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## **Marshall County Economic Development Corporation Newsletter December, 2008**

A great deal has transpired since our September 2008 newsletter. I would like to take this opportunity to again fill you in on some of the progress and activities of the Marshall County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC) during the fourth quarter of 2008, to thank you for your support and solicit your continued support.

As mentioned in our previous newsletter, MCEDC has been diligently pursuing a more permanent location. After a great deal of work by board members and supporters, we acquired a permanent location at 2852 Miller Drive in Plymouth. For the present, the mailing address remains: P.O. Box 526, Plymouth, IN 46563. The office is very well situated with easy access from U.S. 30 and 31. It affords the county an excellent venue for economic development activities.

Perhaps the three most important and interesting accomplishments, besides our new office, that culminated in the fourth quarter of 2008 are completion of the first phase of MCEDC's website, the expansion activities of several local industries and transforming efforts to include Plymouth in the South Bend Metroplex, a fiberoptic network, into a county-wide project.

The importance of an economic development website in today's highly competitive industrial recruitment and expansion markets is difficult to overstate. It is an electronic portal from which site consultants and corporate real estate professionals can extract data that helps them plan future investments. MCEDC's website layout and content are based on an overall strategy of highlighting business clusters and providing information on those specific clusters within the economic context of the community. In other words, it targets industry sectors that have been historically successful in the community, provides some of the economic and demographic advantages of the community and describes investment and service incentives offered by federal, state and local government.

With a single exception, the business clusters targeted by the website were identified by research conducted for the U.S. Economic Development Administration by the Purdue Center for Regional Development and the Indiana Business Research Center of the Kelly School of Business, Indiana University. These "clusters" essentially represent industry sectors in which Marshall County has comparative advantages. They are advanced materials, agribusiness, chemicals and chemical based projects, forest and wood products, fabricated metal products, machinery manufacturing and transportation equipment manufacturing. The "exception cluster" is transportation, distribution and logistics (TDL).

TDL was proactively added based on proposed improvements to U.S. 30 and 31 and increasing congestion in metro Chicago. Migration of intermodal (TDL) facilities beyond the confines of metro Chicago was a continuous theme at several Chicago Industrial Real Estate Conferences. A significant portion of this migration will encompass northern Indiana and represents an economic development opportunity for Marshall County.

Although slowed by the downturn of the national economy, there continues to be a surprising amount of Industrial expansion in the county. This underscores the role of business retention and expansion to economic development.

Perhaps the most publicized of these expansions is the planned creation of 55 new jobs at A.O. Safety. This was a competitive project in which Marshall County's superior market proximity and services were significant. A similar expansion currently being planned by an Argos manufacturer is slated to create 19 new jobs. In addition, we are anticipating locating a company from a neighboring state which will lead to the creation of about 50 jobs in the short term with considerable upward potential. In a floundering national economy such activity highlights the desirability of Marshall County as a place to live and work.

To be sure, there are other expansion projects under consideration in the county. However, due to restrictions on state incentive programs and in some cases the wishes of the companies themselves, MCEDC is not at liberty to divulge their names or information that might lead to their premature identification. We certainly do not want to jeopardize a project.

One of the thrusts of MCEDC's economic development strategy is to help the county transition from a more traditional, but declining, manufacturing economy to a more vibrant knowledge based economy. Another thrust is to help identify infrastructure opportunities that contribute to economic development. This explains our participation in the T-Square initiative, part of which involves creating a "high-tech" industrial park in Marshall County. In order for this to happen, the county must have the necessary infrastructure, in this case, affordable and easily accessible fiber optic capacity.

Through a rather complicated sequence of events and the assistance of Michiana Area Council of Governments (MACOG), we were able to package this initiative as a proposal for the anticipated stimulus package that is being proposed by the new administration. We also met with Representative Donnelly and obtained his support. In this process what had begun as single community proposal was expanded to increase the potential economic impact of the project. The project now includes LaPaz, Bremen, Ancilla College, Argos, Bourbon and Culver.

Marshall County made significant strides in economic development in 2008. We certainly expect to continue this into the New Year and beyond. If you have any questions about any of the information in this newsletter, please do not hesitate to contact me at 780-6153.