

DuPage Regional Development Alliance

2525 Cabot Drive; Suite 303; Lisle, Illinois 60532

Choose DuPage: An Action Plan for Development

*A Four-Year, \$5.5 Million Public / Private Economic
Development Prosperity and Growth Plan for the
Greater DuPage County Region*



Choose DuPage: An Action Plan for Development

A Four-Year, \$5.5 Million Public / Private Economic Development Prosperity and Growth Plan for the Greater DuPage County Region

OVERVIEW

Just due west geographically of the great city of Chicago is another powerhouse for the nation's economy, DuPage County, Illinois. This great county, the largest of Chicago's "collar counties" and the second largest in Illinois, boasts a population of nearly one million people and a market of nearly three-quarter million jobs. Housing Fortune-1000 companies and some of the nation's most innovative employers in technology, manufacturing, retail, health care and logistics, it also boasts a wealth of prime industrial, commercial and office space.

The county is uniquely positioned for technology based growth due to its wealth of knowledge-based institutions and two internationally-renowned national laboratories, Argonne National Laboratory and Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory. DuPage County's low commercial property taxes, its proximity to O'Hare and Midway International Airports and a highly-educated and creative workforce are among the many reasons DuPage County is considered a premier business location.

With a quick look at this thriving and vibrant business environment one could conclude that the county's economic engine is "humming" effectively, bereft of problems. Such is not the case. Income in DuPage County is presently not keeping pace with accelerating housing costs and poverty rates are increasing. The retail and the service sectors are driving employment while the county, in general, is experiencing a decline in its wealth-generating industries. The office and industrial real estate markets have shown a point of stagnation over the past several years with a negative absorption rate. High wage employment sectors are trending flat or losing jobs.

These and other challenges are not readily apparent realities. It takes due diligence and a deeper probing into DuPage County's complex economic activities to know that these challenges are slowly eroding the county's economy right from under us. As the adage goes, while many work IN the county's economy there is no one working ON the county's economy.

BACKGROUND

Surprisingly, DuPage County is the only county in the Chicago metropolitan area at this time without an Economic Development Council. Even with the fast pace of the past few years of economic growth, the outgrowth of the populous “boomer” generation, some have observed that the county has not reached anywhere near its full potential for prosperity and growth.

In the fall of 2005, prominent public and private sector leaders convened a meeting organized by DuPage County government at the headquarters of Tellabs Incorporated in Naperville. Meeting organizers retained the Prager Consulting Group to do a comprehensive review of DuPage County’s economy. In conjunction with Northern Illinois University’s Center for Governmental Studies, they did a comprehensive economic analysis of the county and presented their findings at the meeting.

The “Prager Report and Plan” called for the creation of a public / private partnership which would be the locus of economic oversight, analysis and intervention for the county. The report clearly demonstrated that while global economic pressures have spawned both opportunities and challenges for the county, the county-wide community has not reached anywhere near its maximum potential for prosperity and growth. Due to increased competition for business investment and unfolding social, demographic, and economic changes, the report urged that DuPage County must act regionally to enhance and market its strengths as a world-class business location in order to maintain its current level of economic vitality and quality of life. Leadership from both the public and private sectors would be optimally required to take on this mission for the region.

Area leaders were recruited and united to begin a partnership that would address these macro economic issues. That initial collaboration gave rise to **DuPage Biz**, a proposed multi-year effort charged with supporting current business retention and expansion while also igniting interest in new business investment into DuPage County. In one of its first efforts to re-brand its aggressive agenda, late in 2007 **DuPage Biz** was re-named. **The DuPage Regional Development Alliance** was established and given seed funding by the county to fully launch in 2008. **Choose DuPage** would become its external brand.

Today, the newly-formed regional development alliance and its volunteer leadership propose this multi-year action plan aimed to benefit the entire community and its 39 constituent municipalities. **The DuPage Regional Development Alliance** intends to be a world class regional economic development council with a bold new proactive plan to tackle and address the comprehensive needs, opportunities and threats facing DuPage County’s ongoing and future growth and prosperity.

REGIONAL PLAN FOR GROWTH AND PROSPERITY

Choose DuPage is now building a world-class regional economic development organization. **Choose DuPage** will focus on issues critical to DuPage county's growth and competitiveness in a global economy such as technology, transportation, education, workforce, regulation, healthcare, energy and international trade. Additionally, unique projects such as the development of the DuPage National Technology Park and the Western Access to O'Hare International Airport have the potential to create new business opportunities and thousands of jobs for area residents.

