



# **Forum Delivers Small Business /Community Support**

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Community leaders, civic organizations, business leaders, and citizens came together for a Community Funding Forum on August 31 at the Benld Civic Center to interact with state, federal and local representatives, network strategies with other community leaders and gain financing tools for local projects and small business.

Macoupin County Board Chairman, Andy Manar, along with Benld Mayor Jeff Hendricks welcomed participants. Tom Becker of the Illinois Small Business Development Center was the forum's keynote speaker addressing "Healthy Communities."

"The event and the speaker were really good," said Brighton Mayor Wayne Schafer. "We really picked up on utilizing foundations for specific funding or projects. I also think it is important what he (Becker) said about planning. You do need to know what you want to do and where you want to go as a community."

Participating agencies included Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Small Business Administration, Illinois Department of Transportation, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, SIUE Small Business Development Center, West Central Development Council/Macoupin Job Center, First National Bank, United Community Bank, Frank Bertetti Benld Public Library, Illinois Art Council, PGAV Planners, Macoupin County, Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and Ameren.

“The forum was very beneficial. I was able to talk to representatives from DNR and IL EPA about our lake,” said Bunker Hill Mayor Ray Chapman. “I also spoke with Ameren about doing an energy efficiency audit of our municipal building.”

“I learned some things, made contacts and made connections to hopefully accomplish some projects for the City. It was very informative,” said Benld Mayor Jeff Hendricks.

“I thought it was great to be able to talk directly to the agencies. I had many questions; would like to know more from PG&V Planners and SBA and how they can help our start-up businesses in Staunton,” said Staunton Mayor Craig Neuhaus.

The forum was sponsored by Macoupin Economic Development Partnership and the Macoupin Mayor’s Council. It is the second educational workshop to be sponsored by the Mayor’s Council, a group formed and facilitated by MEDP. The council meets four times a year: two networking events, a legislative reception and an educational workshop.

MEDP’s mission is to drive economic growth in the county by conducting and sponsoring activities that help existing businesses prosper and grow, attract new businesses, and promote responsible development. To learn more about MEDP, visit [www.macoupinpartners.com](http://www.macoupinpartners.com).