



Attracting Business to Wisconsin

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## **New Online System Promotes Wisconsin Sites**

Forward Wisconsin and the Department of Commerce have teamed up with the state's electric utilities to develop and implement a sophisticated statewide system of comprehensive building, site and community information that will be available online, at one location, 24-hours a day.

"This new system will put Wisconsin on par with the most sophisticated economic development organizations in the country," according to Forward Wisconsin President Pepi Randolph. "With the click of a mouse, a CEO or site consultant can instantly customize and print out a fact-filled report on any combination of available industrial buildings, sites or communities in the state."

Called Location One Information System, or LOIS, the interactive system provides the ability to quickly search for and find available industrial properties, office buildings and land throughout the state. Beyond that, however, its Geographic Information System (GIS) component allows users to retrieve economic, geographic and site-specific demographic data as well as labor force data. That GIS feature also enables users to create and print customized maps and reports.

In addition to the GIS technology, which has emerged as perhaps today's most important website tool for business attraction and site selection, the system will also be compliant with National Data Standards. The data fields in LOIS are based on the Site Selection Data Standards Guidelines recently adopted by the International Economic Development Council.

"LOIS is a valuable tool that can help make Gov. Jim Doyle's *Grow Wisconsin* plan even more successful," Randolph said. "In fact, Commerce Secretary Cory Nettles felt the system was so important that he agreed to have Commerce fund a majority of the setup costs."

One of the reasons the LOIS system is so vital to the state's ongoing economic development effort is the growing trend of site selection consultants and corporate real estate professionals going directly to the Internet as their first source of site selection information. Some research indicates that as much as 80% of the initial site selection process is now being done on the Internet and that those communities and states that do not have comprehensive online data available are not even being considered.

Developing the Wisconsin LOIS system is truly a team effort. While Commerce is providing funding for purchase of the software platform and statewide data, additional financial support is being provided by We Energies, Alliant Energy, Wisconsin Public Service Corporation, Madison Gas & Electric, and Xcel Energy. Forward Wisconsin will administer and maintain the system.

The Wisconsin Economic Development Association, UW-Extension, and the Wisconsin Technical College System will provide training for local officials who will populate the LOIS database with their community profile information. The Commercial Association of Realtors-Wisconsin has pledged its support to help with the migration of building and site information into the new system.

A statewide LOIS Steering Committee composed of participating organizations and companies has been formed and is being directed by Forward Wisconsin. The statewide and county-level demographic data is currently being assembled and hands-on training for local economic development officials is being scheduled for the first quarter of 2005. There is no cost for communities to be part of the system.

For a preview and test drive of what the new LOIS system will offer, visit Forward Wisconsin's website at [www.forwardwi.com](http://www.forwardwi.com) and click on *Wisconsin Sites*. Communities in Alliant Energy's service territory are already part of the LOIS system and all of their data can be accessed online at the Forward Wisconsin website. While you're there, take a tour of the organization's new website that was recognized last month with an Award of Excellence from the Mid-America Economic Development Council.

Forward Wisconsin is the state's public-private marketing organization. Its job is to recruit new businesses to the state by marketing Wisconsin's business advantages outside the state. Gov. Doyle is Forward Wisconsin's Chairman of the Board. For additional information about Forward Wisconsin or LOIS, call 608.261.2500.