Isringhausen | Isringhausen Imports |

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| ▪ Richard Levi          | Levi, Ray & Shoup                       |
| ▪ Dan Dungan            | Springfield Electric                    |
| ▪ Dan Meckes            | Crawford, Murphy & Tilly                |
| ▪ Sergio “Satch” Pecori | Hanson Professional Services            |
| ▪ Tom Marantz           | Bank of Springfield                     |
| ▪                       | Illinois National Bank                  |
| ▪ Robert Narmont        | United Community Bank                   |
| ▪ Charles Lucore        | HSHS St. Johns                          |
| ▪ Ed Curtis             | Memorial Health Systems                 |
| ▪ Jerry Kruse           | SIU School of Medicine                  |
| ▪ Ray Williams          | Springfield Clinic                      |
| ▪ Marita Zuraitis       | Horace Mann Insurance                   |
| ▪ Mike Aiello           | R. W. Troxell                           |
| ▪ Mike O’Shea           | O’Shea Builders                         |
| ▪ John Goetz            | R.D. Lawrence                           |
| ▪ Jim Bruner            | United Contractors Midwest              |
| ▪ Charlotte Warren      | Lincoln Land Community College          |
| ▪ Susan Koch            | University of Illinois Springfield      |
| ▪ Chairman              | Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce |
| ▪ Chairman              | Springfield Black Chamber of Commerce   |
| ▪ Mayor                 | City of Springfield                     |
| ▪ Chairman              | Sangamon County Board                   |

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***These LEADERS SHOULD NOT DELEGATE THEIR RESPONSIBILITY  
to Subordinates.***

***If They Do, It Diminishes the IMPORTANCE of the INITIATIVE and JEOPARDIZES  
the POTENTIAL FOR SUCCESS..***

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**Roles and responsibilities of the Sangamon Success 2030 (SS 2030) Board of Directors**

- Set the Regional Economic Development vision (as described above)
- Provide Governance and Policy Direction for the Entity
- Hire a first-rate CEO and support their efforts to hire the best staff available to help them carry out the regional vision
- Give authority to SS 2030 to carry out the regional vision – make SS 2030 leadership position clear to all entities that play a role in regional economic

development along with the expectation that all will work with and follow the leadership of SS 2030 in order to develop, carry out and continuously re-evaluate action items geared towards achieving the region vision.

- Help to refocus and re-energize initiatives when they either stagnate or can't get off the ground. This may mean rallying the community and region around it; providing an avenue for financing; public and behind the scenes support; or some combination of the above.

**Expected Time Commitments for SS 2030 Board of Directors**

- It is essential that SS 2030 Board of Directors members are the heads of organizations and that the responsibility is not delegated to someone else.
- It should be expected that the number and the content of meetings of this board will be intense at the beginning – with meetings every other week, or at least twice a month, for the first 6 to 12 months.
- After the new entity stabilizes, board meetings will most likely be quarterly unless special meetings are necessary.

# Sangamon Success 2030

## SS 2030 Board of Directors



- Note: The Chambers on the chart would be ex officio members of the board, in an advisory capacity.

- Acknowledge the relationship between other entities in order to implement the regional vision but do not absorb them into this entity. These organizations include:
  - Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce
  - Springfield Black Chamber of Commerce
  - Downtown Springfield, Inc.
  - Innovate Springfield
  - Workforce pipeline entities, including universities, community colleges and other educational institutions
  - Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission
  - Springfield CVB
  - Abraham Lincoln Capital Airport – business development components
  - Convention and Visitors Bureau
  - Sangamon County
  - City of Springfield and other regional municipalities

**The new P3 will be given the authority to oversee the evolution of the groups from their individual silos to an implementation partner within the over-all region vision utilizing the Working Council structure. The Working Councils, guided by the P3, will assign tasks and evaluate regional progress on an ongoing basis. The work of the Councils will be coordinated by the Growth Development Board and the P3 CEO and their staff.**

#### **Growth Development Board**

- Composed of heads of each Working Council and the SS 2030 staff
- Led by SS 2030 CEO
- This is the intersection of all entities involved in working councils, allowing them to see and assess how, or if, collectively the groups are forwarding the regional plan and consider necessary adjustments.
- Group provides venue to have on-going, holistic discussions on the regional plan, it's implementation and execution, and supporting organizations' roles and responsibilities.

These preliminary suggestions for Working Councils reflect the comments from interviewees and represent subject areas in the region which were most often expressed as challenges or lacking focus. The ultimate Council structure would ideally be vetted in the **VISION DEVELOPMENT** Stage of the process.

