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# VP 100: Illinois Wind Farm Breathes New Life Into Businesses

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The Streator Cayuga Ridge South Wind Farm has 300 MW capacity of electricity. | Photo courtesy of Greater Livingston County Economic Development Council

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### WHAT ARE THE KEY FACTS?

- County board set aside \$6 million from developer to spur economic growth
- County's economic council has helped a dozen business open or stay open

A car dealership in Dwight, Ill., shut down this year, but recently reopened its doors and 29 people kept their jobs.

Over in Collum, a grocery store that sat silent for three years recently awoke, creating six jobs. And a new coffee shop is now open in downtown Pontiac, bustling with customers sipping lattes and eating muffins.

So what breathed new life into these Livingston County businesses?

Surprisingly, it was the opening of the Streator Cayuga Ridge South Wind Farm, a wind farm that has a 300 MW capacity made possible with the help of \$170 million through the U.S. Department of Energy's 1603 grants-in-lieu-of-tax-credits program to the developer.

### Recovery Act spurs growth

As a stipulation to build the \$600 million, 150-wind turbine project, Iberdrola Renewables, a Spanish wind developer, paid the county \$6 million. That funding from the developer was set aside to spur economic development in the region.

"We believe in economic gardening," says Larry Vaupel, director of the council. "We try to grow our economy from within by nurturing businesses and providing financial assistance for start-ups and expansions." The county board has started to hand over portions of that money—\$500,000, so far—to the [Greater Livingston County Economic Development Council](#). Through a revolving loan program and grants, the council has already helped a dozen businesses start up or stay afloat.

### Open for business

The Jeep and Chrysler car dealership in Dwight was about to go under, but the council was able to give them a revolving loan of \$100,000 to keep its doors open, thanks to the Iberdrola payment.

Residents in Collum lost their community grocery store, so they



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created a corporation and sold shares in a community market. They needed \$26,000 to purchase the building, and the council provided a grant for half of it.

"That created six jobs, but, more importantly," says Vaupel, "it created an opportunity to purchase essential groceries in their town, instead of driving 10 to 15 miles to the nearest one."

That coffee shop in Pontiac took advantage of the council's commercial building improvement grant. To attract new businesses, the council is investing money into building space to make it more "move-in" ready.

"We work for entrepreneurs that are starting a business," Vaupel says. "We are trying to keep their expenses low. Our grant has helped three or four new business get started."

### **Windy jobs**

Businesses are benefiting from the allocated money, but the wind farm is creating jobs and revenue for county in other ways.

About 300 construction jobs were created because of the farm, which officially started generating power in May.

And for every 10 turbines, one full-time maintenance position has been created, says Livingston County board chairman Bill Fairfield.

The county also expects to bring in about \$3.3 million a year in tax revenue from the wind farm.

"The biggest benefit is the economic benefits to the county," says Fairfield. "It's bought quite some money and jobs into the area."



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