

Alliance Alert



“One Stop Shop for Economic Development”

President’s Message

Kankakee County witnessed significant investment in its industrial and commercial sectors in 2007. Growth and development reached more than \$73 million last year. That investment is the most significant jump in recent memory and reflects a commitment to our area.

An encouraging sign is the investment of existing companies into their facilities. Peddinghaus, Ambassador Steel, CSL Behring, Van Drunen Farms, Rohm and Haas Chemicals, Dawn Foods, and IKO Midwest, just to name a few, all expanded or made substantial improvements in 2007. This, in turn, accounts for hundreds of new and retained industrial jobs for the area.

As for the commercial and service sectors, 2007 activity was strong and is anticipated to continue into 2008. The growth and expansion of our commercial sector provides more local choices and opportunities for our residents. In addition, our two hospitals recently committed to investing multi-millions in their facilities in the upcoming year.

Notwithstanding the positive momentum in the local economy, we are cognizant of the economic challenges facing the region, state and country. We under-

stand the need to build and improve the local business climate, engage our existing major employers and aggressively recruit business to locate here. These principles are fundamental and vital to our long-term economic vitality.

To achieve these results, the Alliance is launching several new programs and projects. Some of these include:

- **Business Retention & Expansion Program** – The Alliance staff, along with 20 local volunteers, will split into teams of two and interview major employers to build an understanding of their growth potential and to identify barriers and challenges they face in our community. We have partnered with Commonwealth Edison to take the survey results and produce a comprehensive report outlining the findings of all the visits we make. The results will allow us to identify key economic indicators common among our companies and to compare Kankakee County’s economic environment with our neighbors in northeast Illinois.



Michael J. Van Mill
President/CEO

Enhanced Website Design – The Alliance website is www.kankakeecountyped.org. The website was launched in September 2007, and plans are in place to continue to build and enhance its capabilities. One major initiative is the implementation of LocationOne. LocationOne is a national web-based application that allows us to provide up-to-date information on available industrial land and buildings in the county. National studies show that an estimated 80 percent of site locators visit local economic development organization websites for sites in their initial screening process. Another initiative for 2008 is the utilization of the

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Tim Nugent Joins Alliance as Economic Development Manager



Bio in Brief . . .

- 55; married to wife, Yvette; two children
- Manteno mayor, 2005–present
- City of Kankakee police chief, 1985-1993
- Former private land developer and small business owner in Manteno
- First Alliance task:
Head up Business Retention & Expansion Program

Business Retention & Expansion Program Kicks Off

It pays to accommodate established companies in a community, says newly appointed Economic Development Manager Tim Nugent. “Eighty percent of job growth comes from existing business,” he notes. It stands to reason, then, that Nugent will devote the better part of his first year with the Alliance establishing a strong Business Retention & Expansion Program.

“We want to identify factors that make our area attractive to business,” Nugent explains, “as well as those that hinder productivity.” Commonwealth Edison is partnering with Alliance, providing the initial questionnaire as well as project assessment tools.

Nugent is currently training and overseeing volunteer teams – made up of individuals representing area chambers of commerce, colleges, workforce development boards, businesses and other entities – who will be dispatched to perform initial on-site assessments of local businesses. Phase I will involve meetings with members of the industrial and

health care sectors countywide; larger retailers will follow.

The type of information Nugent and his teams will solicit will run the gamut from the basics – data like employment statistics, expansion plans and product lines – to more involved accounting of employers’ satisfaction with various aspects of doing business in Kankakee County. “Simply knowing all of the items that are manufactured here may open up opportunities to partner local businesses,” Nugent says. “And, having a clearer understanding of the strengths of our area after the personal interviews will provide us with accurate marketing information.”

Businesses will also be informed of the various financial, job training and other resources available through the county, Alliance and other entities.

More challenging is identifying common grievances among businesses in an effort to address them both individually and collectively. Though this individual-

ized attention undoubtedly will be time consuming, Nugent explains, “We’re committed to providing extensive follow-up to ensure that problems are solved to the very best of our ability.” These tasks could involve anything from serving as a liaison with a local elected official to resolving a regional transportation-related issue.

Data will ultimately be fed into ComEd-provided software, which will generate a trends report for the Kankakee County business community. “Not only is the data important in assisting our current businesses,” Nugent explains. “It will be invaluable as we determine which types of companies we aim to attract in the future.”

