

## **E. Industrial Development and Employment**

### ***Key Findings***

#### **Well Paid Industrial Jobs Are a Fundamental Community Need**

Historically Joliet thrived because of employment in heavy industry, where jobs that were frequently unionized paid enough to support a typical family with some surplus. The city's fortunes began to change in the 1970s as global economic pressures that impacted much of industrial America hit Joliet. During the early 1980s Joliet's unemployment rate rose to 26%.

The social consequences of such job losses in many American cities are described by Harvard sociologist William Julius Wilson in his book *When Work Disappears* in passages that mirror some interviewed stakeholders' descriptions of events in the Planning Area's most hard-hit neighborhoods during the 1980s.<sup>21</sup> On a percentage basis, the most severe job losses occurred among minorities and the young. For young minority men, role models of workers who made good livings as industrial employees became less relevant. As real and perceived options dwindled in some neighborhoods of the Planning Area, drug addiction and crime became common, leading to the devastation of minority communities. A percentage of the population became criminalized, driving a negative cycle of unemployment.

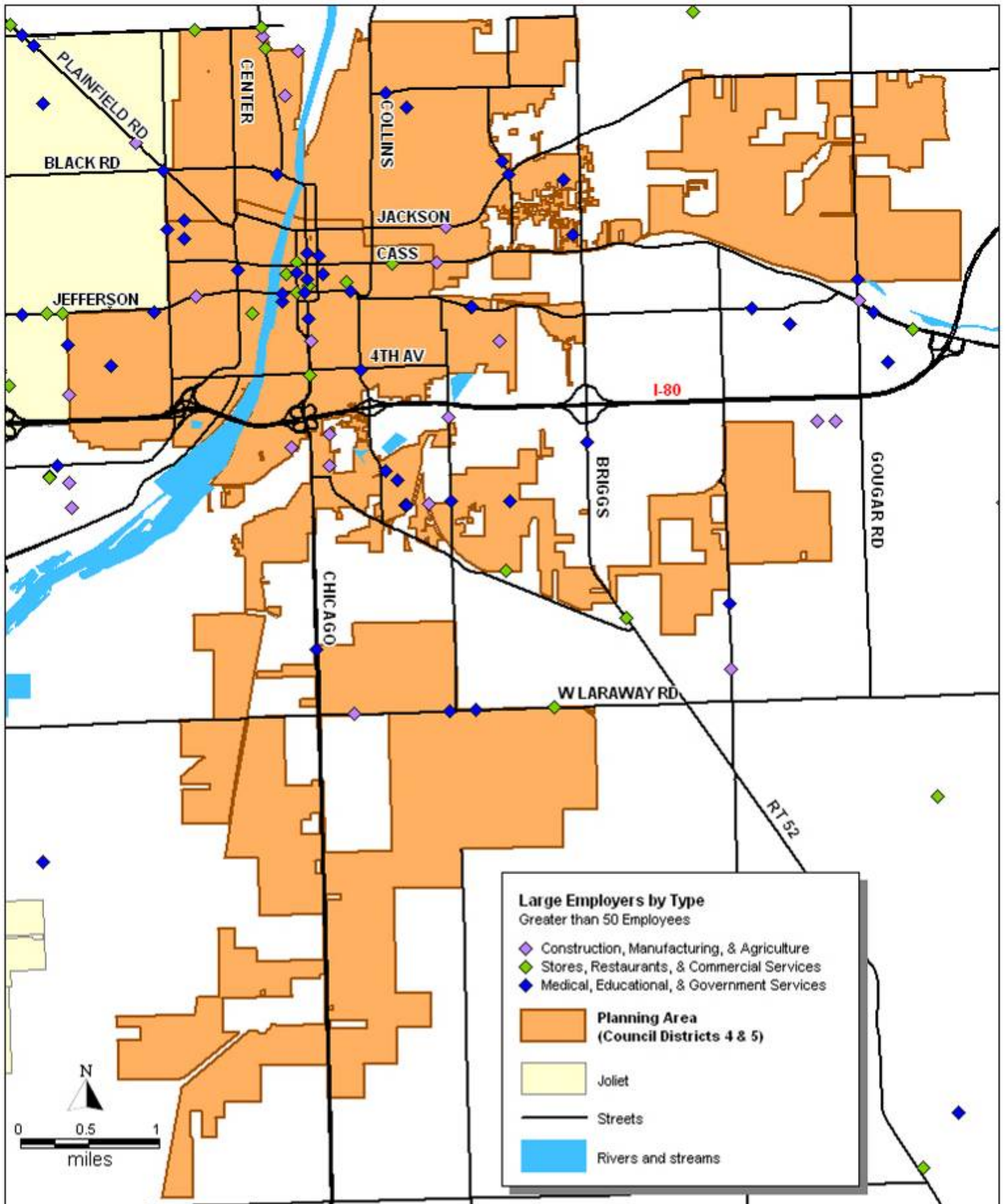
More than thirty community stakeholders interviewed for the Quality of Life (QOL) Plan described such a process jolting through neighborhoods of the Planning Area in the 1980s and early 1990s. Since the mid 1990s the Planning Area has been recovering with the rest of Joliet, though not to the same degree. Employment levels are higher, crime rates lower than in the 1990s. Yet more than thirty community stakeholders have reported that addiction problems and their consequences linger along with an exaggerated perception held by many Joliet area residents that the Planning Area is a dangerous place.

Although employment levels in Joliet have generally been rising for more than ten years, more than twenty ministers or directors of social service agencies interviewed for the QOL Plan identified a shortage of jobs that pay a living wage and benefits as the root cause of problems ranging from inadequate food to lack of access to medical care, to marital stress and mental health problems. Some jobs, they report, are available, but jobs with salaries and benefits that will meet the needs of a household are scarce. This widely held impression is confirmed by the most recent *State of the Workforce* report of the Workforce Investment Board of Will County. This report found that between 1991 and 2001, the County-wide net increase in manufacturing jobs was only 992, while the increase in retail trade jobs over the same period was 8,737. In 2001 Manufacturing accounted for only 16% of all jobs in Will County but approximately 23% of payroll dollars. In contrast, Retail Trade in 2001 made up 22% of jobs in the County but only 12% of payrolls. The report points out as a major concern that "Many of the fastest growing jobs are relatively low wage and low skill."<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> William Julius Wilson, *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor* (New York: Knopf, 1996).

<sup>22</sup> Workforce Investment Board of Will County, *State of the Workforce 2003*, October 2003, 5.



## Some Growth Industries in Will County Offer Good Jobs

A somewhat more hopeful view of job growth in Will County is provided if we consider job growth data for the range of industrial categories provided in the *State of the Workforce 2003* cited above and summarized in the following table.

**Table E-1. Will County Employment by Standard Industry Code (SIC)**

Industry Sector	Numbers of Jobs			Job Growth	% All Jobs	% Wages
	1991	1996	2001	1991- 2001	2001	2001
Agriculture	979	1455	2351	1372	1.98%	1.00%
Mining	294	197	314	20	0.26%	0.50%
Construction	5793	9510	12487	6694	10.49%	13.00%
Manufacturing	18304	19170	19296	992	16.21%	23.00%
Transportation, Communications, Electric	6356	6389	8393	2037	7.05%	10.00%
Wholesale Trade	4062	5329	8697	4635	7.31%	11.00%
Retail Trade	17951	22574	26688	8737	22.42%	12.00%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	3495	4307	4328	833	3.64%	4.00%
Services	20930	29681	36465	15535	30.64%	25.50%
Non-Classifiable Establishments	66	45	0	-66	0.00%	0.00%
Total, All Sectors	78230	98657	119019	40789	100.00%	100.00%

Source: "State of the Workforce Report 2003", Workforce Investment Board of Will County

As this data indicates, job growth has been substantial in the fields of Wholesale Trade, Transportation & Utilities, and Construction, sectors in which contributions to payrolls are proportionately higher than the percentage of jobs in the labor force. This data is consistent with findings of the *Target Industry and Workforce Analysis* prepared by the Workforce Investment Board of Will County and the Will County Center for Economic Development (WCED), which identifies four major fast growth fields with quality jobs:<sup>23</sup>

- *Medical Care:* Doctors and nurses were among 15 types of jobs in Will County ranked as "Top Opportunities" by the Workforce Investment Board based on an integrated consideration of the number of jobs in the field, projected growth in job numbers, and average annual wages. Additional positions for other medical professionals (such physical therapists and nutritionists) as well as positions for less highly trained workers such as nursing assistants, medical technicians, medical record clerks, and facility maintenance workers are also certainly available in medical facilities, although the numbers of such positions has not been counted or projected in Will County. National trends toward the aging of the population ensure growing need for medical services for the next generation. Joliet and the Planning Area are particularly rich in medical service employment and training opportunities with two regional hospitals, some 20 other medical facilities that employ more than fifty people, and entry level and advanced training programs for nurses.
- *Construction:* The 15 types of jobs that the Workforce Board ranks as "Top Opportunities" in Will County include: masons, carpenters, extraction workers, and construction managers.

<sup>23</sup> Workforce Investment Board of Will County and Will County Center for Economic Development, *Target Industry and Workforce Analysis*, prepared by Advisory Group, Cushman & Wakefield, Inc., January 2004.

This is not a surprising finding in a county which has experienced 96% population growth since 1985 and added an average of 8 million square feet per year of industrial space between 2002 and 2004. While the pace of growth and construction in the Planning Area is slower than in Will County or Joliet as a whole, the Planning Area is surrounded by construction activity.

