

# NEWS & *views*

*Economic Development Division*

SUMMER 2004

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*News & Views*, published quarterly, is the newsletter of the Economic Development Division of the American Planning Association. We welcome articles, letters, suggestions and information regarding workshops and other educational opportunities for economic development professionals. Please forward your submissions by email to our Editor, Dr. Ned Murray, AICP (address below).

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## Locating the Hidden Tech Population to Leverage it For Economic Development

by Amy Zuckerman, Principal, A-Z International  
and Mike Levin, Northeast Utilities

One of the prevailing economic development maxims is that you need a critical mass of companies, or cluster, to create a business base big enough to boost the economy of a region. Although the theory has played out in many parts of the country from Boston's Rt. 128 to the Silicon Valley of California and Austin, Texas, there are experts who now believe the cluster theory, itself, is played out. Joel Kotkin, author of *The New Geography* (Random House, 2001) was recently in New England's Knowledge Corridor (Hartford, CT-Springfield, MA region) talking about the "declustering" of those very, once hot technology locations, as well as urban centers.

He was also in the region to study a new phenomenon — the so-called "hidden tech population" — which offers a glimpse of where knowledge workers go when they leave traditional business clusters. Freed from organizations by the Internet/World Wide Web, often flush with cash from the sale of pricey urban homes, these virtual company entrepreneurs are flocking to locations throughout the United States that make great places to live. Rather than selecting a location based on the availability of employment, they are picking places that have both lifestyle appeal and already contain a population, or cluster, of like-minded entrepreneurs. Once there, they set up shop in homes or small offices often hidden from sight and from government statisticians, hence the term hidden tech.

These sorts of new hidden tech entrepreneur clusters are springing up everywhere from Wenatchee, Washington to Bozeman, Montana. But one of the largest, and certainly most organized and studied, is in the portion of New England's Knowledge Corridor centered around Amherst, Massachusetts.

Already, over 700 hidden tech entrepreneurs have joined the Hidden-Tech affinity group of the Regional Technology Corporation since its founding in the spring of 2002. More and more recent arrivals

*(continued on page 3)*

## THOUGHTS FROM THE CHAIR



This newsletter catches us coming off of a very successful National Conference in Washington, DC, where the Economic Development Division sponsored two sessions and six mobile workshops. One great performance deserves another, however, and we are already planning for San Francisco! Elsewhere in this issue is information on how to propose a session for March 2005. The annual business meeting was also a modest changing of the guard, with me taking on the Chair and joined by newly elected Chair-Elect Rhonda Phillips and Secretary/Treasurer Bob Lewis. We are old hands in some ways — Rhonda and I have been officers for the past two years and Bob is a former Chapter President. Bill Anderson has also agreed to serve as the Conference Chair for this coming year and Ned Murray is our new *News & Views* editor. We are all pleased to represent you to APA.

The Division is extraordinarily lucky in a number of ways, the most notable being the strong leadership of our past Chair Mike Delk and the excellent editorship of Zenia Kotval. They have made the EDD one of APA's strongest divisions and provided a firm foundation. In order to remain strong, we want your help. We need

volunteers to chair the Student Scholarship and the Economic Development Award committees. We are also looking for Division members with expertise in Airport planning and planning for Homeland Security to work on these new initiatives. Service to APA through the Division is one of the most rewarding ways to participate in your profession, so contact me if you are willing to work with us.

More about our new initiatives. The EDD has agreed to work cooperatively with the Transportation and Environmental Divisions on aspects of Airport planning. We had an engaging session and a mobile workshop at the Washington, DC conference to kick-off the effort at bringing together the multitude of issues associated with airport design and planning. I hope to use the website ([www.planning.org/economic/index.htm](http://www.planning.org/economic/index.htm)) to keep you apprised of the scope and activities of this special project as it evolves. In addition, I want to provide a focus on Homeland Security and economic development this year. My article in the current issue of *Practicing Planner* (Vol. 2, No. 1, 2004 – [www.planning.org/practicingplanner/](http://www.planning.org/practicingplanner/)) is a starting point for some contributions by the Division on this topic. Also new to the EDD website will be a section on Best Practices. Initially you will find some links to Economic Development Strategies that can be used as models for your own planning. This will be expanded to include Economic Development elements of local and  
(continued next page)

## IN THIS ISSUE OF NEWS & VIEWS



It is a pleasure to serve as the new Editor of the APA Economic Development Division's *News & Views* publication, taking over the reigns from Zenia Kotval who did such an outstanding job over the past two years. I look forward to working with the

EDD, Board Members Terry Holzheimer, Rhonda Phillips and Bob Lewis, and Advertising Director, Jeff Mills, in continuing to provide informative articles to APA readers across the country.

I will particularly elicit articles that demonstrate the range of economic development practice and those that clearly integrate economic development

planning with our other sub-fields, including transportation, housing, community development and environmental management, to promote the holistic advantages of the planning profession in local decision-making.

In this issue our readers will be informed by two very interesting articles; "Locating the Hidden Tech Population to Leverage It for Economic Development" by Amy Zuckerman and Mike Levin and "Reclaimed Opportunities: Recycling-Based Economic Development" by Alisa Kane. Congratulations to Alisa for being the 2004 EDD Student Essay Scholarship winner. Her article on recycling-based economic development is a condensed version of her award-winning essay.

Please feel free to email me at [murrayn@fiu.edu](mailto:murrayn@fiu.edu) with comments and ideas you may have for future articles. ■

— Ned Murray, AICP

LOCATING THE HIDDEN TECH POPULATION, CONT. FROM P. 1

talk about locating to the Pioneer Valley because they understood from word-of-mouth and media coverage that this region was attracting hidden tech entrepreneurs in significant enough numbers to form a cluster. For example, Steve Reynolds, a senior manager at AOL, learned about this region through newspaper articles on the hidden tech movement, which convinced him there was a sufficient cluster of like-minded techies to provide “someone to talk to” off hours. He made the move to Amherst, MA from Maryland in the summer of 2002,

where he has been managing part of the AOL customer retention/marketing operation from his attic.

This article examines the advantages for a region of promoting development of entrepreneur networks that drill down to the virtual company level. The organization Hidden-Tech has proved during its short lifespan that it’s possible for a region to leverage the network’s members for economic development purposes and to promote what Harvard professor Robert Putnam calls “social capital.” In *BOWLING ALONE: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (Simon & Schuster, 2000), Putnam defines social capital as “connections among individuals, social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them.” He believes that informal social connections that build trust, safety and reciprocity are the foundation of economic development. Hidden-Tech is one of those social/business networks.

This article focuses on efforts made to quantify the hidden tech population since the winter of 2002, and describes methodology both authors have evolved to help economic development directors, cities, towns, corporations and non-profit organizations locate hidden tech entrepreneurs in their geographic areas utilizing current national data resources.