Choose DuPage launches with an immediate focus on traditional business & industry recruitment to benefit the communities in the county. But envisioned in its plans are the development of additional collaborations and tools to build a quality, competitive business environment. Among the major activities also included in **Choose DuPage** will be the additional focus on business retention and proactive business expansion, leveraging the county's 39 member communities, and its approximate 40,000 businesses and their resources.

Choose DuPage will work to address key barriers to continued growth and suggest an aggressive advocacy strategy in the political arena for addressing these issues in order to remain a healthy, vibrant and vital business climate for businesses and improve the quality of life of all residents in the region.

As envisioned, **Choose DuPage** will be a public / private partnership initiative that will assist the 39 communities within DuPage County to continue to retain and attract top employers by addressing the critical and more regional and national issues. **Choose DuPage** will concentrate on the following strategic components, each designed to build an even more robust and vibrant local / regional economy for today and well into the future.

Choose DuPage: MISSION and PURPOSE

The DuPage Regional Development Alliance is a public / private partnership working to expand and diversify the DuPage County economy through actions that stimulate business investment in its communities and generate desirable job opportunities for its residents.

THE PLAN FOR OUR ECONOMIC FUTURE

Choose DuPage, its leaders and staff, introduces its multi-year *Action Plan for Development*. This plan is envisioned to be a public / private partnership initiative that will drive our 39 communities to new heights of economic prosperity for all who live, work and play in DuPage County. *An Action Plan for Development* will concentrate on the following four (4) critical strategic components, each designed to build an even more robust and vibrant local / regional economy:

1. It's ALL Here For Business.....

Choose DuPage will support and expand our current extraordinary base of international and domestic companies.

Choose DuPage will identify, target, market and recruit new businesses that will provide quality employment opportunities for DuPage County. Similarly, it will partner with other organizations in the region with the purpose to organize and centralize retention and support services to existing businesses in the county. The optimal marketing and reuse of vacant office and industrial space will be a primary objective. Office and industrial vacancies are on the upswing and aggressive intervention must address this vacancy trend.

Choose DuPage will work with site consultants and decision-makers with a customer focus in mind. Choose DuPage, recognizing the vast geographic boundaries of the county, will recruit with a focus on enabling and assisting our local municipalities. We will attempt to be an advocate on behalf of municipalities for any projects for which they have qualified sites or buildings. The effort we will extend to the client is directly proportionate to the level that local economic development personnel desire us to be involved.

1.1 Attraction Strategies:

1.1.1 **Choose DuPage** will serve as a one-stop source for all business recruitment, referrals, special assistance and all matters relating to economic development.

1.1.2 Will conduct a "targeted core industry study" to identify and create a "menu" of desirable industries that would be a good fit in our area.

1.1.3 Will develop and initiate a domestic & international marketing plan based on results of the aforementioned "target core industry study" to showcase DuPage County as a world class region for business. The plan would include: advertising,

direct mail, web-based promotion, company calls, trade show participation, and ally development.

1.1.4 Will focus on necessary workforce training, transportation, and housing infrastructure in order to create a suitable business environment for existing, expanding, and new industries.

1.1.5 Will serve as a catalyst (or outsource) for placement of positive editorial in national / international business publications.

1.1.6 Will establish a site consultant marketing program to increase calls on consultants and consultant / broker visits to the county.

1.1.7 From its "target core industry study" results, will initiate in-person calls to companies in target cities and in target industries. It will also schedule visits to local companies' headquarters to discuss business retention / expansion intent and opportunities.

1.1.8 Will deploy a new, expanded website utilizing state-of-the art GIS technology to provide up-to-date relocation information for DuPage County, as well as current available site listings for local relocation and expansion.

1.1.9 Will utilize leaders of current corporate headquarters located in DuPage County for recruitment of other corporate headquarters.

1.1.10 Will revisit and revise our core market analysis to determine the best fit for business recruitment in DuPage County and the proper strategy and incentive policy to create a meaningful and compelling message to those markets. (In conjunction with the "target core industry study")

1.1.11 Will attract new office and industrial business to DuPage County.

- Participate in the Chicago Chapter of CoreNet Global (former International Development Research Council & the International Association of Corporate Real Estate Executives) and Real Estate Journal (Chicago Industrial Properties and Midwest Real Estate News) conferences.
- Participate in CoreNet, International Economic Development Council (IEDC) and target industry trade show events locally and nationally.
- Undertake marketing projects utilizing a public relations consultant directed toward Chicago metro area residents, industry owners and managers, real estate agents, developers, utility companies, and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) aimed at target industries and influence groups.
- Participate in target industry trade associations.
- Provide prospect response and follow-up services in conjunction with the Illinois Development Council (IDC) and other local economic development collaborators.