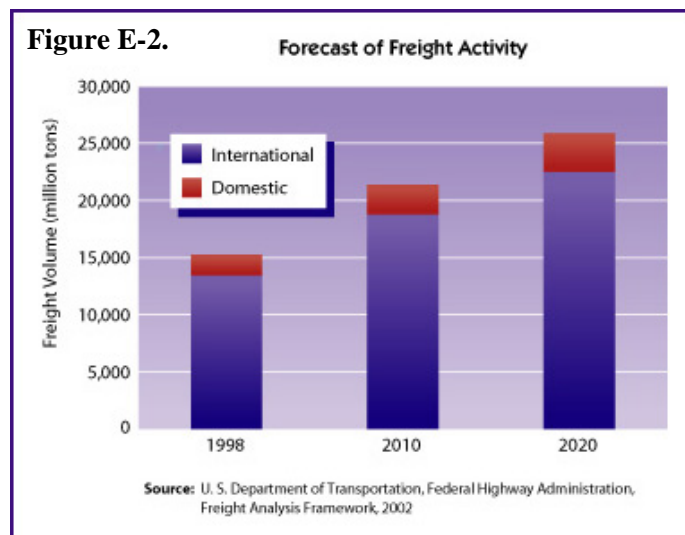
- *Manufacturing:* Although the net number of manufacturing jobs in Will County has been relatively flat, this flat line of total employment masks a pattern of rapid job decline in some industrial sectors and increase in others. The *Wage & Salary Survey* conducted by the Three Rivers Manufacturers' Association and WCED in 2006 shows that manufacturing businesses provide some jobs with wages of \$20 to \$30 per hour for skilled trades people and for technicians with limited but specific training. These businesses also provide jobs for such positions as general production machine operators and assemblers with wages in the range of \$12 to \$18 per hour. Along with growth in some manufacturing businesses, a rising need to replace retiring skilled workers is creating some well paid industrial employment opportunities.<sup>24</sup>
- *Logistics:* Some of the good job growth that the *State of the Workforce* reported in the fields Wholesale Trade and Transportation reflect the growing phenomena of the logistics industry in Will County, which requires a distinct discussion in the picture of Employment and Industrial Development for the Planning Area.

## Logistics Opens a New Industrial Economy

### *Logistics Growth*

Logistics involves all the operations through which goods are sourced, transported, and distributed. The logistics arms of large corporations are frequently becoming more important within their organizations and making new investments. A growing number of companies are competing to perform the logistics functions of other corporations as “third party logistics” providers.

Companies are investing in logistics because there is a large and rapidly growing market to be served in this field. The U.S. Department of Transportation has recorded that the volume of freight moved in America has been rising steadily for the past two decades and is projected to grow by more than 80% between the years 2000 and 2020.<sup>25</sup> Besides sheer volume,



<sup>24</sup> Three Rivers Manufacturer's Association and Will County Center for Economic Development, *Wage and Salary Survey*, prepared by the Employers' Association, July 2006.

<sup>25</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation, *Freight Analysis*, Federal Highway Administration, Freight Management and Operations, 2002. [http://www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/freight/freight\\_analysis/index.htm](http://www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/freight/freight_analysis/index.htm).



demands for efficiency and reliability in logistics movements also continue to rise steadily. These pressures grow from fundamental trends in the world economy as more products are produced thousands of miles away from the places where they are used and as virtually all modern manufacturing and distribution systems adopt just-in-time production and stocking techniques.

#### *Logistics Links to Diverse Industrial Activities*

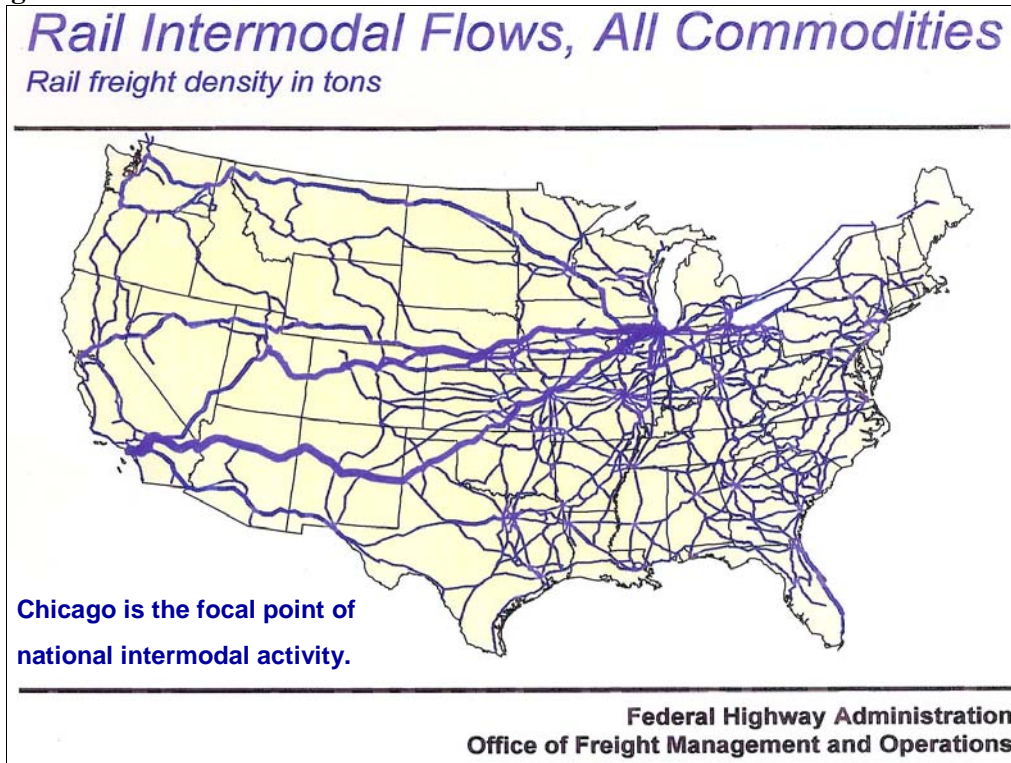
Besides moving products efficiently and reliably logistics businesses perform increasingly broad functions in finishing or assembling goods for final distribution. For example, the Potlatch Paper Company in Elwood takes paper rolls that are compressed for shipping and processes them into household tissue products. The IntraCore company, based in Utah, assembles computer hardware from components and distributes the products to retail outlets and mail order customers. In catalogs of logistics companies today firms are listed by services they provide that include: repackaging, fulfillment, and assembly.

In the new world economy built around international supply chains a growing range of industrial businesses find advantage in locating near intermodal freight terminals and the logistics and other industrial companies that tend to cluster there. For example, Logistics Park was built adjacent to the new intermodal freight terminal of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad in Elwood. Logistics Park opened in 2002, and now approximately 3,000 people work there, performing product distribution and processing functions. In the more mature logistics environment of Chicago, a recent consultant study commissioned by the City government found that intermodal terminals were critical to retaining or adding approximately 15,000 jobs because a broad range of manufacturing, wholesale, and distribution companies wanted to locate near these terminals.

#### *Metropolitan Chicago & Will County as Logistics Centers*

These patterns of freight volume growth, logistics industry development, and the attraction of freight centers are important to the Chicago area and Will County particularly because this is the freight hub of North America. Goods that move more than 500 miles (for example to the Midwest from any ocean port) are usually shipped by train and then reloaded onto trucks for local delivery. Metropolitan Chicago is the only place where all six of North America's major railroad networks meet. So Chicago is the primary place in which goods can practically be transferred from one rail system to another or lifted onto trucks for delivery anywhere in the Midwest. In the intermodal movement of freight, metropolitan Chicago is the third busiest port in the world. And Will County is on the busiest of all railroad routes leading into Chicago (the trunk line from the Port of Los Angeles). Will County is also the nexus of the most heavily traveled east-west and north-south expressways running through the middle of the county. Furthermore, because Will County has had more greenfield land than any other county in the Chicago area, it has offered economical sites for the new intermodal terminals, large warehouses and linked industrial parks that the new supply chain economy demands.

**Figure E-3.**



#### *Wages & Salaries in the Logistics Businesses*

So Logistics Park in Elwood is burgeoning and warehouse and distribution centers are springing up along I-55 and I-80 as a consequence of far reaching economic trends that are likely to continue for the foreseeable future. The Will County *Wage & Salary Survey*, noted earlier, provides detailed information that describes the types of jobs that the logistics industry brings.

- Basic positions in logistics operations include jobs for skilled fork lift operators, material handlers, and maintenance workers that pay wages in the range of \$12 to \$18 per hour.
- Because logistics businesses are service providers that must cope with seasonal and irregular variations in their clients' shipping volumes, they employ temporary laborers who perform unskilled material handling and are sometimes certified for more skilled tasks such as fork lift operation. These workers are paid in the range \$9 to \$12 per hour.
- Logistics companies also employ salaried workers for functions that include customer service, inventory management, dispatching, and shipping supervision. Their compensation ranges from \$33,000 to \$53,000 per year, with most positions in the middle of this range; warehouse and plant management positions pay more. Staffing patterns indicate that salaried specialist and supervisory positions are staffed more heavily than in some manufacturing operations in order to provide deep knowledge of timing and customer service requirements. Staffing patterns and the comments of logistics managers interviewed for the Plan also indicate that movement between hourly labor and salaried positions is common. Logistics can provide a wide career ladder as well as attracting other industrial businesses to industrial development areas, such as the I-80 Corridor in the Planning Area.

**Table E-2. Data on Selected Staff Positions in Will County Logistics Businesses**

Position Type	Type of Company	Numer of Companies	Number of Employees	Base Pay						
				Average	Weighted Average	Interquartile Ranges			Average Actuals	
						25th	Median	75th	Lowest	Highest
1 Worker, Maintenance in Logistics and Distribution	Logistics	6	17	\$18.79	\$18.27	\$17.69	\$19.90	\$20.80	\$17.65	\$19.96
2 Clerk, Shipping & Receiving	Logistics	6	40	\$12.55	\$12.92	\$12.35	\$12.95	\$13.76	\$11.74	\$14.27
3 Material Handler - Skilled in Logistics and Distribution	Logistics	10	392	\$13.48	\$13.69	\$11.85	\$13.06	\$16.91	\$12.01	\$14.07
4 Material Handler - Unskilled/Picker/Packer in Logistics and Distribution	Temp	5	231	\$8.77	\$8.63	\$8.25	\$8.50	\$8.58	\$7.90	\$10.25
5 Coordinator, Inventory in Logistics and Distribution	Logistics	9	18	\$37,576	\$36,272	\$28,454	\$39,770	\$41,825	\$36,203	\$39,138
6 Dispatcher/Planner/ Scheduler in Logistics and Distribution	Logistics	10	56	\$41,477	\$40,451	\$25,948	\$45,115	\$46,731	\$37,729	\$46,610
7 Representative, Customer Service in Logistics and Distribution	Logistics	10	82	\$32,465	\$33,649	\$25,542	\$27,963	\$44,287	\$28,386	\$40,652
8 Supervisor, Receiving/Shipping/Warehouse in Logistics	Logistics	9	43	\$49,677	\$48,602	\$43,800	\$48,491	\$53,394	\$45,487	\$56,733

Source: *Economic Development Wage & Salary Survey*, Three Rivers Manufacturers' Association and Will County Center for Economic Development, 2006

(A detailed analysis of information about the logistics industry and its current positions and future in Will County is provided in Appendix E.)