(continued next page)

### THOUGHTS FROM THE CHAIR (CONT’D)

state comprehensive plans. If you have something to contribute or have found a great example to follow, please share it with the rest of us.

This issue of *News & Views* contains an article by the winner of our student scholarship, Alisa Kane, a planning student at Portland State University. Alisa’s paper on recycling-based economic development was unanimously selected and represents some very original thought and scholarship. Student members — let’s hear from you next year!

So, enjoy this issue, but consider making your own contributions — to the newsletter, the annual conference, or to some of the Division’s special initiatives. ■

— Terry Holzheimer, AICP, Chair

### Propose a Session for the Annual APA Conference

The Economic Development Division presents two sessions at each annual conference of APA. We are soliciting proposals for conference sessions for the San Francisco conference to be held on March 19-30, 2005. Some of the subjects of interest to the EDD include best practices in economic development planning, airport planning, and homeland security. If you would like to propose an EDD session, please contact our Conference Chair, Bill Anderson, at [William.Anderson@econres.com](mailto:William.Anderson@econres.com) or (619) 237-1225. Proposals are due at the end of July, so get busy!

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LOCATING THE HIDDEN TECH POPULATION, CONT. FROM P. 3

### Locating the Hidden Tech Population

In the winter of 2003 Northeast Utilities, based in Hartford, CT, commissioned this author, principal of A-Z International Associates in Amherst, MA, to conduct a follow-up to an earlier pilot study of 75 hidden tech companies entitled *HIDDEN TECH IN THE VALLEY: At The Cutting Edge of the Global Internet Economy* (Amy Zuckerman, Western Massachusetts Electric Company, fall of 2002. See [www.hidden-tech.net](http://www.hidden-tech.net) to access the pilot study). As part of this project, Zuckerman also was asked to explore ways regional economic developers could back the hidden tech population, as well as leverage it to boost the regional economy and build social capital.

The first step to this process was locating hidden tech companies. For anyone familiar with data searches, it would be apparent that there is no one-step, easy method for locating the hidden tech population in national databases that report on small businesses. That's because the term-coined by this author didn't exist when the 2000 United States Census data was collected and has not yet been introduced into the Small Business Administration lexicon.

Moreover, most traditional data on employment comes from a survey of known businesses. Government statisticians will look primarily at mid-sized and large companies and often ignore small companies, let alone those so tiny as not to be apparent to the naked eye. As Census Bureau analyst Paul Zeisset put it in a report on nonemployers: "These very small businesses are excluded from most other business statistics, yet they form an important part of many industries." ("Sales By Nonemployer Business top \$580 Billion in 1997," U.S. Census Bureau, January 18, 2001.)

The only way definitively to locate a given hidden tech population in any community involves old-fashioned, grass roots organizing, surveys of pre-existing business organization membership lists, and surveys of

college/university alumni bases. But with a little knowledge of this population, both Zuckerman and Mike Levin, Chief Policy Specialist for Economic Development at the Hartford, CT-based Northeast Utilities, have developed methodology that will provide regional planners, economic development directors, cities, towns, regional governments and the private sector a means of coming up with an approximate number of hidden tech companies in a given locale. To be able to parse out the hidden tech population from a number of various categories of employment in the 2000 Census or any other small business data sources requires knowing what the term hidden tech actually means and how hidden tech proprietors operate.

### Hidden Tech Defined

A hidden tech company is synonymous with the virtual company as defined by economist George Gilder and made famous by management guru Tom Peters. This is an entrepreneurial enterprise operated by one or two principals in any given location. Support personnel and staff may be housed anywhere in the world and generally are subcontractors rather than full-time employees. Also, work is often carried out in alliance with other like-minded companies. Advanced technology — particularly computers and the Internet — is the tool that binds the company together, allowing information and data to flow throughout the potentially far-flung enterprise.

It's a misnomer to call hidden tech entrepreneurs freelancers or free agents. What matters when counting hidden tech companies is both the mind-set of the proprietor and his/her operating style. A hidden tech proprietor will say they are operating and building a business, not merely taking on projects for pay. Their operations are always small, yet their contacts and clients are often national or global and they may earn revenues to match.



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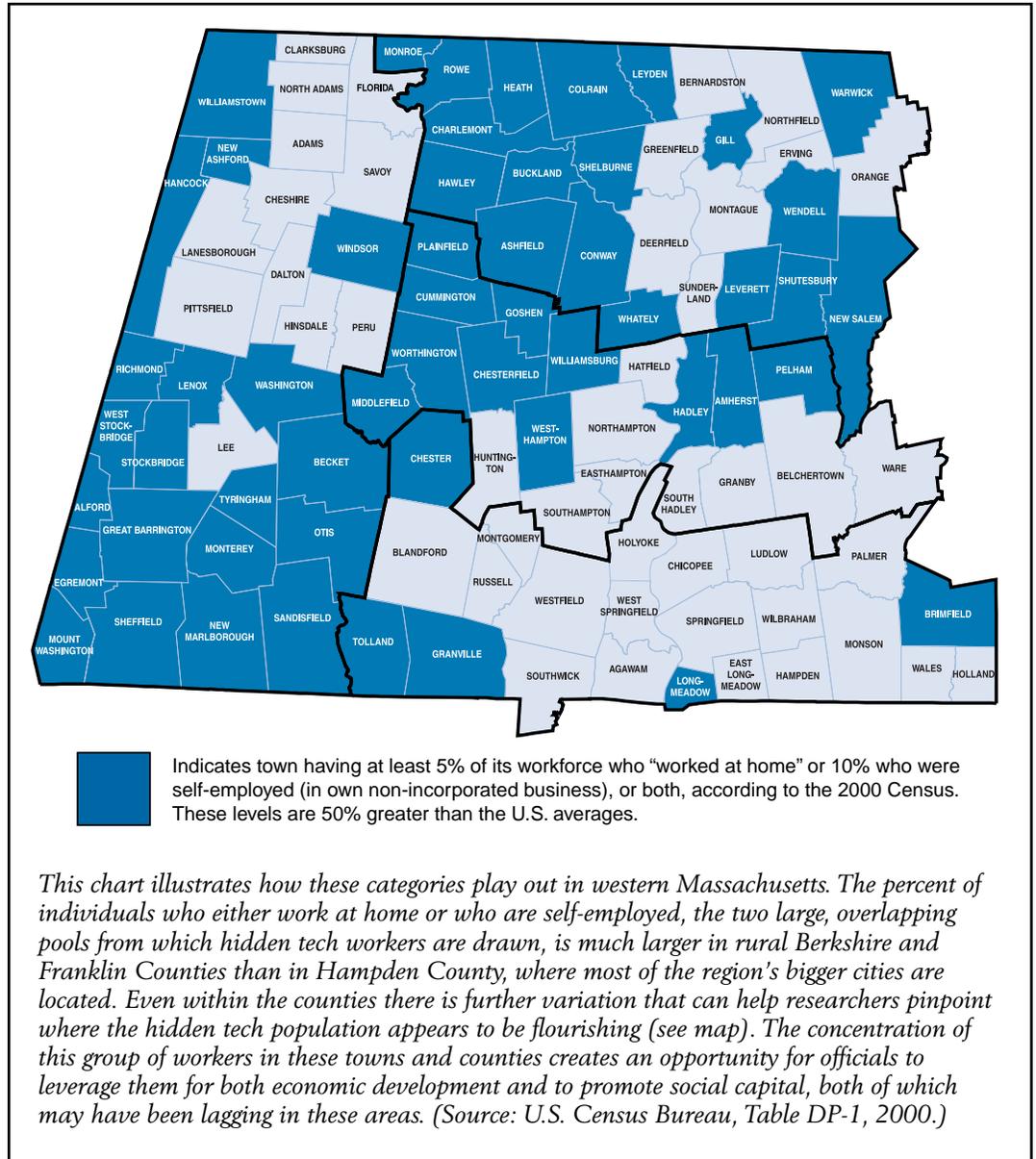
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Also, some tele-commuters fit into the hidden tech category and some do not. If the telecommuter mainly works out of the home and utilizes advanced technology to carry on business, he/she may think more entrepreneurially than those who only use a home office on weekends. The same goes for those building a small business on the side while they work a day job. If they consider the side business to be something they're building for the future and are contemplating leaving their day job, they may fit into the hidden tech population. Neither of these nuances will be reflected in current government surveys. Here are some basic factors that define the mindset of the hidden tech proprietor:

1. He or she considers themselves operating a business rather than taking on work-for-hire projects only;
2. He or she has no desire to employ staff in-house or manage a large, in-house operation. The preference is to work alone, or with one or two others maximum, in a small-office setting, whether in a home, office suite or industrial park office;
3. When there is need for additional help, subcontractors are hired to handle the work or alliances are formed with other hidden tech companies;
4. He or she may not make technology, but are technologically savvy. They are aware that technology is a major business driver; a necessity for survival.



### Structural Changes in the U.S. Economy as Key to National Data Base Searches

It's important to view the hidden tech phenomenon as part of a much larger, accelerating national economic trend towards self-employment, often in a home-based setting. As Bruce D. Phillips of the National Federation of Independent Businesses writes: "...A host of factors seems to be pushing individuals into business ownership: a lack of security in large corporations, the declining price of information technology products, the stresses caused by time pressures, the desire for greater control over one's life, and the relatively cheap and easy market expansion made possible by the Internet."

*(continued next page)*

(Home-Based Firms, E-Commerce, and High-Technology Small Firms: Are They Related? Bruce D. Phillips, "Economic Development Quarterly," February 2002.)

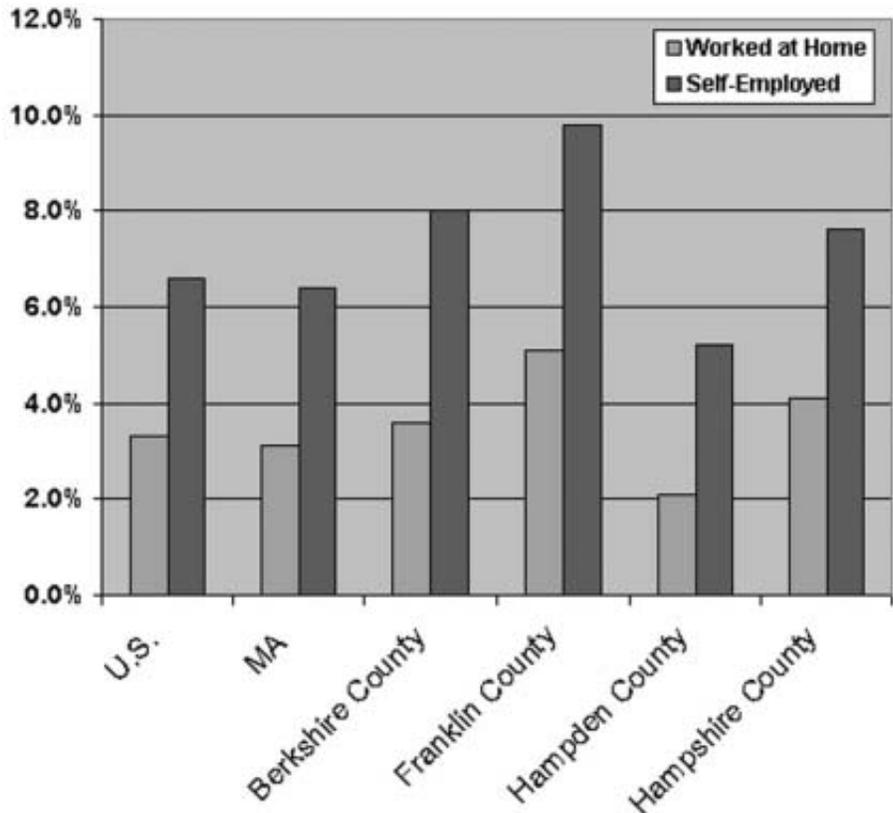
As the role of small businesses becomes even more critical to the U.S. economy, it is important to gather information on subsets of this sector: the micro businesses, self-employed workers or home-based companies that have been largely unexamined and from which the hidden tech population is drawn and, which to a large degree, form overlapping universes. It's now possible to explore these various universes — the sources for data on the hidden tech phenomenon — through government reports and surveys. The following are key categories to consider:

- Self-Employed Workers:** The 2000 Census reports that self-employed workers make up 8.6 million or 6.6 percent of the U.S. workforce. These estimates are understated because the 2000 Census counts as self-employed only those people in the "own not incorporated business" category. But other reports indicate that a sizable share of self-employed are incorporated. Also, a Small Business Administration (SBA) report found 10.5 million self-employed persons in 2000, or 7.8 percent of the civilian labor force. Self-employment represented the primary occupation of the individuals surveyed. This total was up 14.7 percent compared to 9.2 million self-employed in 1998. Growth in the incorporated self-employed accounted for almost all of the overall increase reported between 1998 and 2000. (A pilot study of the western Massachusetts hidden tech population in 2002 indicated that about a third operated as incorporated companies.)

