SI NOW HAPPENING

OCTOBER 2026

LIVE HERE. WORK HERE. DO BUSINESS HERE.







TOP NEWS OF THE MONTH

Illinois Economic Development Association Site Selector Forum/Consular Corps Reception

> **The amount of information we want to know is robust. You don't have to have a perfect site if information is understood. Timelines. Distance. What will it take to get it built.**
>
> COURTNEY DUNBAR
> DIRECTOR – SITE SELECTION
> BURNS & MCDONNELL

Southern Illinois Now was proud to represent our region at the Illinois Economic Development Association's 2026 Site Selector Forum and Consular Corps Reception in Chicago.

The event brought together economic development leaders, site selection professionals and other key partners from across Illinois for conversations about the trends shaping business investment and location decisions. It also provided an opportunity to **strengthen relationships and highlight the assets** that make Southern Illinois competitive for new investment.

The Consular Corps Reception offered another valuable opportunity to connect with international representatives and trade officials while sharing the Southern Illinois story. From our increasingly site-ready industrial properties and multimodal transportation network to workforce, utilities and strategic location, SI Now continues working to put our region in front of the people influencing investment decisions.

Our goal is to make sure Southern Illinois is part of the conversation when companies begin searching for their next location. By **building relationships and raising the region's visibility**, SI Now is creating more opportunities to bring investment and jobs to Southern Illinois.

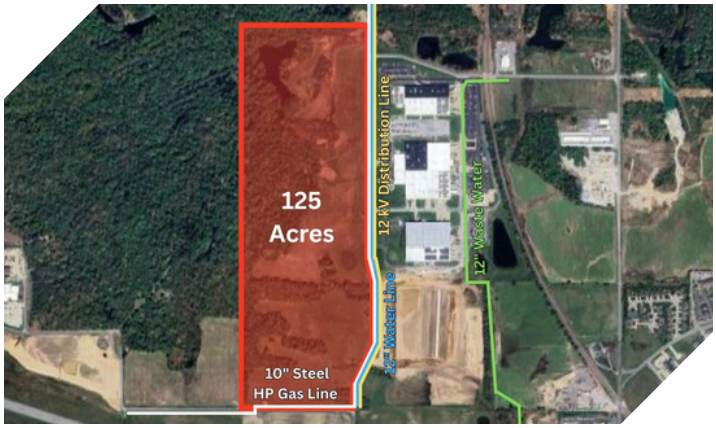
PRIORITY ONE: BUSINESS GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Southern Illinois continues to make significant strides in preparing industrial ground for future investment, with several projects advancing across the region.

- **In Jackson County,** the Jackson Growth Alliance has contracted with Horner Shifrin to conduct due diligence on 88 acres just east of Southern Illinois Airport. JGA has the property under option, representing the first publicly controlled industrial ground in Jackson County in decades.

- **In Marion,** REDCO is partnering with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources on mine reclamation work covering approximately 100 acres along REDCO Drive, including grading, clearing and due diligence. The project coincides with a DCEO Site Readiness Grant to upgrade electrical infrastructure supporting future development.

Together, these projects represent more than 425 acres moving through critical site readiness work, strengthening Southern Illinois' ability to compete for new industrial investment.



- **In Metropolis,** construction is set to begin on 113 acres at the Metropolis Industrial Park, adding streets and utility improvements to the strategically located I-24 site. Master planning is also underway in partnership with Southern Illinois Now, while the Massac-Metropolis Port District is finalizing a feasibility plan for future river-access development at the former Lock and Dam 52 property.

- Further north, surveys and Phase I environmental studies are underway on 125 acres **east of Harrisburg** owned by the Saline Industrial Development Corporation.

SALUKIS BUILD HERE HOMECOMING CELEBRATION
OCTOBER 15, 2026 4:30 - 6:30 P.M.

SALUKIS BUILD HERE
Launch and Grow Alumni Businesses in Southern Illinois

Join us Thursday, October 15, from 4:30–6:30 p.m. at Hangar 9 in Carbondale for the **Salukis Build Here Homecoming Celebration**! We're bringing together SIU alumni, entrepreneurs, businesses, and community leaders to celebrate those who have chosen to build their careers, businesses, and lives right here in Southern Illinois. Come early to connect and network, with a short program featuring alumni stories and regional impact beginning at 5:30 p.m.

Everyone is welcome, whether you're an SIU alum, business leader, community partner, or believe in the future of Southern Illinois. Complimentary small bites will be served, with beverages available for purchase. Presented by Southern Illinois Now in collaboration with the SIU Alumni Association, SIU Foundation, City of Carbondale, and Carbondale Chamber of Commerce.

JOIN US FOR THE HOMECOMING CELEBRATION!

SALUKIS BUILD HERE

Launch and Grow Alumni Businesses in Southern Illinois

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15

4:30 - 6:30 pm | Hangar 9

Complimentary small bites will be served.
Beverages available for purchase.

