



# Model Innovative County Summit brings awareness to benefits of living in Madison County

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer  
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**EDWARDSVILLE** - Madison County has some of the best transportation infrastructure in the county, and its residents should benefit from that, Madison County Community Deputy Administrator of Community Development Kristen Poshard said.

Poshard was behind the Model Innovative County (MIC) Summit, which took place from Thursday, April 6 - Friday, April 7 at the Lewis and Clark Community College

(LCCC) N.O. Nelson Campus. The summit was arranged to bring experts from across the Riverbend, Madison County and entire State of Illinois with the purpose of explaining to those in attendance ways and means they could use to better their communities in a variety of ways - including transportation, affordable housing, tourism, job creation and economics.

Illinois Treasurer Mike Frerichs even spoke about a variety of funding options the state has for people, including ways to help people with disabilities find employment and empowerment as well as a program in which people in Illinois can find money they may have lost or been owed for quite some time.

"He was showing it to a lawyer sitting next to me, and the guy had \$500 he didn't even know about," Poshard said of Frerichs. "He said it was too hard to give people money, not because his office doesn't want to give it, but because people either don't know how or don't want to take it."

The purpose of the summit, Poshard said, was to better acclimate business practices in the face of a new presidential administration under Donald Trump, the likes of which, she said "we have never seen."

One of the main focuses was transportation, because U.S. Congressman Rodney Davis (R-IL), who appeared via video feed, as well as U.S. Congressman Mike Bost (R-IL), are both representing areas of Madison County to the federal government on Congress's Transportation Committee. Senior U.S. Senator John Shimkus (R-IL) also spoke at the event regarding upgrades to infrastructure.

"They can and should send some of those federal dollars back here for our infrastructure," Poshard said. "We have the ports, extensive rail systems, and lots of access to interstates. If someone wants to send something anywhere in the country in a small amount of time, we can do it from Madison County."

Poshard also spoke of innovative methods Madison County residents entering entry-level positions to "earn their stripes" can attain affordable housing.

"We have more and more lofts popping up, and we have ways in the county to help offset the high costs of rent," she said. "Let's say somebody wanted to move into a single loft, which costs around \$750 or so a month, we may be able to offset that cost down to around \$200 a month. We also have ways we can help cover the costs of their heating and cooling bills."

Tourism was also discussed by a panel of tourism experts from across the county, including Brett Stawar from the Alton Conventions and Visitors Bureau (CVB). Newly-

re-elected Alton Fourth Ward Alderwoman Tammy Smith was also at the convention representing Alton.

Madison County Board Chairman Kurt Prenzler also attended the summit, and introduced Frerichs. Poshard said the event was an extremely bipartisan effort.

"The Republican chairman (Prenzler) appointed me to this position, and my last name is as Democrat as they come," she said. "I remember growing up in a very political household (her father is former U.S. Congressman and current SIUE President Glenn Poshard - a Democrat, who also spoke at the event regarding leadership training), and this was when former President George H.W. Bush was in office. The only time anything got done was when people worked together for a common goal and put partisanship aside."

Other subjects broached at the event included adult drug education, alternative energy, manufacturing and methods to prepare for the future of healthcare as well as hospitals' roles in preventing homelessness.