### **The City of Joliet's *South Side Comprehensive Plan* Could Deliver the Benefits of the New Industrial Economy to the Planning Area**

In February 2007 the City of Joliet unveiled its comprehensive plan for the portion of the city south of the I-80 Expressway and Zurich Road, including 4,220 acres that currently lies within Joliet and approximately 16,000 acres of surrounding unincorporated land which the City is prepared to annex.<sup>26</sup> The City's plan would preserve land along the waterways of this territory as nature and recreation areas. It would retain and modestly add to existing residential areas and establish a commercial corridor for local convenience shopping. It also sets standards for the orderly and environmentally sustainable development of the area.

But the essence of the *South Side Comprehensive Plan* is to establish a series of industrial parks on current agricultural land encompassing some 12,000 acres, intended primarily for logistics and related light industrial and distribution uses. As the plan points out, this new area of Joliet is well suited for such use. It would extend to the now burgeoning intermodal logistics center of Elwood. It is effectively at the junction of the I-80 and I-55 Expressways, and it is served by freight rail lines and the Des Plaines River with its barge traffic. Finally, new industrial development here would have immediate access to the large and under-employed labor force of the Planning Area. Given these assets, it is difficult to imagine a location better suited to the development of a new industrial complex based on the fast-growth logistics industry. At full

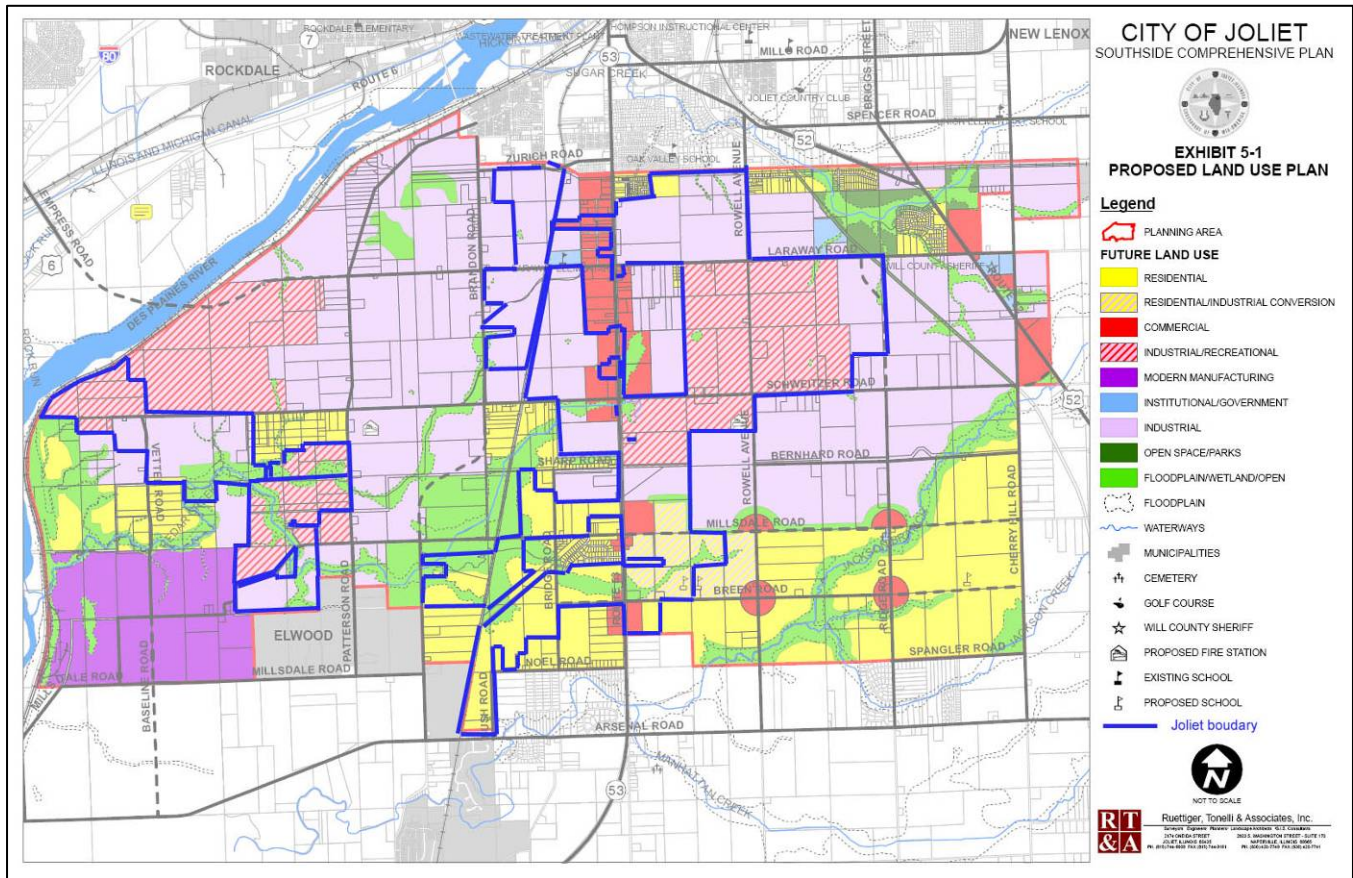
<sup>26</sup> City of Joliet, *South Side Comprehensive Plan*, February 2007.



capacity a logistics-industrial development of the proposed scale would employ over 10,000 workers.

Implementation of the South Side Comprehensive Plan would fundamentally change the strategic position of the Planning Area. The Area would become the working class neighborhood virtually adjacent to one of the region’s largest industrial hubs. If the development is carried out with thoughtful inclusion of the local workforce, it could restore much of the prosperity lost when Joliet’s older industrial base contracted in the 1970s and 80s.

**Figure E-4. Southside Comprehensive Plan Proposed Land Uses**



\*From City of Joliet *Southside Comprehensive Plan*, February 2007 with current Joliet boundary superimposed.

### **Some Planning Area Neighborhoods Contain High Percentages of Residents Who Face Challenges in the Job Market**

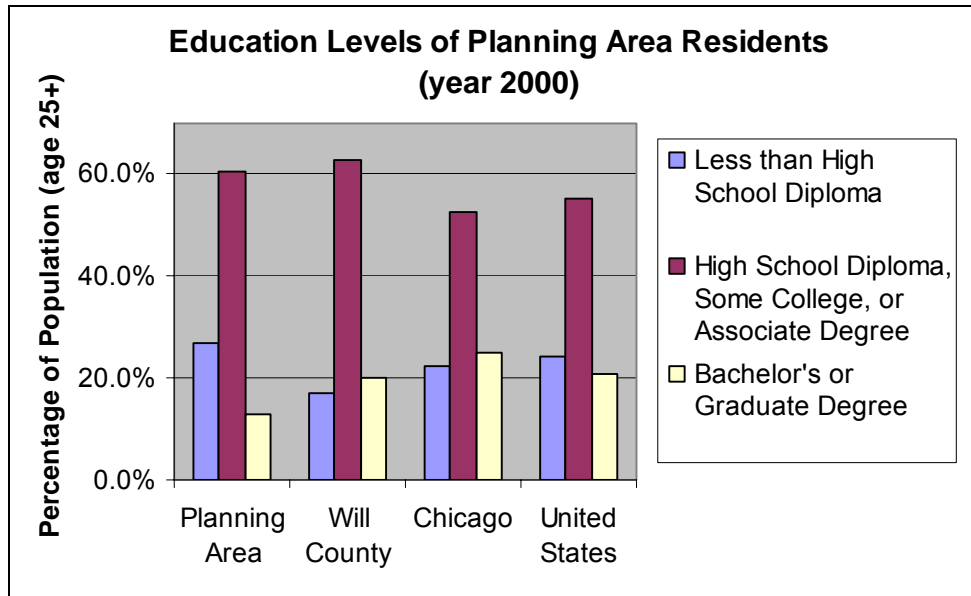
It is notable that ordinary positions in three of the four identified growth sectors with good jobs in Joliet fall into the classification of “production jobs,” a category that includes craft, repair, operator, fabricator, or laborer jobs. In 2003, production jobs accounted for 29% of all jobs in Will County compared to just 24% in the Chicago region and 26% in the U.S. So in the immediate future as in the present, Will County will have a disproportionately large number of production jobs, as opposed to professional, administrative, or service jobs. Production jobs usually do not require a college degree, but to obtain skills and certifications that can make such



jobs relatively secure and well-paid, high school educations or associate degrees are often required.

The educational requirements of production jobs match well with the educational levels of the Will County Workforce. Per the accompanying chart, Will County workers are more likely than workers in all of metropolitan Chicago or in the U.S. to have high school, some college, or an associate degree as their highest level of educational attainment. Will County workers are less likely to be college graduates or high school drop outs. This pattern helps to explain why the overall unemployment rate in Will County is a moderately low 5.3% and why Will County is an attractive location for many industrial businesses.