Moreover, the census doesn't reflect demographic shifts taking place nationally, which Joel Kotkin outlines in his book and has supplemented in more recent forays across the U.S. this year. They indicate continued

## Western Massachusetts: A Hidden Tech Hot Spot

*Percent of Workforce, 2000*



migration from urban centers to lifestyle cities, towns and rural regions. For example, in western Massachusetts, realtors, mortgage officers and school districts are reporting fairly significant influxes of newcomers since the year 2000, many of whom appear to operate hidden tech companies. Those numbers would not be reflected in the most recent census.

The SBA report, *Self-Employment and Computer Usage* (April 2003), offers another glimpse into how the self-employed worker category survives outside organizations. They use advanced technology as a key tool to earn money. Access to the Internet by the self-employed grew 50.4 percent between 1998 and 2000. This information is backed up by data from the Census Bureau's *Current Population Survey, Internet and Computer Use Supplements* from 1998 and 2000.

• **Nonemployers:** Representing almost three-quarters of all businesses in the U.S., businesses with no paid employees totaled 17 million in 2001, up 2.7% from 16.5 million in 2000 and 10.3% from 15.4 million in 1997. The typical nonemployer business was very small, and many were not the primary source of income for their owners. Nonemployers are represented in almost all industries but concentrated in four sectors: real estate; construction; professional, scientific and technical services; and retail trade.

It's not hard to see how hidden tech proprietors fit this category. Hidden tech entrepreneurs eschew hiring full-time employees because they are expensive, create the demand to float a certain amount of overhead and create an accounting and tax burden. Many hidden tech operations would be classified under professional and business services.

Sales or receipts from nonemployers totaled \$730 billion in 2001, up from \$586 billion in 1997. Although only 3 percent of the total business output, growth in nonemployer establishments counters the declines in the manufacturing sector and offers an alternative to traditional economic development initiatives such as incentive-laden recruitment of out-of-state firms or creating/filling industrial parks.

In 2001, Massachusetts had 412,941 nonemployer establishments producing \$20.1 billion in receipts. There were 83,723 nonemployers classified under professional, scientific, and technical services producing \$3.5 billion in receipts or \$41,626 per establishment. Connecticut had 220,751 nonemployer establishments in 2001 with \$11.8 billion in receipts. There were 39,577 professional, scientific, and technical services establishments with \$1.9 billion in receipts or \$48,121 per establishment. Nationwide, there were 2.4 million professional, scientific, and technical services establishments with receipts of \$91.3 billion or \$37,328 per establishment in 2001.

• **Home-based Workers/Companies:** Yet another category to search for in national databases is home-based companies. Decennial Census commuting to work data show broad fluctuations since 1960. In 1960 almost 4.7 million respondents worked at home, but this total dropped substantially in 1970 and 1980, bottoming out at 2.2 million in 1980. The Bureau attributes the drop to a reduction in the number of family farms and the consolidation of formerly home-based professions like doctors into group practices. At any rate the number working from home rebounded to 3.4 million in 1990 and grew again in 2000 to 4.2

million. Like the count of self-employed in the 2000 Census, this number is probably an understatement, as the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIIP) counted 6.4 million exclusively home workers in 1997. About 30 percent of the home workers in the SIIP were in professional services industries, again a likely pool for hidden tech companies.

Although no formal study has been conducted of western Massachusetts farmers, an informal poll of farmers belonging to a regional booster organization indicates that 75 percent are currently selling products via the Web. This is yet another indication that data that looks at self-employed, particularly agricultural workers, may be outdated.

In 1997, according to Bruce Phillips, about 52 percent of all business tax returns represented activities operated in a home-based setting, producing \$325 billion in receipts or 10 percent of the output of the small business sector. There were 11 million home-based businesses in 2000, up from 9.2 million in 1997. Phillips found that "many people use the home to supplement a primary income, but about a third of home-based business owners work full-time in their home offices. I believe we are seeing a new paradigm for entrepreneurship, in which myriad entrepreneurs begin and remain at home." (Phillips, op sic)

• **University-Based Research:** cursory analysis of the Wesleyan University (Middletown, CT) alumni data base indicates that hidden tech entrepreneurs are located just about anywhere in the United States — including urban centers — where they can find good coffee, congenial company and the right bookstores within two hours of a decent airport, the sort of hip locales Brooks outlines in *Bobo's in Paradise*.

As part of the Wesleyan effort, some analysis was conducted on what types of industries and/or occupations would most likely be conducted in a home or small-office setting, certainly not large-scale manufacturing. But there are any number of skills from writing to analysis, engineering design, graphics, accounting to software development and more that don't require more than a wired room and PC, coupled with the right software and Internet connection, to get people up and running. As long as there is phone service, high-speed Internet access (preferable) and decent road and airport connections, any number of occupations can be transferred to lifestyle regions, as the diverse population of the Hidden-Tech organization the Wesleyan alumni base has proven. ■

# Reclaimed Opportunities: Recycling-Based Economic Development

by Alisa Kane

**A**t this nascent stage of the new millennium, cities across the nation face many challenges. Agencies in Anchorage and Andover alike are busy finding ways to counter the effects of globalization, high unemployment rates, and reductions in the municipal tax base. Concurrently, local governments face additional burdens on their coffers, as growing communities require added infrastructure and public services, including services that deal with municipal solid waste. While there is no single prescription to cure these dilemmas, there is one economic development tool that can help cities improve their economic, social, and environmental health in one comprehensive effort. Recycling-based economic development, or R-BED, is a viable mechanism for cities to create meaningful employment opportunities, divert materials from the solid waste stream, enhance local economies, and transition towards a more sustainable community. R-BED extends to activities that involve, but are not limited to the waste management practices of collecting, sorting, and marketing materials. R-BED incorporates all the businesses and organizations that are dedicated to recycling, reusing, and remanufacturing of non-virgin and post-consumer materials in any form, for any function. The range of R-BED enterprises include, among others, thrift stores, ink-jet recycling operations, pallet refurbishers, steel processing plants, auto scrap yards, organic material composting facilities and neighborhood recycling centers. Implicit to this definition is that R-BED creates jobs, and as an important component to the United States' industrial portfolio, generates eco-

nommic activity on the local, national, and international levels.

According to the 2001 National Recycling Coalition's "U.S. Recycling Economic Information Study," "the United States hosts 56,061 recycling and reuse establishments that employ approximately 1.1 million people, generate an annual payroll of \$37 billion, and gross \$236 billion in annual revenues (Beck, 2001)." In comparison, the waste management or waste disposal industry employed around 250,000 people, only a quarter of the jobs in the recycling industry (Beck, 2001). The recycling and reuse sector also beats waste disposal wages, paying \$3,000 above the national average annual wage of \$30,000 (Beck, 2001). These figures demonstrate that reclaiming materials from the waste stream for the purpose of recycling, reuse, and remanufacturing can create meaningful employment opportunities for small and large municipalities.

