



Business Spotlight

Seedorff Masonry, Inc.



Seedorff Masonry, Inc. is the nation's 4th largest mason contractor as listed by Engineering News Record (ENR). In annual rankings by ENR, Seedorff Masonry is consistently listed in the top ten in the nation. Headquartered in Strawberry Point, IA, Seedorff has a regional office in Des Moines as well as Lincoln, Omaha and the Quad Cities.

Founded in 1957, Seedorff Masonry operates throughout the upper Midwest. Available services include pre-construction design assistance, budgets, construction, repair solutions, restoration, and continuing education - Seedorff University. The company has continued to build upon a tradition of performance and safety as they respond to the challenging demands of the industry with ongoing growth and specialization.



Seedorff has been recognized as a 3-time winner of the Masonry Institute of Iowa's Golden Trowel Award for quality, and is a multiple winner of CSI's Craftmanship Award. In recognition of its achievements in safety, Seedorff recently won national recognition in 2007 with first place in the AGC of America's Construction Safety Excellence Awards, and the Master Builders of Iowa/Iowa OSHA's Outstanding Safety Achievement Award in 2008. For more information visit www.seedorff.com.



Project Activity

Project activity has been steady in the Greater Dallas County area and we are pleased to report the following statistics for the fourth quarter of 2009:

- 12 New Prospect/Project Inquiries
 - 5 light industrial/manufacturing
 - 1 warehouse
 - 3 office
 - 2 call center
 - 1 other
- 3 Prospect Visits
- 11 Active Projects
- 62 Pending Projects

Existing Business Call Program

The Alliance staff continues to work on an existing business and industry call program as a means to open lines of communication with businesses located in the Greater Dallas County area. This program continues to identify existing business growth plans. Staff has completed 20 calls this fourth quarter, for a total of 84 calls completed in 2009. Please let us know of any businesses in your community you would like us to call upon.



Legislative Roundtable

The Alliance hosted our annual legislative roundtable December 4, 2009 at Perry City Hall. State legislators in attendance were Senator Brad Zaun, Representative Donovan Olson and Representative Jodi Tymeson. The roundtable included discussion on the Alliance's legislative priorities and legislator expectations of the upcoming session, including an emphasis on education within the discussion. Thank you to our legislators for your participation.

The 2010 Legislative Session will convene Monday, January 11, 2010. The Alliance's 2010 legislative priorities are included in this newsletter and can also be viewed on our [website](#).



Legislative Priorities

MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TOOLS

1. Tax increment finance (TIF) is one of the most widely used forms of development finance today. Over forty states currently have laws in place that allow the use of TIF for financing development projects. TIF is the single most important local development tool available to cities and counties, and it adds millions of dollars each year in property value at the local level for taxing jurisdictions. Tax increment financing is a manageable economic development incentive that is a catalyst for economic growth. Benefits from the economic activity generated by locally controlled tax increment financing projects are impacting areas of new revenue growth. Tax increment financing for projects of expansion of a current business also has retention of other tax revenues.

POSITION: Retain TIF as it currently exists today. Monitor legislation and report to GDCDA membership.

2. Legislation passed in 2009 retooled The Grow Iowa Values Fund Assistance Program (GIVFAP) and High Quality Jobs Program which are significant economic development tools that encourage and assist in business relocations and expansions within Iowa. The purpose of the legislation was to simplify the programs; this included some changes to the wage thresholds required by companies for eligibility to access the funds. Wage thresholds must still meet 130%, but can now be 130% of the average county or average regional wage. For new job creation projects can have wages at 100% in Year 1 but must meet 130% of the wage thresholds by Year 3. These changes do not address the wages within diverse industry sectors. Dallas County and counties all over the state have diverse industry sectors, with each industry offering different wage levels due to the varied levels of skilled labor. Therefore the current wage thresholds based on average county/regional wages unfairly combines all wages regardless of industry and skill. We recommend that wage thresholds be calculated at minimum by two sectors--professional (office) and industrial. This would result in a more accurate and improved measure of calculating wage thresholds for businesses accessing funds for job creation.

POSITION: Monitor legislation and report to GDCDA membership.

3. The research activities tax credit encourages continued economic development, including the attraction of businesses with research activities and the creation and retention of high quality jobs within Iowa. Prior sessions have threatened to eliminate or considerably restrict this valuable tax credit.

