

**ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT**

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: THE INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT VISION**

The City of Vandalia should maximize its economic development potential by diversifying its economic base. Maximizing and diversifying the City's economy increases the City's ability to sustain various economic cycles and allows the tax income collected to provide City services to be divided proportionally among various user groups (e.g. home owners, business owners, industry and tourists). No one group should endure the bulk of the tax burden. In addition to providing tax revenue to the City, a proper industrial development plan would help retain young citizens either before or after they elect to complete courses of study after high school.

**The keys to pursuing economic development within Vandalia are:**

1. Development of an Economic Development Plan to assess the community's needs for economic development activities and determine the City's assets in attracting certain types of development;
2. Development of a Land Use Plan and Zoning Ordinance that delineates what development will go where; (example, acquiring land to develop, which includes infrastructure for an industrial park);
3. Development of a Marketing Plan which would promote the community and devise activities to seek economic development opportunities; (example, web site, brochures, and continue to work with Illinois Power's Economic Development Division).

Most community leaders are elected officials that have other professions and volunteer their time to serve the community on a part-time basis. This makes it more difficult for Vandalia to take advantage of development opportunities as they arise. An additional key to obtain sustainable positive economic change lies in the power of local citizens who organize with the vision of their future. The City may elect to take a passive role and simply react to proposed development plans as they arise, but more economic action will result if the City directs the individual responsible for the economic development to act as point of contact for a potential developer. Potential developers/businessmen should have their questions answered by this representative and, in turn, should provide answers to questions that concern the City.

Another economic promotion option available to the City with respect to development are the resources of such groups as the Chamber of Commerce, The Main Street Program, Tourism Committee, and local civic organizations. The local government, should be selective in the types of economic development it pursues and should be able to assist the selected development in acquiring financing, and more importantly, in marketing and securing the developer's investment to avoid unplanned and disorderly development.

### **Retail and Service Economic Development**

Our community's businesses are a key component of Vandalia's economy. They provide employment for a significant amount of the population that helps define Vandalia's identity. The City should begin a revitalization effort to attract new businesses and retain

existing businesses. The longer a community waits to initiate a revitalization movement, the more difficult it is to achieve, since the community has less business and activity with or "to help to" draw new business into the community.

The revitalization movement of Vandalia must include these four components:

1. Building consensus and cooperation between groups that have a stake in the economic viability of Vandalia.
2. Improving Vandalia's image by enhancing its overall physical appearance.
3. Strengthen the existing economic base of Vandalia while diversifying it.
4. Marketing Vandalia's unique characteristics to residents, investors, tourists and others.

Funding for revitalization efforts can be achieved through:

1. City General Funds
2. Community Development Block Grants
3. Portions of Sales Tax
4. Special Fund Raisers and Events
5. Underwriting from Foundations, Banks, Corporations, Utility Companies, and Local Businesses
6. Illinois Discretionary Funds (i.e. Illinois First (2001))
7. Tax Increment Financing

The City of Vandalia needs a good working relationship with the Chamber Commerce and other business organizations to promote sales programs, special events, marketing pieces, and the aesthetics and design of the City. The City, with the cooperation of these local groups, should evaluate the following concepts to promote economic development of Vandalia.

1. Develop an Economic Development Plan for the establishment of future businesses and industries in Vandalia.
2. Expand and create new festivals for local citizenry, tourists and visitors.
3. Provide landscape design amenities to provide for pedestrian friendly atmosphere.

### Historical Preservation

Historic Preservation may provide the community with the following be

1. Protection of the historic and architectural character and resources of the community;
2. Maintains desired development and aesthetic qualities of the community and discourage degeneration and blight of older neighborhoods;
3. Protects the use of historic preservation for the education, pleasure and welfare of the people of Vandalia, as well as visitors;
4. Protects and enhances individual property values, and, in turn, increases the community's assessed valuation; and
5. Protects and enhances the community's attractions to residents, homebuyers, tourists and visitors, hereby supporting and promoting business and commerce.

To derive the full benefit of historical preservation in Vandalia, the City should make every effort to attain a strong working relationship with local historical organizations in the development of a historical preservation-planning program for the community.

#### **Tourism Development**

A strong possibility to maximize Vandalia's economic development potential involves building on natural attractions that sometimes are accepted by residents as too common place to be of interest to tourists. The direct effect of tourism dollars is widely recognized, and the City may be able to make the tourism industry an essential ingredient in their economic development program. Additional research and a careful review of the historical, cultural, and natural attractions may reap rewards in income and employment associated with tourism. The City should maintain their membership in the Southern Illinois and/or Southwestern Illinois Tourism Commission.

The City of Vandalia should consider participating in the Sister Cities Program, which could be a starting point to increase the tourism industry within Vandalia.

#### **Residential Development**

New housing construction affects Vandalia in many important ways, but perhaps its most important contribution is to the economy. This building activity represents many jobs in the residential construction, building materials and household furnishings industries. Residential development will steadily increase in the community, probably without much assistance from local residents. However, as stated in the proceeding housing section, it is important to present and maintain a positive living environment. A quality living environment means providing services and amenities to all residents. Suggestions<sup>\*</sup> maintaining and improving Vandalia's attractive living environment include:

- \* Establish neighborhood associations to solve problems in their neighborhood.

- \* Conduct studies to determine residential development needs for families, individuals, elderly, and the disabled.
- \* Provide for adolescent and teen activities.
- \* Develop a community center, that may be used by all residents for civic, recreational, educational and/or social purposes.
- \* Identify health care needs of the present population and anticipate health needs of a steadily increasing elderly population.
- \* Cooperate with the school board to assess the need for additional public education facilities with a curriculum and learning environment to foster higher education attainment levels among existing and future students.
- \* Provide a forum for the development of public or private preschool programs for childcare with social and developmental benefits.

The continued enhancement of residential opportunities, with concentration on high quality single family development, is a fundamental ingredient for realizing Vandalia's long-term goals.

Vandalia should:

- \* Identify prime sites for new housing development.
- \* Organize and administer improvement programs designed to enhance the condition of the existing housing stock.
- \* Institute additional land use regulations to guide residential development.
- \* Promote Vandalia as a desirable residential community.

### **Commercial/Business Development**

Existing commercial and business development within, and adjacent to, Vandalia is primarily the product of three factors: the City's location with respect to transportation facilities, its population growth and the availability of land. In order to accommodate existing and future commercial/business development the City should institute land use controls, mainly the zoning code, to preserve and promote development. Zoning ordinances are necessary to regulate the type of development that may occur at specific sites throughout Vandalia. In addition, zoning ordinances may spell out certain requirements that a developer must meet. The objective of placing these requirements on the developer is to promote the aesthetic quality of development as desired by the citizens of Vandalia and ensure the investment of the community, as well as the developer.

Commercial and Business Park Zoning Districts are essential in attracting commercial and business activity to Vandalia. It is much more economical

in promotion a park development within the community than individual sites. There are two important factors associated with promoting a park development. The first is determining the economic characteristics conducive to the type of development the park is designed to facilitate. The second is marketing the park. Underutilized parks are usually a direct result of lack of marketing effort. Parks have to be promoted, maintained, and continually improved, and the marketing effort must be intensive and ongoing.