



February 18, 2016

Dear Benton County Business Owner:

Your business is a tremendous asset to Benton County. You create jobs. You add value to our community through the goods and services you provide. You have an entrepreneurial energy that drives you to grow your business. You push for efficiency and a return on your investment. You expect results.

We have joined with other community leaders in Benton County to harness our collective resources, energy and passion to make Benton County an even better place. **We have created a new economic development organization for the entire County**, one that taps into the strengths of our business community. We need your financial support to sustain this organization. Join us in a partnership with your fellow Benton County businesses, cities, townships and the County to bring this organization to life and keep it viable over the long-term.

Like most businesses, you probably want this question answered right away: How much? Take a look at the attached pledge sheet for our suggested contribution schedule. We think it is fair and reasonable, and offers companies of all sizes an opportunity to be a part of this exciting new organization. Your **tax-deductible annual contribution** entitles you to voting membership in the organization. Voting members are also eligible to serve on the governing board.

So, why be a part of this effort? First, **a more prosperous Benton County means more business for you.** Second, for too long economic development in our county has been fragmented. Benton County, cities, chambers and regional economic development organizations each pursued their own development priorities. We have found that the most successful economic development efforts around the state bring together businesses and local government in a partnership.

Why do we need a single organization? Our answer lies in what this county has to offer. **We need to tell our story.** We need to market our assets. What's on our list? Here are just a few: an excellent, skilled workforce; available land in our industrial parks; an efficient transportation network, including the new Rice interchange and four-lane highway connecting Foley and St. Cloud; and local access to higher education institutions, including St. Cloud State University and the St. Cloud Technical and Community College.

And consider this fact: Benton County is the 13th fastest growing county in Minnesota, according to the State Demographer. Only three "outstate" counties are expected to grow faster than Benton County. This is our message. **We need one organization, focused exclusively on Benton County, to shape and promote this message.**



For the past year, Benton County has helped to coordinate an effort to create a new economic development entity. The County brought together a workgroup of community leaders from businesses, cities and townships to explore various organizational models. This workgroup has proposed the creation of 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation to head up economic development efforts in Benton County.

Under its Articles of Incorporation, a 501(c)(3) known as the Benton Economic Partnership (BEC) will be led by a nine-member Board of Directors. Six of the nine Board members will be private business members of the BEC. The remaining three Board members will represent cities, townships and the County. This organizational structure reflects a core concept set forth by the workgroup that any successful effort must actively engage the private sector in supporting and leading this organization.

An effective, high quality organization will require adequate resources. We estimate needing annual operating funds of approximately \$150,000 initially. The Benton County Board supports this concept and has committed \$75,000 towards the annual operating budget. We need your tax-deductible support too. We are looking for what we call "founding investors" who can contribute start-up capital. Founding investors will be permanently recognized in organization directories and publicity. The organization will need long-term, reliable support as well. With your fellow voting members, you will own, govern and hold this organization accountable for results.

Finally, when will this organization start operating? The 501(c)(3) has been formed. We are in the membership and fund-raising phase now. Once we have funding commitments equal to our projected annual operating budget we will move ahead with electing the governing board and hiring staff. We hope to have those commitments in place within the next six months.

Please return the pledge sheet to the Benton Economic Partnership, c/o Falcon National Bank, 183 Cedar Drive, Foley, MN 56329. If you have questions or need additional information, please call any of the membership committee members listed below. Or, contact Benton County Administrator Monty Headley at (320) 968-5004, or mheadley@co.benton.mn.us.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Jake Bauerly in blue ink.

Jake Bauerly
Benton County Commissioner
(320) 290-7533

Handwritten signature of Jonathan Brenny in blue ink.

Jonathan Brenny
Godzala Brenny Real Estate – Edina Realty
(320) 493-8143

Handwritten signature of John Herges in blue ink.

John Herges
Falcon National Bank
(320) 968-6300

Handwritten signature of Ed Popp in blue ink.

Ed Popp
Benton County Commissioner
(320) 393-2886

Handwritten signature of Sandra Saldana in blue ink.

Sandra Saldana
Saldana Excavating and Aggregates
(320) 393-4503

Handwritten signature of Cheryl Scapanski in blue ink.

Cheryl Scapanski
Benton Teleco
(320) 393-2115