

# New Perspectives on Growing Local Economies

The Sky Room in Holmes Student Center  
Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL  
April 3, 2017

## Overview

The conference presents a new perspective on local economic development, particularly in challenging locations. Topics will focus on both urban and rural communities. The speakers will present an organic approach to economic development based on the innovative use of local resources and growing a connected system of enterprises.

The conference is part of the Great Downtowns Growing Cities program (GDGC). GDGC is a program of Northern Illinois University's Center for Governmental Studies (CGS). CGS staff provide technical assistance to government agencies and organizations to assist them in making informed decisions on issues affecting the wellbeing of their residents, business owners, institutions and other stakeholders. This conference is a continuation of the learning opportunities CGS provides for a large number of civic leaders.

Conference attendees will learn to:

- Target investment to connect potential markets with new destinations and locations
- Identify opportunities to develop an ecology of connected businesses
- Pursue unconventional funding sources
- Develop and utilize effective leadership, government policy, social capital, and communication tools to achieve results

## Program

**8:45 a.m.-9:30 a.m. Registration and Breakfast**

**9:30 a.m.-9:45 a.m. Welcome**

**9:45 a.m.-10:15 a.m. Tourism and Growing Your Local Economy**

Cory Jobe, Director of the Illinois Office of Tourism, will speak to trends in Illinois tourism and how that translates into economic growth. He will address:

- What can communities do to leverage their attractions?
- What state initiatives are planned for the future that will promote visits to communities?
- What assistance can his office provide to communities?

**10:15 a.m.-11:00 a.m. Utilizing Leadership and Social Capital**

Lynne and Ty McDaniel of W.O.W. (West of Western) created a thriving business community in a Chicago neighborhood utilizing local assets and links to new markets. They built on the connection to a nearby population previously considered out of reach. Rather than focusing on shortcomings, they forged ahead by developing a connected business community. Their leadership resulted in new business development and neighborhood improvement.

### **11:00 a.m.-11:15 a.m. Break**

### **11:15 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Developing an Ecology of Businesses**

Scott Struchen, Keith Pearse, and Peter Limberger used the place-based assets of Ottawa, IL to create vertically integrated businesses starting with specialty crop production in the area's fertile soil and growing to include a restaurant and beer distribution system. The area's scenic topography, rivers, and state parks provide the drawing power for tourists. Events, downtown improvements, and local organizations bring these tourists into downtown to support the restaurant. Tourism and transportation linkages to Chicago support product distribution in the greater metropolitan area once perceived as too distant.

### **12:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m. Buffet Lunch-Great Downtowns Growing Cities**

A new statewide downtown initiative, Great Downtowns Growing Cities (GDGC), will be introduced during the lunch program. GDGC will provide communities with tools to enhance their downtowns as economic centers for community wide growth based on entrepreneurship, innovation and quality of place. Learn how you can participate.

### **1:00 p.m.-2:30 p.m. Making It Happen: A Panel Discussion**

Leodis Scott: DePaul University  
Sarosh Saher: Village of Lake Zurich  
Norman Walzer: Northern Illinois University  
Patty Ruback: Eat Local DeKalb  
Alicia Schatteman: Northern Illinois University

Panel discussion on implementation includes the role of higher education in local economic development, how local regulations and policies encourage economic growth, innovative financing for new businesses, and communication strategies to connect businesses, customers and communities.

### **2:30 p.m.-2:45 p.m. Break**

### **2:45 p.m.-3:45 p.m. Round Table Discussions**

Choose your topic! Each round table discussion hosted by a conference speaker. Grab a snack and join the speaker of your choice to ask questions and share ideas with other attendees.

### **3:45 p.m.-4:00 p.m. Wrap-up**

### **4:00 p.m.-5:30 p.m. Organization Meetings**

Organizations related to local economic development and downtown growth will have an opportunity to meet in breakout rooms. A final list of meetings taking place will be announced at the conference.