



Building and Achieving Your Community Vision



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Community Bankers Association of Illinois Endorses Winning Communities Program

Association Partners with Community Development Firm to encourage Illinois Cities, Towns and Counties to Establish Vision and Action Plans for Future Growth and Achievement

Springfield, Illinois and Indianapolis, Indiana – August 1, 2006 — Winning Communities, Inc., a community development corporation, announced today that the Community Bankers Association of Illinois (CBAI) has formally endorsed its vision- and action-planning program to help communities plan for future growth and prosperity.

CBAI will recommend the Winning Communities program to its member institutions as a value-added service and encourage them to provide the local leadership to implement the program. Winning Communities, a proven exploratory planning process, brings together city, town, and/or county leaders to develop a detailed vision and action plan with specific, measurable objectives, including action steps for achieving positive results.

The Winning Communities process has paved the way for the success and revitalization of more than a dozen cities, towns and counties across the Midwest. As a result, many of these communities have raised thousands of dollars in grant funding for economic development projects, and have initiated improvements in such areas as image and beautification, government, leadership, social services, tourism, recreation and life long learning.

“Community bankers have great impact as leaders of their communities,” said Jim Dittoe, president and founder of Winning Communities, Inc., who spoke at the Community Bankers Association’s 11 group meetings across Illinois this spring. “Community growth is asset growth, and community bankers have a convening role of getting government leaders and other community organizations involved and focused on the community’s direction.”

The Winning Communities process is different from many community development programs because of a unique certification program. Any city, town or county that participates in the Winning Communities program is eligible to become a Certified Winning Community™ by achieving and making progress on many of the action items outlined in its community plan. This designation also helps ensure that the community takes action and that the plan does not collect dust on a shelf.

“Many cities, towns and counties, particularly in the rural communities, are challenged to maintain economic vitality and quality of life as they compete for jobs and resources,” said Robert J. Wingert, president of Community Bankers Association of Illinois. “Community bankers are logical choices to lead community development initiatives, and Winning Communities has a reputation for putting ideas into action and getting results.”

For more information about the Winning Communities program, call (317) 402-0524 email jim @ winningcommunities.com, or visit www.winningcommunities.com.



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About Winning Communities:

Winning Communities is a community planning consulting company that has facilitated numerous community vision and action plans for cities, towns and counties throughout the United States. Jim Dittoe, president of Winning Communities, Inc. has been building community progress for more than 30 years, and has developed a unique certification program called the Certified Winning Communities program, which is open to any county, city or town that seeks to create a vision and action plan for its future success. For more information about Winning Communities or the Certified Winning Communities program, contact Jim Dittoe at (317) 402-0524, email jim @ winningcommunities.com or visit www.winningcommunities.com.

About Community Bankers Association of Illinois

The Community Bankers Association of Illinois (CBAI) is the state's only true advocate of community banking. Formed in 1974, CBAI has weathered the changes in banking that have buffeted Illinois since then, emerging as a mature, full-service association for today's community bankers. CBAI proudly represents nearly 500 Illinois financial institutions and 160 associate members. The Association creates money-saving opportunities for its members and provides first-class educational seminars and schools. Moreover, CBAI professionally lobbies for the Illinois community banker. You can learn more about CBAI at www.cbai.com.

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