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Regional Economic Group Seeks Public Input

Macoupin meeting set for Aug. 29 in Benld

[Macoupin County] – Communities throughout Illinois are at a crossroads of challenge and opportunity. As cities and counties redefine their role in a rapidly changing economy, developing a regional competitive economic development strategy and plan of action for the future is vital.

In August, the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs (IIRA) at Western Illinois University began working with the Central Illinois counties of Greene, Jersey, Macoupin, and Montgomery to identify the region's unique assets, formulate a plan of action to position the region for future success, and develop a regional-based organizational structure to oversee the implementation of the strategic plan through its MAPPING (Management and Planning Programs Involving Non-metropolitan Groups) program.

The involved counties and IIRA are now seeking input from local leaders and volunteers on the development of a plan of action for the region. In Macoupin County, the public is invited to a meeting on Wednesday Aug. 29 from 5 to 8 p.m. at the Benld Civic Center, located on Central Street in Benld, two doors east of the city's municipal building. The meeting will be hosted by Macoupin County Economic Development and the Coal Country Chamber of Commerce.

MAPPING the Future of Your Community program, administered by the IIRA at WIU and sponsored by the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), is a series of community-based strategic visioning and planning sessions to help leaders and citizens in rural areas at the city, county, or regional level come together to develop a long-term vision and formulate a plan of action for community and economic development. "Since Fall 1991, the program has reached more than 100 communities in more than 50 Illinois counties," said Gisele Hamm, Manager, IIRA Community MAPPING Program.

"The MAPPING process will give our county, communities and region a clearer vision of where we need to focus economically," said Lea Hudson, a steering committee member of the regional group. Hudson is also a Carlinville business owner and alderman.

"I encourage residents of Macoupin County to attend the Aug. 29 meeting to provide their ideas on the economic vision and goals for our county and the four-county region," added Hudson.

At the conclusion of the MAPPING sessions, a public town meeting will be held to report on the proposed goals and action plan, and to involve the entire community to help set the direction for Macoupin County and the region.

For more information regarding the Central Illinois Regional MAPPING program, contact Shari Albrecht, DCEO Opportunity Returns, 217-825-3812 or Shari.Albrecht@illinois.gov.