**Figure E-5.**

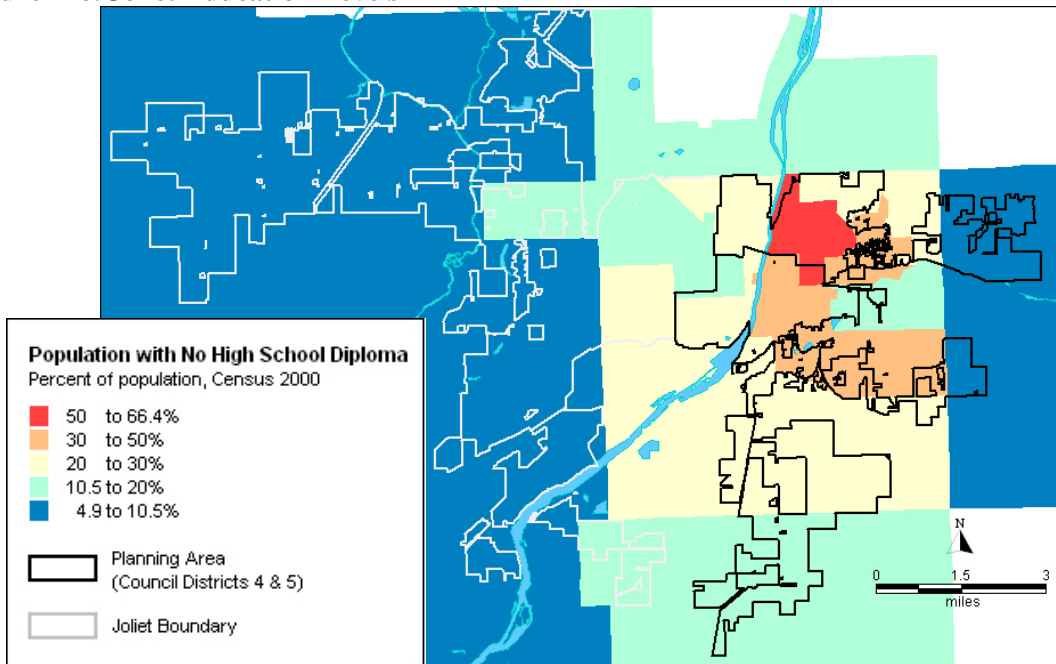


\* Source: Data for Will County, Chicago metropolitan area, and the United States are 2002 projections done by Claritas from 2000 data. Planning area data is from the 2000 Census, aggregated for tracts that intersect the planning area.

However, the workforce of the Planning Area, and particularly the population of some Planning Area neighborhoods, has a higher high school drop out rate and lower levels of high school diploma or associate degree holders than the county norm. Given this level of educational attainment, it is not surprising that the current unemployment rate of the Planning Area at 8.5%, more than 50% higher than the overall rate for the city of Joliet (5.5%) or of Will County (4.3%).<sup>27</sup> As the accompanying maps indicate, those Planning Area residents who have lower levels of education and those who are unemployed are concentrated in some Planning Area neighborhoods. African-American or Hispanic ethnic minorities are the majority populations in these neighborhoods.

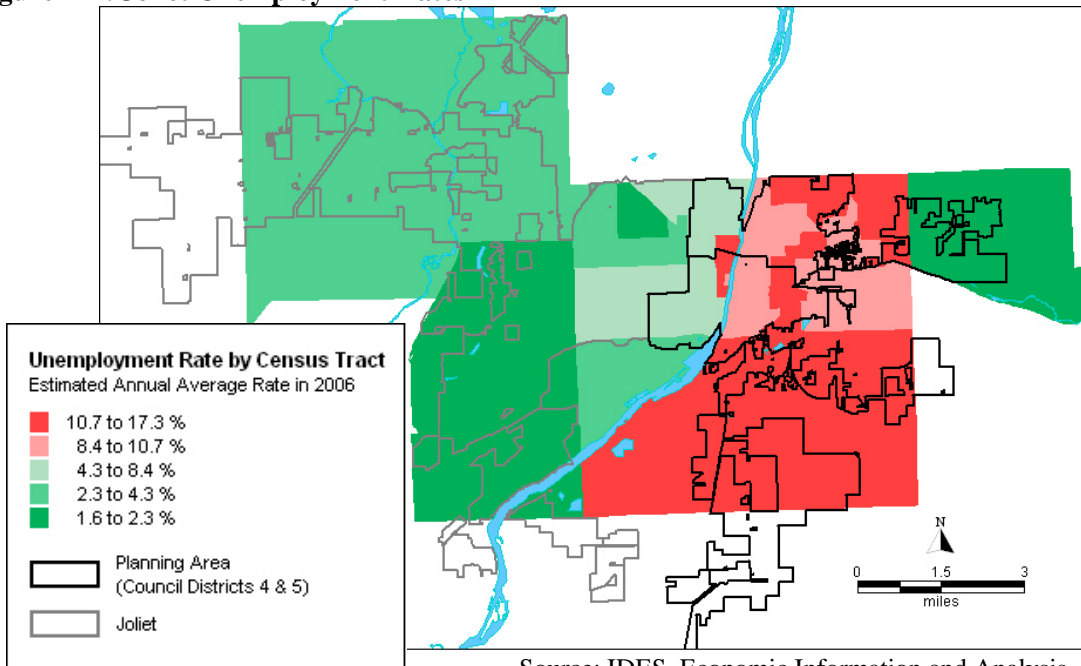
<sup>27</sup> Planning Area and Joliet numbers are 2006 projected unemployment rates from Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES), Economic Information and Analysis, 2007; data for the Planning Area is the average for the Census tracts covering the area. Will County data is from the 2006 Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) published by IDES, <http://lmi.ides.state.il.us/laus/lausmenu.htm>.

**Figure E-6. Joliet Education Levels**



Source: Census 2000

**Figure E-7. Joliet Unemployment Rates**

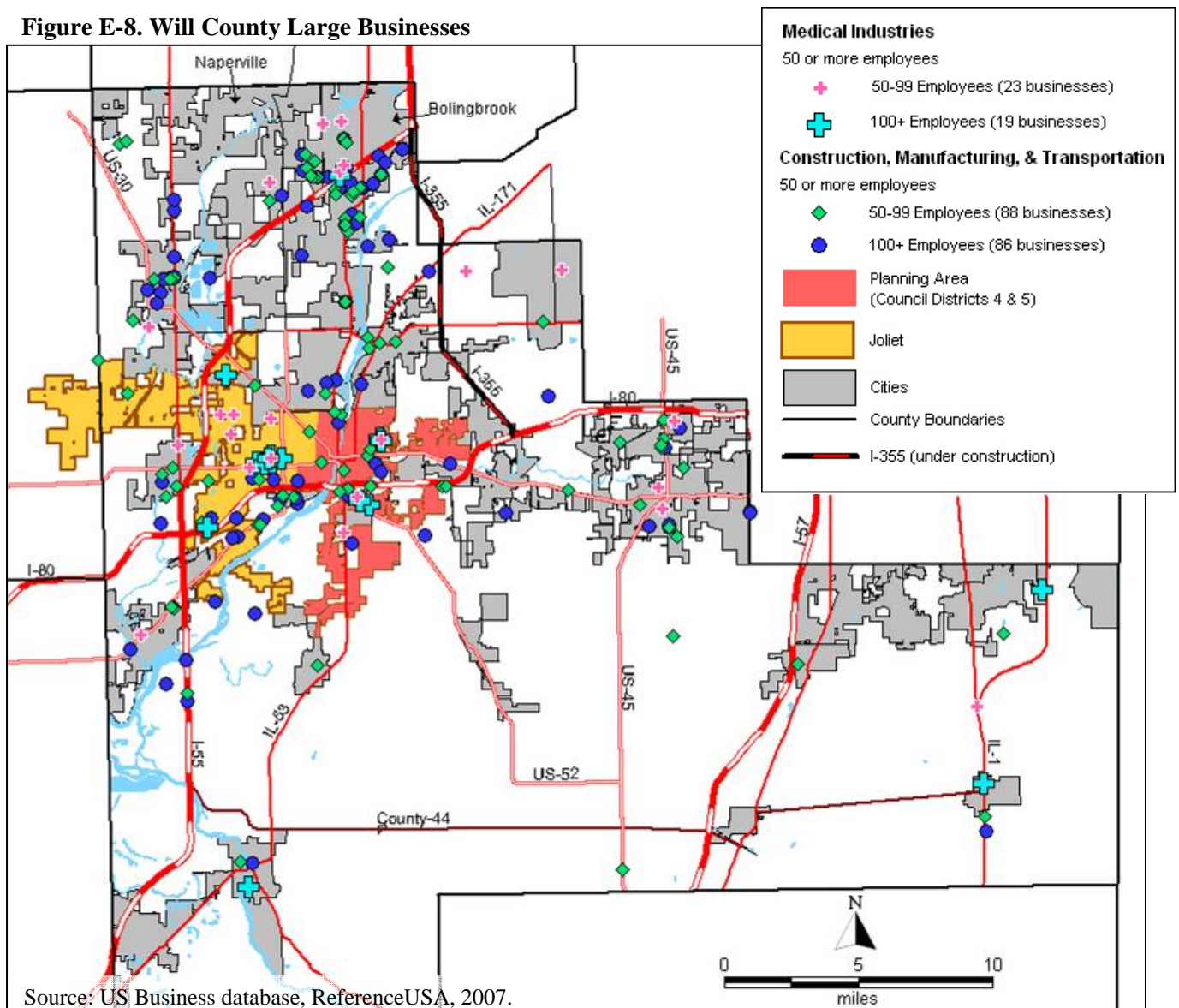


Source: IDES, Economic Information and Analysis

In the Transportation section of this plan, when neighborhoods with low car ownership were mapped, generally the same neighborhoods were identified. As the Transportation section of this plan notes, the Planning Area does not contain many large employers other than public agencies and educational institutions. The Planning Area is a predominantly residential community from which workers must commute. This reality is also illustrated in the accompanying map, which shows employers of fifty or more workers in the growth industries discussed above: medical

care, construction, manufacturing, and logistics. While significant medical care employers and a scattering of construction and logistics employers are found in the Planning Area, opportunities for production work are concentrated along the I-55 expressway corridor and in more developed portions of the I-80 corridor. Even to reach jobs in Joliet along I-80, many workers in the Planning Area need to use public transportation.

**Figure E-8. Will County Large Businesses**



Another factor that impedes job readiness is simple poverty. If residents are unemployed or working at minimum wage positions they may have no resources to train for, find, or support themselves during the start of a new job. Job training programs with even modest fees may be inaccessible to impoverished residents. The lack of a car in a community with limited public transportation service is one example of an impediment to work created by poverty.