To date, cities and states have barely tapped R-BED's potential to create jobs and generate income in the form of wages and tax revenue. In most examples, R-BED has been a naturally occurring activity, stemming from participants' environmental concerns, artistic talents, or an impromptu stream of opportunity. The advantage of R-BED is that any city, no matter the size, has a waste-stream as a by-product of typical operation. By using materials that would otherwise cost the system for disposal and management, regions gain additional streams of income using inputs that they already have in the community.

Though the activities of R-BED are difficult to

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categorize under single headings, the North American Industry Codes System (NAICS) from 2002 includes classifications for several types of R-BED activities. Other R-BED enterprises are assumed under broader categories such as “Environment, Conservation and Wildlife Organizations” (NAICS Code 813312). The table at right provides a summary of the NAICS’s codes and descriptions that are most relevant to R-BED.

One important R-BED category that is overlooked in the NAICS is the emerging use of the World Wide Web to foster the recycling and reuse of materials.

Though there are many privately based materials exchanges that can be found on the web like craigslist.org or freecycle.org, some states and cities specifically developed such exchanges as a way to promote recycling and reuse activities at the local level. The operational overhead of these cyberspace material exchanges is minimal, making them a good starting place for cities and states to initiate R-BED activity.

For example, the Local Hazardous Waste Program in King County, Washington developed the Industrial Materials Exchange (IMEX) in 1989 to help businesses and organizations find alternatives to the disposal of valuable materials. At first, King County printed IMEX quarterly in catalog format, but as internet technology evolved, IMEX became an electronic-based format. In 2002, the use of IMEX alone accounted for the diversion of 316 tons of material from the county’s waste stream (King County website).

Another category that is not specifically reflected by NAICS are material reuse enterprises that do not fit the definition of used merchandise stores or repair shops. These businesses and their supporting organizations are primarily based on the artistic reuse of discarded materials including everything from bike parts to used tin cans. The commonality and identifying factor of these businesses is that they take advantage of a material that, without employing artistic talents, would have little reuse value to larger manufacturers. For example, there are few large-scale businesses that would see economic opportunity in used seat belt webbing reclaimed from auto junkyards. Though the junkyard (admittedly already part of the recycling industry) may

sell an occasional seat belt to replace a worn one for an operating vehicle, a two-person company located in Bend, Oregon called “Low + Tight” targets this material to create handcrafted, one of a kind personal accessories. Another company called “e’kologic,” located in Troy, New York, uses the fabric from cast off-wool sweaters to create whimsical ski hats and scarves. These two businesses are but a sampling of national and even international recycling-based economic activities that keep materials out of the waste stream by adding life to

### Summary of R-BED Related NAICS Categories

Code	Name	Description
453310	Used Merchandise Stores	Thrift stores, antique shops, used book stores, used building material outlets
562111	Solid Waste Collection	Recycling collectors and haulers
562920	Materials Recovery Facilities	Waste recovery facilities that remove recyclable materials manually or by machine
811420	Repair Shops	Furniture refinishing shops, printer cartridge refilling operations

*Source: 2002 NAICS Definitions as accessed at [www.census.gov/epcd/www/naics.html](http://www.census.gov/epcd/www/naics.html)*

discards in an artistic and economically beneficially manner.

There are two other emerging forms of R-BED that have the potential to create thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in economic activity. The recycling of electronic waste (e-waste) is becoming an important solution to the growing environmental threat of disposing of the hazardous components of electronics, including everything from computers to cell phones. Since there is a need for outlets that deal with e-waste, municipalities have an emerging opportunity to incorporate R-BED in their economic development efforts. If state and local governments began collaborating with electronic manufacturers to create local e-waste recycling facilities, they could potentially create hundreds of local jobs and bring thousands of dollars into their coffers in the form of tax revenues and local spending.

The responsible recycling of e-waste for the benefit of the local economy can also occur at the non-governmental level. One example of R-BED’s ability to address emerging waste management issues, while creating job opportunities and serving the needs of the community is a Portland, Oregon-based non-profit organi-

*(continued next page)*

zation named "Free Geek." According to their website, Free Geek's mission is "to recycle computer technology and provide low and no-cost computing to individuals and not-for-profit and social change organizations in the community and throughout the world ([www.freegeek.org](http://www.freegeek.org))." Since 2000, Free Geek's efforts alone resulted in the recycling of 235 tons of electronic scrap and the contribution of over 2,500 computers to individuals and organizations throughout the community ([www.freegeek.org](http://www.freegeek.org)).

Another important R-BED activity that is gaining momentum is the addition of full-scale composting programs to solid waste management practices. Several cities across the nation are turning to composting to address the voluminous quantities of organic materials that take up valuable landfill space and that when separated and processed carefully, can become an agricultural amendment product that has secondary market value. While many cities and counties already have the capability to compost leaf and yard debris, a few are adding food waste composting capacity to their existing programs. In Portland, Oregon, for example, the Office of Sustainable Development estimates that they can annually divert "10,000 tons of food waste...even if collection occurred at a 40 percent capture rate (Porter, 2003)."

R-BED activity is dependent on many factors including the availability of materials and the cost of collecting, sorting, and transporting these materials to local markets. In addition, R-BED is dependent on access to a skilled and semi-skilled work force, and is sensitive to local planning codes and environmental regulations that may limit business activity of specific types in certain areas. As with any business, for recycling-based enterprises to prosper, they require financial, technical, and marketing expertise. Fortunately, many of the resources needed to support R-BED already exist in state and local community economic development organizations. Recycling-based businesses can take advantage of the typical services offered by these agencies including assistance with business plans, workforce training, relocation, real estate transactions, financing, and other commercial development needs.

In practice, recycling-based businesses operate either as for-profit companies or as registered non-profit 501(c)3 organizations. For-profit recycling-based businesses range from small, informal operations (the tin can collector) to large-scale corporations with hundreds of employees (the Oregon-based Schnitzer Steel recycling company). The main objective of most for-profit companies is to recycle materials not for its environmental or social value, but for the economic benefit.

Though a for-profit business can incorporate sustainable business principles in their operation, it is usually the bottom line, not the triple bottom line that serves as a business' measuring stick for success. However, in more recent years, a portion of the business community is beginning to incorporate elements of sustainability into their practices. With its tangible environmental and economic benefits, recycling-based for-profit businesses will play an important role in increasing sustainable economic development.