## Working Councils

- Each composed of representatives of entities working on goals in the specific area that working group is focused on.
- Each owns their piece of the regional plan
- Create actionable items to meet goals of their portion of the plan
- Define what's already being done to meet plan goals
- Find gaps in meeting plan goals
- Assign responsibilities to close regional gaps/meet plan goals
- Evaluate success of what's being done to meet plan goals
- Constant re-assessment of goals to evaluate if current needs are being met

The Councils listed below are not set in stone. They merely reflect the issues that were brought up during the interview process that were deemed to be most important in the context of the report.

The following are examples of topics/task for the Working Councils to undertake after the Board of Directors formalizes the **VISION** for the region.

### Job Retention and Creation

- Identify targeted, industry recruitment and growth sectors
- Identify growth opportunities with existing businesses
- Oversee and provide guidance for regional business retention program that is outcome-oriented
- Identification and screening of buildings and sites available for development/redevelopment
- Development and execution of external marketing plan and social media strategies
- Development and creation of internal marketing plan and social media strategies
- Provide guidance on research
  - For day to day request for proposals
  - For targeted industry effort
  - For business retention program
- Provide guidance on pro-development policy at local, county, state and federal levels as it aligns with regional plans
- Consider and create mechanisms for enhanced access to capital for economic development projects
- On-going evaluation of all infrastructure needs (modes of transportation, water, sewer, electric, gas, telecom, etc.) and pro-business support of necessary enhancements.

### Workforce Development

- Research gaps in regional workforce development efforts as it pertains to the regional plan as well as targeted industries. Look for ways to fill those gaps.
- Create strategies to inform the region about on-going workforce development efforts and programs in which they might be interested or wish to participate, especially those that directly impact the regional goals and vision. Don't forget about K-12.
- Evaluate workforce development public policy at all levels of government and provide guidance and leadership on revisions that need to be made.
- Provide input on funding mechanisms for workforce development needs.

### Placemaking

- Evaluate region as a place that people of all ages and demographics want to live, work, play and learn.
- Create strategies to keep and attract young people in the region, recognizing they are looking for places to live and will find jobs there after they locate in a place. This is a massive shift from 20 years ago when jobs drove location decisions.
- Determine need for and lead land use planning efforts in specific portions of the region. These plans are then used to request funding and gain backing for creation of place.
- Create and implement internal and external marketing strategies about Sangamon Counties quality of place.
- Consider public policies that hinder or that would help quality of place efforts and create an execute implementation strategy. (example could be access to state historic tax credits)
- Evaluate and find funding for infrastructure needs necessary to execute regional plan as it relates to quality of place.

### Diversity

- Identify and engage groups that have not traditionally been involved in the economic development process in an on-going and regular basis. This could include: young professionals, high school and college students, ethnic populations and women.
- Create strategies focused on the retention and growth of these populations in order to ensure the economic viability of the region.
- Evaluate current efforts (ex. High school CEO program) and make adjustments as necessary.

### Entrepreneurship

- Recognize the key role that home-grown businesses have on a local economy
- Build on success of CEO program and Innovate Springfield
- Create internal (regional) marketing strategy

- Evaluate, propose and advocate for public policies (at local, county and state levels) that lead to a pro-entrepreneurial environment.
- Consider and foster opportunities for greater access to capital for start-up and second stage businesses, especially those that support the goals of the regional vision.

#### Rural Economic Development

- Identify rural and suburban communities' economic development initiatives
- Identify gaps in resources and staffing
- Engage in efforts to fill those gaps
- Create and execute internal and external marketing for these communities
- Infrastructure

In addition to the Board of Directors, Growth Development Board and the Working Councils, there should also be an **Investors' Council** for the SS 2030 effort. It is described as follows:

- Composed of ALL regional SS 2030 investors, regardless of their contribution.
- A body to which the progress to the goals is reported on a biannual basis
- Reporting could be a community event

# Sangamon Success 2030

SS 2030 Board of Directors

SS 2030 CEO and Staff

Growth Development Board

Investor's  
Council

Job  
Creation/Retention  
Council

Workforce  
Development  
Council

Placemaking  
Council

Cultural Diversity  
Council

Entrepreneurship  
Council

Rural/Suburban  
Development  
Council

**Appropriately staff the P3 with employees who are experienced in all phases of economic development and its ancillary support functions.**

- At a minimum, this means hiring:
  - Organizational Head/CEO
    - \$180,000-\$250,000
  - Business Attraction Staff
    - \$120,000-\$175,000
  - Business Retention Staff
    - \$110,000-\$160,000
  - Suburban Development Staff – to solely focus on helping communities in the County outside of the City of Springfield
    - \$80,000-\$125,000
  - Data/Research
    - \$50,000-\$85,000
  - Marketing, Social Media and Graphic Arts
    - \$70,000-\$90,000
  - Administrative Professional who is capable of handling accounting, scheduling and other activities
    - \$45,000-\$85,000
  - Office and Related Expenses including one-time startup costs.
    - Space: \$2,000-\$3,000/month
    - Utilities: \$800/month
      - Furniture and Fixtures: \$75,000
      - Computers/Technology: \$35,000
      - Employee Benefit costs: 25-30% of salary
      - Travel: \$50,000-\$100,000 annually
      - National and local marketing: \$250,000 at startup increasing to \$500,000.
    - Consultant Costs
      - \$250,000+

NOTE: Salary ranges reflect averages for similar positions in metro regions of similar sizes to Sangamon County according to interviews and the International Economic Development Association Annual Salary Survey. Actual salaries may vary according to local market norms and the competitive positions available across the country at the time of implementation.