- Participate in Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) and Metropolitan Economic Growth Alliance of Chicago (MEGA) regional marketing activities.

1.2 Retention and Expansion Strategies:

1.2.1 Will focus on economic diversification and development specifically intended to drive local business retention and expansion. It will work to make DuPage County a primary business center of U.S. industry.

1.2.2 Will implement strategies to strengthen select core industry sectors. These strategies would include:

- Recruiting high tech research and technology businesses.
- Promoting alternative entrepreneurial projects through expanding our university tech transfer and entrepreneurial business succession opportunities.
- Supporting diversification within the county's core industries including the development of additional supply lines targeting for potential relocations. (i.e. target companies that supply our core companies).

1.2.3 Annually survey business and industry to identify potential high-growth businesses for expansion and potential business closures or relocation.

1.2.4 Utilizing the "Synchronist" business retention program, utilize more state-of-the-art technology to better and more expediently survey, track, inventory, respond and follow-up to local business needs and concerns.

1.2.5 Maintain a robust information based database of key information needs to support local economic development decisions.

1.2.6 Link businesses with local, regional and state resources.

TOTAL Four-Year investment: \$3,400,000

2. It's ALL Here For Workforce.....

Choose DuPage will be a central facilitator in career, professional, technical education and workforce development.

Choose DuPage will develop the human capital necessary for our region to continue to be an attractive, highly-trained workforce so that this region can continue to be a national leader in the new "information economy". We endeavor to provide leadership in the establishment of strategic partnerships, allied programs, and partner networks to insure an educated, well-trained workforce that is willing and able to compete in today's global marketplace. **Choose DuPage** will

- 2.1** Partner with local schools such as college and university branch campuses, the College of DuPage and other colleges and training centers to establish new initiatives and to enhance existing programs such as the College of DuPage Business and Professional Institute (BPI) and the University of Illinois Extension Business and Industrial Services program.
- 2.2** Facilitate the delivery of industry specific training programs by proactively linking available resources with companies in need of these services. We would link with entities like the Illinois Management Association and the Valley Industrial Association.
- 2.3** Develop additional initiatives to address training needs identified through Choose DuPage's new industry and business visitation program.
- 2.4** Partner with county, regional and state entities in the delivery of workforce initiatives to insure the availability of resources on the local level.
- 2.5** Expand partnerships with the DuPage Workforce Board for training in healthcare, technology and manufacturing.
- 2.6** Develop a coalition to address the educational challenges associated with the increasing immigrant population as well as the developmentally disabled.
- 2.7** Develop coalitions to address training, recruitment, workforce transportation, and workforce housing and create community partnerships to address these matters.
- 2.8** Provide support to enhance and expand programs for the development of skill sets and talent required in technology-based industries.
- 2.9** Support activities to organize the Illinois WorkNet Center in connection with services funded by the DuPage Workforce investment Board.
- 2.10** Monitor enrollment in professional, career and technical education programs.
- 2.11** Organize a county wage and salary survey and publish news and information on the Choose DuPage website.
- 2.12** Organize and participate in a DuPage WorkNet Center business solutions group for employer referrals for recruitment and training, monitor employment, unemployment and other workforce statistics; keep statistics updated on the website.
- 2.13** Provide support and encouragement for affordable housing, which will produce an expanded workforce.
- Support development of affordable housing projects as long as they are planned and managed within municipal, county, and school growth capabilities; monitor housing stock growth and sales and commuting patterns to facilitate recognition of housing market opportunities

2.14 Provide support and encouragement for public transportation and highway improvement options in order to provide increased access for the region's workforce.

TOTAL Four-Year Investment: \$1,100,000

3. It's ALL Here For Development.....

Choose DuPage will provide public policy assessment and input to strengthen community development capacity for transportation, health care, technology / telecommunications, and redevelopment issues, while assuring environmental and community harmony.

Choose DuPage will promote positive interaction between local and state government and our business community; identify some of the physical and social infrastructure needs of DuPage County; and provide leadership to address these needs. **Choose DuPage** will create a professional, political and public policy advocacy effort to draw attention to DuPage County needs for redevelopment and new development from the perspective of governmental agencies. A special focus in all its efforts will be to implement "green" strategies in its development and redevelopment efforts.

3.1 **Choose DuPage** will target key regional, state and national agencies that can and should have instrumental funds to address specific growth needs within DuPage County that would bolster our economy and mitigate barriers to further growth, expansion and development.

3.2 **Choose DuPage** will track the highest and best programs that would have the most influence in the attainment of additional funds and consider a lobbyist to secure our sought after initiatives. This could also include special legislation for DuPage County.