POSITION: Maintain the research activities tax credit. Monitor legislation and report to GDCDA membership

4. Areas of The Alliance service territory are home to several businesses in the insurance industry. Currently businesses, though not in the insurance industry, participating in the Iowa Industrial New Jobs Training Act can receive corporate income tax credits when they expand their workforce by ten percent. Recent sessions have introduced legislation that would expand the new jobs training tax credits to include Iowa insurance companies, but have not passed the legislation through.

POSITION: Expand new job tax training credits to include the insurance industry. Monitor legislation and report to GDCDA membership.

5. Iowa's new restrictions on the use of eminent domain for the purposes of economic development unnecessarily restrict an important tool that aids in enabling revitalization and needed development. The

prior laws on eminent domain provided for responsible development while strongly protecting property owners.

POSITION: Monitor legislation and report to GDCDA membership.

6. Allow elected officials to conduct initial incentive negotiations for economic development projects in closed sessions and keep company business plans, financial information, and other related information confidential. Public negotiations make the details about potential economic development projects available to the competition and drives up both local and state costs of landing the project. Granting this closed session protection to cities and counties during the initial development stages of a deal will help streamline the negotiation process.

POSITION: Modify Iowa Code Section 22.7(8) to allow city and county governments to conduct closed sessions to negotiate certain economic development projects and keep company business plans, financial information, and other deal-related information confidential.

MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE COMPETITIVE POSITION1. Iowa's property taxation system is highly unfavorable to business growth and job creation. The Alliance supports the reform of our antiquated property tax structure to improve accountability, equity, and stability. Property tax reform has continued to fall short in past legislative sessions.

POSITION: Provide guidance and support to seek reform of the property tax structure. Monitor legislation and report to GDCDA membership.

2. Iowa is currently a "Right to Work" state, but legislation introduced in past sessions have threatened to repeal this law by authorizing the negotiation of fair share fees in collective bargaining agreements for employees. If negotiated, non-union members would have to pay a 'fair share' fee for bargaining performed by the union for the employee, even though the employee chose not to be a member of the union. The "Right to Work" status of Iowa helps foster an attractive business environment.

POSITION: Preserve Iowa's "Right to Work" law. Monitor legislation and report to GDCDA membership.

STRENGTHEN TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE1. Iowa's rail system provides critical transportation infrastructure for value-added agriculture, life sciences and commercial distribution enterprise. As a state, we have not devoted the proper resources to maintain the current system, much less to build the system into the tool it could become.

POSITION: Maintain funding for programs that improve Iowa's Railway Infrastructure including the Railroad Revolving Loan & Grant program. Monitor legislation and report to GDCDA membership.

2. The Alliance service territory is well positioned to benefit from highway infrastructure connecting us to markets and customers throughout the country. We recognize the need for continued improvements and enhancements to the already high quality road system. Working with Central Iowa Regional Transportation Planning Alliance, Des Moines Area MPO and Iowa Department of Transportation to plan interstate interchanges, highway corridor improvements, and new bypass routes is a high priority.

POSITION: Support federal and state funding to IDOT including TIME-21 to continue the work in meeting transportation needs. Monitor legislation and report to GDCDA membership.

ENHANCE EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The Alliance endorses the Greater Des Moines Partnership's initiatives on workforce and education through the following priorities:

- Early Childhood Education - The Partnership supports continued investment in accredited pre-kindergarten early education programs to help ensure readiness for kindergarten, increase high school graduation rates, and develop a strong, stable, and productive workforce for tomorrow. Research shows that employees with access to quality early childhood education for their children exhibit greater productivity in the workplace, experience a lower rate of absenteeism, have a lower overall job turnover rate, and are better contributors to employer sales and company profit. Research further indicates that every dollar invested in a child's pre-kindergarten education will return \$7 in reduced costs for special education, state assistance, and/or correction systems costs later.