Earlier we noted that more than 30 interviewed community stakeholders described patterns of drug addiction and crime that rose in the wake of high unemployment in the 1980s and linger

today; these stakeholders were speaking primarily of the same neighborhoods that face high levels of unemployment. Neither the Department of Corrections nor any health agency maintains public records that would allow us to determine the concentrations of ex-offenders or persons suffering from drug addiction in specific neighborhoods. However, nationally criminal backgrounds and drug addiction are highly correlated with conditions of low educational attainment, unemployment and poverty. So it is likely that Joliet stakeholders are correct in thinking that residents with criminal records and/or drug addiction problems are concentrated in Planning Area neighborhoods where unemployment and high school drop out rates are disproportionately high.

When community leaders speak of the enormous road blocks to employment that drug addiction or a criminal record constitute they are not exaggerating. A 2006 national survey of employers found that 84% of employers use drug testing to screen job applicants; 39% randomly test current employees, and over 50% test employees that they have any reason to suspect may be taking drugs. Researchers estimate that 70% of the national population that take illicit drugs are employed, but the probability that a person can have a stable work life and take drugs appears to be small and shrinking.<sup>28</sup>

Ex-offenders also face long odds in securing employment. National research finds that 60% of ex-offenders are unemployed one year after release. And a survey of employers in 5 major cities found that 65% of employers maintain a blanket policy of never hiring ex-offenders. State and Federal programs, including substantial tax credits, exist to encourage employers to hire ex-offenders, and several not-for-profit and faith-based organizations in Joliet join the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) in seeking links to employment for ex-offenders, but they face an uphill struggle.<sup>29</sup>

## **A Network of Institutions Is Striving to Link Workers with Well-Paid Industrial Jobs in the Joliet Area**

In addition to industrial conditions and the needs of neighborhoods, an important aspect of employment and industrial development in the Planning Area is the work being done to establish more quality jobs in the Joliet region and give residents access to these jobs through education, counseling, and referrals.

The **Will County Center for Economic Development (WCED)** is a not-for-profit organization that has been widely recognized for its effectiveness in performing its core mission of attracting and retaining jobs in Will County. The WCED's general strategy of establishing teams to build on the county's areas of strength is reflected in two corporate membership organizations that it has established:

- The *Three Rivers Manufacturers' Association (TRMA)* provides manufacturers with a channel through which they may contribute to public policies and programs. The "Workforce

---

<sup>28</sup> 2006 survey by the Society for Human Resource Management, reported in "Job Applicant? Expect a Drug Test," *The Ledger* (Lakeland, Florida) 6 February 2007.

<sup>29</sup> Joan Petasilia, "When Prisoner Return to the Community: Political, Economic and Social Consequences," paper from Executive Sessions on Sentencing and Corrections, National Institute of Justice, November 2000.



Education Committee” of TRMA seeks to improve K-12 education throughout Will County and to facilitate connections between the county’s workforce and employers.

- The *Transportation & Logistics Council* is an association that helps to plan and execute WCED’s aggressive agenda for capitalizing on Will County’s freight transportation assets. This agenda includes:
  - “Branding” Will County as a “Global Trans Center” in the WCED’s systematic promotions
  - Championing adoption of a high-investment, long-term transportation plan that features expressway extensions and enhancements designed to preserve Will County’s relatively low traffic congestion (a key logistics advantage) for another generation
  - Proactively tackling problem issues for the logistics industry, such as the storage of empty cargo containers, through model ordinances

A new Recruitment Committee of the Transportation and Logistics Council is seeking to form relationships with Will County educators to inform them of job opportunities in this industry.

The WCED works closely with the City of Joliet in its economic development efforts including the redevelopment of downtown Joliet and the location of industrial businesses. WCED’s support will be valuable to the City as it works to implement the South Side Comprehensive Plan, creating new jobs in the I-80 Corridor and the southern portion of Planning Area.

The **Joliet Region Chamber of Commerce & Industry** is the primary network of retail, service, and smaller business owners in the Joliet area. Through its small business development services the Chamber stimulates job creation in a large segment of the Joliet area’s economy and helps to provide a career ladder into small business ownership.

The **Three Rivers Education for Employment System (TREES)** operates in keeping with the “Education and Employment Systems” program established by the Illinois State Board of Education to coordinate technical education in an extensive area under local leadership. In the Will County area, TREES operates through the joint agreement of 18 High Schools, 2 Area Career Centers, and Joliet Junior College. TREES maintains mutual knowledge and agreements on coverage over a broad swath of programs, including several that are critical to readiness for employment in the Planning Area.

- *Education to Careers* and the *21<sup>st</sup> Century Kids Club*: “Education to Careers” is a federally funded initiative in which local organizations cultivate work readiness in youngsters beginning in grammar school. The “21<sup>st</sup> Century Kids Club” is the popular embodiment of Education to Careers in Joliet. In the Kids Club, third to eighth grade children receive daily after school tutoring and exposure to a variety of careers. Through several sites in the Planning Area (each of which has a waiting list) Kids Club serves approximately 450 children per year and has served over 2,000 children during the last 8 years, the large majority of whom have been Planning Area residents.
- *Joliet Township High School (JTHS) Central Campus Career Academies*: As discussed in the Education section of this Plan, the career academies offer high school students the opportunity to build their math, reading, and problem solving skills in the context of programs that prepare them directly for careers as skilled trades people or technicians. Ironically, JTHS’s status as a school under “Academic Warning List” restrict some under-

performing students from enrolling in career academy courses until they demonstrate basic math and reading competencies, with the effect that these students are barred from learning experiences that would be more engaging for them, leading them to sometimes drop out of school in frustration. Despite these problems, the JTHS career academies provide a broad road to well-paid employment that is open to the majority of young people in the Planning Area.

- *Union Trades Program:* JTHS offers another program in collaboration with several unions, through which students spend the summer working as assistants to active union members. This is a rewarding program for the 6 to 12 carefully selected students who are allowed to participate each summer, but unless the program is expanded it will have little impact on the employment picture of the Planning Area.

**Joliet Junior College (JJC)** is the primary institution for preparing Will County area residents to enter well-paid employment through skilled labor. JJC works with adults at all levels of their preparation for employment.

- JJC's *Adult and Family Services Division* offers adults an opportunity to make up for basic educational deficits through its Adult Basic Education (ABE) program. JJC also provides classroom and on-line instruction to complete a high school education through the General Education Development (GED) program. English as Second Language (ESL) instruction is available in community centers as well as JJC's downtown campus, giving immigrants an important tool in their efforts to find alternatives to very low paid labor.
- *Technical Education:* JJC confers associate degrees or certificates in over 40 technical specializations including each of the four fields identified by research as sectors in which good jobs are being created in Will County: nursing and medical service technologies, building construction specializations, industrial production and industrial maintenance, and more recently truck driving and warehouse operations.
- The *Business and Industry Training Program* of JJC designs and conducts training programs under contract to companies that need to hire workers for these jobs or augment the training of current workers. During the last several years this program has earned \$1 - \$2 million/year in training fees (of which approximately 50% was reimbursed by the State of Illinois per the State's standard practice for qualified worker training programs). For the last several years JJC's Business & Industry Training Program has also trained approximately 150 to 200 new workers per year, placing them in jobs that pay \$40,000 to \$60,000 per year. The program is promoted by the Three Rivers Manufacturers' Association and other business networks, and all of the corporate members of these networks receive quarterly mailings on the Business & Industry Training Program. The question about this valuable program is how it could be expanded to connect more Planning Area residents to good jobs.

**Workforce Investment Board of Will County:** As the institution responsible for the allocation of federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funds in Will County, the Workforce Board plays a central role in setting policy and coordinating job training and placement services. The Workforce Board has made policy decisions to support the development of jobs that pay a living wage, rather than all types of employment. It helped fund the research that identified industries with quality job creation potential and supported initiatives to place county residents in these industries. For example, the Workforce Board has striven to create a "One-Stop Workforce

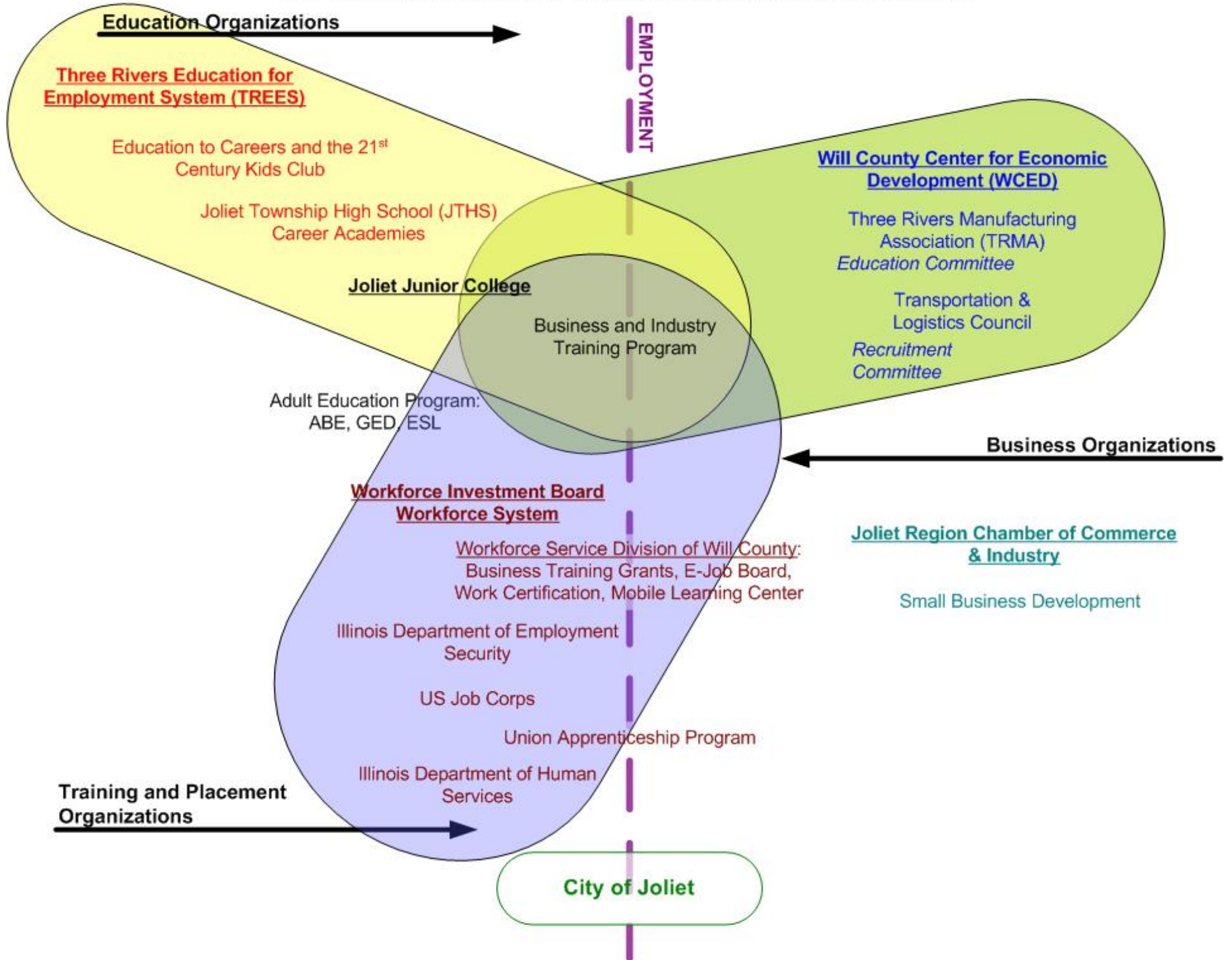
System” in which public agencies working in partnership meet the training and job placement needs of Will County residents in one seamless system. Within this system:

- *JJC* has the primary responsibility to educate workers for productive employment as discussed above.
- *Workforce Service Division of Will County*: This office executes and promotes many of the Workforce Board’s direct services to employers and job seekers including:
  - “Local Business Grants for Employee Training” which supplement public funds for companies to directly train new workers who are paid a living wage.
  - An on-line matching service for area job seekers and employers
  - A Mobile Learning Center, a staffed mobile office with internet access that extends information and counseling into neighborhoods
  - A Worker Certification program that assures employers that all referred job candidates have completed a work readiness course conducted by JJC which covers fundamental issues for all employees such as appropriate dress, timeliness, and consideration of an employer’s perspective.
- *Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES)*, besides administering the unemployment compensation program, this agency has a comprehensive responsibility to help all job seekers in the county find employment. IDES performs this function by cultivating relationships with local employers (using the business networks noted above) and providing information, evaluation, and counseling services at IDES’ downtown Joliet office.
- *Federal Job Corps* operates a Joliet office that provides personalized, intensive skill development and work readiness training for 280 young people at any given time. Job Corps members are pursuing a one-to-two year program that will give them certified knowledge and experience in construction, medical service or other specializations.
- *Illinois Department of Human Services* provides tailored services for job seekers with disabilities through its Office of Rehabilitation Services and some economic assistance for those seeking work or newly hired through its program of “Temporary Assistance for Needy Families”.

**Union Apprenticeship Programs:** Unions in skilled production and construction trades offer apprenticeship programs that are important pathways into well-paid employment. Several unions are represented in the governing structure of the Workforce Board. Unfortunately a number of unions face flat or declining membership, as skilled trade work has been outsourced from the factories of major unionized employers and as cheaper non-union labor has become increasingly competitive. An example of a union that bucks these trends and enjoys growing membership in Will County is the Pipe Fitters Union, whose members generally work in the construction of large buildings.

The overall picture of employment training and placement programs in Will County is a complex network in which business organizations reach out to institutions that provide basic and technical education in an effort to ensure an ample workforce of skilled job applicants and employees. At the same time public and private organizations network with each other in order to provide complimentary services and with business associations in order to understand market needs and build referral relationships. This picture of interlocking organizational efforts is illustrated in the accompanying conceptual map.

# The Will County System for Employment Education and Placement





**Remaining Challenges and Gaps Remain in Workforce Development:** Despite the thoughtful, professional efforts of Will County business organizations, the Workforce Board with its partner organizations, and local governments, serious challenges and gaps remain in systematic efforts to create an effective worker training and placement system in Will County, including the Planning Area. These concerns were raised in discussions with stakeholders who are familiar with at least some aspects of current employment education and placement systems and reinforced by the comments of residents in community meetings. They are discussed most efficiently in regard to proposals by which they can be resolved.

## *Proposals*

Capturing the large potential benefits of industrial development for employment and the overall quality of life in the Planning Area requires two basic proposals regarding (1) Development of new industrial parks and (2) Enhancement of Will County's technical education and workforce systems. Both of these proposals would leverage not only the fixed assets of the Joliet region but the momentum of the region's development institutions.

Proposals for Industrial Development and Employment will be carried out most effectively by a partnership of the City and the organized community working with the Workforce Investment Board of Will County, and other institutional partners. To take part in this partnership the community will need to be represented by an entity that can make plans and carry out programs. Other sections of the Plan discuss and propose the formation of a Planning Area Community Development Corporation (CDC) as the type of entity that might best act for the organized community. A CDC would be an appropriate type of organization to carry out the community's role in the following proposals.

### **1. Build New Industrial Parks as Proposed in the City of Joliet's South Side Comprehensive Plan with Optimal Job Growth and Environmental Sustainability for Planning Area Residents.**

The City of Joliet should continue to be responsible for the development of the South Side industrial parks and the implementation of this proposal with the support of the WCED and a volunteer committee including members of the Planning Area CDC. The City should establish an Industrial Planning Committee that should include: Staff of the WCED, a liaison member of the Three Rivers Manufacturers' Association, a liaison member of the Transportation and Logistics Council, faculty of the University of St. Francis and Lewis University who have expertise in logistics and related real estate and industrial development, a liaison member of the "Community Employment Task Force" (discussed in regard to this plan's second major proposal for Employment & Industrial Development.) The Industrial Planning Committee should assist the City in carrying out the tasks proposed in the following paragraphs. The Committee should meet monthly during the first year of the project and should meet regularly for the foreseeable future, although meetings after Year 1 may be less frequent. The Committee should not obviate the City's need to engage consultants for specific assignments but may assist the City in identifying and selecting optimal consultants. The City and its advisors should:

- Identify optimal areas for industrial parks which the City may choose to prioritize for annexation, for the creation of Tax Increment Finance or other special districts, or for acquisition to ensure site control.
- While remaining open to entrepreneurial proposals from industrial developers, identify prospective developers who have a record of successful, large scale, environmentally sustainable, and logistics-oriented industrial developments, and issue a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to these developers. Establish a cadre of qualified developers who may respond to Requests for Proposals (RFP) for specific projects.
- Guide the selection of end users of industrial parks to include logistics companies that follow a business strategy of high capital investment per worker or manufacturing companies that derive particular advantage from locations near freight transportation infrastructure or concentrations of logistics providers. Draft detailed criteria for the selection of end users and list specific companies to approach as prospects for relocation in the new industrial parks.
- Establish industrial parks under development as Foreign Trade Zones (FTZ) in order to provide federal tax incentives for end users that are processors of imported materials/parts/products.
- Capitalize on the City's commitment to develop new industrial parks to the highest environmental standards by adopting standards that are consistent with its *South Side Development Plan* and with the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards for industrial developments. By meeting these standards property owners could obtain (LEED) certifications for their projects. Such certification would ensure the long-term value of properties and assure end users and community residents of the high environmental quality of the parks.
- In area industrial park planning give particular consideration to new freight transportation infrastructure that would:
  - Contain truck traffic on highways dedicated to the service of industrial parks, and seek a new entrance & exit on I-80 primarily for truck traffic.
  - Provide bicycle path access from the Planning Area north of I-80 to industrial parks.
- Review potential new developments as they are proposed with the Industrial Planning Committee.

Anticipate a need to spend \$50,000 to \$150,000 over the next two years, for consultants to assist in carrying out the tasks summarized above for Proposal 1. The specific tasks to be performed for these fees cannot be anticipated until the Industrial Planning Committee is convened and the volunteer expertise available from the Committee and the organizations represented on it is known. Other costs entailed in the development of industrial parks are not estimated here although such costs include: allocated time of Planning Department personnel; fees to establish special area designations and public infrastructure improvements at development sites, which may be packaged with project development costs.

**2. Increase the number of Planning Area residents who obtain good jobs through existing training and placement programs by implementing the recommendations of a new Community Employment Task Force.**

The Workforce Investment Board of Will County maintains strong policies and practices to facilitate client access to its services. The Workforce Board's philosophy of offering a one-stop service through any of its points of access, the clear and user-friendly web sites of the Workforce Board and its partner organizations, and the Workforce System's use of a mobile service unit are all indications of this commitment. The Workforce Board demonstrated a further sensitivity to community access recently when it made a decision to move its operations from Plainfield Road to downtown Joliet, in the QOL Planning Area, where it is close to its densest concentration of clients, partner organizations, and the center of public transportation for the county.

Findings presented in regard to neighborhood conditions in this section of the Plan show how problems linked to unemployment or poorly paid employment reinforce each other and cluster in some Planning Area neighborhoods. Most of the problems with obtaining adequate employment that stakeholders or community residents described to QOL consultants reflected difficulties that residents of lower income neighborhoods are especially likely to suffer. So the QOL Plan proposes that the Workforce Investment Board compliment its other operations with a neighborhood-based approach to meeting the needs of those who currently are not participating successfully in the technical education and workforce development systems of the county.

In this approach the Workforce Investment Board would establish a "Community Employment Task Force" (CETF) charged to develop a set of recommendations for increasing the number of adults who have jobs with livable wages living in census tracts that now suffer Joliet's highest levels of unemployment or employment for wages that do not adequately support a household. The CETF would then monitor the implementation of its recommendations.