3.3 **Choose DuPage** will develop and promote an annual *DuPage County Economic Development Strategic Policy Agenda*. Each election year it will hold a regional candidate's forum specific to their support and understanding of key economic development issues facing DuPage County and invite the general public to attend. Thus it hopes to raise awareness of economic development issues relevant to the community.

3.4 **Choose DuPage** will provide business-focused, public policy input in formulating organizational policy and advocacy positions.

- **Choose DuPage** will provide a voice for the business community in the arena of public policy. **Choose DuPage** will track regional, state and federal regulations to evaluate their impact on business and industry in the region.
- **Choose DuPage** will assemble *ad hoc* committees of local business and industry experts to assist in assessing, in-depth, the regulatory impacts of pending legislation and to assist in the formulation of policy positions for the organization.

- The leadership of the organization will formulate advocacy and outreach programs directed at legislative leaders at the state and federal levels to ensure that the needs of the DuPage region are known and understood.

3.5 Will support public / private partnerships to plan and identify funding sources for new physical infrastructure (sewer, water, roads, business parks, technology, etc).

3.6 Participate in environmental efforts to protect and promote our natural resources to enhance and preserve our quality of life.

3.7 **Choose DuPage** will work closely with the municipalities as well as with the DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference to facilitate good working relations between governmental entities and business leaders.

3.8 It will host annual highway, transportation, public transit, housing, and community development forums to encourage new investment and projects that will benefit citizens in the county and increase the quality of life in DuPage County.

3.9 It will prepare information on county development issues such as municipal utility capacity, municipal incentives, municipal taxes, and school, vocational and educational programs.

3.10 Collaborate with other associations and groups to organize economic development promotion of resources in transportation, research and development (National Labs), telecommunications and other fiber optic infrastructure.

3.11 Work cooperatively with local chambers of commerce, economic development commissions and other local business organization initiatives; participate in regional economic development activities such as structuring specific marketing project initiatives with local economic development organizations, and with neighboring counties economic development organizations, the Illinois Development Council's Marketing Plan, CMAP, MEGA Chicago, and other regional strategies from the Illinois DCEO.

3.12 **Choose DuPage** recognizes that health care recruitment is a fundamental part of the quality of life here as well as part of the economic base for DuPage County. Healthcare is a major business recruitment target industry because of its potential to bring high quality health services to the area. **Choose DuPage** hopes to collaborate with healthcare leadership in the county to assist them in their recruitment needs.

TOTAL Four-Year Investment: \$800,000

4. It's ALL Here For Opportunity.....

Choose DuPage will create a sense of county identity and create an investment orientation to ensure sustainability of its high quality of life.

DuPage County is a great place to live and work. With its proximity to the City of Chicago, it is worthy of investment to improve its business efficiency and quality of life. **Choose DuPage** will marshal efforts to promote this sense of pride and investment.

4.1 **Choose DuPage** will create an Opportunity Fund that will allow the organization to “close” deals on catalyst projects that will greatly enhance the local economy and job base, thus creating ancillary additional investment outcomes that leverage the original investment exponentially.

4.2 This “discretionary pool” of monies will be targeted to “close” strategic deals that create significant local economic growth and job creation opportunities.

4.3 This fund will be utilized to grow and expand current business and industrial parks, including the development of shovel-ready certified development sites.

4.4 **Choose DuPage** will provide “match funds” for projects that are directed at local economic development within the 39 communities that it serves.

4.5 The Opportunity Fund will also be a “discretionary pool” of monies to assist local entrepreneurs in procuring the services and tools necessary to develop Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) / Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) applications and patentable knowledge based intellectual rights that could create new markets for cutting edge products in the global economy.

4.6 Establish the “seed capital” to create a local *Angel & Seed Capital Network* in order to fund new, innovative ideas and companies that lack access to more traditional capital sources to create, grow and revolutionize their business concepts.

4.7 **Choose DuPage** will encourage communication and input from investors on its Action Plan and program of work. Each investor will receive personal communication from the President / CEO annually. Individual investors will be surveyed for input and encouraged to take a proactive role in directing the work of economic development in the county.

4.8 **Choose DuPage** will develop and implement an Investor Communications & Retention plan. Quarterly Executive Dash Board newsletters with accountable metrics will be furnished to investors to gauge progress and to stimulate further dialogue. Other information will be distributed on an as needed basis.

4.9 **Choose DuPage** will increase alliances between investors and economic development activity by ongoing promotional and educational events.

4.10 **Choose DuPage** will continue to promote investor companies on its website, and in its workforce recruitment efforts.

4.11 **Choose DuPage** will provide opportunities for investors to attend first-class educational events not available elsewhere in the region.

