



**Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity**

Pat Quinn, Governor

November 15, 2012

Dear Members of the General Assembly:

The enclosed information fulfills the statutory directive that the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) report annually to the members of the Illinois General Assembly on the status of the Illinois River Edge Redevelopment Program.

DCEO has designated four cities – Aurora, East St. Louis, Elgin and Rockford – as River Edge Redevelopment Zones.

The purpose of the River Edge Redevelopment Program is to revive and redevelop environmentally challenged properties adjacent to rivers in Illinois.

I trust that you will find this 2012 River Edge Redevelopment Zone Report useful.

Sincerely,

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Director

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River Edge Redevelopment Zone Program 2012 Annual Report

The River Edge Redevelopment Zone is an innovative program designed to help revitalize riverfront areas by providing local developers and businesses with the critical tools to revive and redevelop abandoned or contaminated properties that will stimulate economic development opportunities and create more Illinois jobs. The River Edge Redevelopment Initiative includes the designation of redevelopment zones that are eligible to receive tax credits, exemptions and grant funding to support clean-up, remediation and redevelopment efforts that will lead to economic revitalization in these areas. This initiative combines resources across state agencies and is administered primarily by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA).

Implementation Status

DCEO has designated zones in the cities of Aurora, East St. Louis, Elgin and Rockford.

Aurora Zone

The City of Aurora River Edge Redevelopment Zone consists of former industrial land lining its east and west riverfronts that have tremendous economic development potential, but the costs of redevelopment have made attracting investment extremely difficult. Construction of public areas that will create a downtown park and public space that will support redevelopment is well underway.

RiverEdge Park is a 30 acre regional festival park which is the centerpiece of a 10-year economic development master plan for the City of Aurora. Aurora's downtown, the park and the properties along the Fox River are all part of the River Edge Redevelopment Zone. RiverEdge Park is located just north of Downtown Aurora along the Fox River.

The City's website says this about the RiverEdge Park: "A River that is a park. A Park that is a River."

The Environmental Protection Agency also awarded the City of Aurora a \$1,450,000 grant under the Green Infrastructure Grant Program.

East St. Louis Zone

The City of East St. Louis River Edge Redevelopment Zone is adjacent to the Mississippi River. In 2010, the City added the Goose Hill neighborhood to the zone. The East St. Louis Riverfront is a unique area because of its unparalleled location directly across the river from the Gateway Arch.

The City has proposed development of the Port of East St. Louis in the zone. The project will involve the redevelopment of a former industrial site along the Mississippi into a multi-modal facility. The necessary environmental assessment has been completed for the project.

In the Goose Hill area, Tank Trailer Cleaning has nearly completed demolition of the old Hunter meatpacking plant. Also, in the Goose Hill neighborhood, the City passed an ordinance rezoning this area as the North East Riverfront Industrial Park.

Elgin Zone

In the City of Elgin, River Edge provides a critical tool to further the redevelopment of the City's downtown and create new economic opportunities along the Fox River. The City was awarded \$8 million for the redevelopment project, which the City's website describes this way:

"Constructing Riverside Drive Promenade, along the Fox River, is a critical component of Elgin's master plan to revitalize the riverfront by encouraging more redevelopment, public space and transportation projects. Riverside Drive Promenade involves the complete redevelopment of the Riverside Drive right-of-way and the adjacent parking deck into an urban riverfront plaza connected to Elgin's Festival Park. It will create a large urban park right next to the downtown retail corridor with the goal of adding new commercial buildings to nearby empty lots."

Rockford Zone

In Rockford, River Edge will allow for multiple redevelopment projects using abandoned industrial and commercial sites along the Rock River. The City has been granted \$8 million for a variety of projects along the riverfront to address blight and spur economic development.

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency also awarded the City of Rockford an additional grant of \$1,000,000 in brownfield grant funds. Rockford will use the grant funds to do environmental investigation and cleanup work at three sites: the former Tapco facility, former Depot site, and former Lorden/Eclipse site, all of which are located along South Main Street in Rockford. The overall goal of the grant is to fund cleanup activities to make way for the expansion of Davis Park into the former Tapco facility site and the return of passenger rail to Rockford at the former Depot and Lorden/Eclipse sites.

Peoria Zone

The City has not yet applied for RERZ designation.

Effectiveness

During State Fiscal Year 2012, according to reports submitted by these four cities, private investments totaling approximately \$22.5 million in these designated zones will result in the projected creation and retention of 309 jobs. Although other factors are undoubtedly involved, RERZ designation can play an important role in a decision by a business to locate or expand.

Proposed New Legislation

DCEO is not proposing any new legislation at this time.