

# FEDA Quarterly



The Newsletter of the Fairfield Economic Development Association  
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## FEDA In Your Inbox

Welcome to the first Fairfield Economic Development Association newsletter. Moving forward and on a quarterly basis, FEDA will provide to you an update on the Fairfield business climate, overall economy as we see it, and the activities of the organization which now boasts more than 100 members- members who, through their commitment to the full-time economic development efforts of their community, have exemplified a belief in progress and a belief in the importance of initiative-driven, not reactionary, growth.

FEDA members speak through their memberships to the rest of the community and to themselves that economic development does not just happen. We must control our own destiny and create for Fairfield an even brighter and more prosperous future. This newsletter is about letting you know what your economic development association is up to on a regular basis. We're glad you're with us.

## Executive Director's Memo

It's a great time to be in the economic development business in Fairfield. With recent announcements putting the next 36

### In This Issue

[ExecDir Memo](#)

[Horizon: 231K in New Fairfield Footage](#)

[Spotlight: Sky Factory](#)

[UDAG Report](#)

[By-Law Update](#)

[Lean, Mean FEDA Office](#)

[From the Research Dept.](#)

[LISCO Project Picking Up](#)

[Biz Plan Rolled Out](#)

### LISCO Fiber Project Puts Fairfield on the Map

The LISCO Fairfield fiber-to-the-home/business project has moved into its second phase, with infrastructure installation complete in the downtown area. Downtown businesses are now able to access the 100 MB/s-speed fiber- a major upgrade from current 3 - 5 MB/s

months on a major growth track, the Fairfield Economic Development Association has been keeping busy putting FEDA membership dollars to work for Fairfield. We've unveiled a new and updated Business Plan, rolled out at the October Annual Meeting at the Fairfield Arts & Convention Center. We've brought on board FEDA Administrator Samuel Busch, the first support staff in our history, to help implement the plan and expand our capabilities. We've furthered and expanded strategic relationships with local and regional partners like the Fairfield Entrepreneurs Association, Fairfield Area Chamber of Commerce, Iowa Department of Economic Development and *Opportunity*<sup>2</sup> regional marketing cooperative.

And we've rolled up our sleeves to do the hard work of grassroots economic development, moving projects like the expansion of The Sky Factory, FoodChain Global Advisors, Cambridge Investment Research along through assistance facilitation, advocacy and advisement. We are working feverishly to wrap our arms around the work we're doing and the work to be done, mapping out economic and demographic trends in Fairfield and packaging them in the interest of furthering our recruitment capabilities to the level of larger metropolitan areas, doing Web site development work and serving as a voice of industry and commerce in the Fairfield future-land use discussion. It's a great time to be in our business, but we cannot do it without our membership, and so we everyday hold open our doors, inboxes and telephone lines for you.

Keep in touch,

Brent

## 231K Total Announced Increase In Commercial Square Footage

Over the next 36 months, at least five major Fairfield-area employers will develop more than 230,000 square feet of new commercial construction, creating over 230 new jobs. The breakdown:

**The Sky Factory;** 11,000 square feet; *underway*; **30 new jobs**  
**Orschelns;** 20,000; *Groundbreaking 2007*; **10 new jobs**  
**Cambridge Investment Research;** 40,000 square feet;  
*Groundbreaking March 2008*; **97 new jobs**

capabilities. The project, a milestone for rural America, puts Fairfield on par and in many cases above par with major metropolitan centers for fiber availability and access. In many large American cities, 100 MB/s is available, but is cost-prohibitive to most commercial enterprise. Not so in Fairfield, where entrepreneurial business continues to foster an economy of diversity and buoyancy. 100 MB/s is now available to all downtown and soon to all in town for nary more than a small upgrade in cost.

Already, Fairfield has experienced the arrival of several new businesses upon which the availability of fiber was of primary importance to the decision-making process and we continue to talk with other companies which are intrigued by and interested in Fairfield due to the availability of low-cost fiber. For example, ScribeStorm, a digital media company, is now operating in Fairfield and utilizing the fiber. The company comes to Fairfield from Seattle.

The LISCO project, when bundled with other, more traditional infrastructure capabilities, puts Fairfield at a competitive edge moving forward into an increasingly information transmission-dependent economy, one where more people will work from home, where more business will be transacted electronically and where more business models will be built entirely around electronic and data transmission capabilities. We are uniquely positioned as a rural economy to take advantage of our emerging status as a truly rural

**Hy-Vee;** 62,000 square feet; *Groundbreaking Fall 2008*; **30 new jobs**  
**Wal-Mart;** 98,000 square feet; *Groundbreaking Spring 2009*;  
**Approximately 50 new jobs**

The announcements, all having occurred within six months of each other, come on the heels of estimated upward trends in population growth and property valuations- two major economic indicators- in Fairfield. And other sectors of the Fairfield economy continue strong performance. Retail trends remain strong, with a 6% uptick in sales and use tax receipts in 2007, a square with virtually no first-floor commercial vacancy- Fairfield's newest downtown retail tenant is 24-Hour Fitness on the south side of the square. The new Jefferson County Hospital's construction remains on schedule, a true focal point for a south corridor expected to experience significant development as the 34 bypass is completed and traffic counts on that highway increase by nearly 35%. FEDA expects to be a part of the conversation with regard to the development of the south corridor in an at least advisory role- advising the City of Fairfield on future use and zoning determinations.