The proposed Community Employment Task Force (CETF) should include:

- Two or more members of the Workforce Investment Board;
- Representatives of two or more of the partner organizations of the Workforce System, including Joliet Junior College (JJC) and the Illinois Department of Employment Security;
- At least one liaison member each of the Three Rivers Manufacturers' Association, the Transportation & Logistics Council, and the Social Services Council;
- Representatives of at least two of the institutions that are members of the TREES network including Joliet Township High School and Joliet Junior College (JJC);
- At least one representative each from the governments of Will County and the City of Joliet;
- Faculty of Lewis University, University of St. Francis, and JJC with expertise on technical education and workforce development issues;
- At least two members recommended by the Planning Area Community Development Corporation (CDC).

Some issues that the CETF should consider were brought to the attention of QOL Plan consultants by stakeholders who are familiar with the technical education or workforce development systems of Will County or by community residents speaking in public meetings. These issues are summarized in the following paragraphs, along with recommendations for the CETF to consider as it frames proposals to the Workforce Investment Board regarding each of the issues:

## Quality, Scale, and Accessibility of Workforce-to-Employer Linkages

### *Issues & Opinions*

Virtually all of the job training and placement programs available through the Workforce System are based on expressed employer needs. However, the “freshness” of this employer input and the potential numbers of job placements and levels of salaries connected to different opportunities vary greatly. For example, in some manufacturing and petrochemical industries where companies see looming labor shortages from the imminent retirement of experienced workers, employers that know the Workforce System are prepared to offer attractive salaries and shoulder some of the development and recruitment costs of public agencies. Other programs may have relatively stale demands for workers, and some employers may not be sufficiently connected to the Workforce System to let their needs be known. The Workforce System tracks placement percentages for each training program and employs knowledgeable professionals who network with employers. However, Workforce System stakeholders differ in their opinions as to how thoroughly corporate labor needs are known and met with appropriate training and recruitment program responses. Some stakeholders feel that Will County employers are effectively saturated with information that would lead them to plan with the workforce development system; others think that many more job opportunities could be identified if more resources were invested in marketing and contacts with employers.

Another aspect of the workforce-to-employer connection is knowledge of existing linkage programs in the community. When labor needs\opportunities are identified, preparation to respond with local workers may need to begin years in advance, with the recruitment of candidates for long-term training programs. Besides internet messaging, recruitment may take place through job fairs, schools, community centers, and churches. Community leaders can be valuable assets in recruitment, from the standpoint of the training provider and the employer. And from the perspective of the Planning Area community, leaders may provide a vital service in directing prospective trainees\workers to programs that will bring prosperity to their families and neighborhoods. However, knowledge of existing employer-workforce linkage programs is now thin in the Planning Area. For example, during community workshops participants, including ministers and community organization leaders, repeatedly proposed the formation of programs to link workforce training and placement programs with employers, without being aware of existing programs of this type. If high-opportunity employment and training programs are to have much impact in the Planning Area, regularly refreshed knowledge of the programs will need to be distributed through community leaders.

Union apprenticeship programs provide a related set of concerns. These programs, which can provide excellent career opportunities, are networked with the workforce system. However, a number of these programs have few placement opportunities, and the identity, number, and timing of opportunities to join such programs is not well known in the Planning Area. Opinions of stakeholders differ about the number and accessibility of trainee placement opportunities in union programs.



## *Recommendations*

*The CETF should review the networking and outreach mechanisms between institutions that provide technical education for and recruitment of prospective workers and businesses that need workers with specific skills. The CETF should then recommend measures that will ensure: (1) Optimal investment in the effort to identify and predict corporate\union job placement needs and opportunities, and respond to these with appropriate training programs. (2) A system for regularly disseminating information about training and employment opportunities through the Planning Area, including its community leadership network.*

## **Geographically Based Rosters of Qualified Workers**

### *Issues and Opinions*

Through its general records and on-line matching services, the Workforce Services Division of Will County maintains retrievable records of workers with skills demonstrated by certification or work history. The Workforce System has the capacity to generate lists of workers with certain skill sets who reside within specified geographies (e.g. within a two-mile radius of a particular work place), and workforce agencies have sometimes called up such lists at request of the Will County Center for Economic Development (WCED). If workforce agencies were ready to routinely generate geographically based lists of prospective workers with certain skills for the information of employers, this capacity would be valuable for the development of the Planning Area and the County as a whole, for several reasons:

- The Planning Area contains the densest concentration of workers seeking employment in Will County. To the extent that these workers are trained in marketable skills and their skills are known to employers, some companies will have a strong incentive to remain or locate near this workforce (e.g. in the industrial areas that the City of Joliet is developing south of the current city (District 5) boundary). Locating businesses close to this workforce will benefit the development of Will County as a whole as well as the Planning Area for several reasons. First, such locations will significantly increase the probability that jobs there will be taken by nearby unemployed or underemployed workers; and each time a job is filled by an unemployed Will County resident, instead of a worker who might drive in or relocate from another location, the County is better off. Second, such locations are efficient from a traffic demand perspective. Each time a worker has the opportunity to work less than three miles from home (possibly commuting by public transportation or biking rather than driving alone) air quality and traffic congestion problems in Will County are reduced.
- If workforce agencies are providing lists of skilled workers as tools for the industrial retention and relocation efforts of a local CDC, the City of Joliet, and WCED, Planning Area residents and community leaders will see another reason to think that the Workforce System will actually benefit them. Then knowledge, use, and support of the Workforce System in the Planning Area will increase.

### *Recommendations*

*Through the deliberations of the CETF, the Workforce Board should consider instituting a routine practice of generating geographically based lists of qualified workers as tools to support*

*industrial retention and relocation efforts. In the establishment of this practice, the CETF would need to consider such issues as the confidentiality of information about individual workers and the quality and age of information drawn from several existing systems.*

## **Time and Costs of Training for the Job Seeker**

### *Issues and Opinions*

During the first six months of this year, 3,154 customers (recipients of service) received some type of help from the Will County Workforce System. While a large number of customers use the system exclusively to find a job and are not seeking additional training, only 322 of these customers received training.<sup>30</sup> This limited number of trainees is in part because the Workforce Investment Act funds that the Workforce System allocates must be used for people who are either dislocated workers or “economically disadvantaged,” and the definition for economically disadvantaged was an income no higher than \$10,210 for an individual or \$23,510 for a family of four. The percentage of Will County residents who may be grouped in these categories has been declining in recent years. However, social service agency managers interviewed for the QOL Plan consistently reported that charitable need in the Planning Area is rising rapidly because the number of households working for less than a living wage is growing. Under these circumstances, the need for training assistance experienced by individuals who are working for insufficient wages may in some respects exceed that of households that fall below the official poverty line.

Tuition at JJC is now \$73/credit hour, a cost of several hundred dollars per semester for an ambitious worker taking, say, two courses per semester. This seemingly modest cost is heavy for workers who are earning less than the cost of living. Joliet Junior College (JJC) provides a number of financial assistance programs and the Workforce Board reports that a number of scholarship and grant programs are available through its partner organizations. However, residents in community meetings report knowing individuals who were unable to pursue objectives for training and career advancement because they were unable to afford the cost of community college courses on top of living expenses. The experiences of these individuals might be due to:

- Insufficient financial aid for education\training costs available for all households who need and want it;
- A need to support the living expenses, as well as education costs, of people who are working for less than the cost of living and require training to enter true careers;
- A lack of knowledge by residents of the Planning Area of all the financial aid options available to them;
- Some combination of these factors.

### *Recommendations*

*The CETF should evaluate all of the possible reasons listed above for the perceived lack of sufficient educational financial aid for Planning Area households. Depending on the results of*

---

<sup>30</sup> “Will County Workforce System, Service Analysis, January 2007 through June 2007”, Workforce Investment Board of Will County.

*this assessment, the CETF should consider alternative means of reducing the costs of technical education for aspiring workers who cannot realistically meet these costs without serious financial hardship. Alternatives to be considered in this evaluation include: a sliding scale in technical education fees; additional technical education scholarship programs or funds for local residents who meet a means test; the payment of fees with “forgivable loans” that would be repaid when the worker finds employment for which he or she trained; a program through which work training grants and/or tax credits could be transferred to employers when they hire a trained worker; a sustained campaign to disseminate knowledge of existing and new financial aid programs to help working households acquire marketable skills.*

## **Possible Declines in On-the-Job Training (OJT) Programs:**

### *Issues and Opinions*

Some stakeholders in the Workforce System believe they have observed a decline in the number of employers who provide meaningful OJT, despite training incentives offered by the State and the Workforce Board. The perceived decline in OJT is particularly for positions with compensation in the lower range of jobs that pay livable wages, \$25,000 to \$40,000/year. If this perception is correct, the decline puts more pressure on aspiring workers who must use limited free hours and pay tuition fees for training they might hope to receive on the job.

In contrast to this opinion the WCED has conducted surveys which show that more employers than ever before are investing in training for their current workforce. In addition, the Workforce Investment Board has invested nearly \$450,000 in the last 18 months in incumbent worker training targeting over 800 Will County employees to improve their on-the-job skills. An additional \$350,000 is budgeted for this program in the current year. Furthermore JJC, through its Business and Industry Program, last year conducted customized training programs for employed workers with 67 companies, offering 234 classes attended by 1,786 corporate employees. Client companies contracted with JJC to provide this training, and in the large majority of cases half of the corporate expenditures will be returned to them through matching grants or tax credits provided by State agencies.

In light of these differing informational inputs it is possible that:

- Workforce System stakeholders who think that OJT programs are declining for some salary brackets are simply familiar with atypical cases and mistaken regarding a trend in OJT; Current trends in OJT are positive, and no intervention besides the maintenance of current efforts is required;
- Or WCED surveys may have missed a significant trend in one salary bracket; Substantial public investments to support OJT may be insufficient to compensate for economic pressures that are leading to OJT declines for some salary ranges;
- Or cases of OJT decline in some companies or for some salary brackets, while not representative of a broad trend, require some strategic adjustment in outreach to companies that may be unfamiliar with public benefits for OJT or the nature of public OJT support for some situations.