On the other end of the business spectrum are non-profit organizations whose mission may or may not be specifically related to diverting materials from the waste stream. A non-profit agency can use R-BED to fulfill a mission that is based on job creation and job training for populations in need. Alternatively, an organization can develop recycling-based businesses to generate funds to finance and support their charitable efforts, often in place of relying on external funding. An example of both these scenarios is how the St. Vincent de Paul organization in Lane County, Oregon uses a variety of recycling-based businesses to provide jobs and services to homeless, low-income, and at-risk populations. Using materials found in their local waste stream, St. Vincent de Paul of Lane County's programs include a foundry that produces decorative art pieces utilizing discarded window and recycled beverage glass and a dog-bed manufacturing company that uses textile scraps from a nearby denim jean factory ([www.stvdplanecounty.org](http://www.stvdplanecounty.org)). As evidenced by their commitment to the triple bottom line, this St. Vincent de Paul operation provides an excellent model of how R-BED can create over 250 jobs, generate funds for needed social services and effectively divert thousands of tons of materials from the waste stream every year.

In either business structure, for-profits and non-profits can contribute to creating sustainable communities through R-BED if they are dedicated to upholding certain business practices. Though R-BED represents a range of job opportunities that employ both skilled and semi-skilled workers, it is important that livable wages are available to the entry level. A livable wage is loosely defined as wages that are high enough for people to afford housing, clothing, food, and other basic life necessities, plus cover applicable federal and state taxes. What constitutes a livable wage varies from state to state, and from urban to rural locations. For example, the Vermont Joint Fiscal Office declares that a livable wage for a family of four with one working parent is "\$21.28/hour or \$44,262/year ([www.vtlivablewage.org](http://www.vtlivablewage.org))." While the arguments for and against livable wages deserve atten-

tion in another paper altogether, recycling-based businesses have the ability to pay livable wages if that issue becomes a leading factor in business decisions.

When created with sustainable community development principles in mind, a recycling-based business can do more than just divert material from the waste stream. A pertinent example of this concept is the approach used by The ReBuilding Center, a Portland-based outlet for used building materials whose waste diverting activities are the sole funding mechanism of a non-profit neighborhood enhancement organization called "Our United Villages." While starting the organization in 1998, the co-founders made certain sustainable business practices a priority. In fact, the "human line" was factor one in the calculus of every decision. This commitment is apparent in the decision to start entry-level employees at ten dollars an hour and offer full health benefits after 90 days. In day-to-day operations, employees have decision-making capabilities in areas that affect their work environment, and every employee with three months or more experience has a vote in who is hired as a co-worker in their department.

The Board of Directors also recognized that where their retail outlet was located was important to the triple bottom line. By choosing to locate within the boundaries of the central city and close to main transportation arterials, The ReBuilding Center limits the amount of pollution created and energy used in transporting the reclaimed materials to and from the center. In addition, the Board also recognized the potential for their choice of location to contribute to neighborhood revitalization. Though already in progress, when The ReBuilding Center purchased a permanent facility on one and one half acres of property in inner Northeast Portland, they brought over 40 livable wage jobs to the community. By specifically recruiting employees from the neighborhood, by keeping valuable materials in the region, and by bringing hundreds of customers to the street every day, The ReBuilding Center greatly energized the transformation of this neighborhood where at one time high crime rates and decaying buildings were its most notable features. Now only five years later, this neighborhood's business district has evolved into to a vibrant strip whose locally owned businesses are destinations for community residents from near and far.

When interviewed, Shane Endicott, Our United Villages' Executive Director, de-emphasizes the role The ReBuilding Center played in increasing the vitality of the neighborhood. He does however admit that the activities of The ReBuilding Center set the tone for business development on the rest of the street. Though

The ReBuilding Center's mission to divert reusable building materials from the waste stream fits nicely with the definition of R-BED, its sustainability theme was co-opted by other businesses that decided to locate on the street. The sustainable-based businesses that opened on N. Mississippi Avenue after The ReBuilding Center moved there include two restaurants that serve dishes using locally grown organic ingredients. Another business that incorporates sustainability into its practices is a nursery that retails plants that were grown in the city without pesticides or other chemicals. Finally, this business strip boasts a coffee house that serves locally roasted organic coffee and a non-profit bike shop that not only offers repairs and quality used bikes, but also has a program that refurbishes cast-off bikes to give to those in need.

The ReBuilding Center example highlights the benefits of recycling-based businesses that consider the triple bottom line in every aspect of development, including how much employees are paid and where the company locates. When connected physically, economically and socially to the community where material inputs are generated, recycling-based enterprises can "reduce the cost of their raw materials, save on transportation costs, create less pollution, save energy, provide a marketing edge of their products, and be a good neighbor by supporting local recycling programs (Perlmutter, (2002)." Demonstrated by The ReBuilding Center's success in achieving the triple bottom line, other R-BED efforts can equally serve and be served by the tenets of sustainability.

Beyond the provision of business development programs, there are other planning tools that cities can use to advance R-BED. The California Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB), a state level program of the California Environmental Protection Agency, is a leader in planning for R-BED. To create incentives that would encourage businesses to use recycled materials as the primary input in manufacturing activities, CIWMB instituted a Recycling Market Development Zone Program (RMDZP). By establishing specific geographical districts from San Diego to the Oregon border, CIWMB designated over 24 recycling market development zones (RMDZ). Similar in function to Enterprise Zone programs, RMDZ P promotes R-BED to create and sustain jobs and foster capital investment in targeted areas. RMDZP's most notable form of assistance is their revolving loan program that provides low-interest rate loans to recycling-based businesses located within designated RMDZ's.

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“The RMDZ revolving loan program provides direct loans to eligible businesses that use post-consumer or secondary waste materials to manufacture new products or that reduce the waste resulting from the manufacture of a product. These low-interest loans promote market demand for post-consumer and secondary waste materials (California Integrated Waste Management-1).”

“RMDZP also offers product marketing, permitting and other administrative assistance. By partnering with local governments, RMDZP helps further recycling-based businesses “through relaxed building codes and zoning laws, streamlined local permit processes, reduced taxes and licensing, and increased and consistent secondary material feedstock supply (California Integrated Waste Management-2).”

Another tool that promotes R-BED is encouraging zoning for business or industrial clusters. Used in many traditional community economic development departments, business clusters “are composed of related companies that have certain commonalities such as customer-supplier relationships, markets, research and development needs or product lines (Cohen-Rosenthal, 2003).” Applying the cluster concept to R-BED activities would enhance the ability of small businesses to expand their capacity to create jobs and utilize even more recycled materials in their industrial processes. By locating in close proximity to one another, or at least in a similar region, recycling-based businesses will have greater strength to access suppliers, markets, information, advertising opportunities and workforces. In addition, small, medium and even large-scale recycling-based businesses can more readily collaborate with each other to increase economies of scale, which may result in a higher competitive advantage. “Examples of such collaboration may include R&D, product manufacturing and assembly, training, purchasing, and marketing (Cohen-Rosenthal, 2003).”