The recent hiring announcements are wonderful news for Fairfield, a community in an economically-stressed southeast Iowa area, but they do reignite and in some cases introduce challenges our community will face in the near-, mid- and long-term as we work to grow. Available labor is often the primary challenge existing employers in small and major hiring situations and, indeed, the Fairfield area faces through business recruitment and cultivation. Virtually a statewide emergency, the shortage of labor in Iowa's future is truly the 800-pound gorilla in the room of any discussion of the Iowa and Midwestern economies. According to Iowa Workforce Development, if each student graduating from a university, college or community college in Iowa this year were to stay and work in Iowa, we would still fall short 200,000 workers following the Baby Boomer retirement blow to the workforce. We as a state and, indeed, a community, face massive labor issues ahead. FEDA has commissioned a 2008 Laborshed Study from Iowa Workforce Development, the results of which we expect to have available to us in late January. We expect to see that our shed has increased, but that our overall worker availability, if kept on the current track, will not keep up with demand.

And so FEDA has set to work. We are coordinating with the Southeast Iowa Manufacturer's Association, Iowa Association of Business & Industry, Iowa Workforce Development and

technology center. For more information on the LISCO project, contact the company at 472.2813 or visit [www.lisco.com](http://www.lisco.com).

## Updated Business Plan Rolled Out

On Wednesday, October 3, an updated strategic document, *Business Plan and Methods of Implementation* was presented to the membership. The document, the result of an intensive review and extensive update of the existing FEDA business plan, which in its first phase places emphasis on entrepreneurial development, a community information gathering and dissemination project and service, Web development and strategic marketing. The *Business Plan* will be the playbook by which FEDA operates moving forward and, through its authorization, frees up the resources necessary to implement its initiatives, including the hiring of Busch, who now works out of the FEDA offices at 204 West Broadway. For more information on the *Business Plan*, or for a copy, contact Brent Willett at 472.2111 or [bwillett@fairfieldiowa.com](mailto:bwillett@fairfieldiowa.com).

regional partners to address this critical issue. This month, FEDA executive Brent Willett will attend the Iowa Workforce Summit, hosted by Gov. Chet Culver in Des Moines, to make Fairfield a part of the conversation on the state level. The work has truly only just begun with this conference, but FEDA will be involved every step of the way.

## *Spotlight:* Sky Factory Going Up

The Sky Factory is nearing completion on a new, 11,000 sq. ft. energy-efficient office and manufacturing building on former FEDA land.

The new building, which incorporates several design strategies to decrease its energy consumption, has been long in development. Getting the project underway was spurred by assistance from FEDA, which sold the 5-acre parcel to The Sky Factory, and continues to help the company gather resources from county, state and federal sources, including High Quality Jobs Creation program tax benefit from the Iowa Department of Economic Development announced in recent days.

"FEDA's charter dictates that we encourage and engage with those growth opportunities in the very best interest of the community of Fairfield," said Brent Willett, FEDA Executive Director. "The Sky Factory has been on our radar for some time now, and with this groundbreaking, the fruition this project has finally realized means we've been on the right track. We applaud the company for their projected growth, as the jobs created at the level anticipated will mean real progress for our community."

Cooperation between neighbors, the Fairfield City Council, The Sky Factory and FEDA helped to establish the new zoning of the property as a light industrial lot.

"It has been FEDA's privilege in facilitating the land sale and rezoning so that The Sky Factory may move forward with a growth plan which will create a substantial number of high-quality jobs for Fairfield over the near term," said Pat Doyle, FEDA President. "As a partner for progress, The Sky Factory is one which clearly means business for Fairfield."

Bill Witherspoon, President of The Sky Factory, said in a statement that, "We hope that our unique contribution of a building whose site, orientation, 'sealed envelope', and 'daylighting' is consistent with the strategies of running a zero

carbon emissions operation, will attract other like-minded green companies to share the remaining 23 acres of this FEDA land with us."

The new headquarters is a long, East-West oriented, conventional pole-style metal building with some significant twists. The building will have a 'sealed envelope' by virtue of spray-on foam insulation on walls and ceiling, and nearly a thousand sq. ft. of clerestory windows along the long North and South walls will provide enough daylighting to significantly decrease electric lighting costs. Energy-efficient heating and cooling systems will help decrease the building's 'carbon footprint'. The company hopes to implement solar and other leading energy saving strategies over time.

## UDAG Report

In its capacity as Administrator on the fund, FEDA recently recommended to the Fairfield City Council that the interest rate on the Urban Development Action Grant loan to Fairfield Aluminum Castings Company be retroactively reduced to aid in the company's ongoing reorganization and improvement. FALCO, a long-time major employer and responsible corporate citizen to Fairfield, continues to reorganize in the face of heavy market pressures. It is FEDA's belief that the UDAG action is in the best interest of Fairfield's economy and we look forward to FALCO's ongoing importance to the Fairfield workforce and economy.