# Sangamon Success 2030

## SS 2030 Board of Directors

### Sangamon Success 2030 P3 Chief Executive Officer

Employer Attraction Staff

Employer Retention Staff

Suburban Development Staff

Data/Research Staff

Marketing/Social Media/Communications Staff

Administrative Coordinator

**Appropriately fund the P3. This would ultimately be a \$1.5 to \$2 million annual commitment.**

- Board Member Contributions should be a minimum of \$25,000 to \$50,000 annually.
- Public sector contributions should seed the initiative with an initial collective investment of \$1,000,000.
- Additional private sector contribution levels may be sought at lower thresholds. These contributors would be a part of the Investors' Council.

**HOW IT FITS TOGETHER**



As is shown in the graph above, good and great economic development efforts function as a holistic ecosystem. All of the pieces and parts that impact job creation and retention and investment, not only function within their own plans of work – i.e. job creation and

retention, workforce development, placemaking, diversity, entrepreneurship and rural economic development – but also are crossed over by what could be considered staff functions – i.e. research, communications/marketing, public policy, infrastructure, access to capital and outreach. This weaves all of the efforts together to support and forward the community vision.

Ongoing metrics and performance goals/standards can be set to keep people and organizations on track and aligned with the regional vision.

This example can and does work across business sectors or specific topics and requires four basic things to succeed:

- Committed Leadership
- Employer, Community and Organizational Buy-In
- Capable Staff
- Funding

### **BROAD TIMELINE**

As with any restructure and visioning exercise, it takes time to create and implement the vision, and strategy and message. Over the first three years the following must occur:

- Seat Board of Directors
- Create a community vision and plan with actionable items
- Governance – bylaws, budgets, employee manuals, guiding principals
- Solicit other investors
- Recruit and hire CEO
- Help CEO recruit and hire other staff
- Transition from Q5 to new initiative
- Sustain and enhance RFP responses
- Develop and execute robust business retention program that not only surveys businesses but acts on their issues and concerns
- Create Working Councils
- Create rules of engagement for Working Councils so that they are action, and not reporting, oriented
- Develop and execute internal marketing plan
- Develop and execute external marketing plan
- “Map” the region’s assets as well as information about specific buildings, land or targeted industries
- Create research strategies

As much as TDC would like to be able to give a firmer timeline on the activities listed above, the reality is these are all parallel tracts. The order in which they are completed

will be based on how effective the region is in setting up a board of directors which is willing, and able, from a time perspective, to put in the hard work to drive change and guide this initiative. The timeline will also be impacted by the length of time it takes to hire an experienced, respected and effective CEO. This initiative needs not only the involvement of past regional stalwarts but also a renewed sense of direction and leadership.

**OTHER ISSUES TO CONSIDER:**

- This does not address the methodology for community participation and buy-in.
- There are gaps in the makeup of the Board from a diversity and labor perspective. This is not intentional but reflects the fact that the local government bodies and major employers are not inherently diverse. The community has existing gaps that must be overcome throughout this process and these groups are critical to the long-term success and viability of any program.
- The information above relates to the basics of a new structure. Additional thought must be given to handling the needs of prospects, current businesses and communities within the region during the transition period as well. That is outside the scope of the TDC Professional Services Agreement.

## **FINAL THOUGHTS**

You should realize that economic development is what many in the profession call the “Magical Mystery Tour.” This applies even in the formation of a new E.D. entity. Today it appears that this is the way things need to go should all the stars align, but things will change along the way and the region must be able to adapt and change in order to succeed.

### **THIS ABILITY TO CHANGE WILL BE A CRITICAL CHALLENGE TO THE LONG-TERM SUCCESS OF THIS PLAN.**

We encourage you to build on the inherent strengths of the area and to remember ***the goal should be to create a vibrant, diverse and transformational community that welcomes innovative ideas, new visions and new investors from the outside.***

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***THIS IS A MARATHON, NOT A SPRINT!***

***CHANGE AND SUCCESS TAKE TIME AND LONG-TERM COMMITMENT.***

***IS SANGAMON COUNTY UP TO THE CHALLENGE?***

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