Advancing the clustering concept is the eco-industrial or industrial ecology (IE) model of co-locating businesses so that they can use one another’s waste products as feedstock or fuel for various manufacturing processes. Though few IE projects have actually been implemented, IE holds enormous potential as a way to promote R-BED by linking environmental remediation with economic development. Allen Hershkowitz, a senior scientist with the Natural Resources Defense Council of New York, elaborately depicts the rise and fall of an eco-industrial project that was premised on recycling as its main activity. In his book, *Bronx Ecology*, Hershkowitz recounts a collaborative attempt to develop a full-scale paper recycling plant in a highly

impoverished area in the South Bronx.

The Bronx Community Paper Corporation (BCPC), a partnership between public and private agents, designed a mill that to specifically use as its main feedstock the 12,600 tons of waste paper that is discarded in New York City every day (Hershkowitz, 2002). The co-located facilities would have included “an integrated recycled-paper mill, a wastepaper de-inking plant, a newsprint paper making machine, a wastepaper sorting plant, and a steam boiler” (Hershkowitz, 2002) that were all engineered to use each other’s material by-products or waste heat in their industrial processes. The result of these efforts would have created over 400 new full-time jobs and would have remedied an environmentally contaminated abandoned rail yard. The book clearly illustrates that intent plays an important role in how well IE will work to promote economic development, social equity, and environmental remediation. “By designing industrial facilities from the start with industrial ecology in mind, production facilities are more likely to work in harmony with natural biological systems and promote sustainability (Hershkowitz, 2002).” When sited and engineered with the principles of sustainability as a guide, recycling-based IE projects will play an important role in the future of R-BED.

However, an equally important message of the book is why the ten-year effort never broke ground. In addition to other project challenges, including the faltering management of a community partner, Hershkowitz sites that the primary reason why BCPC failed was that during the ten-year time span of the project the political climate in New York changed significantly. When planning started in 1992, BCPC enjoyed support from both the Governor of New York and the Mayor of New York City, Mario Cuomo and David Dinkins respectively. After the elections in 1994, both politicians were defeated and support for the BCPC project waned. “As a result of the these political changes, the BCPC project had to accommodate and negotiate with three different Sanitation Department commissioners, four different presidents of the city’s Economic Development Corporation, two different commissioners for both the city and state departments of environmental protection, and two different state economic-development commissioners (Hershkowitz, 2002). Ultimately, the project never got the political support “it needed from the state or the city — wastepaper, cleaned sewage water, tax-exempt financing, cooperation from various agencies during construction, grants and subsidies (Hershkowitz, 2002).”

## Barriers and Solutions

The above example illustrates one obstacle to the full-scale promotion of R-BED as a tool for sustainable economic development. While particular recycling-based industries will have their own set of considerations that are unique to their operation or site, there are three additional barriers that may thwart the potential of R-BED to thrive. One challenge is how public policies can bolster or hinder the recycling industry. In the past, well-publicized garbage crises, including the notorious journey of the orphaned “Garbage Barge” along the Eastern seaboard in 1987, made recycling and waste reduction efforts a legitimate concern for city and state planning departments. In response, the early 1990s saw the rise of state legislated recycling policies that coupled the prescription of targeted recycling rates (usually at the 50% level) with the economic resources to meet the mandate. As a result, waste management practices across the country changed and recycling became a commonplace activity for many communities.

However in recent years, recycling is beginning to lose momentum at the policy level. As cities and other government entities across the country face epidemic budget problems, recycling programs are some of the first items to end up on the chopping block. The decision in 2002 by New York City

Mayor Giuliani to eliminate curbside-recycling pick-up of plastic, tin, and glass illustrates how the future of recycling is susceptible to the changing whims of policy-makers. Though New York City’s curbside recycling service resumed in 2004, without consistent policy-level commitment to recycling, the potential of R-BED as a viable waste management and economic development solution will not be realized.

For the field of R-BED to grow there are also certain economic conditions that need to change. Though deeply embedded in the attitudes and habits of a now global marketplace, the use of virgin material as the primary feedstock for industry has significant economic (as well as environmental and social) implications. In most cases, extracting raw materials from the earth to make products for profit is cheaper than using reclaimed materials. This is due to the economic structure

that emerged during the Industrial Revolution where the true cost of using virgin natural resources is suppressed by government subsidies or by not accounting for externalities. Since virgin materials are often superficially less expensive to obtain and process than collecting, sorting and reprocessing recycled material, industries will favor the use of virgin material. Unless the accounting system changes to reflect the true cost of virgin materials, it will not make economic sense to pursue the use of recycled materials for expanded industrial activity.

In addition, in most cases it is cost-prohibitive for industries to re-tool or develop new methods for utilizing recycled materials instead of virgin materials. “Government policies, by making virgin raw materials cheaper to use and more easily acquired than they

would be without financial and research subsidies, have facilitated the investment in and development of industrial equipment designed to process virgin materials (Hershkowitz, 2002).”

One way to change this dynamic is for governments to invest in the research and development of methods that would streamline the collection, transportation, and processing of recycled materials. Alternatively, governments could reward companies that increase their capacity to use recycled materials as their

primary feedstock by offering tax-breaks or low-interest rate loans to acquire new processing equipment.

Finally, there is another barrier to the full-scale promotion of R-BED. During the 1970s, the environmental movement was crystallized by the debate over where new landfills were sited. Considered to be dirty, loud, and dangerous to the environment, the siting and operation of landfills became a nightmare for planners and developers alike. Faced by the attitude of Not In My Backyard (NIMBY) and allegations of environmental injustice against minorities, landfill siting remains one of the most volatile development concerns confronting communities across the country. The result of this debate has been the creation of land use laws that do not always distinguish between landfills and other solid waste management facilities including some recy-

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***In most cases it is cost-prohibitive for industries to re-tool or develop new methods for utilizing recycled materials instead of virgin materials. One way to change this dynamic is for governments to invest in the research and development of methods that would streamline the collection, transportation, and processing of recycled materials.***

cling operations. Depending on the zoning code, these “locally undesirable land uses” or “LULUs,” can mean that locating recycling-based businesses can be financially and physically impossible to set up. Without separating recycling activities from other waste management practices, such as landfilling and incineration, R-BED may prove to be difficult in certain locales.