The UDAG fund, originally established via a grant from the Housing and Urban Development department of the US government, is a local economic development resource. It is administered by FEDA but allocations are controlled by the City of Fairfield.

## By-Law Report

At the November FEDA Board meeting, a substantial by-law amendment was approved. It reads

*The following Amendment to the By-Laws is adopted as an official action of the Board of Directors upon signing of the same by all Directors of the Fairfield Economic Development Association, Inc. and its entry in the Minutes Book of the Board of Directors pursuant to Article VI, Section 1 of the By-Laws.*

*Signature of the undersigned approves the following Amendment of the By-Laws*

*as well as waiving all notice of time, place and purpose and terms of the amendment proposed for adoption:*

*Article V - dealing with Directors is amended by deleting the full text of Section 4, which states:*

*"The members of the Board of Directors initially shall serve for the following terms: one-third for four years, one-third for three years and one-third for two years, and in each case until the first Board meeting of the fiscal year following the expiration of their respective terms. The selection of the Board members who will serve the various terms shall be by the incorporators of the Corporation initially, and by the membership commencing in fiscal 1980. Thereafter, the terms of all regular members of the Board of Directors shall be three years. Each regular member shall continue in office until his or her successor is elected and agrees to serve."*

*and by inserting in place of the foregoing in Article V, the following amendatory language:*

*"Section 4: The term of a Director shall be limited to three consecutive terms. However, this limit shall not prevent a Director who has been appointed an unexpired term of a departing Director from having their period of service extended by three consecutive terms. In the event a Director is an employee of a bank institution, that Director shall be limited to one term."*

What does it mean? FEDA has installed term limitations on its directors for the first time in its history. Now, a total of three, three-year terms may be consecutively served by FEDA Board members. The amendment strikes a careful balance between the value of the wisdom and knowledge of long-associated Directors and the importance of the continuing introduction of new eyes, ears and ideas to the board. It's just another example of a page being turned in FEDA, in lock-step with the progress of the community of Fairfield.

## Improvements Mean a Leaner, More Efficient FEDA Office

Recent organizational improvements undertaken by management at FEDA offices mean that more time is being spent on economic development and less on paperwork and project catch-up. A move to professional accounting stewardship over FEDA finances, the completion of several pending FEDA construction projects, a filing reorganization, paperless electronic streamlining of much FEDA documentation and a move of the FEDA Board's monthly meetings to the spacious FEDA Executive Conference Suite in the Fairfield Arts & Convention Center has meant a leaner, more efficient office, one which more efficiently puts FEDA

membership dollars to work. It all adds up to more getting done. It's what you'd expect from your company. It's what we expect from ours.

## From the Research Department

by Samuel Busch, FEDA Administrator

What are demographics? Demographics are the physical characteristics of a population. The term demographics, as a noun, is mistakenly used in place of demography, the study of human population, its structure and change. Commonly used demographics include race, age, income, disabilities, mobility (in terms of travel time to work or number of vehicles available), educational attainment, home ownership, employment status, and even location. Demographics are frequently used in economic and marketing research.

Demographics are important because it allows economic developers to compile accurate statistics and facts that are unique to the community. For example, Fairfield's population is 9,379- according to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2006 Population Estimates. Fairfield is ranked #39 in population size compared to the other 947 cities located in Iowa. The study of local demographics are vital to local economic developers, who constantly must compile accurate statistics and facts that are unique to the community in order to understand the economy and population of his or her town, city or region. These demographics are used to market the community to help attract organizations and cultivate existing companies which will create local jobs.

FEDA has taking the lead in this area. By compiling such data, FEDA will be enabled to create marketing materials and quickly respond to information requests from organizations researching Fairfield to either startup, relocate or open new facilities.

Compared with national trends, Fairfield has very affordable housing, a low cost of living, a tremendous education system and an above-average educated population. The median sales value of a home in Fairfield is \$129,500- compared to the \$217,200 national average. Fairfield's cost of living index is 77.2- compared with the national average of 100. The lower the index numbers the lower the living costs and vice versa. Fairfield's student/teacher ratio is 13:1 compared to a national average of 15.9:1. Fairfield's graduation rate from high school is 87.7%- compared to a national average of 79.6%. And 16.4% of Fairfield's population hold advanced college degrees-

compared to a national average of 7.2%.

Fairfield has a rich history of being a progressive and pioneering community. For example, in 1882, Fairfield operated and purchased an Electric Power plant, thus becoming the first in the nation to have a municipal utility. By owning its own electric power plant, Fairfield became the first city west of Pittsburg to light its city at night.

Initially compiling demographics is a time-consuming, labor-intensive process. FEDA is happy to report that this compilation process is progressing swiftly. Several times, FEDA has already drawn upon the results of the valuable demographic research. A Web site project is underway that will disseminate much of the demographic information. A community quick reference brochure project has also been initiated. This project will present the community's demographics in a visually appealing manner in print and electronic versions. FEDA has many more exciting projects being planned to utilize and disseminate the information we are compiling. Stay tuned!

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