

PRESIDENT'S NEWSLETTER: FEBRUARY 2015

Share the momentum in the Rockford Region

Welcome to the **President's Monthly Newsletter**, one of the ways the Rockford Area Economic Development Council demonstrates the economic momentum in our community and helps you better understand what we do.

Momentum is the theme of our 2014 Annual Report, new online this week!

When we look back at those 12 months, we see not only a tremendous year but also positive trends since 2010. The future holds even more to celebrate. So, we will continue to use "momentum" as we update you on the progress of the Rockford Region.

A conversation-provoking addition to the annual report is our **"10 Things To Know About the Rockford Region"** page, which we have also posted as its own [page on our website](#). Promoting regional pride is part of what the RAEDC does. It's important to recognize and share positive news. Our list makes it easy for you to be an ambassador for where we work, live and play.



Because great things are happening here....

The hottest news from a cold February:

1. The \$40 million **AAR Corp. jet maintenance, repair and overhaul facility** moved forward with intergovernmental agreements on financing from two major governmental bodies. [Rockford City Council](#) approved its \$5 million commitment Feb. 23; the [Winnebago County Board](#) followed four days later on its \$8 million

commitment. Loves Park and Machensey Park are expected to chip in, too, with votes coming soon.

2. Amtrak was the buzzword of the month. The Rockford Region turned up the volume of its voice to support **Chicago-Rockford passenger rail service**, as funding has been put on hold by the state for review.

- Just last week, on Feb. 25, more than 200 leaders and supporters turned out for an **Illinois Senate committee hearing**. RAEDC President Mike Nicholas testified, saying "this is the right time and the right place for passenger rail." [Read the 6-page testimony online.](#)
- The **Rockford Chamber of Commerce** launched a [letter-writing campaign](#), which has drawn more than 3,000 new followers to its advocacy center; watch soon for a more detailed chamber update.
- Mike Nicholas spoke to **Gov. Rauner** about the issue during his Feb. 7 airport stop and during an introductory visit Feb. 18 with the new Acting Department of Transportation Director Randy Blankenhorn in Springfield.

Other project-related updates:

1. The **Rock Valley College** [aviation maintenance training program](#) has grown to 78 students, including 15 who just started this spring semester.

2. [Demolition of the former Rockford School District Administration Building](#) on Walnut and Madison started to **make way for parking for the upcoming multi-use indoor sports facility** in the former Ingersoll building.

3. **Meijer** has started the hiring process for more than 540 jobs at [two grocery supercenters set to open in May](#) in Rockford and Machesney Park.

In case you missed our summary of wins: [Success Stories in 2014](#)

Staff/organization updates

1. **Terrance Hall** has been designated as the local director of the Illinois SBDC **International Trade Center**, the "go-to" entity for companies that want to start or boost exports; [learn more](#).

2. Carrie Zethmayr attended the "**Growing the Local/Regional Food System: Strategies for Sustainable and Equitable Economic Development**" workshop Feb. 18-19 in Louisville, along with representatives from the City of Rockford and Rockford Housing Authority.

3. On Feb. 28, Mike Nicholas attended the **American Apprenticeship Initiative** meeting (Illinois Manufacturers Association) to focus on a grant application and apprenticeship needs/opportunities.

We post good news regularly. A recent sampling:

[More Rockford students participating in ACT prep course](#)

Awards: [Field recognized as a Top 15 Great Workplace in Manufacturing & Production](#); [Fehr Graham receives two Illinois ACEC awards](#)

National press: [Illinois ranked No. 1 in LEED rating](#)

Upcoming events

- **March 5, State of the City Address:** Rockford Mayor Larry Morrissey's annual update; [register to attend](#).
- **March 18, Getting the Right People in the Right Jobs:** A free lunch and learn; [register and read more](#).
- **March 27, Due Diligence in Exporting** -- Preventing Scams, Fraud and Deceit in Your International Business: A free [International Trade Center event](#) sponsored by PNC Bank.
- **April 16, Taking Your Business International:** Assess your readiness, find trade partners and navigate logistics; [sign up now](#).

Watch for my President's Newsletter each month to see the collective impact of our efforts.

The RAEDC often works behind the scenes due to the confidential nature of business projects. Plus, big deals take time: The average time from start to completion on the more than 20 announced project wins in 2014 was 665 days, with several projects requiring more than three years.

We are committed to persistence and continuity in our work: We market the Rockford Region to the world, influencing companies to locate or expand here. We support and promote growth within targeted industries through regional public-private collaboration. We assist prospective and existing companies by connecting them to resources for workforce development, available buildings, supply chain partners, incentives and more.

Together, we will continue the momentum in 2015 for an even stronger, more sustainable economy. **Together, we will Connect, Act and Thrive!**



Michael Nicholas

[Michael Nicholas](#)

President,
Rockford Area Economic
Development Council



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ABOUT THE RAEDC

The primary role of the Rockford Area Economic Development Council (RAEDC) is to collaboratively improve the economic strength of the Rockford Region by helping employers retain and create quality jobs. The RAEDC works closely with many partners to learn what existing and new employers need to grow, and to serve as a one-stop resource for clients. The RAEDC seeks to improve the competitiveness of the region by taking what it learns from the region's employers, and engaging the community in the daily work of economic development.