



AltonWorks Spokesperson Ryan Visits Our Daily Show!, Discusses New Wedge Innovation Center Project Details

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON - AltonWorks Spokesperson Susan Ryan paid a visit to the new Riverbender.com Our Daily Show! to more elaborately discuss Governor Pritzker's Monday announcement that \$3 million from the Rebuild Illinois Grant will go to the Wedge Innovation Center Project in Downtown Alton.

[Listen to Our Daily Show! for the full interview with Susan Ryan, a spokesperson for AltonWorks. The show is live daily Monday - Friday from 9-11 a.m. on Riverbender.com.](#)

John Simmons is the AltonWorks CEO, and Jayne Simmons is the president. The Wedge Innovation Center will be designed as an accelerator, incubator, co-working space, and digital hub focused on social impact innovation and specializing in livability, clean tech, and climate tech to benefit everyday lives.

The Wedge plan is to support early-stage, growth-driven companies through education, mentorship, and financing. It will house startups, space for individuals or teams, and more established companies that want to accelerate their businesses or develop new technologies, products, or systems. The Wedge will create 106 full-time jobs during construction. Once open, it will create 249 permanent full-time and 62 permanent part-time jobs, with an average wage of over \$43,000 per year. Eighty-four percent of the permanent jobs created will have a living wage, 20% will be accessible to persons without a four-year college degree, and 90% will be hired from the surrounding community.

By developing an innovation center in Alton, AltonWorks strives to inspire to create an entrepreneurial ecosystem in the area, attracting interested businesses, investors, seed and early-stage financing, and media attention, all of which benefit the local and wider regional economy.

AltonWorks is making a \$21 million dollar investment in the Wedge Innovation Center.

Ryan said AltonWorks set out in 2018 to determine how to figure out a way to attract and retain business innovation and to get a long-term commitment in Alton.

“The new Wedge project is designed to help startups and new businesses people with really good ideas get the support they need to move their companies forward,” today told CJ Nasello, host of Our Daily Show! “If you have a great idea and you want to figure out how to build a business through technology or product or service, an incubator provides support systems for good ideas to start and develop.”

“At AltonWorks, we believe that innovation is foundational to transformational change, and it underpins our overall strategy,” explained John Simmons. “Each area of economic development that we are focused on overlaps and sustains the others by creating communities of people who support each other. I’m convinced, with the right investments combined with a big, can-do attitude, Alton can become a bright light of innovation, opportunity, and equity for this entire region.”

“We are determined to work with public and private partners to revitalize Alton into the type of city in which people want to live, start a business, and be included in the fabric of the community,” said Jayne Simmons. “The pandemic has revealed a need and urgency to focus on the type of innovation that will make downstate Illinois a preferred relocation destination.”



The AltonWorks’ master plan for revitalization includes development strategies for each of the 25 historic buildings that will be implemented over time depending on market and economic conditions and social impact. Plans are underway for the renovation of Lucas Row and the Jacoby Building, two beautiful historic buildings across the street from the Wedge. Lucas Row will provide 12 new apartments with modern amenities and great views of the Mississippi.

The Jacoby Building will be restored to house the Jacoby Arts Center on the first floor and lower level and large, open, loft-like office space on the second and third levels. AltonWorks will begin construction on these projects in Fall 2022, adding to the critical mass of revitalized historic buildings in the Jacoby Arts and Innovation District. Initially, Ryan said AltonWorks' initial plan was to start on the entertainment district area with The Grand Theater, Hotel Stratford, etc., but after the COVID-19 Pandemic, a change was made to focus on redevelopment of another Alton area. AltonWorks’ opened Flock Food Truck Park & Bar, on East Broadway at Ridge. Theodora Farms, an

organic farm owned by John and Jayne Simmons, is also the catalyst to link healthy food farmers and producers with restaurants and families to create a safe, economical, and equitable supply of food for the region.

Ryan was asked about a timetable for the new Alton project and she said they hope construction begins in October 2022. She said the goal is to have construction completed by 2024 and the incubator then unveiled later in that year.



Level 1



Level 2



Level 3



Level 4