## *Recommendations*

*The CETF should evaluate all of the hypotheses listed above. Depending on the results of this assessment, the CTEF might conduct a survey of employers to determine whether or not the availability of OJT is declining for some types of businesses or salary brackets; and/or review the effectiveness of outreach measures through which employers are informed of State tax credits, Workforce Board grants and other training incentives; and/or consider additional initiatives to consult or provide other contractual services to companies to help them meet their OJT requirements.*

## **Endorsement of Transportation Proposals**

### *Issues and Opinions*

The Transportation section of the QOL Plan recognizes that reliable transportation to work is a major obstacle to employment in the Planning Area, particularly in some neighborhoods with high percentages of households that do not own a car or include more than one adult but own only one car. The Plan makes systematic proposals for the improvement of public transportation services that would create viable commuting alternatives for Planning Area workers.

### *Recommendations*

*The CETF should review and hopefully endorse the QOL Plan's proposals for transportation including: endorsement of Pace's fully funded proposals for the improvement of fixed route bus services in Will County; the addition of a small bus circulator service linking fixed routes and major destinations within the Planning Area; the creation of an extensive van pool system with robust connections between Planning Area neighborhoods and Will County Job Centers; endorsement of major transportation proposals including the Will County Blue Print for Transportation and the Star Line, provided that these proposals include support for public transportation to job centers.*

## **Use of Temporary Labor**

### *Issues and Opinions*

Temporary labor provided by staffing companies fills a necessary function in the Will County economy, allowing companies to adjust to seasonal or irregular surges in activity. Because of the high level of unemployment and underemployment in the Planning Area, its residents are particularly likely to be affected by the temporary labor industry, either as laborers for staffing companies or as independent temporary or entry level workers who staffing companies may replace.

Some stakeholders in the Will County Workforce System and the Joliet business community, as well as residents speaking in community workshops, have perceived a growing use of temporary laborers, supplied through contractors, to perform tasks that were performed by entry level employees. The temporary worker, in this perception, is in a worse position than an entry level



worker because he or she lacks job security and benefits, and may be barred by contract from taking a permanent job at a site where he or she performed well. Some representatives of temporary labor services maintain that steady workers in their systems may receive training that enhances their qualifications (e.g., the certification of workers as forklift operators) and that steady workers may receive wage increases and benefits. Staffing company representatives also report that their workers are not necessarily barred from taking permanent positions at assigned job sites, although contractual agreements blocking permanent employment vary among staffing companies and client situations.

### *Recommendations*

*The CETF should establish a dialog that includes companies that regularly contract for temporary labor, temporary service contractors, and temporary workers. As an outcome of this dialog, the CETF should recommend measures through which incentives and/or regulations could be established to make the role of temporary labor in Will County as constructive as possible, i.e., a system that does not replace permanent entry level positions in conventional employment and gives workers a path to increased job security, wages, benefits, and certified skills.*

## **More Flexible Standards for Worker Certification**

### *Issues and Opinions*

The Workforce Board requires all job seekers who receive training funds through the Workforce Investment Act to complete a basic work readiness course, taught by JJC staff, which discusses issues such as appropriate dress, timeliness, and an employer's perspective. This program was developed based on focus groups of Will County employers, in which a dire need for such a program was indicated.

Stakeholders and residents who are familiar with this course have suggested that it should be required of a narrower group of applicants, because its instruction is unnecessary for some job seekers (e.g., adults who have been laid off after working for twenty years) and prolongs the job searches of these workers during days when they are living on inadequate workers compensation benefits and savings. Workforce Board management has noted that trainees have an opportunity to waive out of the certification class by taking an examination, although only a very small portion of the trainees pass this waiver exam.

### *Recommendations*

*The CETF should review the procedure and examination through which work trainees may secure a waiver from the certification class requirement and make any proposals for adjustment that it feels would be fully consistent with the needs of employers and knowledgeable trainees.*

## **Gaps and Breaks in Financial Support Programs**

### *Issues and Opinions*

Stakeholders and residents report that some of the support programs available to prospective workers in training or new workers are incomplete and gapped, like a road that is paved for a block with stretches of rough ground before and after. For example, parents in work training programs may receive child care benefits that do not continue while the newly trained worker seeks employment or establishes him or herself in a job. Besides disappointing aspiring workers, funding programs with such abrupt breaks may be unwise uses of public funds, since they incur expenditures without achieving desired results.

Workforce Board Management has observed that supportive service funds for trainees and new workers are available through a number of programs that have differing eligibility and programmatic requirements, as well as limitations as to how long funds are available.

### *Recommendations*

*The CETF should examine the “path” of client experience in programs to support worker training and placement, i.e., what trainees and job seekers experience as they progress through the course of these programs. Along with this examination the CETF should consider requirements of the source programs that provide support funds. After completing this analysis, the CETF may make proposals to Workforce System organizations for administratively smoothing the path of clients. It may also make recommendations to funding sources or legislators for adjustments to program requirements or limitations.*

## **Employment for Ex-Offenders**

### *Issues and Opinions*

The findings regarding neighborhood level problems in this section of the QOL Plan summarize how ex-offenders frequently face blanket policies and more subtle biases against their employment. For ex-offenders reentering the Joliet community, a number of programs exist to help them find employment. Prisoner Release Ministries offers job placement services and maintains a list of job seekers with their particular skills. Post-hiring follow ups with both clients and employers help to ensure success and maintain good relationships with the companies that hire their ex-offenders. The Prisoner Release Ministries organization is well-established in Will County, their service area, and many other area workforce programs refer ex-offenders to Prisoner Release Ministries. The Safer Foundation also provides employment services coupled with pre- and post-hiring support, though it serves the broader metropolitan area. In addition to the normal job-seeker support services it provides, the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) offers specialized assistance to ex-offenders through its Re-entry Employment Service Program (RESP). IDES also offers fidelity bonding at no cost to ex-offenders whose future employers may require additional insurance given their past life experiences.

### *Recommendations*

*The CETF should meet for at least one session with the Will County Health & Justice Coalition and discuss any adjustments in public support and coordination with other agencies that would assist their operations as well as measures to make their work more widely known and appreciated in the Planning Area.*

### **Outreach, Referral, Tracking, and Community Engagement:**

#### *Issues and Opinions*

Community residents participating in public meetings and professional stakeholders commonly recommended the creation of programs for employment education and job placement that already exist in Will County systems. Also community leaders such as ministers and counselors or administrators of social service programs frequently try to make job referrals of individuals through informal networks or cold calling, without reference to the networks established by the TREES or the Workforce Investment Board. At one level, these suggestions and referral patterns represent a simple lack of awareness, which is not surprising, considering that the existing systems are complex, even when they are represented by attractive public information tools such as the web sites of the JJC or the Workforce Services Division of Will County. Lack of complete understanding of a system may be compounded with a lack of confidence in it. At least five clergy or other community leaders interviewed for the Plan expressed skepticism that residents referred to workforce agencies would receive useful assistance. Only if community leaders and a fair sampling of residents understand and trust the Workforce System agencies will the community consistently refer prospective workers to the services they need and appropriately support individual clients in their efforts to take specific career building steps.

#### *Recommendations*

*The CETF should consider and recommend a series of steps that the TREES and Workforce System partners should take to instill a deep level of awareness and confidence in their work in the community, particularly in neighborhoods with high levels of unemployment. These measures might include: workshops with leaders of churches, community organizations, and social service programs; events to celebrate the achievements of program graduates and new workers; appointment of an ombudsman who can follow up responses to individual referrals and serve as a regular source of information to community organizations about training and workforce issues and programs.*

The CETF should meet monthly, or more frequently, for a year to formulate proposals on all of the issues noted above to the Workforce Investment Board and its partner organizations. (The CETF may well form subcommittees to address a number of these issues that are relatively complex.) In subsequent years the CETF should continue to meet regularly, perhaps quarterly, to monitor progress in the implementation of its proposals. To carry out this ambitious agenda, the CETF will need to be staffed by a professional(s) with strong analytical and communications skills who will devote 50% to 100% of a full-time employee's effort to this work. After the year of recommendation development, the staffing of the CETF should become a secondary

responsibility, probably requiring less than 20% of the time of a qualified professional. Staff responsibilities might be shared between an employee of the Workforce Division of Will County and a Planning Area CDC employee, which could provide a combination of deep experience in the local system and fresh perspective to this work.

An appropriate budget for the CETF would be in the range of \$60,000 to \$90,000, for personnel and direct expenses, in Year 1 followed by subsequent expenses of \$8,000 to \$15,000 per year.

<b>Proposals Summary</b>					
<b>Short term (0-3 years) and Long term (3+ years)</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>	<b>Estimated Costs</b>	<b>Potential Funding Sources</b>
1) Build industrial parks on Joliet's south side, per the City's comprehensive plan, with optimal job creation and environmental sustainability: Establish Industrial Planning Committee including St. Francis & Lewis U faculty/ Prioritize development areas/ Establish pool of qualified developers/ Identify optimal end user companies/ Establish park area as a Foreign Trade Zone/ Adopt LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Standard for site design	City of Joliet, Will County Center for Economic Development, Planning Area community organization, possibly a Community Development Corporation (CDC)	1	<b>Area Develop Planning Years 1-2</b>  Project Planning & Execution Years 3 – 20	<b>\$50,000 to \$150,000+ Recovered Project Costs</b>	City of Joliet
2) Increase the number of Planning Area residents who obtain good jobs through existing training & employment programs by implementing recommendations of a new Community Employment Task Force. Recommend and implement programs to: Increase outreach of work training programs to employers/ Create community-based rosters of qualified workers/ Mitigate job training costs	Workforce Investment Board of Will County and partner organizations including: Joliet Junior College and the Illinois Department of Employment Security & Planning Area	1	<b>Year 1: Form Policies</b>  Years 2-4 Implement programs	<b>Year 1</b> \$60,000 to \$90,000  Years 2-4 \$8,000 to \$15,000 annually  + Cost to Taskforce recommendations, to be	Workforce Investment Board, federal Workforce Investment Act funds



for workers/ Increase on-the-job training programs/ Define a constructive role for Temporary Labor/ Smooth gaps in financial support for new workers/ Increase Employment of ex-offenders/ Establish outreach, referral tracking & community engagement	CDC			estimated	
--	-----	--	--	-----------	--