4.12 Highlight member activity and involvement in economic development retention, attraction and municipal preparedness activities.

4.13 Recruit board members that represent a cross-section of the industrial, business, government, and education constituencies of DuPage County. Balance the membership of the board geographically from the county.

4.14 Create, administer and publish a yearly, **Choose DuPage** "Investor Satisfactory Survey."

4.15 Survey results measuring **Choose DuPage** market awareness.

4.16 Produce a quarterly **Choose DuPage** Performance Measurement "Making a Difference" scorecard.

4.17 Produce a yearly **Choose DuPage** efficiency and effectiveness benchmark study.

4.18 Build measured **Choose DuPage** brand awareness locally, regionally and internationally.

TOTAL Four-Year Investment: \$600,000

Four-Year Budget Summary

GOAL AREA	BUDGET	PERCENTAGE
1. Business Recruitment, Retention & Expansion	\$3,000,000	55%
2. Workforce Development & Education	\$1,100,000	20%
3. Community & County Capacity Building	\$800,000	15%
4. Investing in Our Quality of Life	\$600,000	10%
TOTAL	\$5,500,000	100%

Four Year Goals and Program Measurements

Aggressive measurable goals will be established for the four-year Action Plan to provide focus and accountability to program investors and the region alike.

1. **Choose DuPage** Business Recruitment & Retention

- Regular and consistent participation in networking events and professional organizations; solid schedule of speaking engagements.
- Regular participation by staff in events and professional organizations. A series of written articles to be disseminated to keep the county business environment "top of mind."
- Participation in marketing activities related to target audiences.
- Track website traffic.
- Generate positive gains in office and industrial absorption. To reduce overall vacancy of office space by 1-2 % per year, down to 10% over four years; and industrial space by 1-2% per year, down to 8%; representing gains of office space of about 400-600,000 square feet in the first year; followed by 600-1,200,000 in the succeeding years; and gains of up to 1 to 1.6 million square feet of industrial space in the first year, followed by 1.6 to 2.4 million in succeeding years of industrial space.
- **Choose DuPage** will target and grow its leading employment sectors over the next four years in the following way:
 - It will grow the service sector by 10,000 jobs over the next four years.
 - It will grow the Professional and Technical Services employment sector by 5% per year or approximately 3200 jobs over the next four years (EPW: \$80,295)
 - It will stem the attrition of the Manufacturing employment sector, reversing an 11% decline or approximately 5900 jobs (EPW: \$73,299)
 - It will grow the Healthcare and Social Assistance employment sector by 4% per year or approximately 2000 jobs over the next four years (EPW: \$51,412)
 - It will grow the Finance and Insurance employment sector by 4% per year or approximately 2000 jobs over the next four years (EPW: \$82,824)
 - It will grow the Transportation and Warehousing employment sector by 2% per year or approximately 600 jobs over the next four years (EPW: \$65,920)
 - It will grow the Company Management employment sector by 5% per year or approximately 1900 jobs over the next four years (EPW: \$118,071).

2. Workforce development and education

- Consistent attendance at meetings of groups and agencies and evidence of meetings with local employers.
- Achieve a 2-3% expansion of the county's workforce; maintain the county unemployment rate in the 3-4% range.

3. Community and County Infrastructure Development

- Develop and update community profiles and keep site selection data up-to-date.

4. Organize community meetings and resources to create a transportation and technology capability to serve the technology needs of the office and industrial sectors.

Oversight and Governance

The Board of Directors of *Choose DuPage* will guide the initiative and they will remain responsible for program implementation, management, oversight and the disbursement of funds.

Conclusion

Choose DuPage will work toward creating new jobs and economic growth by traditional methods such as attracting new business and industry to the county so all 39 communities will benefit from its success. In addition, in its undertaking development activity not assumed by anyone else in the county, long-term community and economic development growth will be realized as DuPage County proactively moves toward the goal of creating a world class advanced and diversified economy that will allow a unique quality of life where our citizens live, work and play in DuPage County.

A successfully implemented Action Plan will generate benefits for those who live and work in DuPage County, including:

- Higher quality jobs with improved living wage employment opportunities.
- A stable and growing tax base.
- New market opportunities for existing businesses.
- Protection of existing investments that have been made by businesses and homeowners.
- Individuals becoming activists and more in building more prosperous communities across its regional landscape.

- Unparalleled quality of life for the residents of DuPage County.

By collaboration and investment by concerned public and private leadership, and by an aggressive plan of action (outlined above), Choose DuPage can not only maintain our current fertile business climate without diminishment, but insure that our economic prosperity continues well in to the future. The time to invest in our community, and in our future, is NOW!