However, R-BED can serve as an alternative to land use problems. In 1993, when the city of Minneapolis was to site a waste transfer station in the Phillips neighborhood, residents came together to fight what would have been a considerable environmental and social burden on this community. In response to the City, residents formed a non-profit organization called the “Green Institute” to purchase the transfer station’s property. In addition, they sought to create economic opportunities by developing the property for community use and promoting recycling and reuse as an economic generator. Ten years later, the neighborhood now possesses a 64,000 square foot state-of-the art environmentally advanced “enterprise” center that offers retail and light manufacturing space to green businesses and a retail outlet for used building materials that employs over 30 residents at livable wages ([www.greeninstitute.org](http://www.greeninstitute.org)). Again, R-BED proves to be an effective way to turn a liability into a community asset.

## Conclusion

R-BED exists in many forms, ranging from a non-profit organization refurbishing out-of-date computers for community use, to a small company utilizing scraps from wool sweaters to make one-of-a-kind hats and scarves. The diversity of R-BED provides opportunities for regions to find avenues to add jobs and income streams. By offering examples of existing businesses, planning tools, and solutions to overcome specific barriers, this paper illustrates how cities can foster the growth of R-BED. Whether it is through policy, by providing financial resources, or implementing appropriate zoning, municipalities can use R-BED to attract or expand business activity in their vicinity.

R-BED should become increasingly desirable as technical advancements make material collection and processing easier, and as industries face natural and economic limitations on using virgin materials. R-BED makes available a sustainable option to combat a range of municipal burdens, including the rising cost of waste disposal and high unemployment rates. R-BED is a sound approach for communities seeking to grow in an environmentally, economically, and equitable manner. When enabled by policy and reasonable development

assistance, cities can use R-BED to turn their liabilities into assets and reclaim opportunities hidden in garbage cans, recycling containers, dumpsters and landfills. ■

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*Alisa Kane graduated from Portland State University in June 2004 with a Master's in Urban and Regional Planning. Ms. Kane is starting her own firm, Green Ways Planning, to assist businesses and organizations seeking sustainable development options. For more information on recycling based economic development or to request a complete copy of this paper send an email to [info@greenwaysplanning.com](mailto:info@greenwaysplanning.com) or call (503) 473-1879.*

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## Calendar of Upcoming Events

### **July 19-20**

International Economic Development Council (IEDC), IEDC Professional Development Series: Real Estate Development Land Reuse, Kansas City, MO  
[www.iedconline.org/prodev\\_Real\\_Estate\\_MO.html](http://www.iedconline.org/prodev_Real_Estate_MO.html)

### **July 28-30**

Southeastern Development Council (SEDC), Automotive Seminar, Nashville, Tennessee  
[www.sedc.org/events\\_automotiveseminar2004.asp](http://www.sedc.org/events_automotiveseminar2004.asp)

### **July 29-30**

Georgia Institute of Technology Course: Local Economic Impact Analysis (LOCI), Atlanta  
[www.pe.gatech.edu/conted/servlet/edu.gatech.conted.course.ViewCourseDetails?COURSE\\_ID=84](http://www.pe.gatech.edu/conted/servlet/edu.gatech.conted.course.ViewCourseDetails?COURSE_ID=84)

### **August 2-3**

International Economic Development Council (IEDC), IEDC Professional Development Series: Brownfields Redevelopment, Richmond, Virginia  
[www.iedconline.org/prodev\\_Brownfields\\_VA.html](http://www.iedconline.org/prodev_Brownfields_VA.html)

### **August 10-13**

International Economic Development Council (IEDC), Course: Introduction to Economic Development, Atlanta  
[www.pe.gatech.edu/conted/servlet/edu.gatech.conted.course.ViewCourseDetails?COURSE\\_ID=113](http://www.pe.gatech.edu/conted/servlet/edu.gatech.conted.course.ViewCourseDetails?COURSE_ID=113)

### **August 11-13**

Kentucky Industrial Development Council (KIDC), Summer Meeting, Glasgow; [www.kidc.org/Calendar.asp](http://www.kidc.org/Calendar.asp)

### **August 15-18**

Arkansas Economic Developers (AED), Annual Meeting, Hot Springs; [www.aed.dina.org](http://www.aed.dina.org)

### **September 8**

Georgia Institute of Technology, Course: Developing Non-Traditional Funding Strategies for Your Economic Development Programs  
[www.pe.gatech.edu/conted/servlet/edu.gatech.conted.course.ViewCourseDetails?COURSE\\_ID=404](http://www.pe.gatech.edu/conted/servlet/edu.gatech.conted.course.ViewCourseDetails?COURSE_ID=404)

### **September 16-17**

International Economic Development Council (IEDC), IEDC Professional Development Series: Economic Development Planning, St. Louis  
[www.iedconline.org/AnnualConference/professional\\_development.html](http://www.iedconline.org/AnnualConference/professional_development.html)

### **September 18-19**

International Economic Development Council (IEDC), IEDC Certified Economic Developers Exam (in conjunction with the 2004 IEDC Annual Conference), St. Louis; [www.iedconline.org/AnnualConference/index.html](http://www.iedconline.org/AnnualConference/index.html)

### **September 19-22**

International Economic Development Council (IEDC), 2004 Annual Conference, St. Louis; [www.iedconline.org/AnnualConference/index.html](http://www.iedconline.org/AnnualConference/index.html)

### **September 22-24**

Georgia Economic Developers Association (GEDA), Annual Conference, Savannah  
[www.geda.org/about/calendar.htm](http://www.geda.org/about/calendar.htm)

### **September 29-October 1**

Virginia Economic Developers Association, Fall Conference and Annual Meeting, Richmond; [www.vedanet.org/calendar.html](http://www.vedanet.org/calendar.html)

### **September 29-October 1**

Texas Economic Development Council (TEDC), Annual Conference, Dallas  
[www.texasedc.org/events/](http://www.texasedc.org/events/)

### **October 4-5**

Missouri Economic Development Council (MEDC), Fall Conference, Lake Ozark; [www.showme.org](http://www.showme.org)

### **October 5-6**

Georgia Institute of Technology, Course: Georgia Economic Development, Atlanta  
[www.pe.gatech.edu/conted/servlet/edu.gatech.conted.course.ViewCourseDetails?COURSE\\_ID=507](http://www.pe.gatech.edu/conted/servlet/edu.gatech.conted.course.ViewCourseDetails?COURSE_ID=507)

### **October 5-8**

Tennessee Industrial Development Council (TIDC), Fall Conference, Destin, Florida  
[www.tidc-ecdev.org/conference/index.html](http://www.tidc-ecdev.org/conference/index.html)

### **October 14-15**

South Carolina Economic Developers Association (SCEDA), Midyear Meeting, Greenville  
[www.sceda.org/members/calendar.htm](http://www.sceda.org/members/calendar.htm)

### **October 16-19**

Southeastern Development Council (SEDC), 2004 Annual Conference, New Orleans  
[www.sedc.org/calendar\\_sedc.asp](http://www.sedc.org/calendar_sedc.asp)

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