- K-12 Education - The Partnership supports bold, innovative recommendations to improve Iowa's education system to meet the workforce needs of Iowa's new economy. The Partnership supports the following legislative solutions that can be enacted to better equip our students to compete in the global marketplace and strengthen accountability. The Partnership believes that a time of economic and budgetary challenges is the ideal time to pursue innovative policies to improve student achievement. To this end, the Partnership supports:
 - Establishing state-level 21st Century learning standards and assessments focused on student achievement.
 - Implementing the Iowa Core Curriculum with deliberate speed and aligning it with comprehensive student assessments that accurately measure critical learning skills at a comparative level globally, including the immediate implementation of a writing assessment.
 - Aligning the Iowa Core Curriculum with career pathway maps to build a stronger connection between the K-12 education system and the Iowa business community.
 - Improving and enhancing existing technology tools to better connect the workforce needs of businesses to school curriculums and students assessing future career pathways.
 - Fully implementing a career ladder to provide teachers enhanced merit-based compensation and more professional development opportunities for career advancement to enhance recruitment and retention of quality teachers.
 - Increasing the utilization of flexible and innovative school reform models such as charter schools.
 - Increasing focus on sciences, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) learning.
 - Implementing initiatives to improve graduation rates.
 - Evaluating reform efforts to further implement year-round school and lengthen the school day and school calendar year, which could arguably improve student achievement, reduce juvenile crime, improve current workforce productivity, and better prepare Iowa's future workforce.
- Higher Education - The Partnership supports sufficient state funding for community colleges and Regents institutions and the continuation of the Iowa Tuition Grant that invests in financially eligible students who attend independent colleges in Iowa to keep the costs of higher education in Iowa affordable and to help reduce student loan debts for Iowa's future workforce. The Partnership also supports the state's marketing of Iowa's public and private universities and colleges as education destinations as a tool to recruit top students from across the nation and world.
- Workforce Development - Today's economic climate demonstrates the need to properly retrain and retool workers to meet the skills demanded of Iowa businesses. Iowa's workforce needs to adjust and upscale skills as the economy dictates. The Partnership believes the state should continue to encourage partnerships between Iowa's business and industry and community colleges and other education institutions and supports proven programs within IDED, Iowa Workforce Development, and the Iowa Department of Education, including the Iowa Industrial New Jobs Training Program (260E), Iowa Jobs Training Program (260F), Accelerated Career Education (ACE) Program (260G), and the Iowa Student Internship Program, to meet the ever-changing workforce needs of Iowa companies in the 21st Century. To this end, the Partnership supports the following "Meeting Iowa's Workforce Challenge" recommendations for state workforce development programs: (1) measure success, ensure accountability; (2) invest in regional strategies and industry-based public-private partnerships; (3) build career pathways to good jobs for all Iowans' and (4) provide Iowans with lifelong access to skills training and educational opportunities.
- Workforce Retention and Recruitment - To help address Iowa's workforce needs, the Partnership encourages policies and practices by the government and private sector to support the legal immigration of new Iowans, to encourage former Iowans and other non-residents to relocate to Iowa, and to retain current Iowans.
- Immigration - The Partnership encourages policies and practices by the government and private sector to support the legal immigration of new Iowans. These efforts should include a stronger focus on English Language Learners (ELL) training, workforce training for immigrants, and continued support for regional Diversity Welcome Centers to assist new residents with overcoming legal and cultural obstacles. The Partnership also supports comprehensive immigration reform at the federal level, but opposes state-based punitive anti-immigration proposals.
- Future Workforce Recruitment and Retention - The Partnership supports the creation of a forgivable loan program for Iowa higher education students who stay in the state following graduation and a tax credit for employers that pay down employee student loans in an effort to recruit and retain our workforce.

- Financial Literacy - The Partnership supports public policy initiatives that encourage educational institutions and adult education programs to improve the financial literacy of all Iowans. Financial education will encourage greater personal savings, is essential to help consumers avoid financially-destructive transactions and fraud and to exercise their consumer protection rights, and helps individuals create household budgets, initiate savings plans, manage debt, and make strategic investment decisions to plan for retirement, health care and education. Specifically, the Partnership supports the creation of a Governor's Financial Literacy Council. Additionally, Iowa is one of three states that tax the professional service of investment management. Removing taxes on individuals getting advice will make financial services more affordable for all.

The Alliance also supports the initiatives of the following from Dr. Rob Denson, President, Des Moines Area Community College:

- Support for Regent Universities in the development and commercialization of technologies that can impact the economic and workforce climate of Iowa, both short and long-term. The Legislature should ask for specific plans and provide targeted funding from the Values Fund and other sources for specific high potential initiatives, above and beyond the general aid provided.
- Community Colleges have proven to be very cost effective and quality sources of education and training for vocational and college transfer bound students. Their graduates stay in Iowa, providing a great return on a small investment. However, Community Colleges need additional capacity in order to recruit and train if they are to meet Iowa's workforce challenge. Community Colleges are in a strong position to be able to recruit more students, but having waiting lists often preclude enrollment. As sustainable source for additional funding for facilities needs to be found.



Happy Holidays!

The Alliance wishes you a safe and happy holiday season. Our office will be closed December 24 and returning January 4 to allow staff time with family and friends for the holidays. Staff will be monitoring email and voicemail during this time and providing response as necessary.