COME CELEBRATE GROWTH, PARTNERSHIP, AND COMMUNITY!

HEAR INSPIRING STORIES

Alumni testimonials highlighting success, growth, and community impact.

NETWORK WITH PURPOSE

Connect with fellow alumni, local entrepreneurs, and community leaders.

EVERYONE WELCOME!

SECURE YOUR SPOT!

Presented by SI NOW Southern Illinois Success Initiative

in collaboration with the **SIU Alumni Association**, **SIU Foundation**, **City of Carbondale**, and **Carbondale Chamber of Commerce**

ILLINOIS AGRICULTURE: HARVEST 2026 UNDERWAY

As harvest gets underway across Illinois, agriculture is once again taking center stage in one of the nation's most productive farming states. Illinois is a national powerhouse in **corn and soybean** production, but its agricultural leadership reaches far beyond traditional row crops. Illinois is the nation's leading **pumpkin**-producing state, with its fertile soils supporting a massive crop each fall and supplying pumpkins for both processing and the traditional fall harvest season. Southern Illinois adds another distinctive crop to that agricultural story. Randolph County and the American Bottom region are at the heart of Illinois' **horseradish** industry, where rich soils and generations of farming expertise have helped Illinois become the nation's leading producer. From pumpkins and horseradish to corn and soybeans, **Illinois agriculture is remarkably diverse** and remains a major part of the state's economy, communities, and identity.



UPDATE FROM SI NOW BOARD CHAIR: WOODY THORNE



Each month, our progress reflects a shared commitment to a stronger, more connected, and more competitive Southern Illinois. Critical to the success of that work is the SI Now Board of Directors, a group of leaders who contribute their time, expertise, relationships, and regional perspective to move our mission forward.

Representing the 17 southernmost counties of Illinois, our Board helps SI Now look beyond individual organizations and communities to identify opportunities that benefit the region as a whole. Board members provide leadership across our three primary areas of focus: **business growth and development, regional marketing, and education and workforce development.**

Our partners are equally essential. Businesses, educators, economic and workforce development organizations, elected officials, community leaders, nonprofits, and residents bring local knowledge, specialized capabilities, and valuable networks to the table. Together, they help existing businesses thrive, prepare communities for new investment, promote Southern Illinois beyond our borders, and develop the talent our employers need.

Much of that work happens behind the scenes: opening doors, sharing information, convening the right people, championing regional priorities, and supporting initiatives that no single organization could advance alone. This collaboration is what makes SI Now a regional platform for partnership, problem-solving, and progress.

That spirit is at the heart of SI Now. Our Board of Directors and partners consistently demonstrate what is possible when leaders look beyond traditional boundaries and ask, "What can we accomplish together?"

I am grateful for the Board's continued leadership and for the many partners who invest their time, energy, and resources in this work. Their commitment strengthens our collective voice and advances the belief that **a win for one is a win for all.**

Woody Thorne, *Board Chair*, **Southern Illinois Now**

SI NOW IN FOCUS

Regional Development

by Nick Holdinghausen



This year, I've had the opportunity to go through the Delta Leadership Institute, an experience that has given me the chance to think more deeply about what leadership really means and the role each of us plays in our communities. Leadership isn't always defined by a title or position. It's about showing up, sharing ideas, building relationships, and being willing to help move your community forward. If you're receiving the NOW! Happening newsletter, chances are you're already a leader in your community. You may not think of yourself that way, but your voice, your perspective, and your involvement matter.

Strong communities don't happen by accident. They need people **willing to speak up, pitch in, get involved, and help create** a shared vision for where their community is headed. Some of the most meaningful leadership happens quietly, through serving on a board, supporting a local project, mentoring someone, connecting people, or simply being willing to show up when your community needs you. It also means looking beyond what exists today and asking what we want our communities and our region to look like five, ten, or twenty years from now. Southern Illinois needs people who care enough to be part of those conversations and who are willing to help turn ideas into action. **Our communities will ultimately become what we collectively choose to build**.

Marketing the Region

The **Fall 2026 issue of NOW! Magazine** arrives later this month, packed with stories that show why Southern Illinois is building momentum and gaining attention far beyond our region.

From Fare Foods' major expansion in Du Quoin and the new Don Welge Memorial Bridge to the potential of critical minerals at Hicks Dome, growing workforce and apprenticeship opportunities, and Southern Illinois businesses making an impact across the country, **this issue showcases a region on the move**.

It's a celebration of the people, places and partnerships shaping what's next for our 17-county region. Watch for the Fall 2026 issue later this month!





Education and Workforce Development

October and November are packed with career fairs and workforce events across Southern Illinois, connecting students and job seekers with employers and career opportunities throughout the region.

Whether you're a school, employer, or organization, Regional Career Connections makes it easy to see what's happening and find opportunities to get involved. Visit the Regional Career Connections section of the Southern Illinois Now website for a list of upcoming events.

TAP TO LEARN MORE!

Regional Career Connections