Site visits to businesses throughout Kankakee County are slated to begin in April.

“We want to identify factors that make our area attractive to business as well as those that hinder productivity.”
-Tim Nugent

Community Spotlight: Village of Bourbonnais

1. How long have you been Mayor?

Since May 2001

2. What have been your greatest accomplishments as mayor?

The accomplishment of redeveloping the Bourbonnais Towne Centre shopping center and the creation of a new Jewel/Osco store; the relocation of Kroger; increased residential growth; working with Olivet Nazarene University to bring the Chicago



Bears to Bourbonnais; and last but not least, the wonderful relationship I have with the other mayors and municipalities in Kankakee County.

3. What type of industries does the village have within its borders?

The Village of Bourbonnais has several industries within its borders: retail; medical and business offices; restaurants; steel plants; an asphalt plant; and within the last year and a half, the creation of a manufacturing district to welcome new business to our village for the future.

4. What challenges do you face as a village, and how are you addressing them?

Like any other municipality, we are trying to make the most of the revenues we receive by improving infrastructure and working closely with our school districts. The major challenge facing Bourbonnais and Bradley is expanding our high school. This is a big problem for Bourbonnais.

5. What makes the village of Bourbonnais a great place to live and raise a family?

Bourbonnais is a great place to live and raise a family because it is still has the small town feel. We are fortunate to have great

schools and a wonderful library. We are also privileged to have the many volunteers who provide several tremendous youth sports programs. We also provide many parks for family recreation and are in close proximity to the Kankakee River State Park, as well as the Bourbonnais Township Park District Perry Farm and Kankakee Park District's Splash Valley Water Park in Kankakee.

6. What does the future hold for the village, its residents and its businesses?

With affordable housing and residential growth, commercial expansion will follow. This growth will prompt business to bring more shops to Bourbonnais.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Bob Latham retired as Bourbonnais mayor effective March 30. Village trustee Paul Schore was appointed as his successor.



Mayor Bob Latham

The Economic Alliance of Kankakee County salutes Mayor Latham for 22 years of local leadership.

Economic Alliance of Kankakee County Mission & Executive Board

It is the mission of the Economic Alliance of Kankakee County to create jobs and expand the economic base by improving the business climate. The Alliance actively supports the retention and expansion of existing businesses and endeavors to attract and recruit new businesses. Our business is your business.

A public/private partnership, the Alliance has a 14-member executive board that is comprised of seven members of the Kankakee County Board and seven representatives of the private sector.

Private Sector

Joe Franco, Chairman
Jack Dorn
Steve Magruder
Pat Martin
Michael O'Gorman
Leonard Tobey
Jerry Weber

Heritage Development Company (Agriculture)
Kankakee Building Trades
HomeStar Bank
Centrue Bank
Kankakee Valley Construction Company
Kankakee Community College

Public Sector

Cherrie McBride
Kelly McLaren
William Olthoff
Robert Scholl
Jim Vickery
George Washington, Jr.
Leo Whitten

District 4
District 22
District 25
District 12
District 2
District 17
District 23



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county's Geographical Information System (GIS) for economic development studies and reports. We are working closely with county GIS staff to build applications on the website.

Greater Kankakee Valley Airport Strategic Plan – In cooperation with the City of Kankakee, the Kankakee Valley Airport Authority and Kankakee County, a Task Force was created to study growth and development in and around the airport. Areas of focus in the study include land use and development restrictions, transportation improvements, and economic development initiatives. The task force will select a consultant to

assist in the preparation of the study, which is anticipated to take approximately 10 months to complete.

In January, Tim Nugent was added the Alliance staff to lead Business Development. As a successful local business owner, Tim brings a unique and valuable perspective to county-wide economic development with his intimate knowledge of the area, the local economy and regional development issues. Tim will lead the Alliance's Business Retention & Expansion Program.

I want to encourage you to participate and become involved in the Alliance. We are always looking for volunteers to help us with our mission. I want to also invite you to attend and partici-

pate in our regular monthly meetings held at ONU's Weber Center at 7:30 a.m. on the second Thursday of every month. You can download the agenda from our website. I look forward to working with you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael J. Van Mill".

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