



Press Release

**For Immediate Release**

**Date:** April 7, 2026

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## Two Regional Cities Awarded \$4.7 Million in Economic Development Grants

**ROCKFORD, IL** – Region 1 Planning Council (R1) helped two McHenry County cities secure a total of nearly \$5 million through the Illinois Regional Site Readiness Program to stimulate business development in northern Illinois.

The Regional Site Readiness Program, issued by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), provides funding to make industrial sites shovel ready, simplifying and accelerating site selection for businesses looking to invest in the northern Illinois region. In this first wave, a total of \$25.9 million was awarded to eight sites across the state. DCEO is expected to announce further rounds of grant recipients later this spring.

“Economic development happens with thoughtful long-term planning and considerable investment in new roads, water, sewer and other infrastructure, creating shovel-ready sites for industry,” said Michael Dunn, Region 1 Planning Council Executive Director. “We appreciate the collaboration from McHenry County and its municipalities, and we’re thrilled to secure this critical funding to help bring private investment to our region. We are also very grateful for DCEO’s continued partnership and investment in our region.”

The city of Marengo received a \$4.6 million capital grant to extend water and sewer infrastructure to the interchange at Interstate 90 and IL-23. This grant is the final phase of the Route 23 Utility Extension Project, continuing the progress made through Site Readiness grants for previous phases.

“Utility extension along Route 23 to I-90 represents the most important economic development opportunity for Marengo and western McHenry County,” said Derik Morefield, Marengo City Administrator. “It opens the potential for significant industrial, commercial, and residential development, which will affect the City of Marengo’s economic health for decades to come.”

The city of McHenry received a \$120,000 planning grant to conduct environmental assessments at Ebel Farms to prepare the site for further development. It was the sole planning grant recipient in the first wave of funding.

“In the long term, this proactive investment in site readiness and entitlement will enhance the property’s competitiveness in attracting a major primary industrial employer, ultimately supporting job creation and fostering economic growth and development for the City of McHenry, McHenry County, and the broader region,” said Doug Martin, McHenry Director of Economic Development.

“We are grateful to Governor Pritzker and DCEO for recognizing McHenry County's potential through these awards,” said Mark Piekos, Executive Director of McHenry County Economic Development Corporation. “Credit goes to our partners at R1 for helping to assemble competitive applications on behalf of Marengo and McHenry. These investments give us opportunity to build on McHenry County's strong industrial base and compete for the kind of projects that create lasting jobs.”

In 2025, R1 helped the cities of Rockford, Belvidere, Marengo, and Harvard secure \$8.5 million in Federal Site Readiness planning and capital grants to better position sites for industry in those communities. R1 is the Economic Development District (EDD) for Winnebago, Boone, and McHenry counties, designated as such by the U.S. Economic Development Administration in 2023. As a district, R1 works closely with its municipal and county partners on the long-term planning and site preparation of road, water, and sewer infrastructure – an essential foundation for attracting industry. R1 also helps its partners secure state and federal funding to implement those plans.

**ABOUT R1** – [Region 1 Planning Council](#) is a special-purpose, regional government agency providing cross-jurisdictional, government-to-government collaborative planning for Northern Illinois. The regional planning model provides an efficient means to promoting a well-informed, comprehensive dialogue that holistically addresses regional issues by fulfilling the needs of government entities for long-range planning, securing funding, and analyzing and providing data in support of regional projects and initiatives.

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